

1: 2 – Introduction to Theories of Modernity / Mass Culture

I. What is Modernity? Modernism? Modern Art? (The City / the artist)

A. Modern

1. Classics: reign of authority vs. Renaissance ideal of rational empiricism
2. Quarrel of the ancients and the moderns full-fledged by 12th century; “class/ vulgar” played out in Latin versus vernacular (“Vulgate” Bible).
3. Slow, ongoing usage of the binary through 18th century, when Enlightenment gave “modern” its propulsive thrust.
4. By 19th c, music one of the battle grounds, (1818 William Crotch lectures in England on the ancients versus the moderns) – but the line moves (Now Beethoven, who died in 1827, is “classical”)

Matei Calinescu: The idea of modernity was born during the Christian Middle Ages (*Modernus* = from *modo*, just now); “Classic” was first used in the second century==“first class” Roman citizens, aristocrats -- (The antonym for this was “vulgar”) The way to accommodate classical tradition and the modern came with Bernard of Chartres’s 12th century (1126) idea of *rational progress*: We are dwarfs standing on the shoulders of a giant and thus able to see farther than the giant himself...

B. *Modernization* – idea of industrial progress independent of any cultural reckoning.

- C. *Modernity* – already by 1830s, the experience or condition of modernization, expressed by people as a split between time (moving) and aesthetic (static) experience.
- D. *Modernism* – word from 18th century replay of “quarrel,” revived in 19th century. We will focus on this self-conscious realm in which visual culture (“Modern Art” but also mass culture) is made from the experience of modernization and modernity.
- E. *Post-modernism* – emerges after 1970, although its seeds were planted in 1930s.

II. Who are “the masses”? Is a mass audience *produced* by mass culture? (The people / a public)

- A. From peasants and serfs to “the people” and the proletariat
- B. Early information technologies
 - 1) Shifts from oral to written culture
 - 2) Printing and literacy
 - 3) Universal education and “enlightenment”
- C. Early capitalism, commodities, and “alienated labor”

III. Mass Culture as a product of industrialization

- A. The factory and technology: more images and things for more people

- B. The metropolis: more is distributed, concentrated, displayed
- C. Dramatic demographic shifts: more viewers “subject” to images

Slide List (selected) for 1:2

Humanity

Roman copy of Classic Greek sculpture, marble, compared with Renaissance sculpture by Donatello
 Donatello David (first version), 1408-09 marble
 Donatello David (second version), 1440 bronze
 Rodin, Clenched Hand, 1885
 Rodin, Burghers of Calais, (maquette)1884 and details of heads (Jacques de Wiessant)
 Roszak, Bipolar Form, 1940

Millet The Gleaners 1857
 Courbet The Stonebreakers 1849
 Courbet Burial at Ornans 1849 and detail
 Monet Boulevard des Capuchines 1873-74
 Seurat Sunday Afternoon on the Island of Grand Jatte, 1884-5

Urbanity

Roman City (Pompeii), showing forum (market), temple, grid of streets, and extending roads
 Paris evolving in 12 centuries:
 the huts of the Parisi on an island in the river
 Caesar’s plan: roads regularized, bridges built
 the medieval expansion and interstitial growth of the city
 Paris under Baron Haussmann, mid 19th century (1840s):
 Boulevards, Avenues, and Enlightenment “Stars” fanning through the *texture* of the medieval city
 Haussmannian changes in Cairo under Is’mail Pasha, 1890s
 City plan of Chicago:
 1834 the grid over the river
 1909 the *systems* of waterways, parks, transport, railways
 1920s Frank Lloyd Wright’s aerial view of the gridded garden city
 from New Amsterdam to New York:
 1661 “Nova Amsterdam” and the topography of an island reflected in the streets and canals
 1807 the grid laid over Manhattan island, tilted to maximize the elliptic of the sun’s path
 1907 the *systems* of railways, bridges, sewers, fresh water...

Information

(organizing the masses)

“Morris” poster column in France, 1910
 Wall of posters – from theater to soft drinks, 1901
 Times Square, New York, 1938 and 1990
 Newspapers in France, 1875 vs 1912 – toward a culture of the visual

Names/ Historical Figures:

Baron Haussmann - (1809-1891) born Paris, directed a vast urban renovation plan under Napoleon III, once quipped "My titles? I have been named artist-demolitionist" Baudelaire named Haussmann as the chief force in the constantly changing face of modern Paris.
 Karl Marx - (1818-1883) political and economic philosopher from Germany, 1844 to Paris where he met Friedrich Engels, and the two of them wrote the “Communist Manifesto” (1848) and began to theorize its opposite, capitalism. Moved to London after the revolutions of 1848, died and buried in Britain.