

Baroque humanities

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If ever there was a period of enlightened absolutism on European soil, it has to be the 150 year-long period from 1600 A. D. to 1750 A. D. , which witnessed the rebirth of grand styles in art, sculpture, painting and literature. The ideas of monarchism were rejuvenated during this era as the issues of social contract and individual liberty frequented the thinking minds. In fact the thinking renaissance had already been set in motion by eminent philosophers and rulers, including Joseph II and Maria Theresa of Austria, Louis XIV of France, Frederick II of Prussia and many others.

Also known as the Baroque period, this phase is noted for its spectacular growth and development across all vertices, especially in artistic realms. What singles out the Baroque from other periods in European history was its dynamism of cultural expressions. The creation of art was unrestrained and raw in nature. From a political perspective, the British Commonwealth under the leadership of Oliver Cromwell thrived in trade and commerce, and secularism emerged after the brutal bloodbath of the Middle Ages.

The royal court of England was receptive to the refreshing counter-reformatory changes that occurred in the intellectual sphere of this period. Our current course of discussion goes beyond just the social, political or religious scenarios that characterized the Baroque era. Rather we attempt to seek the culminating point to have come out of the intellectual revolution of the time, expressing itself in threefold directive of literature, music and art.

To achieve our objective, we have picked up three authoritative works distinctive of the Baroque era – Orfeo by Claudio Monteverdi for music, The Flaming Heart by Richard Crashaw for literature and The Last Supper by Jacopo Tintoretto for artwork. The rest of this essay is going to elaborate on <https://assignbuster.com/baroque-humanities/>

how the profound philosophies and witticism of the Baroque period were manifested in these three masterpieces. Music in the Baroque featured a discernible style and mode of expression unique to this era only.

It was converged on a diverse breed of artistic expressions to form a continuum of aesthetic principles rooted in visual and literary arts. First performed in 1607, *Orfeo* by Claudio Monteverdi is deemed as the signature musical composition of the Baroque. The grandeur of this Italian opera dissolved the geographical barriers and traversed far and wide to all corners of Europe. Composed on the themes of the Greek legend of Orpheus, *Orfeo* celebrates the freedom of spirit of the Baroque through its forceful dramatic appeal and impeccable orchestration.

The compelling intellectual sensitivity of the Baroque literature is best manifested in *The Flaming Heart*, an English poem by Richard Crashaw. This poem captures the extravagance of poetic imagination both in content as well as in form. As argued by Summers and Pebworth (175), *The Flaming Heart* is comparable to *The Ecstasy of St. Teresa* by Bernini in its vividly descriptive expression of personal emotions. As the poem nears the end, it weaves a state of the mind for the reader, which is left unexplored by Bernini (Summers et al. 175): “ By all of him we have in thee,

Leave nothing of my self in me: Let me so read thy life that I Unto all life of mine may die. ” (*The Flaming Heart* 2009) The Baroque elements in Crashaw, as argued by Healy (1), are reflected in his “ tendency to adopt the fallacious view...”. Indeed, the period in question was stripped off all sorts of polished sophistication and the style of expression was more inclined to counter reformatory impulses than to “ judgments about taste” (Healy 2).

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The Last Supper by Jacopo Tintoretto concerns the Biblical allusion to the spiritual act of communion.

As a groundbreaking work of manneristic painting, a genre that evolved in the Baroque traditions, this piece of artwork speaks volumes for the ingenuity of painters belonging to the Venetian school during the Italian Renaissance. The quintessential baroque features in The Last Supper are manifested through Tintoretto's offbeat use of perspective and lighting effects. Similar to all other artistic genres of the baroque, the manneristic painting too was characterized by freedom of expression and intricacies of ornamentation.

In case of The Last Supper, these aspects were brought to life by brisk brushstroke technique on canvas (The Last Supper by Jacopo Tintoretto 2002-2009). Etymologically the term 'baroque' implies abnormality and extravagance. Now it has been historically proved that any productive age is bound to be fueled by these traits rather than orderly and genteel ones. It is quite clear from the above discussion that the Baroque era was the golden period in the history of Europe in terms of authentic art movements. Literary compositions, musical experimentations and painting reflected the erratic but extremely creative spirit of the age.

Works Cited

1. Healy, Thomas F. Richard Crashaw. Leiden: Brill Archive, 1986.
2. Summers, Claude J. , and Ted-Larry Pebworth. The wit of seventeenth-century poetry. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1995.
3. " The Flaming Heart. " Poemhunter. com. 23 April 2009. 23 April 2009

4. " The Last Supper by Jacopo Tinteretto. " DirectEssays. com. 2002-2009. 23 April 2009