Society and Spectacle: The Sublimation of Reality in Baroque Aesthetics

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Abstract

This article takes a trans-historical approach to the notion of a baroque aesthetic as the expression of a particular set of societal and cultural circumstances. Drawing on the works of French philosophers, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Christine Buci-Glucksman, a baroque épistèmè is characterized in terms of the suspension of reason or reality through various representational ambiguities, highlighting the tension between being and appearing (être et paraître). Concluding with an invocation of Guy Debord's *La Société du spectacle*, the above outlined perspective contributes to an understanding of contemporary representational practices in order to elucidate a sublime baroque madness that results from the suspension of certainties.

Keywords: Sublime, Baroque, Spectacle, Madness, Reason

In *Culture of the Baroque* (*La cultura del Barroco*, 1975), José Antonio Maravall discusses the baroque specifically as a "concept of epoch," stating: "[b]aroque culture emerged not from influences or character but from the historical situation" (13).[1] He identifies this historical situation in Spain specifically as an "epoch of interesting contrasts," and although he describes the baroque as "having its center of greater intensity and fuller significance between 1605 and 1650" (4), he identifies a longer "baroque century [that] was a long period of a profound social crisis [of which t]he result is conflict, or rather, a generalized situation that we can designate as *conflictive*" (19-20). There is undoubtedly an interesting historical phenomenon underlying the perceived tension between the classicality and relative baroqueness of artistic expressions from the broader Early Modern period, and Vuillemin states: "Dans la multiplicité de ses manifestations esthétiques, le 'baroque' trahit une mentalité, dessine l'image anamorphique d'une sensibilité" (20). The anamorphic image of a mentality or mindset depicted by baroque art is inextricably tied to an acute consciousness of social, material, ideological, and historical circumstances. Based on the recognition of a "general crisis of society" that marks the baroque period, Maravall attributes determining characteristics of particular "*mentalités*" of the baroque epoch to a variety of fields in a complex social matrix. He states:

> It is in this way that the crisis economy, monetary upheavals, credit insecurity, economic wars, and (along with this) the strengthening of seigniorial agrarian landholdings and the growing impoverishment of the masses foster a feeling of being threatened and of instability in one's personal and social life, a feeling that is held in control by the imposing forces of repression that underlie the dramatic gesticulation of the baroque human being and permit us the use of such a name (6).

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Although Maravall is writing with regard to the specificities of the baroque in Spain, the general baroque character that he describes—the material crises motivated by ideological conflicts between the Protestant Reformation and the reactionary Counter-Reformation, as well as conflicts between faith and scientific reason, Ancient and Modern ideals, for example, even the disjuncture between the world and its image—existed in more or less distinct material and historical manifestations in all countries of Western Europe, and beyond.[2] We see in Maravall's depiction the specific socio-cultural factors of an epoch that set the stage for a baroque *mentalité* or "sensibility" which is revealed in the diverse aesthetic manifestations of the baroque. The specific divergences, discords, and dissonances that brought about the breakdown of classical reason and the subsequent baroque conglomerate consist of an ensemble of economic, political, theological, and epistemological shifts, which engendered the precarious condition of uncertainty or "undecidability" that is hallmark state of the "baroque human being." Thus, Maravall remarks, "[t]he gruesomeness, violence, and cruelty so evident in baroque art were rooted in that pessimistic conception of the human being and of the world and which they, in turn, reinforced" (162). From this depiction of the baroque, one can glimpse the interplay between art and life, reality and representation, the kind of theatricalization of existence that might, depending on one's perspective, be considered at the same time either "classical" or "baroque."[3]

In this regard, the baroque mind is a reflection of the overall instability and temporality of baroque *being*. Thus, the baroque is only a "transition" or a temporary state in the non-linear sense that, whether for a long or short historical time span, is constantly unfolding and folding under the implicit and contrary notion of a classical stabilizing repression.

Marshall Brown summarizes Wölfflin's "cyclical view" of art history, which focuses on a single transformation, that of a flowering Renaissance classicism into "the late style of the baroque, which is initially seen as classicism gone to seed and in later writings as the fruit of classicism" (Brown, 90). Maravall concurs that "we can characterize the Renaissance, with all its purity of precepts, as the first manifestation of the subsequent baroque" (7), and he continues, "'wherever the problem of the baroque emerges, the existence of Classicism remains implicit'" (8). It seems that the baroque as a phenomenon cannot exist without the alterity that a contrasting classicism affords to it. For Brown, "[t]he baroque is at once the opposite of the classic and identical to it, later and simultaneous, cancellation and fulfillment" (106). The relationship between the classical and the baroque aesthetic can be understood as two sides of the same "epochal unfolding," two different expressions of the same plant—the flower and the fruit—to simultaneous yet opposed perspectives through which to view the world and the human subject. Hence, the baroque is that mode of representation that exists solely as representation, divorced from any "ressemblance" with the thing itself.

The view of the baroque aesthetic of appearances detached from the world of objects, as a "'system of form-alienated signs'" (Brown, 99) clearly coincides with an explicit situation of the baroque as the backdrop of classicism, the deconstructive moment of *ressemblance* that allows for the construction of a new order of representation. The baroque is that almost imperceptible *différance* that allows for the effects of difference and identity that are the basis of the classical *épistémè*. In *Marges de la philosophie* there appears the text of a lecture given to the Société française de philosophie in January 1968,[4] in which deconstructionist philosopher Jacques Derrida defines "la *différance*" (to which I have alluded in the heading of this subsection) as an anterior temporization or "espacement,"

neither active nor passive, neither a word nor a concept, which generates the differences between a thing and its sign. For Derrida, the distance or difference (whether real or abstract) between a thing or "presence" and its sign, the sign being precisely a "présence différée" or representation of the absent thing or presence, is only possible because of *différance* (9). It is with reference to Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* that Derrida relates *différance* to a pre-ontological non-being, stating: "Ce qui s'écrit différance, ce sera donc le mouvement de jeu qui 'produit', par ce qui n'est pas simplement une activité, ces différences, ces effets de différence" (12). Less a definition than a performance of this *différance*, the text of Derrida's "la *différance*" puts into play "ces effets de différence" in the way that the phonic difference between "différence" and "*différance*" cannot be detected by his audience but is visible to his readers in the form of a visual trace—the letter *e* or *a*. This sensory *décalage* is the result of an initial speech-act— "Je parlerai donc, d'une lettre" (3)—that introduces a "dérèglement" between sight and sound, between speech and writing, between sensibility and intelligibility. Etymologically as the present participle (*différant*) of the French verb *différer*, derrived from the Latin infinitive *differre* (defined as "to temporize"), which when given the passive ending *-ance*, *différance* implies neither an active nor a passive spacing, which illustrates the much more fortuitous difference between the English word "being" (*être*) and "being" (*étant*), which can be *neither* audibly nor visually distinguished. Regarding *différance* Derrida asserts: "la différance n'est certes que le déploiement historial et époqual de l'être ou de la différence ontologique. Le *a* de la différance marque le *mouvement* de ce déploiement" (23). The inaudible *a* of *différance* serves as an interrogation of the difference between being and language, signaling that *différance* which is the being of language proper, an awareness of that separation being conceived in the baroque.

It is the momentariness of baroque art as "an art of flux—of time" (Brown 101) which allows for the possibility of establishing a fixed and stable order based on distilled classical forms. Brown remarks on how the perceptible difference between the classical and the baroque is minimal (like an *e* or an *a*), but the effect produced is profound. What marks the baroque is the embodiment of the estranged meanings of words, a new experience of language (in the general sense of representation) and things that traverses the spectrum of affective response, from the grotesque to the sublime, an art that expresses the entire gamut of highs and lows of human being. Brown concludes that "the classic *is* the baroque" in an ontological sense, for "*the classic does not exist*" (107); "when the classic comes to life it always does so in a belated baroque language of turmoil and self-division" (108). The baroque usurps the classical, rational form in its "becoming," and infuses it with living energy, renders its existence somehow other, corrupted, less than perfect, even insane, but perhaps more closely human.[5]

In *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (1960), Foucault endeavors to write a history of the ways in which madness has been constructed in Western civilization. In the first chapter, he starts with a description of the way in which, in the second half of the fifteenth century, the theme of "la folie" replaces that of "la mort" as the experience of the void (*le néant*), noting that "[l]a folie c'est le déjà-là de la mort" (26). This morbid fascination translated into a pathology of the mind, that is to say madness in the character of the waking or living dead, recalls all sorts of grotesque and fantastic imagery of ghouls and zombies, terrifying monstrosities that are already present in the early Renaissance in the forms of gothic symbolism.[6] Ad it is precisely this horrifying vision of madness that is at the foundation of "l'expérience classique de la folie" (27-8). This movement from the margins

to the center, from outside to inside, defines the evolution of the concept of madness itself, as Foucault notes, from "une forme relative à la raison, [… où] folie et raison entrent dans une relation perpétuellement réversible qui fait que toute folie a sa raison qui la juge et la maîtrise" (41) toward being "une des formes mêmes de la raison [… où] la folie ne détient sens et valeur que dans le champ même de la raison" (44). Foucault sees this interiorization of madness as the foundation for "le grand renfermement" and the institutionalization of madness during the classical age, noting the prevalence of madness in literary works from the end of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. They represent "un art qui, dans son effort pour maîtriser cette raison qui se cherche, reconnaît la présence de la folie, de *sa* folie, la cerne, l'investit pour finalement en triompher. Jeux d'un âge baroque." (47) The baroque plays on the notion of madness within reason, and of reason, and through this recognition it is able to reach beyond the madness to find its own modes of understanding or "entendement" as *un*reason. For Foucault, "La folie, c'est la forme la plus pure, la plus totale du *quiproquo* [… l]a folie est le grand trompe-l'œil dans les structures tragi-comiques de la littérature préclassique" (51-2). For Foucault, the baroque investment of madness within reason itself was not only evident in art and literature (recall the characters of "le fou" and "le poète"), it is also "[c]e monde du début du XVII^{e} siècle [qui] est étrangement hospitalier à la folie" (55). In the baroque, madness or unreason is an integral part of reason itself, as the internal boundaries of reason; it is accepted and entertained as such, and as a result, arrives at its own reasonable resolution as madness "within reason." Foucault again states:

> Maitrisée, la folie maintient toutes les apparences de son règne. Elle fait maintenant partie des mesures de la raison et du travail de la vérité. Elle joue à la surface des choses et dans le scintillement du jour, sur tous les jeux de l'apparence, sur l'équivoque du réel et de l'illusion, sur toute cette trame indéfinie, toujours reprise, toujours rompue, qui unit et sépare à la fois la vérité et le paraître. Elle cache et manifeste, elle dit le vrai et le mensonge, elle est ombre et lumière. Elle miroite; figure centrale et indulgente, figure déjà précaire de cet âge baroque. (53-4)

The unreasonable (*la déraison*) resides in the margins of knowledge and the depths of the imagination and finds its expression in the baroque liberty of representation, making use of madness and allegory as means to convey the hidden power of language and reason (*logos*), re-presenting the "thing" where it is not. Smoke and mirrors, grand illusion, the baroque is always an art of effects, of semblance, and while it may appear as "madness," it is only the somewhat distorted, hyperbolic, or extreme reflection or representation of reason.

In *La folie du voir: De l'esthétique baroque* (1986), Christine Buci-Glucksmann elaborates the intricacies of a baroque aesthetic with corresponding epistemological groundings based explicitly on the immediacy of "seeing," which involves "la duplicité de la Voix (cri) et du Voir dans l'écrit" (21).[7] Although her analysis, as her title suggests, focuses largely on the visual, I believe that the general theory can be applied to sensory perception in general, and this notion can be translated into various textual strategies that give image and sound to the words of a text, stressing the intentional bias of looking obliquely at something that at face value may appear plain and mundane.[8] Buci-Glucksmann elaborates, "la Voix doit précisément *représenter* le texte, le 'faire voir' par l'écoute, le mettre en scène et en corps. […] *Être, c'est Voir:* en cela, l'œil baroque s'installe dès l'origine dans un nouveau partage du visible, qui accorde au regard un 'optikon' ontologique, une portée épistémologique et esthétique" (29). In the baroque, being is seeing; vision

(or sensory perception more generally) is the ontological priority at the basis of being; the visible in the sense of representability is what exerts its aesthetic or epistemological "presence."[9] The baroque is once again shown to be an art (and a science) of effects, of "le paraître," which is not the mere chaos of excess or the monstrous phantasms of the imagination and unreason, but rather the appearance of deformity or disorder that follows its own internal rules based on the convergence of perspectives.

Buci-Glucksmann provides the portrait of baroque masking and metamorphosis that "ferait coïncider ici science et leurre, raison et sans raison, en une loi toujours déviée, prise de biais" (43). In the baroque mind and in baroque arts, a thing is never quite completely either what it is nor what it seems, for it is always also what it is and what it *appears* to be—how it is represented.[10] Accordingly, she concludes, "La 'chose' y est vouée au paradoxon visuel, à la perte de qualités fixes, à une privation permanente de substance, au corps fictif" (43). For Buci-Glucksmann, seeing is an *effect* of knowing. What one knows to be real or orchestrated spectacle influences what or *how* one sees or hears. Thus, the (incom)possible world one sees and hears is dependent upon the particular way of knowing to which one has subscribed, one's point of view, perspective, or bias, one's visionary or auditory experience of words and things.[11] It is therefore a way of looking and listening, a way of *reading* that is baroque: "Ce regard-là, se soutenant de ce qui s'y dérobe, se déréglant dans le jeu de ses apparences, ce regard de biais, tissé des crevasses du mourir et de l'oubli, était baroque" (18). The "(dé)règlement" peculiar to the baroque is not merely disorder for its own sake, but a sensual destabilization and re-ordering of perception based on spectacular dramaturgy of the passions that deviates into the multiplicity of its constituent harmonies and deviations and the overwhelming dissonance of emotions vacillating from the sublime to the obscene.

In his book *L'Artifice* (1988), which is an extension of his 1985 work *L'Impureté*, Guy Scarpetta discusses the return(s) of the baroque, in terms of both cultural content and aesthetic techniques, stressing that it is not a backwards return *to* the baroque, rather: "c'est le Baroque lui-même qui revient" (22). Pure movement above (or below) essence, a pre-ontological *différance*, the baroque appearance is a "techné," the other defining characteristic of the Aristotelian man, a technique or process of production that renders some-thing out of the no-thing-ness of raw material. Buci-Glucksmann writes, "[e]n suspens, [la techné] manifestera dans son plein le mouvement quasi spiralique du vide qui l'anime" (50), and "le baroque construit *une mimétique du rien*" (49). The process of becoming or rendering—"produire des effets qui créent des êtres"—of baroque art (*tekhnî*) performs the very mise-en-abîme of language that the Foucauldian rupture with Renaissance *ressemblance* outlines in which words do not recall things but only the absent no-thing that necessitates the deferred presence of re-presentation, (the *différance* that produces differences); and in the proliferation of signs another image or "vision" is created, not the vision of verbal representation, but, either allegorically or through the kind of deranged reflections of unreason, a different vision of the very nothingness that unfolds into multiple and different meanings of beings.

In *La Société du Spectacle* (1967), Guy Debord discusses the contemporary structuring of reality through representations in that the machinery of modernity operates through the proliferation of imagery that usurps the function of reality such that "tout ce qui était directement vécu s'est éloigné dans une représentation" (3). He clarifies that, "Le spectacle n'est pas un ensemble d'images, mais un rapport social entre des personnes, médiatisé par des images" (4). In what seems eerily reminiscent of the baroque notion of the world

as theatre, Debord's spectacle is also a mediation of human life and interaction through representation (social, cultural, and political) in and by social institutions, especially the mass media and democracies. This representation usurps and becomes the basis of reality itself as a substitute for reality.[12] According to Debord, "l'origine du spectacle est la perte de l'unité du monde" and that what remains is a fragmented abstraction assuming the form of a spectacle whose very "*mode d'être concret* est justement l'abstraction" (15). Interestingly, Debord defines the baroque as the point at which "le temps historique qui envahit l'art s'est exprimé d'abord dans la sphère même de l'art," and about this art becoming the expression of the times, he states that it is "l'art d'un monde qui a perdu son centre" and "l'*art du changement*" (145). It is here that the modern spectacle that Debord identifies and defines becomes very close to the baroque, first in the sense of a loss of unity or centeredness in the world, and secondly in the pervasive spectacle and artifice deployed to fill that vacuity. The manner by which the subject/spectator lives is a world of calculated illusion, and the affinity between the predominance of "la scène" in the baroque culture a society of spectacle whose expression is constantly mediated by the language and rhetoric of "l'écran" (the screen) quite possibly represents one of the most striking affinities between distant baroque and neo-baroque epochs.[13]

If there is an essential quality to the baroque, it is precisely the more specific relationship between reality and illusion. In *Le Baroque: profondeurs de l'apparence* (1973), Claude-Gilbert Dubois analyzes the spectacular displays of power that were essential to the baroque monarchies of Early Modern Europe, describing "une éthique de l'illusion" in the festivals of the early seventeenth century which functions through the representation of presences that are, in reality, absent and thus allegorizes those objects through their aesthetic images. An ethic of appearance dominates the social scene. Dubois writes: "[l]a vie s'impose comme manifestation et comme spectacle" (159), and further on, "il y a cette attestation d'une manière d'être, dont l'expression est spectacle de cette existence" (163).[14] It is clear how a political ethos (or arguably, lack thereof) can indeed be fundamentally aesthetic in nature, precisely in the very baroque nature of the representation of power. Dubois describes how, in the baroque period, "[c]ette alliance du spectacle et de la vie politique, puisque le théâtre est un moyen de publier une idée politique et d'agir sur les consciences par le moteur de l'admiration ou de la terreur, connut une vigueur particulière pendant les périodes de frénésie et de changement" (169). The pervasive spectacle described by Dubois is encapsulated by the metaphor, "La vie est un théâtre" (179), in which whole of society is transformed into a performative arena in which to represent oneself; he writes:

> [À] la limite, elle est une célébration, qui s'adjoint un rituel: 'pompe' accompagnant les actes de la vie officielle, utilisation du 'décor' de la rhétorique pour la transformation du discours en panégyrique, cérémonial théâtral des 'entrées,' des 'sorties,' accompagnées de gestes et de mots – les mots de théâtre – qui sont comme le sublime du rituel protocolaire (159).

In the Baroque period, Dubois recognizes the organization of appearances as a political strategy, which essentially creates the "truth" of social reality through ritual performances.[15]

In *La raison baroque* (1984): Christine Buci-Glucksmann writes "[l]a Raison baroque: le terme peut paraître provocateur, tant le 'rendre raison' de la raison a effacé la pluralité des raisons classiques et occulté le baroque comme paradigme de pensée et d'écriture qui excède les modèles convenus du penser, la logique de l'identité" (184). In its quest

for absolute certainty and classical perfection, Enlightenment rationality served only to efface the plurality of reasons recomposed in a dissonant harmony of Renaissance ruins, replacing the multiplicity of techniques for rendering something true to form and the diversity of perspectives with the monolithic Order of representation, all the while suppressing any aesthetic and epistemological variations of "baroque" irregularity as unworthy divergences or differences. But the baroque over time has proven resilient, the unreasonability of its "reason" being that Vision which the baroque eye "sees" or apprehends in its entirety language and its limits. From this, one may conclude that Baroque reason, in as much as it defies rationality as the appearance of madness, chaos, and difference or as the reflection of the internal limits of logic, order, and identity, is a material, corporeal reason that inhabits the body and the world in the non-finitude of its constantly evolving material existence. Discussing the nature of his professed task of the "*revaluation of all values*," Nietzsche writes: "the art of separating without setting against one another; to mix nothing, to 'reconcile' nothing; a tremendous variety that is nevertheless the opposite of chaos—this was the precondition, the long, secret work and artistry of my instinct" (254). It is important to make the distinction that the baroque is not something "separate" but rather something that is "within," operating simultaneously yet in opposition to more mainstream modes of expression and understanding, a movement within and across material and psychological boundaries. In an essay entitled "Pour une histoire pervertie" in *Résurgences Baroques*, Mieke Bal discusses a kind of frustration when faced with a baroque image because of the way it resists definition, which can both discourage and elicit a supplementary effort to think about "la signification de la difficulté de voir." For Bal, this near resignation and ancillary effort to think what the difficulty of apprehension might itself entail symbolizes "un rapport inverse entre le présent et le passé qui inaugure le mouvement oscillant que je conçois comme une histoire culturelle opérant en sens inverse, une histoire perverse dans le sens étymologique du terme. Cette histoire, je l'appelle 'baroque.'" (61) We might then understand baroque as a necessary involvement of the past and the present, each exhibiting reciprocal effects that sometimes escape our vision, in a way similar to Deleuze and Guattari's "ligne de fuite."[16] Yet when this *ligne de fuite* itself is thought, the underlying temporality of history, the ontological difference of an "epochal unfolding" can be glimpsed in its relative obscurity. Thus, Bal states: "il est difficile de saisir le baroque—parce qu'il nous englobe. Nous sommes *dans* le baroque" (64). The inversion or "perversion" of history represents an alternative reading of time and space that disrupts and subverts divisions and linearity in favor of a "*regard cyclique* sans aboutissement" that confronts rational orders with the reality of bodies and being, and which proceeds much more organically and analogically, like a Deleuzian rhizome operating underneath the surface, spreading and manifesting itself in different areas of thought, art, and culture.[17]

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Notes

[1] Similarly, Eugenio d'Ors proposes that the baroque is specifically "un style de culture" (*Du Baroque*, 91).

[2] See Maravall, *Culture of the Baroque*: "Baroque culture thus extended to the most varied manifestations of social life and human works, although different manifestations predominated in different places…" (10). For specific differences, see Trevor Aston, ed. *Crisis in Europe: 1560-1660* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965).

[3] See Maravall's *Culture of the Baroque*, chapter 9 entitled "The Social Role of Artifice" (225-47); see also Claude-Gilbert Dubois, *Le Baroque: profondeurs de l'apparence* (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1973), pp. 159-80 for a discussion of how "la vie s'impose comme manifestation et comme spectacle" in Early Modern French society.

[4] For the complete transcription of the talk, including introductions, questions and comments, see its original publication in the *Bulletin de la Société Française de Philosophie* LXIII "Séance du 27 janvier1968 (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1968), pp. 75-101. The text I will refer to here appears in Derrida's 1972 publication *Marges de la Philsophie* (Paris: Édition de Minuit) pp. 3-29.

[5] Giancarlo Maiorino. *The Cornucopian Mind and the Baroque Unity of the Arts*, indeed reasserts the distinction made by Werner Weisbach regarding baroque art as "a style of being" and "a style of becoming," thus creating an art that "probe[s] into the shapelessness of the ever-unfolding matter of life amidst an open universe without ends in sight" (2-3).

[6] Eugenio d'Ors, *Du Baroque*, recognizes the *Barocchus gothicus* as a particular manifestation of a baroque spirit, noting "de telles autres manifestations couronnées par le développement du 'gothique fleuri', espèce baroque type, traduction rigoureuse et fidèle de l'*éon* baroque" (124).

[7] Bertrand Gibert, *Le baroque littéraire français*, echoes this statement regarding the doubling effects of a baroque aesthetic: "Dès les origines de la poésie baroque, on peut dénombrer toutes sortes d'effets de miroir et d'échos entre le matériau phonique, la structure poétique et les effets sémantiques" (191).

[8] Think, for example, of the unrelenting poetic effect espoused by the endless succession of alexandrine verses in the works of Molière, Racine, and Corneille for example, and the ways in which the sensory effect can at times overwhelm the verbal content of a play or scene. For example, in acte III, scène VI of Molière's *Le Tartuffe*, a scene in which Tartuffe dodges culpability by pitting father Orgon Against his son Damis, the rhetorical rapidity by which Tartuffe manages to manipulate the narrative is underscored by the rapid succession of rhyming dialogue, which although tragic in nature, creates a hyperbolic comedic effect as the form and content tend toward the absurd.

[9] Perhaps it is useful here to recall Descartes' *Méditations* in which his vision of the empirical world as existent or as a kind of divine trickery is dependent first and foremost on his rational knowing of his own thinking subjectivity (*cogito*) and the world then appears as it "is" from this initial cognitive moment.

[10] Benito Pelegrín remarks in "Typologie des écritures baroques" that "même s'il n'est pas exclusivement verbal, l'esprit se manifeste essentiellement par le 'concepto', le 'mot', apparence, surface, qui est le seul témoignage d'une réalité intime: le paraître est la seule manifestation de l'être" (89).

[11] Bertrand Gibert, *Le baroque littéraire français*, supports this conception that, "Le baroque est un art démonstratif, qui cherche à séduire et impressionner par des moyens visuels, y compris dans le langage. La formule de la 'peinture parlante' (*pictura loquens*) est particulièrement vivante dans sa pratique littéraire: 'donner à voir' y est un des maîtres mots de la poésie et de l'éloquence." (165)

[12] Along these same lines, and in a way that rings harmonically with Benito Pelegrín's analsysis of the Baroque in *D'Un temps d'incertitude* (2008), see Jean Baudrillard's *L'Échange impossible* (Paris:

Galilée, 1999), which outlines the double bind of contemporary society, based on the impossibility of exchange in a world dominated by uncertainty and self-contained systems. His analysis of the economic sphere, "prise dans sa globalité, ne s'échange contre rien," extends the same "inéquivalence" unto the political, juridical, and aesthetic spheres, all haunted by their own illusion and impossible to exchange against any*thing*, only Nothing; and metaphysically, also with a wink to Nietzsche, he states, "les valeurs, les finalités et les causes que nous circonscrivons ne valent que pour une pensée humaine, trop humaine. Elles sont irrelevant au regard de quelque autre réalité que ce soit (peut-être même en regard de la 'réalité' tout court)." (11-15)

[13] Accordingly, Scarpetta remarks in the case of modern televisual media, that a rhetorical strategy of appearances produces the effect of (effective) truth: "la 'vérité du spectacle,'" a relative truth that nonetheless pretends to absolute authority (*L'Artifice*, 26).

[14] In Debord's *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*, first published in French in 1988, he indeed notes the spectacle's "rapid extension over the last twenty years [since 1968]" (4), and attributes it various forms of spectacular power: "Spectacular power, which is so fundamentally unitary, so concentrated by the very weight of things, and entirely despotic in spirit, frequently rails at the appearance in its realm of a spectacular politics, a spectacular justice, a spectacular medicine and all the other similarly surprising examples of 'media excess'" (6).

[15] According to Jean Rousset, *La littérature de l'age Baroque en France*,"Cette époque, qui a dit et cru, plus que toute autre, que le monde est un théâtre et la vie une comédie où il faut revêtir un rôle, était destinée à faire de la métaphore une réalité/ le théâtre déborde hors du théâtre, envahit le monde, le transforme en une scène animée par les machines, l'assujettit à ses propres lois de mobilité et de métamorphose. Le sol semble vaciller, les maisons se transforment en boîtes à surprise, les murs s'ouvrent comme des portants, les jardins et les fleuves prennent part aux jeux de la scène, deviennent eux-mêmes théâtre et décor" (28). This notion will also be elaborated in chapter 5 in relation to Achille Mbembe's analysis of the political culture of the Postcolony.

[16] In the Introduction to *Mille Plateaux*, Deleuze and Guattari define "lignes de fuite" in contrast to lignes d'articulation ou de segmentatarité" (both of which make up the rhizome), the former being more akin to "des mouvements de déterritorialisation et de déstratification," and he continues: "Les vitesses comparées d'écoulement d'après ces lignes entraînent des phénomènes de retard relatif, de viscosité, ou au contraire de precipitation et de rupture." (9-10) As such, the baroque might be understood as a de-stratification of history, which places different times (and spaces) in dialogue, but not to positively signify any*thing* in particular, rather to disrupt *every*thing in terms of the absolute totality of linear history and narrative progress."

[17] In the Introduction to *Mille Plateaux*, Deleuze and Guattari define the literary concept of the rhizome as a way by which "l'un fait partie du multiple," elaborating certain approximative characteristics of connection and heterogeneity, multiplicity, a "rupture asignifiante" or an "antigénéalogie," and the principles of cartography and of decalcomania (or layered tracing, like a palimpest) (pp. 13-21). This notion will also be explored more fully in the next chapter.

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