The Northern Renaissance

Announcements

• Map Quiz on N. Europe, today or Wed

• Museum Trip on Wed, 10/24
  • Confirm sign-up sheet and Drivers
  • Gardner guide = TBA; MFA guide = Hope Stockton
  • Focus on highlights of Renaissance collection....

• Report on New England Renaiss. Conference
  • Eyewitness reports from Meghan, Derek
  • NERC Archive Project

This Week’s Agenda

• Introduction to the Northern Renaissance
  • Comparison w/ Italy; distinctive features

• Politics of Northern Renaissance
  • expansion of monarchy vs. nobles; patronage; religious unity

• Art of the Northern Renaissance
  • oil painting; illuminated Mss.; detail

• Christian Humanism
  • Erasmus of Rotterdam, Sir Thomas More
  • Reformation and Christian renewal

• The “Printing Revolution”
Characteristics of the (Italian) Renaissance

- Classical “rebirth”
- Realism
- Secular
- Change
- Humanism
- Individualism
- Public
- National/International

Italian vs. Northern Renaissance

- Northern
  - Happens later
  - More villages
  - More Christian > Classical
  - Powerful monarchs
  - Art: attention to detail, stiff, angular, muted colors, oil painting
  - Universities: theology dominates, regional
  - Emphasis on reform, renewal, humanist methods/sources for Xian purposes

- Italian
  - Happens first
  - More urban, more secular
  - Balance of Christian and Classical
  - Competitive city-states
  - Art: flowing, dramatic, vibrant color, fresco, classical themes
  - Universities: medicine & arts; int’l recruitment
  - More economic development (trade, industry, pilgrimage)
Northern Monarchies

- Grow out of highly feudalized medieval world, w/ powerful nobles
  - Mixed success at taming nobles
- Mercenaries, royal bureaucracy common
- Patronage common
- Religious unity valued
  - Initially Catholic, later Protestant (mostly)
- Compare w/ our discussion of the “Renaissance State” in Italy....
- Remember this as background for Prot. & Cath. Reformations later this semester....

France

- Largest unified kingdom in Europe (12 M.)
- Francois I (r. 1515-1545)
  - Limiting Nobles: reduced Parlement’s authority
  - Patron: Leonardo, Guillaume Budé; College of France; Heptameron
  - Loyal Catholic
  - Frequent milit. campaigns vs. Habsburgs, GB, Ottomans
    - Yet makes treaty w/ Turks: pragmatic
France: Renaissance Culture

• Louise Labe (1520-1566)
  – Female humanist, poet, author; also a courtesan
  – “raise your minds above your distaffs and spindles”

• Marguerite of Navarre (1492-1549)
  – Sister of Francois I
  – Patron of humanist/reform circle
  – Author of Heptameron: 72 risque short stories, which criticize the
  RCC, & defend women

• Francois Rabelais (1483-1553)
  – Ex-monk, M.D., satirical author, classical scholar, vernacular
  humanist
  – Author of Gargantua and Pantagruel, satires full of Classical
  references and scatological humor

• Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592)
  – Humanist explorer; “I am myself the subject of my book”
  – Combination of doubt, personal anecdotes, & fluid style
  – Raised in a Latin-only household

England

• Tudors: Henry VII (r. 1485-1509), Henry VIII (r. 1509-47) and Elizabeth I (r. 1558-1603)
  – Star Chamber attacks feudal
  nobility, even as Parliament gains authority
  – Martial politics
  – Patrons of literary humanists, playwrights, court artists, poets
  – Frequent conflict w/ Catholic
  Spain & Catholic France
  – Maritime economy, & wool
  – Royal control of Anglican Church; royal control of Ireland

England: Renaissance Culture

• “English Renaissance”
  – Beg. 1485, flowers post-1560
  – Literature:
    • Wm. Shakespeare; Edmund Spenser;
      Christopher Marlowe; Thomas Wyatt
  – Visual Arts:
    • largely imported
  – Music:
    • Wm. Byrd, Thomas Tallis
  – English madrigal & sonnet
  – Architecture:
    • Influenced by N. Europe > Italy
    • Hampton Court Palace; half-timbered
    manor houses
Spain

- Ferdinand of Aragon, Isabella of Castile (r. 1469-1514); Charles V (1519-1543)
  - Patrons: Christopher Columbus, Beatriz de Galindo, Royal Library; Miguel Cervantes, “golden age of literature”
  - “Most Catholic Monarchs”:
    - Inquisition, expulsion of Jews and Muslims in 15th/16th c.
  - Limiting feudal power
    - Hiring jurists and clerics to staff administration
    - King as head of military orders
    - Disinvite nobles to attend Cortes

Holy Roman Empire

- Not a dynasty, but elected monarchy/loose confederation (Habsburg family dominates) of 300 towns/principalities.
- Thus 7 sovereign princes/bishops select the HRE, and govern their own principalities
- Universities founded to serve needs of princes/nobles
- Patrons: e.g., Luther = client of Duke of Saxony
- Maximilian I (r. 1493-1519) or Charles V
Were there centralized monarchies?

• YES (sort of)
  – France
  – Britain
  – Scandinavia
  – Spain
    • Yet nobility still retains great power & wealth...

• NO
  – Holy Roman Empire
    • 7 princes, 300 towns
  – Italy
    • Competitive city-states
  – Russia & E. Europe
    • “golden veto” of nobles

The Printing Revolution

• 5,000 yr. tradition of writing by hand (“manu-scripts”), on papyrus reeds, calfskin vellum
• China/Korea had mechanical printing w/ wooden blocks (ca. 750 AD), and moveable type w/ clay characters by 1000 AD. But Chinese language has too many characters… whereas Latin has only ca. 100.
• Woodblock printing begins in Europe in early 15th c. for religious images, playing cards, short prayers.
• Moveable print type discovered in 1450s in Germany by Johann Gutenberg
• Paper discovered in 12th c.: cheap, likely to tear
• Folio, quarto, octavo, duodecimo size books….
Book Sizes

Renaissance Printing

Making Paper

Medieval manuscript, w/ gloss

A page from a wood-block book, c. 1450

A page from the Gutenberg Bible, c. 1453
Consequences of Printing

- Removable type vs. woodblock printing
  (+) fewer transcription errors
  (+) increased literacy
  (+) standardization of academic works, modern languages
  (+) easier spread of new ideas
  (+) oral culture is "fixed"
  (+) cheaper books ("pocket books" vs. folio editions)

More consequences of printing

- Price of books drops dramatically
- Standardization of vernaculars
- Reading becomes a solitary activity
- Literacy is increasingly an urban phenomenon
- Division between literary and "popular" cultures
- Protestant Reformation spreads via cheap pamphlets, woodcuts, & ‘the Word’ of God.
The press descends from the Heavens

Not everyone wanted the p. press...

A 16th century printing shop