

## A. Introduction

Art History is such a specialized study that, until the sixth edition, Chambers used special authors to keep much of the history of art segregated from the rest of the text. The December 1996 issue of *The American Historical Review* (AHR)<sup>1</sup> has a study Dr. Jirran finds especially suited for integrating art into this survey course. This lecture will try to pick up on what is already in Chambers for purposes of incorporation into this lecture. After his students have made use of the presentation, Dr. Jirran intends to forward the revised lecture for further incorporation into Chambers.

Art is both about what is portrayed and how the portrayal is made. History is about changes through time. A consideration of how artists portrayed harvests through time reveals historical changes of a broader pattern that changes in art itself. Contrary to what some may think, food production is the oldest of the professions.<sup>2</sup> By studying art, historians can unveil upper class ideas about the peasantry.<sup>3</sup> The supplement to this lecture contains a list of both harvest illustrations (as identified by Dr. Jirran) and names mentioned in the AHR. Students are especially invited to double check the evidence here presented. The course goal for this topic is **to evaluate the impact of ideas on life**. We are suggesting that artists contributed to the identities of social relations in their artistic portrayals of harvests.

## B. The Seventeenth Century

Until mechanization of the late Nineteenth Century, harvesting was both labor intensive and central to economic activity. The whole scene was too vast for ready portrayal, but too important to be ignored. In the Middle Ages individual peasants represented the varieties of activities. Having to work was a curse of Original Sin. Rebellion was an act against nature.<sup>4</sup>

During the Renaissance, sense a sense of community was depicted, humans in harmony with nature. Such harmony among a community of peasants harbored a dangerous potential in times of upheaval.<sup>5</sup> See "The Peasant Dance, CA. 1567." on page 388 in the sixth edition. Communities of peasants tended to vanish from the scene during the Baroque Seventeenth Century, only to reappear before the French Revolution, during the Eighteenth Century.<sup>6</sup> During the Seventeenth Century, the notion of the vigorous mower generated the Grim Reaper, the avenger of death. The peasant and death became associated.<sup>7</sup>

Harvesters were shown using sharp tools from the beginning into the Sixteenth Renaissance Century. Examples are found on pages 160, 186, 3221, and 388 in the sixth edition of Chambers. See pages 382, 426, and 427--all Sixteenth Century art works which illustrate what became more pointed in the Seventeenth Century. What

---

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Jirran asked Professor Thomas B. Waters, Department Head of Fine Arts at Thomas Nelson Community College, to review this lecture and supplement. While Dr. Jirran alone is responsible for any errors, Dr. Jirran wishes to express gratitude for the corrections and suggestions made by professor Waters. This lecture draws heavily from Liana Vardi, "Imagining the Harvest in Early Modern Europe," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 101, No. 5 (December 1996), page 1357.

<sup>2</sup> Liana Vardi, "Imagining the Harvest in Early Modern Europe," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 101, No. 5 (December 1996), page 1357.

<sup>3</sup> Liana Vardi, "Imagining the Harvest in Early Modern Europe," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 101, No. 5 (December 1996), page 1396.

<sup>4</sup> Liana Vardi, "Imagining the Harvest in Early Modern Europe," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 101, No. 5 (December 1996), page 1396.

<sup>5</sup> Liana Vardi, "Imagining the Harvest in Early Modern Europe," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 101, No. 5 (December 1996), page 1359-1360.

<sup>6</sup> Liana Vardi, "Imagining the Harvest in Early Modern Europe," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 101, No. 5 (December 1996), page 1362.

<sup>7</sup> Liana Vardi, "Imagining the Harvest in Early Modern Europe," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 101, No. 5 (December 1996), page 1383.

happened was that the establishment was becoming afraid of peasant uprisings during the era of social unrest and economic restructuring. The key to the Seventeenth Century is the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia. Artists decided to bring urban dwellers into harvest scenes. This is especially noted in "Carnival and Lent 1559" on page 427. Peasants are portrayed as kindred participants with urban dwellers in leisure. Countryside became a place of repose and meditation, rather than work. A good example of this is "Fete in the Park, 1718," the painting by Antoine Watteau on page 536. A lesser example is on page 593, "In contrast to England." In any event, peasant work is no longer depicted as magnificent effort, complete with knives used for cutting the harvest.<sup>8</sup>

### C. The Eighteenth Century

Throughout history, until the Eighteenth Century, peasants were considered the very antithesis of culture. Dr. Jirran finds it hard to locate a picture of bestial and servile peasants in Chambers, the Hogarth prints on page 633 serve the purpose. In the Eighteenth Century peasants became a symbol of traditional culture, resistant to change.<sup>9</sup> Harvests returned in the Eighteenth Century, but without sharp and dangerous tools. Harvesters were portrayed as binders and gatherers. Tension with peasants was less pronounced. The full effect of the notion of the pleasant countryside was felt here and later. On page 636 "Joseph II" himself is doing the plowing. On page 745 "This idealized" picture depicts prosperous peasants in mid-Nineteenth Century 1850. Sisters teaching school for Black African peasant children on page 828 completes the picture Chambers sets forth. Liana Vardi words it as follows. Note, there is no cutting of the crop.

Nature provided sustenance; it only needed gathering. This was, moreover, fun and easy work--eighteenth-century elites delighted in this image, exemplified by George III's haymaking--something that the sweat-drenched images of the sixteenth century or the blood-stained ones of the seventeenth could not successfully project.<sup>10</sup>

The Eighteenth Century (1700's) can be given no comprehensive stylistic label, as Chambers pointed out on page 623 in the sixth edition.<sup>11</sup> The Eighteenth Century, nonetheless, was a time of Rococo art. As a point of reference, the setting for Colonial Williamsburg is the late Eighteenth Century. Dr. Jirran likes to think of the Sixteenth Century as the age of well-balanced Renaissance art, of the Seventeenth Century as fancier Baroque, of the Eighteenth Century with plenty of ginger bread Rococo art, followed by a return of Classical reason, of the Nineteenth Century with milder Romanticism, and of the Twentieth Century with a rebellion against human limitations.

For Eighteenth Century Classicism see "The Inspiration of the Epic Poet, CA 1628." by Nicholas Poussin. As Chambers points out,<sup>12</sup> Poussin enjoyed royal approval and influenced generations of painters. Dr. Jirran regards classical art, with its symmetry and balance, as the best sort of art.

Rococo was characterized by fantastic scrolls and shell-like designs which were frequently used for ornamentation, especially in architecture. Whereas Baroque art reflected ideas struggling for dynastic power and colonial empire, Rococo reflected the indolent ease and fancy manners characteristic of the court of Louis XIV.

### D. Interpretive Differences

---

<sup>8</sup> Liana Vardi, "Imagining the Harvest in Early Modern Europe," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 101, No. 5 (December 1996), page 1374.

<sup>9</sup> Liana Vardi, "Imagining the Harvest in Early Modern Europe," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 101, No. 5 (December 1996), page 1357.

<sup>10</sup>Liana Vardi, "Imagining the Harvest in Early Modern Europe," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 101, No. 5 (December 1996), page 1390.

<sup>11</sup>In the fifth edition of Chambers, page 720.

<sup>12</sup>Chambers, sixth edition, page 519.

Suggestions made in this lecture are on the cutting edge of scholarship. The standard interpretation is that peasants were unsuited subjects for high culture. The standard treatment of peasantry is a phenomena essentially internal to each nation.<sup>13</sup> These European peasants are like United States Blacks, inelegantly depicted on page 435. What happened during the Eighteenth Century, the century of Colonial Williamsburg, was the transformation of the peasant from uncultured worker to fitting citizen of the state. While the European peasant thereby became an "emblem for mankind," Dr. Jirran sees the same potential for American Blacks.

Standard interpretations acknowledge the absence of agricultural work in Seventeenth Century paintings. Usual interpretations regard the absence as an urban yearning for nostalgia in the country. Supporting the status quo, commentators have regarded the no-workers countryside as indicative of the bounty of nature and the hope for better times to come. Standard interpretations do not link the Rococo countryside with validating the peasant estate, as is suggested in this lecture.

#### E. Conclusion

By studying the Introduction, Sixteenth Century, Seventeenth Century, and Eighteenth Century, students have been able to evaluate the impact of ideas on life. The ideas were about the development of class identities. The impact was about political ramifications found in the French Revolution.

### Supplement

#### F. Antoine Watteau (1683-1721)

Watteau was a French painter of Flemish origin. A short-lived genius of the early Eighteenth Century, he was, in many ways, the best artistic representative of upper-class French society and its attitudes. He is noted for the lyric quality of his gay and sensuous scenes of open-air festivities. "Fete in the Park" on page 536, again makes the point. His art, more freely designed than possible during the Louis XIV period, embodied at least an idealized version of the social graces of his day., Working with colors like Rubens except in a more restrained fashion, Watteau embodied the difference not only between the lustiness of the Flemish versus his own somewhat diffident manner, but more importantly, between the former vital and decisive role of the aristocracy and its increasingly useless and negligible function in the Eighteenth Century.

Watteau portrayed aristocrats engaged in elegant idling, listening to music, having conversations in parks, while making delicate and skillful love. Watteau depicted a theater-influenced, highly artificial concept off love in which conversation played a leading role. Where Rubens would portray healthy women and impressive cavalier men, Watteau had thin figures and decorative sensitivity. The woman in the upper right-hand corner is not very thin, according to Twentieth Century standards. Delicacy was the difference between the inherent vigor of the Baroque style and the charming gallantry of Rococo. The characters of Watteau had typical elegance and distinction complete with aristocratic gestures along with fuzzy landscapes. The generalized landscape backgrounds of Watteau suggested a theater backdrop. In most of Watteau's paintings, the statuary participated in the scene.

In the final analysis, the fanciful background and the old-fashioned costumes of Watteau gave an air of unreality and fancy. The doll-like figures in glistening satins, with high-heeled shoes, symbolized the behavior approved by courtly society. The atmosphere, however, was anything but joyous. Aristocratic sadness, a spiritual gallantry, a blending of the sad and the gay hovered over all. Watteau's influence was felt all over Europe, from Russia to Britain and Scandinavia. Studying Watteau gives students a sense of the later French Revolution, already treated in the first semester of this course.

#### G. Theater

---

<sup>13</sup>Liana Vardi, "Imagining the Harvest in Early Modern Europe," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 101, No. 5 (December 1996), page 1358.

Theater is an aspect of art seldom given historical note. Theater buildings are ignored even more. Buildings, however, are what tourists see. An effort is made in these lectures to relate architectural to other historical phenomena.

Theater buildings were copied in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries from Italian and French sources in places like the castle of Stockholm in Sweden. Stockholm may be located on the inside front cover for the hardback sixth edition of Chambers.<sup>14</sup> To build a new castle was to incorporate new theaters. King Gustavus Adolphus,<sup>15</sup> supported a troupe of players at his castle in Stockholm in 1625.<sup>16</sup>

One can move from the theater to commerce and back again to track parallel historical phenomena between 1550 and 1750. The medieval market was a sort of first theater where social mores were tested. As time went on, fiduciary concerns remained in the market while a broader range of interests entered the stage, particularly the later Renaissance stage. Renaissance theater changed from "a divine commentary on human vanity," as was the case in the Middle Ages, to "a secular commentary on the plasticity of human relations."<sup>17</sup>

Such secular theater disturbed Puritan religious thinking. As a result, in 1642, long after Shakespeare had died, the theater was suppressed in England. By the early 1700s the more humane considerations gave way to material and capitalistic ones, as the theater returned. Theater reflected Society.

#### H. Feminism

Dr. Jirran regards Watteau as a precursor of modern feminism. Watteau gave validity to feminine values of delicacy and finery. In the Nineteenth Century, the woman's movement objected "that the gender hierarchy of male dominance and female submission was not natural but arbitrary."

Twentieth Century feminism offered a more comprehensive challenge to the prevailing status quo<sup>18</sup> than did the Nineteenth Century woman's movement. After World War I, those advocating feminism were prepared to jettison Christianity and respectability for gains in the labor, suffrage, birth control, and socialist movements. As women entered the professions they faced the cruel dilemma of either accepting what the long-established males determined was objective, or challenging the very foundations on which the professions were grounded.

Dr. Jirran regards Watteau as a symbol of greater equity between men and women. Dr. Jirran regards what Watteau did as a development in consciousness raising. The French Revolution, of which Watteau was a type of precursor, raised feminist consciousness as a part of the rights inherent in democracy. Consciousness precedes actions.

#### I. Conclusion

[This topic has helped the student concentrate on Modern Art from the Sixteenth through the Twentieth Centuries. In the main lecture, the student has compared the treatment of harvests from era to era. In the Supplement, the student has compared the Rococo with the Baroque and has paid some attention to the painting to Watteau. From this, the student has seen that just as art reflects life, so does life reflect the ideas which inform

---

<sup>14</sup>Stockholm may be located on the inside front cover for the hardback fifteen edition of Chambers.

<sup>15</sup>Indexed in the sixth edition of Chambers on pages 470, 471 f, 474, and 492-493; indexed in the fifth edition of Chambers on pages 572, 574, 581, 583, 608, and 691.

<sup>16</sup>Marian C. Donnelly, "Theaters in the Courts of Denmark and Sweden from Frederik II to Gustav III," *Journal for the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 43 (December 1984): page 328.

<sup>17</sup>Nicholas Rogers, review of Jean-Christophe Agnew, Worlds Apart: The Market and the Theater in Anglo-American Thought, 1550-1750, in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 92 (December 1988), page 1180. This source is also used in the 1992 edition of HIS 101-24 Commerce.

<sup>18</sup>Nancy F. Cott, The Grounding of Modern Feminism, page 18, as cited in the review by Susan Porter Benson, *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 94, No. 5 (December 1989), page 1461.

it. In this way, the student is better able to evaluate the impact of artistic ideas on life during modern times. The student is reminded to read, study, think, and prepare a written comment.

Appendix A  
Sources

Page	Title	Why Dr. Jirran noticed this illustration
160	Bad and Good Regiment, CA. 1125	The plow knife
186	Agriculture	Byzantine peasants with knives.
321	Mining 1389	Miners use sharp tools.
382	Luther in the Vineyard	Associated with harvest by Dr. Jirran.
388	The Peasant Dance, CA. 1567	Peasants have knives.
388 ff.	Pieter Bruegel the Elder	Mentioned by Vardi on page 1364.
Misspelled "Breughel" in the index to Chambers. Sometimes the name is spelled "Brueghel."		
417 ff.	Peter Paul Rubens	Mentioned by Vardi on page 1373.
426	The Prodigal Son, CA. 1516	Scene in countryside, without knife.
427	Carnival and Lent 1559	Shows peasants in the spring time.
427 ff.	Pieter Bruegel the Elder	Mentioned by Vardi on page 1364
435	Slave Shop	The ultimate peasant.
465 ff.	Pieter Bruegel the Elder	Mentioned by Vardi on page 1364
498 ff.	Pieter Bruegel the Elder	Mentioned by Vardi on page 1364
496	Rembrandt	Mentioned by Vardi on page 1379
510	Mannerism	Mentioned by Vardi on page 1367
513	Peter Paul Rubens	Mentioned by Vardi on page 1373.
514 ff.	Peter Paul Rubens	Mentioned by Vardi on page 1373
517	Peter Paul Rubens	Mentioned by Vardi on page 1373.
517	Nicholas Poussin	Mentioned by Vardi on page 1379.
518	Peter Paul Rubens	Mentioned by Vardi on page 1373.
519	Nicholas Poussin	Mentioned by Vardi on page 1379.
518 ff.	Rembrandt	Mentioned by Vardi on page 1379.
520	Nicholas Poussin	Mentioned by Vardi on page 1379.
536	Fete in the Park, 1718	Landscape without peasants.
583	Incremental improvements	Corvee workers with hammers.
589	Livestock	Fields.
593	In contrast to England	French peasants without knives.
613-38	Denis Diderot	Mentioned by Vardi on page 1395.
616-19	Rousseau	Mentioned by Vardi on page 1390.
622	Joseph Addison	Mentioned by Vardi on page 1386.
623-25	Rousseau	Mentioned by Vardi on page 1390.
633	"Gin Lane"	Hogarth's decadence.
636	Joseph II	Joseph II doing the plowing.
641	George III	Mentioned by Vardi on page 1390.
643	Rousseau	Mentioned by Vardi on page 1390.
664	The radical activists	French Revolutionaries.
745	This idealized picture	Of prosperous peasants without knives.
762	Jeanron's depiction of a barricade	1830 workers and middle classes together.
788	Crowds cheer Prussian troops	1866 without peasants
828	Illustrated French Catholic weekly	Sister with children of peasants
859		