

PART VII SCIENCE AND SPLENDOR: THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

Chapter 21 The Baroque Style in Art and Literature

1. The cultural upheavals of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were accompanied by new styles in the arts.
2. High Renaissance conventions of human beauty expressed in ideal proportions reached a dead end.
3. Calvin and Luther took on the whole Catholic tradition which they dismissed as pagan.
4. Protestants sought art forms less tied to classical antiquity and formal standards, suitable for individual piety.
5. Catholics judged Renaissance art too intellectual and lacking in emotional appeal.
6. European historians from Spain, Holland, France, and sometimes England referred to the seventeenth century as the great century or the golden century.
7. The power attained by these countries was accompanied by a great cultural outpouring.
8. The stylistic terms most used to describe this era take their name from the visual arts—baroque and neoclassical.

I. Baroque in the Visual Arts

1. By the eighteenth century, the French were using the term baroque to mean a painting in which the rules of proportion were not observed in favor of the artists' subjective ideas.
2. Like Gothic, baroque was originally a term of disparagement.
3. Later it came to mean art that was naturalistic rather than ideal and emotional rather than rational.
4. Subjects could be from the Bible or daily life and were presented to achieve strong emotional impact or intense, detached observation.

II. Baroque Painting

1. Renaissance artists fashioned an artistic revolution responded to by artists all over Europe.
2. Each country's artists applied these new tools to their own needs and sensibilities and those of their patrons.
3. By the end of the sixteenth century, European artists created masterpieces both visually and emotionally removed from the art of the preceding one hundred years.
4. Painters from France, Italy, the Netherlands, and Spain created works demonstrating both great diversity and a shared heritage.
5. Art historians generally modify the term *baroque* with qualifiers that reference the time, artist, and place of origin.

A. Caravaggio (1573–1610)

1. Caravaggio was accused of murder and had to flee Rome in 1606.
2. Caravaggio's anger permeates his artistic style, which is dramatic and emotional.
3. *The Conversion of St. Paul* depicts the moment when Paul, blinded by the light of Christ, falls from his horse.
4. Caravaggio relied on ordinary settings to make the earthly divine.

B. Artemisia Gentileschi (1593–1652/53)

1. Gentileschi worked at a time when women were beginning to be accepted as talented painters.
2. She was trained by her father, a master painter.

3. Among her favorite subjects was the Biblical heroine, Judith.

C. Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640)

1. Rubens was from a wealthy Protestant family that converted to Catholicism when the Catholics took control of the Netherlands.
2. He traveled to Italy in 1600 and was influenced by the fifteenth-century Renaissance paintings he encountered.
3. Rubens paintings were distinctive, optimistic, and visually rich.
4. Rubens had his own workshop where assistants under his direction would help with the painting of works he designed.
5. Rubens received many important secular commissions designed to convey the power and nobility of those he painted.
6. Rubens was captivated by the people and objects he loved.

D. Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–1669)

1. Rembrandt was raised in the more sober and restrained world of Dutch Protestantism.
2. A large class of prosperous Protestants emerged with the money and inclination to purchase art for their homes.
3. The face, costume, and demeanor of the subject became a means to explore the internal life of the people Rembrandt painted.
4. Rembrandt's genius lay in the unity of composition achieved by light.
5. Rembrandt's work marked a break with the convention of Renaissance Italy where paintings possessed uniform light throughout.
6. Rembrandt used light to reveal color and texture and to enliven and enhance objects.

E. Jan Vermeer (1632–1675)

1. Dutch landscape painters of the sixteenth century created paintings full of feeling that offered remarkable windows into the world.
2. Vermeer, particularly, had a genius for capturing a moment.
3. Vermeer's *The Kitchenmaid* emits an incredible transparency and glow.
4. Shadows are not rendered in gray or black but in thin layers of color.
5. Vermeer presses the issue of light by confining his subjects to figures in front of windows almost exclusively.

F. Diego Rodríguez de Silva y Velázquez (1599–1660)

1. Velázquez created few religious paintings, though religious subjects predominated in his native Spain.
2. Velázquez was known for his stunning portraits and scenes of classical allegory and myth.
3. Like Vermeer, Velázquez was fascinated by light and how it alters the color and appearance of objects.

III.–Baroque Architecture and Sculpture in Rome: Gian Lorenzo Bernini

1. Baroque style in architecture emerged in Rome when the papacy and the militant Counter-Reformation were dominant forces.
2. Urban planning was integrated with the architecture, sculpture, and art within a framework reflecting Rome's classical heritage.
3. St. Peter's Basilica was begun in the early sixteenth century and was worked on by a succession of popes for 120 years.
4. Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598–1680), the greatest baroque sculptor, worked on a variety of projects at St. Peter's for decades.
5. Commissioned to finish the interior, Bernini designed the great canopy that stands over the high altar, the Chair of St. Peter, and the

magnificent staircase that connects the papal apartments with the west front of the church.

6. It was from Rome that baroque was carried to other artistic centers in Europe and where some of the greatest baroque masterpieces were created.

#### IV. Literary Baroque

1. In recent decades “baroque” has been applied to literature as well as to the other arts.
2. Literary baroque had several characteristics in common with baroque in the visual arts.
3. Like the baroque style in art, literary baroque has both a Catholic and a Protestant strain.

##### A. The Origins of Spanish Baroque

1. The seventeenth century was Spain’s golden age of literature.
2. A widespread sense of disillusionment had pervaded Spanish society in the previous century.
3. Wars, religious conformity, and a rigid class structure stifled creativity and growth.
4. The tale of *Lazarillo de Tormes* presents a revealing picture of the problems in sixteenth-century Spain.

##### B. Saint Teresa of Ávila (1515–1582) and Spanish Mysticism

1. Mystic poets flourished in the second half of the sixteenth century.
2. Their mysticism involved unity of the soul with God through mystic visions.
3. Teresa of Ávila expressed her mystic visions in poetry.
4. Her visions inspired several Baroque artists.
5. Her autobiography describes many aspects of her life including her own doubts and those of others about her mystical experiences.

##### C. The Baroque Style in Spain

1. Spanish baroque emerged in the seventeenth century.
2. The *barroco* denotes an attitude of *desengaño*—a view of human experience as intrinsically deceptive.
3. The reaction to this is extreme and ornate artifice.
4. In literature, the baroque style takes the form of extravagant metaphors, violent paradoxes, and abstruse language.

##### D. Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1651–1695)

1. A Spanish woman from Mexico, de la Cruz was known from an early age for her unusual aptitude and thirst for learning.
2. She joined a convent at 19 to lead the quiet life of a scholar.
3. De la Cruz defended the right of women to pursue secular as well as religious studies.
4. Her works include over 200 poems in a variety of forms about various subjects as well as songs, devotional exercises, and plays.
5. De la Cruz was an outspoken advocate for the rights of Native Americans.

##### A. Don Quixote and Don Juan

1. Cervante’s famous *Don Quixote* (1605) is the most famous work of Spain’s literary golden age.
2. It is the comic adventure of a country gentleman who tries to impose his ideas of chivalry on the modern world.

3. The original Don Juan was a figure in Analusian legend and oral literature.
4. Tiro de Molina composed the first literary work about him, *The Trickster of Seville and His Guest of Stone*.
5. Don Juan replaced the idealized lady with a cynical and mocking belief in the fallibility of women.
6. Don Juan became one of the most compelling symbols of this period of despair.

B. English “Metaphysical” Poetry

1. The term “metaphysical” was originally a disparaging one used by the critic John Dryden.
2. Metaphysical poets include John Donne, Andrew Marvell, and George Herbert.
3. Some critics have seen affinities between this poetry and the baroque sensibility that prevailed in Europe at the same time.
4. Richard Crashaw, a British Protestant who converted to Catholicism and had a fascination with the female saints, was perhaps the most baroque of the British metaphysical poets.
5. John Donne’s poems were ardently religious and ardently erotic—sometimes both at once.