READINGS: BAROQUE

Background:

"Baroque": A term used in the literature of the arts with both historical and critical meanings and as both an adjective and a noun. The word has a long, complex and controversial history (it possibly derived from a Portuguese word for a misshapen pearl, and until the late 19th century it was used mainly as a synonym for `absurd' or `grotesque'), but in English it is now current with three principal meanings.

Primarily, it designates the dominant style of European art between Mannerism and Rococo. This style originated in Rome and is associated with the Catholic Counter-Reformation, its salient characteristics--overt rhetoric and dynamic movement--being well suited to expressing the self-confidence and proselytizing spirit of the reinvigorated Catholic Church. It is by no means exclusively associated with religious art, however, and aspects of the Baroque can be seen even in works that have nothing to do with emotional display--for example in the dynamic lines of certain Dutch still-life paintings.

Secondly, it is used as a general label for the period when this style flourished, broadly speaking, the 17th century and in certain areas much of the 18th century. Hence thus phrases as `the age of Baroque', `Baroque politics', `Baroque science', and so on.

Thirdly, the term `Baroque' (often written without the initial capital) is applied to art of any time or place that shows the qualities of vigorous movement and emotional intensity associated with Baroque art in its primary meaning. Much Hellenistic sculpture could therefore be described as `baroque'.

The older meaning of the word, as a synonym for `capricious', `overwrought' or `florid', still has some currency, but not in serious criticism.

Caravaggio and Annibale Carracci are the two great figures who stand at the head of the Baroque tradition, bringing a new solidity and weightiness to Italian painting, which in the late 16th century has generally been artificial and often convoluted in style. In doing so they looked back to some extent to the dignified and harmonious art of the High Renaissance, but Annibale's work has an exuberance that is completely his own, and Caravaggio created figures with an unprecedented sense of sheer physical presence. From the Mannerist style the Baroque inherited movement and fervent emotion, and from the Renaissance style solidity and grandeur, fusing the two influences into a new and dynamic whole. The supreme genius of Baroque art was Gianlorenzo Bernini, an artist of boundless energy and the utmost virtuosity, whose work--imbued with total spiritual conviction--dominates the period sometimes called the `High Baroque' (c. 1625-75). Slightly later, Andrea Pozzo marks the culmination in Italy of the Baroque tendency towards overwhelmingly grandiose display.

In the 17th century, Rome was the artistic capital of Europe, and the baroque style soon spread outwards from it, undergoing modification in each of the countries to which it migrated, as it encountered different tastes and outlooks and merged with local traditions. In some areas it became more extravagant (notably in the fervent religious atmosphere of Spain and Latin America) and in others it was toned down to suit more conservative tastes. In Catholic Flanders it had one of its finest flowerings in the work of Rubens, but in neighbouring Holland, a predominantly Protestant country, the Baroque made comparatively slight inroads; nor did it ever take firm root in England. In France, the Baroque found its greatest expression in the service of the monarchy rather than the church. Louis XIV realized the importance of the arts as a propaganda medium in promoting the idea of his regal glory, and his palace at Versailles--with its grandiose combination of architecture, sculpture, painting, decoration, and (not least) the art of the gardener--represents one of the supreme examples of the Baroque fusion of the arts to create an overwhelmingly impressive whole. (The German term *Gesamtkunstwerk*--`total work of art'--has been applied to this ideal.) In France, as in other countries, the Baroque style merged imperceptibly with the Rococo style that followed it.

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BAROQUE

The principal European style in the visual arts in the 17th century and the first half of the 18th; generally considered to be characteristic of the period of Caravaggio, Rubens, Rembrandt, Giordano and Tiepolo in painting, Bernini in sculpture, and Borromini, Fischer von Erlach and Wren in architecture. Usage of the term is often extended to the whole period 1600–1750 without qualifying restrictions, or improperly to mean a florid and elaborate style in art, architecture, music or literature, of any date from late antiquity to the early 20th century.

1. Origins of the term and the concept.

The history of the term has an important bearing on our present understanding of it. If classical art is seen—as its name implies—as representing aesthetic norms, then 'baroque', like 'gothic' and later 'romantic', has to be seen as in some way departing from or antithetical to those norms (Gombrich, pp. 81–98). Attempts have been made to trace the origins of the word in the terminology of formal logic, but, plausible though this derivation may be, it is not historically useful. The word began to be used specifically of the fine arts early in the Neo-classical period that developed in succession—and in reaction—to the Baroque. Winckelmann, in the riposte he added to his own *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst* (1755, para. 113) derived the term *Barrockgeschmack* ('baroque taste') from a word used of 'pearls and teeth of unequal size'; he cited the 17th-century etymologist Gilles Ménage, and the Portuguese word *barroco* has this meaning. Thus in writing on art 'baroque' was initially a term of reaction and of opprobrium, as 'gothic' had been a century earlier. In 1758 the encyclopedist Diderot described 'baroque' specifically in relation to architecture as a 'nuance of bizarre' characterized by 'the ridiculous taken to excess' and exemplified in particular by the work of Borromini and Guarini. The same terms and examples recur in Francesco Milizia's *Dizionario delle belle arti* (1797), and thenceforth almost to the present day Borromini has been cited especially and consistently as the antithesis of the whole 18th-century Enlightenment. Modern scholarship has clarified the relation between rational means and mystical ends in Borromini's architecture, but it is surely significant that even some of his Roman contemporaries misconstrued and indeed attacked his work as bizarre and irrational.

Nevertheless, to see the Baroque merely as a reaction against Renaissance ideals or norms is simplistic, because both 17th-century and modern critics have identified in the Baroque clear signs of a return to Renaissance order and affirmation after the disorder and pessimism they perceived in the arts of Mannerism (Gombrich, pp. 99–106). The roots of this critical ambiguity in fact lie deep in Western art and thought, and they came to the surface a century after Winckelmann, when a generation capable of a longer historical perspective over the period began to distinguish stylistic interpretation from adverse criticism. In his artistic guide to Italy, *Der Cicerone* (1855), Jacob Burckhardt describes Baroque architecture as speaking 'the same tongue as the Renaissance, but in a dialect that has gone wild'. He was unprepared for the Italian Baroque: his brief reference to the geometry of Borromini's churches of S Carlino and the Sapienza calls them 'infamous', while of Bernini's *Ecstasy of St Teresa* (1645–52; Rome, S Maria della Vittoria, Cornaro Chapel; see fig. 1) he wrote that 'one forgets mere questions of style at the shocking degradation of the supernatural'.

Burckhardt was not willing to dismiss so easily the architecture of Michelangelo, whose vestibule to the Laurentian Library in Florence he nevertheless called 'ever instructive', characterizing its blind windows as Baroque and the staircase as neck-breaking; in the 1867 edition of the *Cicerone* he summed up the whole as 'an incomprehensible joke of the great master'. Burckhardt's study of Rubens, written late in life and published posthumously in 1898, was based on long familiarity with Rubens's paintings; it is sympathetic and still worth reading; significantly, in the *Cicerone* he categorized Italian painting of the age of Rubens, from the Carracci and Caravaggio onwards, not as Baroque but as *modern*, 'partly eclectic, partly naturalistic'

2. The modern concept.

The acceptance of Baroque architecture as a legitimate field for study was signalled by Cornelius Gurlitt's *Geschichte des Barockstils in Italien* (1887) and his further volumes on France and Germany in the two following years, but a work of greater critical import was *Renaissance und Barock* (1888) by Burckhardt's pupil Heinrich Wölfflin. His Hegelian determinism, in which each style was seen as the product of the spirit of its age, led Wölfflin without hesitation to write of 'the Baroque' as something with motives, aims, actions and a will of its own. He sought through stylistic analysis to clear from it the stigma of decadence and to show that, far from being a debased dialect of the Renaissance, Italian Baroque architecture was radically different, a discrete and autonomous style in the same sense as Gothic or Renaissance, with an equal validity; but while over a century after Wölfflin it may still be possible to find acceptable his identification of Michelangelo as the 'father of the Baroque' (a paternity with which Borromini could have agreed), his choice of 'the year 1580 as a convenient starting point for the fully formed Baroque style' is now considered about 20 years too early.

Wölfflin identified two major factors in the recognition of Baroque art. First, he placed its origin not merely in Italy but specifically in the Rome of the late Renaissance, and indeed of the Counter-Reformation. In this, as also in his allocation of first place to architecture, he was followed by Alois Riegl (*Die Entstehung der Barockkunst in Rom*, 1908; based on lectures given in 1894–9). Second, the principal quality Wölfflin identified in Baroque architecture was that of the 'painterly' (*malerisch*), the term for which he is most famous among German language users. In 1897 August Schmarsow would put Wölfflin's term into the subtitle of his book *Barock und*

Rokoko: Über das Malerische in der Architektur. Later, in *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (Principles of art history), published in 1915, Wölfflin would oppose to this term that of 'draughtsmanly' or linear. Wölfflin's intention in this second book was to demonstrate, by the comparison of contrasting pairs of examples, what he called 'the double root of style' in different modes—not so much modes of representation as modes of vision or of (in his own preferred term) imagination, which preceded and informed representation. Subsequent generations of critics, concerned with the characterization of styles, found meaning and utility in the polarities that distinguish his five chapters: linear and painterly, plane and recession, closed and open form, multiplicity and unity, clearness and unclearness. Thus although with his first pair of examples, drawings of female nudes by Dürer and Rembrandt, he warned his reader that 'Rembrandt cannot forthwith be taken as equivalent to the 17th century', the 'Principles' came to be seen as a handy, if not always helpful, guide to the distinction between 'classical' and Baroque art.

Most accounts and definitions of Baroque art start from papal Rome, the city of Bernini, Borromini and Pietro da Cortona, and proceed to the painting of the exemplary Catholic artist Rubens. As long as the style was thought to begin with what we now call Mannerism, in the mid-16th century, it was plausibly linked with the Catholic Counter-Reformation (Werner Weisbach: *Der Barock als Kunst der Gegenreformation*, Berlin, 1921), and the idea of a close and specific connection with the early Jesuits appealed in particular to those who disliked both Baroque art and the Society of Jesus. Walter Weibel's *Jesuitismus und Barockskulptur* (Strasbourg, 1909) supported a causal connection between the techniques of spiritual direction of St Ignatius Loyola and the art of Bernini, largely through the erroneous claim that the sculptor 'practised' the *Spiritual Exercises* of Loyola. Nevertheless, in publications contemporary with Weibel's, the Jesuit scholar Joseph Braun demolished the idea of a Jesuit style. The church of Il Gesù in Rome did not receive its Baroque decoration until late in the 17th century, although its compact Latin-cross plan became, for practical and symbolic reasons, a common pattern; but in general the Society's policy everywhere was to adapt as far as possible to local customs and styles, building 'Gothic' churches in the Rhineland to suggest continuity with pre-Reformation Christianity there. The unprecedentedly lavish decoration of the Jesuit church in Antwerp, supervised by Rubens and intended to contrast with the iconoclasm of Antwerp's Calvinist years, indeed drew a reprimand from headquarters in Rome.

The effect of the Council of Trent (1545–63) on religious art is most evident in the search for clarity both of form and of subject-matter in painting (Friedlaender, 1957). Caravaggio's humble apostles and Rubens's rapturous saints spoke unequivocally to peasant and prince alike, and a type of altarpiece was developed that stressed the sacrificial function of the altar and the chief point of contention (apart from the papacy) between Catholic and Protestant: the corporeal presence of Christ in the eucharistic host. In Rubens's great *Raising of the Cross* (1610–11; Antwerp Cathedral; see fig. 2) the divine body is lifted up as the consecrated wafer is elevated for the congregation to see, and Bernini's St Teresa manifests a union with her Lord analogous to (though more intense than) that of the communicant at the altar rail below. Parallels were also encouraged between the Passion of Christ and the sufferings of the martyrs, whether in ancient pagan Rome or in the contemporary non-Catholic and non-Christian worlds. Two qualifying remarks are, however, essential. First, the optimism of Baroque religious art belongs to the second (17th-century) phase of the Counter-Reformation, in which themes of love, joy and Heaven increasingly replaced justice, penitence and Hell, and in which the interior of Il Gesù changed from grey-white to coloured. Second, the desire for clarity after about 1590 is equally evident in secular art; one need only compare the Farnese Gallery of the Carracci (started 1597) with Francesco Salviati's frescoes (started 1549) of a generation earlier, in the Sala dei Fasti Farnesiane in the same building (Rome, Pal. Farnese). Truth to appearances and realism of gesture and presentation quickly put the obvious artifice of Mannerism out of fashion (Freedberg, 1983; 1986 exh. cat.).

3. Characteristics of the Baroque style.

Baroque is the characteristic style of the 17th and early 18th centuries. It is a style of appearances rather than essences, or of *Werden* (becoming) rather than *Wesen* (being). Rubens's *Raising of the Cross* is affective, dramatic, realistic almost to the point of illusionism, so that the viewer seems through a picture to be witnessing the actual event. The crucifix is displayed diagonally, both across the picture surface and in the represented depth; it is eternally about to reach the perpendicular, but can do so only in the viewer's imagination. All art reaches the intellect through the senses, for there is no other route; but Baroque art addresses the senses directly and reaches the intellect through the emotions rather than through reason.

In an unfinished paper on Bernini, Max Dvořák (1927–9, ii) emphasized the 'actuality' of Bernini's marble group of *Apollo and Daphne* (*c.* 1622; Rome, Gal. Borghese; *see* Bernini (2), fig. 1). The versatility of touch and texture brings to the marble both the painterly, and indeed erotic, warmth and sensuousness of Titian's Ovidian mythologies and the cold chaste calm of antique models and in particular the *Apollo Belvedere* (Rome, Vatican, Mus. Pio-Clementino). There is no illusion: we are confronted by a piece of marble. Yet no trace remains of the original block shape sent down from the quarry; the actuality of the marble and that of the event, likewise the figures, their space and the critical instant of drama, are bound inseparably together. So too in the Cornaro Chapel, whose centrepiece is the *Ecstasy of St Teresa*, the beauty and the brilliance of Bernini's literal illustration of Teresa's account of her mystical experience raise it from the sensory to the spiritual level. It is no accident that Bernini's stated and achieved aim was the unification of the arts of painting, sculpture and architecture (Lavin, 1980), or that opera, the combination of vocal and instrumental music, dramatic speech, mime and visual effects, was developed in Italy early in the 17th century.

Baroque art expresses and affects with immediacy, by a variety of means, whether it be by Wölfflin's concept of unity, in which pictures and buildings alike are first apprehended in a single sweeping impression, or by the manipulation of the beholder into a particular viewpoint, or by devices that bridge the barrier between the world of the image and that of the viewer. Critical scholarship has recently turned to the ideas underlying the work of painters such as van Dyck and Velázquez; nevertheless, their art in particular is indeed first and last one of sight, not of intellect, and its virtue lies more in the paint surface than in ideas. Their aim was to make beautiful pictures, as the Earl of Newcastle well understood when he wrote to van Dyck of his desire to be a hundred-eyed Argus, 'or all over but one eye, so it or they were ever fixed upon that which we must call yours'. However rational and deliberate the artist's procedure, it was the sensory effect that counted: Borromini's S Carlo alle Quattro Fontane in Rome is based on a geometry of circles and equilateral triangles, but the first prior of the church noted that visitors, at once puzzled and fascinated by the plan, were drawn again and again to the building, an effect that he likened to the soul's aspiration to heaven.

One characteristic of the Baroque on which all agree is movement, whether it be the orthogonal and lateral movement in Maderno's archetypal façade of S Susanna in Rome (1597–1603; *see* Maderno, carlo, fig. 1) whose consistent forward breaks of plane lead the eye to the centre, or the flickering chain of figures in Poussin's bacchanals, in which the movements of the dancers are complemented by the changing pattern of colours and shadows. There is also the movement of the spirit. Seventeenth-century writers were conversant with approaches to the emotions, and the materialist philosopher Thomas Hobbes formulated a mechanistic theory of what is now called the subconscious. Sir Christopher Wren, while insisting on the geometrical basis of beauty, admitted also to the existence of another kind of beauty, that of association or evocation 'of things not in themselves beautiful', and he required the architect to visualize his designs in the perspective not of drawing but of the real world. Faced with Bernini's *David* (1623; Rome, Gal. Borghese), the spectator instinctively looks behind him for the object of the slinger's gaze. Rembrandt, seeking in his *Blinding of Samson* (1636; Frankfurt am Main, Städel. Kstinst. & Städt. Gal.) the greatest possible movement (his word, *beweechgelickheyt*, was ambiguous and meant both activity and emotion), seems to place the beholder inside the cave looking out past the horrific event to the blue sky, symbol of sight and freedom. In the Piazza of St Peter's and at Versailles the beholder's attention is captured; he is overwhelmed by the scale of his surroundings in relation to himself, and the messages respectively of an embracing mother-church and a monarch responsible only to God are inescapably borne in upon him. These two great ensembles became the model for rulers through the 18th century and beyond. In the 20th century the use of such imagery has been imperfectly understood by adherents of totalitarian ideology all over the world, who have imitated the vastness of Baroque prototypes in order to dehumanize the individual. For indeed, in the Piazza one may sit on the bases of the columns, and the focus of attention is human and of human size: the successor of Peter and (in the phraseology of papal documents ever since Gregory the Great) 'the servant of the servants of God'. Likewise at Versailles human scale informs not only the individual units of the vast design but also every detail of its decoration.

In *Renaissance und Barock* Wölfflin had related 'linear' and 'painterly' to the distinction between things as they are and things as they seem to be, i.e. between essences and appearances. It is imperative to recognize—as Wölfflin himself was well aware—that this crucial distinction was not new: it has been made ever since Classical antiquity, and its use as a key to the difference between Renaissance and Baroque art is a particular application of a much more general principle.

Ultimately these two modes of imagination have a physical basis in perceptual psychology and in the existence of different and complementary modes and regions of function in the human brain: on the one side analytical, symbolic, digital and linear, on the other side synthetic, concrete, spatial and holistic. Some of these differences were recognized, although their basis was not understood, by Renaissance writers. Alberti's theory of vision in *De pictura* (*c.* 1435) envisages separate kinds of rays to convey to the eye the outlines of things and their colours; this distinction can be related in particular to early Florentine painting, which is concerned with contours as a means of describing forms. Vasari's life of Titian, on the other hand, describes from a Florentine point of view the optical and non-linear basis of the great Venetian painter's later works, executed (as Vasari says) 'with coarse strokes and daubs, in such a way that from near by they cannot be made out, but from a distance they look perfect'. Modern experimental psychology has shown Alberti's concept to be closer to the truth than later theories of light and colour might suggest, for the visual cortex contains kinds of cells that respond to colours and others that respond to lines of various orientations. The basis of this diversity is biological, since, in a world perceived as patches of colour without contours, it would be impossible to distinguish obstacles and objects from their background; hence the popular association of certain Impressionist techniques with short-sightedness.

How far Florentine prejudice became the basis for critical and historiographical norms can be seen from both 16th- and 19th-century examples. Vasari quoted Michelangelo, on seeing Titian's *Danaë*, as saying of that artist that 'it was a shame that in Venice one did not start by learning to draw well … if he had the help of art and *disegno*, as well as that of nature, and most of all in drawing from life, he could not be surpassed'. *Disegno* means not only drawing but also design, implying order and structure, or 'a sense of form'. A little over three centuries later, Bernard Berenson suggested to the world that Florentine painting surpassed that of 14th-century Siena or 16th-century Venice because of its 'tactile values', the appeal to the sense of touch for which Riegl (using Greek rather than Latin) coined the term 'haptic' as opposed to 'optic'. In Vasari's Florence and in 17th-century Rome the prejudice was expressed as a preference for *disegno* rather than *colore* (*see* Disegno e colore). A less biased view of the antithesis is to be found in the writing of Vasari's Venetian contemporary Lodovico Dolce; and in

17th-century Holland Samuel van Hoogstraten was able to describe drawing, consciously in the context of Michelangelo's remark, as 'imitating things after life even as they appear' (*Inleyding tot de hooge schoole der schilderkonst*, Rotterdam, 1678).

By the beginning of the 17th century, however, such polarizing distinctions had become simplistic and misleading. With the range of models and exemplars offered in painting by (for instance) Raphael, Michelangelo, Correggio, Parmigianino, Titian and Tintoretto, or in architecture by Bramante, Michelangelo, Palladio and Vignola, no subsequent artist of any sensibility could rely exclusively on either *disegno* or *colore*—not at least in Rome, by then the centre of the European art world. The range may be illustrated by the ceiling paintings of two suburban garden pavilions made within a span of ten years. In Guido Reni's *Aurora* (1613–14; Rome, Casino Rospigliosi–Pallavicini; *see* Reni, guido, fig. 3) the chariot of Dawn is driven across the sky in what is—though executed in fresco—virtually a framed easel picture transposed from wall to ceiling. In Guercino's fresco of the same subject (1621–3; Rome, Casino Ludovisi; *see* Guercino, fig. 2) on the other hand, the chariot is seen diagonally from below, surrounded by *trompe l'oeil* architecture as if it really were flying above the viewer. Yet Reni is no mere imitator of Raphael: in colour, draughtsmanship and rhythm, and also in its overbearing scale in a relatively low room, the *Aurora* is quite different from Raphael's *Galatea* wall fresco of exactly a century earlier (Rome, Villa Farnesina); and on the other hand Guercino subsequently fell to the seduction of classicizing theory, and within a decade of his *Aurora* had totally changed his style.

Nevertheless, false antitheses are often presented either between the followers of Titian and those of Raphael (Annibale Carracci was both), or between the theatrical 'realism' of Caravaggio's paintings created directly on the canvas (and often from models recognizable between one painting and another) and the 'academicism' of the Carracci based on selection, idealization and the systematic use of preparatory drawing. This is not how their contemporaries saw them: the Roman collector Vincenzo Giustiniani, writing before 1620, placed both artists (with Guido Reni) in the highest class of painters, those 'who paint *di maniera* and also directly from life … some have inclined more towards nature than *maniera* and some more towards *maniera* than nature, but without detaching themselves from either way of painting, rely on good *disegno* and true colouring, and give proper and true lighting' (Enggass and Brown, p. 19).

In 1665 Bernini gave praise for colour rather than drawing to the 'Lombards', meaning those outside the Tuscan–Roman tradition and including both the Venetians and the Emilian Correggio. Bernini was not alone in using *colore* to mean tone as well as chromatic hue; already by 1557 Dolce's *Aretino* implied a distinction between *colore* and *tinto*. Thus Federico Zuccaro's dismissal of Caravaggio's newly finished *Calling of St Matthew* (1599–1600; Rome, S Luigi dei Francesi) as 'nothing but the thought of Giorgione' is probably best understood as a reference to his chiaroscuro modelling.

Seventeenth-century artists were thus well aware, both in theory and in practice, of a diversity of modes; the cases of two 'classical' painters of the mid-century are illuminating: Nicolas Poussin and Andrea Sacchi. Poussin, whose work was highly esteemed by Bernini, the most Baroque of sculptors, is recorded as regarding colour as a distraction, like the beauty of sound in poetry; but in a famous letter discussing his theory of the 'modes' in painting he explained on the contrary that both colour and sound were essential to the narrative. Moreover, many of Poussin's drawings are colouristic, in the tonal sense, in the way that patches of shadow, and sometimes even pen outlines, overrun and obscure the contours of figures and objects. Poussin has recently emerged as more impulsive in character and more intuitive in his art than Giovanni Pietro Bellori and the Académie Royale represented him, and indeed less of a philosopher than the urbane archetype of the Baroque painter, Rubens.

Sacchi, who has been justly characterized as a Baroque painter with the mental approach of a classical one (Harris, 1977), is most often remembered for the debate in which he engaged (*c.* 1636) with Pietro da Cortona on the number of figures required in a history painting. Sacchi defended the 'classical' theory that determined his own practice, that in using the fewest possible figures each could have the maximum effect in expression, gesture and movement; the analogue is with Classical tragedy. For Cortona, on the other hand, history painting was analogous to epic poetry, which is full of episodes and sub-plots: a large number of figures gave variety and richness both to forms—including light and shade—and to the telling of the story.

6. Historical context.

Consideration of the political uses of architecture (a phrase already used by Wren) may conveniently introduce the question of underlying causes or explanations for the Baroque, other than those mainly formalist ones that have so far been discussed. From the earliest days of art history the identification of historical styles has been linked to the search for external causes of stylistic identity and stylistic change: Vasari attributed the origin of the Renaissance to the strength of Tuscan soil, which was his own and that of his patron, Cosimo I de'Medici, and the refinement of Tuscan air, and the compassion of Heaven. Subsequent explanations have been no less partisan, seductive or inadequate, and Hegel's *Zeitgeist* lives on not only in the popular cliché of the 'Spirit of the Age' but also in Marxist criticism and its parodies and derivatives. History cannot explain but only elucidate, and in practice a formalist historical model, in which the causes of change are seen in the desires of artists to outdo their forebears, is no more simplistic than social, economic or ideological ones. Two factors make this general discussion especially relevant to the Baroque. First, the unprecedented force of Baroque art in conveying ideas through the senses and the emotions. Second, the coincidence in time, around the end of the 19th century, between the growth of critical interest in Baroque art and the development of specific art-historical methods, of which those of Wölfflin, Riegl and Dvořák are but three examples.

Crude cultural explanations include the break-up of an old world order and the abandonment of traditional cosmology, both leading to scepticism and a rejection of essences in favour of appearances. The rehabilitation of pagan antiquity changed Western culture nowhere more radically than in architectural language and the representation of the human body in art. Nevertheless, antiquity formed part of medieval tradition, which itself shaped the Renaissance perception of antiquity. The political and social consequences of a divided Western Christendom were immense and led to a recolouring of the European map, but here again continuity with the past was claimed by both sides in the religious controversy. The collapse of the old cosmology had nothing to do with the roundness of the earth (which educated Europeans had understood for centuries) but resulted from quite different changes in scientific thought and observation. The vastness of outer space, and the realization that the true relative positions of the heavenly bodies are not as they seem, were traumatic. On the other hand the idea that the everyday world was illusory was not then either new or common. Moreover, in the visual arts illusion continued to be distinguished from appearance, and reserved for the special circumstances of *trompe l'oeil* and the theatre. The heliocentric theory was contentious until Newton proved it from the Law of Gravity, and among its late opponents was Guarini, the architect whose buildings are spatially the most mysterious, although they depend on a brilliantly clear mathematical mind. Moreover, the hostility of Rome to the physics of Galileo was matched by that of Calvinist Holland to the philosophy of Descartes.

There can be no doubt that the new sceptical science of the 17th century was visual, or more generally sensory, being based on observation in preference to received ideas. There is a similarity between the understanding of what inventions of the age such as the telescope, the microscope and the barometer can reveal, and Hawksmoor's insistence on experiment in architecture 'so that we are assured of the good effect of it'. It is paradoxical, though not accidental, that in the 17th century were conceived both the idea of infinite space and the Cartesian system by which any point can be located in space by reference to numerical co-ordinates. Baroque architecture depends on the premiss that space as well as material can be moulded like clay; there is a mathematical basis to architectures both as rational as Wren's and as apparently irrational as that of Guarini. Borromini even conceived—although he did not achieve—the idea of a curved façade made of a single piece of terracotta. There were new spatial subtleties in painting too: in the almost infinite degradation of tone and colour in the distance of a Claude landscape, and in the interiors of Vermeer, where in depth projection the edges of things in different planes very nearly touch, while the space of the room continues indefinitely sideways beyond the boundaries of the picture frame.

A priori cultural theories have led to the identification of Baroque art with Catholic and courtly patronage, and even to the assertion that Wölfflin's Baroque unity and Classical multiplicity correspond respectively to the absolutist monarchy and the republican democracy. Thus a contrast has been argued between the idealism of Italian 17th-century mythologies and Madonnas and the realism of 'bourgeois' Dutch landscapes, still-lifes and portraits. Such correspondences may be illuminating, but only so long as they are understood as fatally simplistic. Rubens worked in the same style for both princes and burghers. Church and state were no more closely linked in the papal territories than in the Venetian Republic, where St Mark's basilica was the Doge's chapel, or in the Dutch one, which owed its existence to a desire as much for religious as for political emancipation. In painting, Venice was the mother not only of Titian and Tintoretto but later also of Tiepolo and Piazzetta; in music Venice was the nurse of opera. In recent years the study of 17th-century Netherlandish art has turned to history and decorative painting and the theatre; the Dutch Republic acquired a hereditary principality early in the century, and, although Rembrandt did little work for the court in The Hague, it had never been possible to accommodate his oeuvre within the formula of Dutch realism. Not only is the *Blinding of Samson* a Baroque painting but also the *Night Watch* (Amsterdam; Rijksmus.): the latter's fleeting light effects, its free composition and its theatrically momentary action lift it out of the category of group portraiture altogether. Protestant architects (notably in the Calvinist Netherlands and the London of Queen Anne) experimented as freely with centralized church plans as their Roman and Piedmontese counterparts, even though religion denied them any comparable pictorial or sculptural embellishment. In one of the greatest achievements of decorative painting in the whole period, the ceiling of the Painted Hall of Greenwich Hospital (for illustration *see* Thornhill, james), all the artifices of Catholic or absolutist *quadratura* were employed to deliver a nearly republican message in praise of the Glorious Revolution of 1688, and of the constitutional monarchy and the Protestant settlement that followed from it. The 17th-century Town Hall of Amsterdam (*see* Town hall, fig. 3) is one of the great classical buildings of its age, in the three-dimensional integrity of its planning, elevations and detailing, based on the Antique through Vincenzo Scamozzi. It is Baroque in its scale and in the relationship between ideas and imagery: these not only celebrate the greatness of Amsterdam and the Peace of Münster (concluded in 1648, the year of its foundation) but also heighten and solemnize the ordinary citizen's perception in his contacts with his city (Fremantle, 1959).

7. Conclusion: historical singularity.

Seventeenth-century artists were not conscious of a break in history at some such date as 1590 or 1600; instead they saw themselves as belonging to 'modern' times, whether in distinction to antiquity or to what came to be called the Middle Ages. From the standpoint of either distinction they could see a continuity from the early Renaissance and the revival of antique culture into their own day. In *Die kirchliche Baukunst des Abendlandes* (Stuttgart, 1901) Georg Dehio, taking up a remark of Burckhardt, went so far as to claim that 'every architectural style has the Baroque as its last phase' (II, p. 190). The recognition of the Baroque as a late development has prompted the question whether a previous Baroque can be found in the art of late Roman antiquity (e.g.

Lyttelton); this idea, however, suggests the ascendancy of methodology over observation. Certainly Imperial Roman art was considered 'decadent' for much of the 19th century, according to formal criteria not unlike those that at the same time condemned much art of the 17th century. Certainly late Roman sculpture and wall painting exhibit a kind of impressionism in technique, movement in rendering and pathos in expression for which analogies can be found in 17th-century Baroque. Certainly an architect like Borromini could find in Imperial Roman architecture a freedom of detail and a complexity of spatial planning, and claim them as authority for his own imagination. Certainly the dispersion of artistic ideas and images throughout the huge Roman Empire suggests parallels with the International Baroque. There is a fundamental difference, however, between the antique and the post-medieval eras. The grammar of Classical architecture was first constructed in the 16th century, just as the grammar of Classical Latin as a 'dead' language had been constructed some centuries earlier by Irish monks, the first western Christian converts outside the Roman world's living tradition of Latinity. The Renaissance (and generally also the modern) concept of the Antique is not of a thousand years' development across the Mediterranean world but of a homogeneous body of cultural achievement. Thus early Renaissance artists thought that through the study of Vitruvius (*see* Vitruvius, §3(ii)) and of ancient remains they could discover the system by which, they believed, ancient Roman architects had created beautiful architecture. By the late 16th century, when it had become clear that no such system had existed in antiquity, architects and theorists had of necessity invented one of their own. There were Latin grammarians in the time of Cicero, but the poverty of Vitruvius' text is in itself witness to the scarcity of comparable authorities in architecture. With no canon of the art, there could in antiquity be no deviation or development of the kind that produced Mannerism and Baroque.

A style is 'of its age', not because the age has a guiding spirit but because the art is one of the components that define and characterize that age. The great difficulty generally found in making comparisons between the visual arts and others is due to the fact that they share neither common origins nor a common development; music, for example, has no comparable Antique, and 16th-century polyphony or the harmonies of Purcell and Bach were new inventions, never prefigured. The polarities named by Wölfflin may be useful indicators, and some historians have tried to apply them to such crafts as furniture and metalware, but they are neither watertight nor comprehensive.

The value of a stylistic definition decreases as its precision increases. The Baroque may, however, be characterized as a style based on a long tradition of growing familiarity with the canons and methods of the Renaissance, and through it with those of Classical antiquity. It is a style in which appearances take precedence over essences; familiarity allows the visual language to be adapted, as only a mother tongue can be, to metaphor, wit, punning. It achieves its effects by a direct appeal to the senses, and through them to the emotions as much as to the intellect. Thus it is an art related more immediately to the beholder than to abstract principles. It has the richness and diversity of form and language that come at the end of a continuous period; not of any period or all, but specifically that of the Renaissance, on whose forms and language it depends.

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KERRY DOWNES

MESSIAH

AN ORATORIO

MUSIC COMPOSED BY GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL

Libretto by Charles Jennens
Date of composition: 1741

Part I

TENOR
Comfort ye, my people, saith your God;
speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem,
and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished,
that her iniquity is pardoned.
The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness:
Prepare ye the way of the Lord,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
Every valley shall be exalted,
and every mountain and hill made low:
the crooked straght and the rough places plain.
[Isaiah 40:1-4]

CHORUS
And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,
and all flesh shall see it together:
for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.
[Isaiah 40:5]

BASS
Thus saith the Lord of Hosts:
Yet once a little while, and I will shake the
heavens, and the earth, and the sea and the dry land,
and I will shake all nations,
and the desire of nations whall come.
The Lord whom ye seek, shall suddenly come
to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant,
whom ye delight in, behold,
He shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts.
[Haggai 2:6-7; Malachi 3:1]

SOPRANO
But who may abide the day of His coming?
And who shall stand when He appeareth?
For He is like a refiner's fire.
[Malachi 3:2]

CHORUS
And He shall purify the sons of Levi,
that they may offer unto the Lord
an offering in righteousness.
[Malachi 3:3]

ALTO
Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son,
and shall call his name Emmanuel,
God with us.
[Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23]

ALTO
O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion,
get thee up into the high mountain;
O thou that tellest good tidings to
Jerusalem, lift up thy voice with strength;
lift it up, be not afraid;
say unto the cities of Judah:
Behold your God! Arise, shine,
for thy light is come,
and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.
[Isaiah 40:9; 60:1]

CHORUS
O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion,
arise, say unto the cities of Judah,
behold your God! behold!
the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.
[Isaiah 40:9; 60:1]

BASS
For behold, darkness shall cover the earth,
and gross darkness the people:
but the Lord shall arise upon thee,
and His glory shall be seen upon thee.
And the Gentiles shall come to thy light,
and kings to the brightness of thy rising.
[Isaiah 60:2-3]

BASS
The people that walked in darkness
have seen a great light, and they that dwell
in the land of the shadow of death,
upon them hath the light shined.
[Isaiah 9:2]

CHORUS
For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given,
and the government shall be upon His shoulder,
and His name shall be called Wonderful,
Counsellor, the mighty God,
the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace
[Isaiah 9:6]

SOPRANO
There were sheperds abiding in the field,
keeping watch over their flock by night.
And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them,
and the glory of the Lord shone round about
them, and they were sore afraid.
And the angel said unto them:
Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings

of great joy, which shall be to all people:
for unto you is born this day in the city of David
Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.
And suddenly there was with the angel
a multitude of the heavenly host,
praising God, and saying:
[Luke 2:8-11,13]

CHORUS
Glory to God in the highest,
and peace on earth, good will towards men.
[Luke 2:14]

SOPRANO
Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, shout,
O daughter of Jerusalem, behold, thy King
cometh unto thee. He is the righteous Saviour,
and He shall speak peace unto the heathen.
[Zechariah 9:9-10]

ALTO
Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;
then shall the lame man leap as an hart,
and the tongue of the dumb shall sing.
[Isaiah 35:5-6]

ALTO & SOPRANO
He shall feed his flock like a shepherd,
and He shall gether the lambs with his arm,
and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead
those that are with young.
Come unto Him, all ye that labour,
that are heavy laden, and He will give you rest.
Take His yoke upon you, and learn of Him,
for he is meek and lowly of heart,
and ye shall find rest unto your souls.
[Isaiah 40:11; Matthew 11:28-29]

CHORUS
His yoke is easy, and his burthen is light.
[Matthew 11:30]

Part II

CHORUS
Behold the lamb of God,
that taketh away the sin of the world.
[John 1:29]

SOPRANO
He was despised and rejected of men,
a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.
He gave His back to the smiters,
and His cheeks to them
that plucked off the hair;
He hid not His face from shame and spitting.
[Isaiah 53:3; 50:6]

CHORUS
Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried out sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions,
He was bruised for our iniquities,
the chastisement of our peace was upon Him.
And with His stripes we are healed.
All we like sheep have gone astray,
we have turned every one to his own way.
And the Lord hath laid on Him
the iniquity of us all.
[Isaiah 53:4-6]

TENOR
All they that see Him laugh Him to scorn:
they shoot out their lips, and shake their heads,
saying:
[Psalms 22:8]

CHORUS
He trusted in God that He would deliver Him:
let Him deliver Him, if He delight in Him.
[Psalms 22:9]

TENOR
Thy rebuke hath broken His heart; He is full of
heaviness: he looked for some to have pity on
Him, but there was no man,
neither found He any, to comfort Him
[Psalms 69:21]

TENOR
Behold and see if there be any sorrow
like unto His sorrow.
[Lamentations 1:12]

TENOR
He was cut off out of the land of the living, for the
transgression of Thy people was He stricken.
[Isaiah 53:8]

TENOR
But Thou didst not leave His soul in hell,
nor didst Thou suffer Thy Holy One
to see corruption.
[Psalms 16:10]

CHORUS
Lift up your heads, O ye gates,
and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
and the King of Glory shall come in.
Who is this King of Glory?
The Lord strong and mighty,
the Lord mighty in battle.
The Lord of Hosts:
He is the King of Glory.
[Psalms 24:7-10]

TENOR
Unto which of the angels said He at any time,
Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee?
[Hebrews 1:5]

CHORUS

Let all the angels of God worship Him.
[Hebrews 1:6]

ALTO
Thou are gone up on high,
Thou hast led captivity captive, and received gifts
for men, yea even for Thine enemies,
that the Lord God might dwell among them.
[Psalms 68:18]

CHORUS
The Lord gave the word,
great was the company of the preachers.
[Psalms 68:12]

SOPRANO
How beautiful are the feet of them
that preach the gospel of peace,
and bring glad tidings of good things.
[Romans 10:15]

CHORUS
Their sound is gone out into all lands,
and their words unto the ends of the world.
[Romans 10:18]

BASS
Why do the nations so furiously rage together,
and why do the people imagine a vain thing?
The kings of the earth rise up,
and the rulers take counsel together,
against the Lord and His Anointed.
[Psalms 2:1-2]

CHORUS
Let us break their bonds asunder,
and cast away their yokes from us.
[Psalms 2:3]

TENOR
He that dwelleth in heaven shall laugh them to
scorn: the Lord shall have them in derision.
Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron;
Thou shalt dash them in pieces
like a potter's vessel.
[Psalms 2:4,9]

CHORUS
Hallelujah!
for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.
The kingdom of this world is become the
kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ;
and He shall reign for ever and ever.
King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.
[Revelation 19:6; 11:15; 19:16]