

Sunset Harvest



1. Introspection, Exploration

April 7, 2022

Introspection, Exploration

THE TERM *Spätstil*, which I translate as *LateStyle*, was coined by the German philosopher and musicologist **Theodor Adorno**, writing about Beethoven. It is also the subject of a book, *On Late Style*, by the Palestinian thinker **Edward Said**, which I have used extensively in preparing this course. In this opening class, we shall look at some of its manifestations in art, poetry, and music. We shall also consider whether *LateStyle* is a necessary concomitant of age and whether it is possible to see its fingerprints in the work of artists who died quite young. *rb.*

A. The Gift of Age

Although **Rembrandt** was only 63 when he died, his later works have long been considered to define certain aspects of *LateStyle*.

♪ **Video montage:** *Rembrandt's Eyes*

Rembrandt: *Self-Portrait at 63* (1669, Hague Mauritshuis)

Rembrandt: *Return of the Prodigal Son* (c.1669, Hermitage)

Rembrandt: *Simeon in the Temple* (unfinished, 1669, Stockholm)

B. Last Works, Late Works

By looking at the final works of four masters of the High Renaissance, **Raphael**, **Leonardo da Vinci**, **Michelangelo**, and **Titian**, we shall consider some of the characteristics of *LateStyle* in art, and whether it applies equally to the last works of each artist,

Raphael: *The Transfiguration* (1520, Vatican)

Giovanni Bellini: *The Transfiguration* (1480, Naples)

Leonardo: *Madonna and Child with Saint Anne* (unfinished, Louvre)

Leonardo: *Deluge; Vision of the End of the World* (HM the Queen)

Michelangelo: *Bandini Pietà* (1555, Florence Duomo)

Michelangelo: *Rondanini Pietà* (1564, Milan)

Titian: *Allegory of Prudence* (1565–70, London NG)

Titian: *The Crowning with Thorns* (1543, Louvre)

Titian: *The Crowning with Thorns* (1576, Vienna)

C. Visions of Darkness, Visions of Light

We contrast two artists of the 19th century. **Goya**, stone deaf and socially isolated, retreated to his house *La Quinta del Sordo* and painted grotesque visions of darkness for himself alone, a radical shift from his earlier style. **Turner**, by contrast, had been evolving a late style throughout his career, and it was one in which solid forms dissolved in light.

Goya: *The Harvest* (1786, Madrid Prado)

Goya: *Witches' Sabbath* (1798, Madrid Galdiano)

Goya: *Witches' Sabbath* (1819–23, Madrid Prado).

Goya: plates from *The Disasters of War* (1810–20)

Goya: *Saturn* and other "black paintings" (–1823, Prado)

Goya: *Pilgrimage to San Isidoro* (–1823, Prado)

Turner: *The Angel Standing in the Sun* (1846, London Tate)

Turner: *Norham Castle, Moonrise* (1836, print)

Turner: *Norham Castle, Sunrise* (1845, London Tate)

Turner: *Stormy Sea with Dolphins* (1835, London Tate)

Turner: *Rain, Steam, and Speed* (1844, London NG)

D. To Autumn

Unlike Raphael, **Keats** knew that he would die young. Does this give his later poems a *LateStyle* quality, or is this merely sentimental hindsight?

♪ **Keats:** *To Autumn*, read by Matthew Coulton

E. An Expanded Vision

We look at two poems in which the aging **WB Yeats** considers his death, the later one an artistic testament written as though he were already in the ground.

♪ **Yeats:** *Sailing to Byzantium* (1927), read by Dermot Crowley

♪ **Yeats:** *Under Ben Bulbin* (1938), read by Michael Macliammoir

F. Breaking the Mold

It was his study of Beethoven that inspired Theodor Adorno to coin the term "late style" in the first place. We look at some of its characteristics in the Ninth Symphony (Choral), and two of the last Quartets.

♪ **Beethoven:** *Ninth Symphony*, opening of fourth movement (Riccardo Muti, Chicago SO; Eric Owens, baritone)

♪ **Beethoven:** String Quartet Op.131, excerpts (American Quartet)

♪ **Beethoven:** String Quartet Op.135, last mvt. (Ariel Quartet)

Full Names of Artists, Composers, and Writers

Theodor W. **Adorno** (1903–69), Ludwig van **Beethoven** (1770–1827), Giovanni **Bellini** (c.1430–1516), Francisco de **Goya** y Lucientes (1746–1828), John **Keats** (1795–1821), **Leonardo** da Vinci (1452–1519), **Michelangelo** Buonarroti (1475–1574), **Raphael** (Raffaello Santi, 1483–1520), **Rembrandt** Harmenszoon van Rijn, 1606–69), Edward **Said** (1935–2003), Friedrich **Schiller** (1788–1805), Joseph **Severn** (1793–1879), **Titian** (Tiziano Veccellio, c.1485–1576), Joseph Mallord William **Turner** (1775–1851), Giorgio **Vasari** (1511–74), William Butler **Yeats** (1865–1939)

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