

Elizabeth Kopy

Professor Robert Rann

Humanities 2020

18 July 2012

Final Exam

Question 2: Romantic Era: Nature and the Physical World

In the course textbook, *The Humanistic Tradition: the Early Modern World to the Present*, Gloria K. Fiero discusses the Romantic era in *Book 5: Romanticism, Realism, and the Nineteenth-Century World* (pages 667–807). Originating in Europe, the Romantic era sprung toward the end of the 18th century, and brought about an intellectual, literary, and artistic movement. Two primary developments for shaping the nature for this new cultural existence were the European dominance over the rest of the world and the Western society's alteration in becoming an established industrial society (671).

Faster than the past thousand years, the European world doubled in size and the material culture grew. Art, music, and literature demonstrate the social movement's involvement of being "a revolt against convention and authority and a search for freedom in personal, political, and artistic life" (671). Chapter 27 explains the central attribute in shaping romanticism to be the societal love for nature and the natural world. A leading poet, Williams Wordsworth (1770-1850), believed nature could bring about a re-establishment of childhood wonder notions. It was Williams Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's literary work, *Lyrical Ballads*, that build denotes England's birth of romanticism (673). While Western

poetry focused on making nature a major theme, it was the Eastern civilizations that allowed for natural landscape to dominate their romantic sensibility, But despite the differences, the nature poetry of both East and West addresses an enduring theme in the humanistic tradition: the value of nature in freeing human beings from the artificial confines of the material world (679).

Landscape poetry was not the only Eastern origination, in the tenth-century, landscape paintings originated “as an independent genre” in the China (680). They are meant to be expressive benign natural harmony representations, rather than literal realities, which differs from European artists, and in the nineteenth-century became a primary channel for artistic expression of mood, “Constable’s freshly perceived landscapes celebrate the physical beauty of the rivers, trees, and cottages of his native Suffolk countryside” (681). Constable conveys a sensitive blend of freedom of form and empirical detail to his landscapes, in expression of the humble and contemplative guises (682).

For the Americans, romanticism grasped as an attitude of style and of mind, its purest expression was found in the idea of transcendentalism. This idea held notion, “...by way of intuition transcended or surpassed knowledge based on reason and logic. They believed that the direct experience of nature united one with God.” (686). Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) essays influenced American thought on transcendentalism. He too courted nature, like Wordsworth, “to see into the life of things,” his essay “Nature” is an example of this (686).

Nature and the natural landscape, the hero and heroism, and nationalist struggles got political independence--the very themes that

intrigued romantic writers--also inspired the art of music of the nineteenth century (720).

Romantic artists were about revealing heart over mind (emotions over intellect). Ideas that sparked imagination, found inspiration, and expressed personal emotion, are often what historians find when looking into the art, literature, and music behind this era, an era that favored ballet and opera, heroism, and love.

Question 1: 18th Century: Reflection of Enlightenment through Art?

In the course textbook, *The Humanistic Tradition: the Early Modern World to the Present*, Gloria K. Fiero discusses the early 20th Century art in *Book 4: Faith, Reason, and Power in the Early Modern World: Part 2* (pages 597-668). Sparked by philosophers in the 18th century, The Age of Enlightenment was a movement of intellectuals in the United States and Europe, whose aim was to civilize society and progress knowledge. The successors of Newtonian science, these philosophers saw the universe as a machine that operated through natural laws. This movement promoted science and opposed superstition. During this time, most men and over half of the women were literate, which allowed literacy to become widespread. "The public interest in literature and the arts spurred the rise of the newspaper, the novel, and the symphony. Satire became a popular...educated circles, debate...

by the pen and the musket the new world would be launched" (597). So how exactly did the arts reflect ideals in the 18th century enlightenment? It was through visual arts, the rococo style, neoclassical, literary biography, and Western instrumental music that reflect on the 18th century ideals.

Eighteenth century principality for the idea of liberty is shown through the treaties. Treaty formation occurred from the social discontentment in citizen rights and the role of government reformation, which redefined social order. This happens after John Locke and Thomas Hobbes raise question concerning the sovereignty of the ruler versus human rights with the idea of social contract (599). Both men agreed to the formation of government be reached through the formation of a contract in means of individualized happiness and social order (600).

Hobbes and Locke's treaties influenced many other people, which would expand upon the ideals of equality and political freedom. One example of this is Charles Louis de Secondat Montesquieu, who initiates sociology. He writes *The Spirit of the Laws*, to defend liberty, condemn slavery, and expand upon separate powers in government (603). After Louis XIV died in 1715, the Palace of Versailles was taken up by French nobilities who would occupied townhouses and would meet to exchange views on politics, religion, the sciences, and morality. This lifestyle would bring about idea circulation, causing Paris to be a place of intellectual activity (606). The shared philosophies were summed-up in Diderot's (thirty-five volume) *Encyclopedia* (published 1751 and 1752), which expressed the basic ideals of the

Enlightenment era. The *Encyclopedia* includes philosophies from Francois Marie Arouet (Voltaire), Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Francois Quesnay, Montesquieu, and many more people who demonstrated ideals on music, politics, art, education, and so on (607). The *Encyclopedia* had a large impact on the eighteenth-century society, in bringing about social criticism.

New expressions of literary social criticism founded newspapers, magazines, journalistic essays, and the modern novels. The satire, *Candide*, by Francois Marie Arouet, demonstrated French philosophies. "Voltaire celebrated traditions of non-Western cultures," and his "views were basic to Enlightenment optimism" (623).

Visual satire of literary is seen through William Hogarth's (1697-1764) paintings of the English. "Hogarth produced a telling visual record of the ills of eighteenth-century British society" (634). It was artists, like Hogarth and Voltaire, who demonstrate upon the ideas of satirization of the social living conditions in their time. Social critiques who question the living standards in general through literary and visual arts (635). Jean-Jacques Rousseau was the most outspoken critic of the Enlightenment. A contributor to Diderot's *Encyclopedia*, a play-write composer, and an educator, this man took up issues with the notion that progress of the arts and sciences would change human condition (636). One of his philosophies can be read in *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality among Men* (1755).

It was in the early discussions of a governing society that led expressive artists in visual paintings and literary works, that demonstrates the ideals behind the Enlightenment. The rococo style (born in France), ornamented architectures, expressed the optimism of the Enlightenment (641). Antoine Watteau painted

theatrical scenes on buildings, paints the *Departure from the Island of Cythera*, which pays tribute to fleeting love (642). He shows a wistful and poetic style. Intellect of a woman and fashion as a public expression is shown in *Marie-Louis Elisabeth Vigee-Lebrun*, a work by Francois Boucher. Rococo sculpture reveals the Enlightenment's religious fervor and lack of dramatic urgency (647).

In France, paintings demonstrate a moral purpose, which aligned with the philosophies. The works paint realistic daily life scenes, and abandoned indulgent the sensuality of the rococo. Greuze paints the nature of ordinary people, bringing "moralizing subjects as *The Father Reading the Bible to His Children*, and *The Well-Beloved Mother*, *The Effects of Drunkenness*" (647).

Eighteenth-century Neoclassicism architecture was unique in design. The buildings were distinct between the Greek and Romans, and took inspiration from geometric shapes. Wealth and prestige were demonstrations in the architectures, especially in English homes. Jacques-Germain Soufflot Church of Sainte Genevieve, is an example of the Enlightenment revealing inspiration. Dignity and austerity made the Greek and Roman antiquities the ideal style for public monuments (page 653).

Rococo music tested the popularity with Handel and Bach, in the same way as rococo art, the music was delicate in sound, and natural to feeling. Couperin published *The Art of Playing Clavecin*, one example of his shared expression of fragile elegance and lighthearted spirit of the rococo visual arts. After this style came classical music, and then the symphony orchestra. The symphony orchestra served as secular entertainment, and bringing about a sophistication in music,

similar to the sophistication of the intellectual world. "Eighteenth-century art and music reflected the changing character and tastes of its various social classes" (666), they also demonstrated the social critiquing to general life style.