***Unit 9--Late Medieval Arts and letters***

******

***John William Waterhouse - THE DECAMERON* 1915 - 1916**

***THE NATIONAL MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES ON MERSEYSIDE,***

***LADY LEVER ART GALLERY, PORT SUNLIGHT***

**Boccaccio's tales of 14th century are the basis of this dramatic composition of 1916. In 1348 a party of wealthy young patricians take refuge from the plague that is raging in the city in a villa outside Florence. To pass the time, they tell each other stories. Ranging from the earthily comic to the profoundly tragic, they encompass marital misunderstanding and thwarted passion, the simple joys of physical love as well as exuberant tales of deception and hypocrisy shamed. The perceived bawdiness of the novellas is somewhat challenged by Waterhouse's exploration of the suppressed sexual tension and emotion in the contrasted faces and demeanors of the women. The idyllic garden setting and the inclusion of the symbolic lutes of love give the picture a dramatic intensity.**

**Late Medieval arts:**

**Late Renaissance Mosaics:**

**Mosaics, or at least "mosaic like structures" go back at least to the Sumerians in the 3rd millennium BC.**

**Mosaics have always been for rich folks, and frescoes were used if you couldn't afford mosaics.**

**The great artistic fresco "re-inventions" of Cavallini, Cimabue, and Giotto -- three dimensional "living" figures and perspective scenes, especially architecture -- were anticipated in mosaics made at least a generation earlier.**

**Mosaics in S. Maria Maggiore**

**We've already seen some of Rome's early medieval mosaics in S. Prassede and Santa Cecilia. There is also a cycle of early medieval mosaics high on the walls of the interior of Santa Maria Maggiore, but it’s the late medieval mosaics in apse of S.M.Maggiore and outside under the roof of the Renaissance loggia that interest us now**

**Apse Mosaic by Jacopo Toriti**

**Torriti, Jacopo [Iacobus]**

**(*c.* 1270–1300). Italian painter and mosaicist. Two mosaics in Rome are signed by him: one, on the apse of S Giovanni in Laterano, that once bore the date 1291 (or, according to some sources, 1290 or 1292); and another on the apse and triumphal arch of S Maria Maggiore, now replaced by a 19th-century restoration but at one time dated 1295 or 1296. Torriti is also known to have executed a mosaic for Arnolfo di Cambio’s tomb of *Pope Boniface VIII* (1296; destr.; *see* ARNOLFO DI CAMBIO) in Old St Peter’s, Rome. Torriti was active during the same period as Cimabue and Giotto, Pietro Cavallini and Arnolfo di Cambio, but his fame has been obscured by theirs, no doubt because of his closer links with Byzantine art. He was nevertheless one of the most important artists working in Rome during the papacy of Nicholas IV (1288–92) and was entrusted with some of the most prestigious commissions of the day.**

**Circular "orbus" -- actually a large blue universe with gold stars -- inside of which, on a double throne, are seated Jesus and, to his right, his mother. Jesus is crowning her with his right hand and holding the "word" in his left. Below them the River Jordan flows in both directions, and to the sides are scenes of from the life of Mary. As usual, Saints are standing by as are the donors, Pope Nicolas4 (Girolomo Masci, reigned 1288-92) and Jacopo Colonna (elected Cardinal 1278.) Christ is shown not, as usual, as Pantokrator (=all ruler) but as coronator.**

**The figures are in no way Byzantine: poses are naturalistic, there is interplay among the figures, they reach back into and out from the plane of the picture and they are naturalistic in color -- all the things said to have been "invented" later by the fresco artists.**

**Loggia Mosaics by Filippo Rusuti**

**Rusuti [Bizuti], Filippo**

**(*c*. 1297–1317). Italian painter and mosaicist. His only certain work is the mosaic on the façade of S Maria Maggiore, Rome, which is signed on the mandorla of Christ. He served as ‘King’s painter’ in France during the reigns of Philip IV and Louis IX, receiving payments in 1304/5, 1308 (for repairs in the Grande Salle of the royal palace at Poitiers), 1309, 1316 and 1317, but none of this work survives.**

**Originally the mosaics were under a projecting curved super-structure and open to the piazza, like those on the front of S, Maria in Trastevere, but on a grander scale over and surrounding a rose window. They were covered with a Baroque Loggia, but in such a way as to incorporate them as decorations of the loggia.**

**Here the central figure is Christ Pantokrator holding a book with the text exposed: "Ego sum lux mundi qui" -- "I am the light of the world who (takes away sin)", with appropriate saints, donors and angels in attendance.**

**As with the apse mosaic, figures are three dimensional and "alive". Three dimensional structures are featured -- the other great "invention" of the later great fresco artists.**

**More Mosaics information:**

[**http://www.dimosaico.com/pages/mosaic.htm**](http://www.dimosaico.com/pages/mosaic.htm)

[**http://www.pitt.edu/~medart/menuglossary/INDEX.HTM**](http://www.pitt.edu/~medart/menuglossary/INDEX.HTM)

**Late Renaissance Frescoes**

**There were two great schools of Late Medieval fresco artists, usually designated Florentine and Roman, but actually northern and southern with their centers in Florence and Rome, where there was enough money actually to attract artists who would set up studios.**

**This is not to say that the other cities in the north didn't produce fresco artist -- but they were usually co-opted into the "Florentine" or "Roman" schools. Also, then as now, a lot of inferior work was produced**

**The great northern masters were Cimabue (Cenni di Peppi, 1240-1302) and Giotto (Ambrogio Bondone, 1267-1337.**

**Pietro Cavallini (ca. 1243-1308) headlined the southern or Roman school.**

**[Georgio Vasari (b. 1511, d. 1574) was a mid-level artist but had a major influence on art history because of his series of artists' biographies. He was a northerner and his biographies were certainly biased in favor of the north -- and often said to be wittingly biased. His list of biographies starts with Cimabue and Giotto. Vasari wrote a bio of Cavallini, but did not credit him with all of his works nor with his clear influence on Giotto. [Vasari also does not explicitly credit the mosaicists, who came first, with some of the artistic "inventions" of the time.]**

**In the north, Cimabue flourished first, and Giotto was his student. Vasari inserts in their joint biography a legend that tells how Cimabue found a juvenile Giotto scratching pictures on a slate. There is no outside evidence that it's true, but it might have been current in Vasari's time -- nothing is really verifiable for the first 30 years of Giotto's life. He simply appears as a 30-year-old already being mentored by Cimabue.**

**Cimabue's work is usually still "Byzantine" -- i.e., traditional, flat, etherial, "not alive" -- but he did experiment.**

**Giotto's work is non-traditional, alive, three dimensional (both people and scenes), and of all the frescoists of his time, best at all of these things. His Padua frescoes clearly demonstrate this.**

**Of the three, north and south, Cavallini was the best known in his own time. He got the biggest and best commissions, especially in Rome. But his popularity meant that he decorated all the biggest and best churches in Rome -- where, in this period, the biggest money was.**

**Among his commissions were the major works in Old St. Peters, St. Paul Outside the Walls, S. Cecilia, S. Maria in Trastevere, and S. Maria in Aracoeli.**

**Because they were the biggest and most important Roman churches, they were most likely to be rebuilt or redecorated. Old St. Peter's was completely replaced, St. Paul's burned down in the 19th century, The Santa Cecilia Frescoes were buried behind and inbuilt loft (but eventually rediscovered around the beginning of the 20th century), the S. Maria in Aracoeli frescoes were painted over (only rediscovered in the last ten years). Only his mosaics in S. Maria in Trastevere were visible from the time of their making.**

**Assisi Frescoes**

**Giotto and Cimabue traditionally have received the lions’ shares of the credit for the frescos in the church of St. Francis in Assisi. Cimabue and Cavallini were credited with frescoes in the lower church. In the upper church, Cimabue was credited with the biblical cycle and Giotto with the "Life of Francis" cycle.**

**Recent research has pretty much established that the "Francis" cycle was actually the work of Cavallini's Roman school.**

**More Fresco info:**

**Cimabue:**

[**http://www.abcgallery.com/C/cimabue/cimabue.html**](http://www.abcgallery.com/C/cimabue/cimabue.html)

[**http://www.mega.it/eng/egui/pers/cimab.htm**](http://www.mega.it/eng/egui/pers/cimab.htm)

[**http://easyweb.easynet.co.uk/giorgio.vasari/cimabue/cimabue.htm**](http://easyweb.easynet.co.uk/giorgio.vasari/cimabue/cimabue.htm)

[**http://www.kfki.hu/~arthp/html/c/cimabue/**](http://www.kfki.hu/~arthp/html/c/cimabue/)

[**http://www.christusrex.org/www1/francis/lower.html**](http://www.christusrex.org/www1/francis/lower.html)

[**http://images.google.com/images?q=cimabue&ie=ISO-8859-1&hl=en**](http://images.google.com/images?q=cimabue&ie=ISO-8859-1&hl=en)

[**http://www.nga.gov/cgi-bin/psearch?Request=S&imageset=1&Person=232230**](http://www.nga.gov/cgi-bin/psearch?Request=S&imageset=1&Person=232230)

[**http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/vasari/vasari1.htm**](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/vasari/vasari1.htm)

**Giotto**

[**http://www.google.com/search?num=100&hl=en&lr=&ie=ISO-8859-1&newwindow=1&client=googlet&q=giotto+bondone**](http://www.google.com/search?num=100&hl=en&lr=&ie=ISO-8859-1&newwindow=1&client=googlet&q=giotto+bondone)

[**http://www.christusrex.org/www1/francis/**](http://www.christusrex.org/www1/francis/)

[**http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06565a.htm**](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06565a.htm)

**Cavallini**

[**http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/946648.stm**](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/946648.stm)

[**http://www.truefresco.com/dcforum/DCForumID29/1.html**](http://www.truefresco.com/dcforum/DCForumID29/1.html)

[**http://****www.google.com/search?num=100&hl=en&lr=&ie=ISO-8859-1&newwindow=1&client=googlet&q=cavallini+pietro&btnG=Google+Search**](http://www.google.com/search?num=100&hl=en&lr=&ie=ISO-8859-1&newwindow=1&client=googlet&q=cavallini+pietro&btnG=Google+Search)

[**http://****www.kfki.hu/~arthp/html/c/cavallin/lastjudg/index.html**](http://www.kfki.hu/~arthp/html/c/cavallin/lastjudg/index.html)

[**http://****www.kfki.hu/~arthp/html/c/cavallin/mosaic/index.html**](http://www.kfki.hu/~arthp/html/c/cavallin/mosaic/index.html)

[**http://****www.mmdtkw.org/VCavallini.html**](http://www.mmdtkw.org/VCavallini.html)

[**http://****wwar.com/masters/c/cavallini-pietro.html**](http://wwar.com/masters/c/cavallini-pietro.html)

[**http://w****ww.artcyclopedia.com/artists/cavallini\_pietro.html**](http://www.artcyclopedia.com/artists/cavallini_pietro.html)

**Fresco info**

[**http://www.truef****resco.com/technique.html**](http://www.truefresco.com/technique.html)

<http://www.italianfrescoes.com/history.asp>

[**http://ww****w.italianfrescoes.co****m/frescotechnique.asp**](http://www.italianfrescoes.com/frescotechnique.asp)

[**http://www.sinopia****.com/**](http://www.sinopia.com/)

[**http://www.muralist.org/fresco/intro.html**](http://www.muralist.org/fresco/intro.html)

**Late Medieval Letters**

[**http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08245a.htm**](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08245a.htm)

**Before we can understand the flourishing of "Italian" literature in the late Medieval period, we have to acknowledge a few things:**

**First, what we're talking about here is, finally and for the first time, really "Italian". The big three -- Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio -- all consciously decided to use and promote the "Italian vernacular".**

**Second, they and others before them were responding to stimuli from outside. Nobody, including themselves, ever claimed otherwise, but it's just not commonly known.**

**Third, they were the culmination of an already existing movement -- not its inventors -- and again, they never claimed otherwise.**

**Fourth, Dante did not invent the "dolce stil novo" (the "Sweet new Style"). In fact, what he did was invent the term to describe and praise the style that he and others before him were already using -- and he emphasized the work of others. Acknowledged precursors and then colleagues included Brunetto Latini and Guido Cavalcanti.**

**Fifth, Dante, was the undoubted leader of letters of his generation, and Brunetto Latini and Guido Cavalcanti were his contemporaries. Petrarch was in his mid teens when Dante died, and Boccaccio was five years old -- they were therefore contemporaries in the next generation.**

**Sixth, they all were well known in their own time and were memorialized by the great artists of their time. This means there are hundreds of pix of the big three to choose from in print and electronic sources.**

**Seventh, modern Italians are intensely proud of their literary tradition and the Italian language that grew from it. We, on the other hand, know that high class Italian, as it is defined today, was chosen to emulate the three masters -- it wasn't that they necessarily used the best, but rather that their popularity ensured that it would what was decided to be the best.**

**Brunetto Latini (c. 1210—C. 1294)**

**LATINI, BRUNETTO, Italian philosopher and scholar, was born in Florence, and belonged to the Guelph party. After the disaster of Montaperti he took refuge for some years (1261—1268) in France, but in 1269 returned to Tuscany and for some twenty years held successive high offices. Giovanni Villani says that “he was a great philosopher and a consummate master of rhetoric, not only in knowing how to speak well, but how to write well. . . . He both began and directed the growth of the Florentines, both in making them ready in speaking well and in knowing how to guide and direct our republic according to the rules of politics.” He was the author of various works in prose and verse. While in France he wrote in French his prose Trésor, a summary of the encyclopaedic knowledge of the day (translated into Italian as Tesoro by Bono Giamboni in the 13th century), and in Italian his poem Tesoretto, rhymed couplets in heptasyllabic metre, a sort of abridgment put in allegorical form, the earliest Italian didactic verse. He is famous as the friend and counselor of Dante (see Inferno, XV. 82-87).**

**More info**

[**http://www.newadv****ent.or****g/cathen/09034a.htm**](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09034a.htm)

[**http://****www.google.com/****search?client=googlet&q=Brunetto%20Latini**](http://www.google.com/search?client=googlet&q=Brunetto%20Latini)

[**http://****www.italianstudi****es.org/comedy/Inferno15.htm**](http://www.italianstudies.org/comedy/Inferno15.htm)

[**http://www.fh-aug****sburg.de/****~harsch/italica/Cronologia/secolo13/Latini/lat\_intr.html**](http://www.fh-augsburg.de/~harsch/italica/Cronologia/secolo13/Latini/lat_intr.html)

**Guido Cavalcanti (c. 1250—1300)**

**CAVALCANTI, GUIDO, Italian poet and philosopher, was the son of a philosopher whom Dante, in the Inferno, condemns to torment among the Epicureans and Atheists; but he himself was a friend of the great poet. By marriage with Beatrice, daughter of Farinata Uberti, he became head of the Ghibellines; and when the people, weary of continual brawls, aroused themselves, and sought peace by banishing the leaders of the rival parties, he was sent to Sarzana, where he caught a fever, of which he died. Cavalcanti has left a number of love sonnets and canzoni, which were honoured by the praise of Dante. Some are simple and graceful, but many are spoiled by a mixture of metaphysics borrowed from Plato, Aristotle and the Christian Fathers. They are mostly in honour of a French lady, whom he calls Mandetta. His Canzone d’Amore was extremely popular, and was frequently published; and his complete poetical works are contained in Giunti’s collection (Florence, 1527; Venice, 1531—1532). He also wrote in prose on philosophy and oratory.**

**More info**

[**htt****p://****www.sonnets.org/pound.htm**](http://www.sonnets.org/pound.htm)

[**http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guido\_Cavalcanti**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guido_Cavalcanti)

[**http://www.enotes.com/classical-medieval-criticism/guido-cavalcanti**](http://www.enotes.com/classical-medieval-criticism/guido-cavalcanti)

**Dante**

**born *c.* May 21–June 20, 1265 , Florence, Italy; died September 13/14, 1321 , Ravenna**

**Italian poet. Dante was of noble ancestry, and his life was shaped by the conflict between papal and imperial partisans (the Guelphs and Ghibellines). When an opposing political faction within the Guelphs (Dante's party) gained ascendancy, he was exiled (1302) from Florence, to which he never returned. His life was given direction by his spiritual love for Beatrice Portinari (d. 1290), to whom he dedicated most of his poetry. His great friendship with Guido Cavalcanti shaped his later career as well. *La Vita Nuova* (1293?) celebrates Beatrice in verse. In his difficult years of exile, he wrote the verse collection *The Banquet* (*c.* 1304–07); *De vulgari eloquentia* (1304–07; “Concerning Vernacular Eloquence”), the first theoretical discussion of the Italian literary language; and *On Monarchy* (1313?), a major Latin treatise on medieval political philosophy. He is best known for the monumental epic poem *The Divine Comedy* (written *c.* 1310–14; originally titled simply *Commedia*), a profoundly Christian vision of human temporal and eternal destiny. It is an allegory of universal human destiny in the form of a pilgrim's journey through hell and purgatory, guided by the Roman poet Virgil, then to Paradise, guided by Beatrice. By writing it in Italian rather than Latin, Dante almost single-handedly made Italian a literary language, and he stands as one of the towering figures of European literature.**

**More info**

[**http://www.n****ewadvent.org/cathen/04628a.htm**](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04628a.htm)

[**http://www.d****anteonline.it/english/home\_ita.asp**](http://www.danteonline.it/english/home_ita.asp) **and linked pages**

[**http://www.trinc****oll.edu/~pbittenb/00-Intro.htm**](http://www.trincoll.edu/~pbittenb/00-Intro.htm)

[**htt****p://images.google.com/images?hl=en&lr=&ie=ISO-8859-1&newwindow=1&q=dante+dore**](http://images.google.com/images?hl=en&lr=&ie=ISO-8859-1&newwindow=1&q=dante+dore)

[**http://****dante.ilt.columbia.edu/comedy/**](http://dante.ilt.columbia.edu/comedy/)

[**http://www.sacred-te****xts.com/chr/dante/**](http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/dante/)

**Petrarch**

**born July 20, 1304 , Arezzo, Tuscany [Italy], died July 18/19, 1374 , Arquà, near Padua, Carrara**

***Francesco Petrarca --* Italian scholar, poet, and humanist.**

**After 1326 he abandoned the study of law for his true interests, literature and the religious life. He took minor ecclesiastical orders and moved to Avignon, where in 1327 he first saw Laura, the idealized subject of his chaste love and of his celebrated Italian love lyrics; mainly sonnets and odes written over some 20 years, most were included in his *Canzoniere* or *Rime* (1360). The greatest scholar of his age, especially of Classical Latin, he traveled widely, visiting learned men, searching out manuscripts, and undertaking diplomatic missions. He strongly advocated the continuity between Classical culture and the Christian message; in combining the two ideals he is considered the founder and a great representative of humanism. His Latin works, reflecting his religious and philosophical interests, include *On Illustrious Men* (begun *c.* 1337), the epic poem *Africa* (begun *c.* 1338), the autobiographical treatise *Petrarch's Secret* (written 1342–58), *De vita solitaria* (1345–47; “The Life of Solitude”), and *Epistolae metricae* (begun *c.* 1345; “Metrical Letters”). After 1367 he lived in and near Padua. His influence on European literature was enormous and lasting, and his deep consciousness of the Classical past as a source of literary and philosophical meaning for the present was of great importance in paving the way for the Renaissance.**

**More info**

[**http://www.newadv****ent.org/cathen/11778a.htm**](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11778a.htm)

[**http://petr****arch.petersadlon.com/pictures\_laura.html**](http://petrarch.petersadlon.com/pictures_laura.html)

[**http://****petrarch.petersadlon.com/**](http://petrarch.petersadlon.com/)

[**http://petrar****ch.petersadlon.com/his\_writings.html**](http://petrarch.petersadlon.com/his_writings.html)

[**http://****www.google.com/search?client=googlet&q=Petrarch**](http://www.google.com/search?client=googlet&q=Petrarch)

[**http:/****/****www.worldwideschool.org/library/books/hst/roman/TheDeclineandFallofTheRomanEmpire-6/chap37.html**](http://www.worldwideschool.org/library/books/hst/roman/TheDeclineandFallofTheRomanEmpire-6/chap37.html)

[**http://****www.humanistictexts.org/petrarch.htm**](http://www.humanistictexts.org/petrarch.htm)

**Boccaccio**

**born 1313Paris, France, died Dec. 21, 1375Certaldo, Tuscany**

**Italian poet and scholar.**

**His life was full of difficulties and occasional bouts of poverty. His early works include *The Love Afflicted* (*c.* 1336), a prose work in five books, and *The Book of Theseus* (*c.* 1340), an ambitious epic of 12 cantos. He is best known for his *Decameron*, a masterpiece of classical Italian prose that had an enormous influence on literature throughout Europe. A group of 100 earthy tales united by a frame story, it was probably composed 1348–53. After this period he turned to humanist scholarship in Latin. With Petrarch, he laid the foundations for Renaissance humanism, and through his writings in Italian he helped raise vernacular literature to the level of the classics of antiquity.**

**More info**

[**http://italia****n.about.com/cs/boccaccio/**](http://italian.about.com/cs/boccaccio/)

[**http://ww****w.newadvent.org/cathen/02607a.htm**](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02607a.htm)

[**http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\_Decameron**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Decameron)

[**http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian\_Studies/dweb/index.php**](http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb/index.php)

**Additional RelevanLinks**

**Dolce Stil Novo**

[**http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dolce\_Stil\_Novo**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dolce_Stil_Novo)

[**http://italian.ab****out.com/library/weekly/aa060699a.htm**](http://italian.about.com/library/weekly/aa060699a.htm)

[**http://ww****w.crs4.it/HTML/Literature.html**](http://www.crs4.it/HTML/Literature.html)

[**http://digil****ander.libero.it/maironidaponte/didattica\_online/vita\_nuova/pagine/stilnovo.html**](http://digilander.libero.it/maironidaponte/didattica_online/vita_nuova/pagine/stilnovo.html) **(in Italian)**

**Courtly love**

[**http://cla.calp****oly.edu/~dschwart/engl513/courtly/courtly.htm**](http://cla.calpoly.edu/~dschwart/engl513/courtly/courtly.htm)

[**http://condor.****depaul.edu/~dsimpson/tlove/courtlylove.html**](http://condor.depaul.edu/~dsimpson/tlove/courtlylove.html)

[**http://www.a****stro.umd.edu/~marshall/chivalry.html**](http://www.astro.umd.edu/~marshall/chivalry.html)