Baroque
Baroque

Figures of Excess in Seventeenth-Century
European Art and German Literature

Wilhelm Fink
for Zoë
for being there
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A NOTE ON TEXTS

Because I hope this book will be of use to students as well as professors, and perhaps of interest to other readers as well, I quote throughout not from standard scholarly editions of German Baroque literature, which are readily available only to very few, but rather, where possible, from the Reclam Verlag editions that are readily available to all, easily affordable, and edited by experienced scholars. The hope, after all, is that readers of my text will want to read, or re-read, Baroque literature.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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INTRODUCTION
THE CONTESTED BAROQUE

“The Baroque still remains one of the least tamable beasts in the wilderness of criticism.” Giancarlo Maiorino began his 1990 book, The Cornucopian Mind, with those words.1 In the nearly three decades since then, there has been an explosion of interest in the Baroque, an interest borne as much by popular culture as by academia. Everywhere one turns, it seems, there have been exhibitions, coffee-table books on Baroque art and Baroque interiors, and various bombastic or overwrought cultural productions described as excessive and as Baroque. There are even clichéd puns—a sure sign of popular acknowledgment—such as the cringeworthy “going for Baroque.”2 In academia and particularly in art history, the boom, to which I must admit I have contributed with a symposium, an anthology, several essays of my own, and now this book, has grown in the last decade or two and in some areas, notably Caravaggio studies, nearly exceeds any overview.3 Still, the agitation conveyed by Maiorino’s tautologically emphatic “still remains” remains understandable.

The problem with the popular interest is less that much of what it calls Baroque has little to do with the actual historical phenomenon of the Baroque or with an understanding of it informed by our own historical and cultural-theoretical position—one not infrequently finds instinctive recognition of important characteristics of the Baroque—than that the application of the term generally occurs, whether employed appropriately or not, only in the most superficial manner, as does the use of the concept of excess for descriptive purposes. The problem, in other words, is that the popular interest in the Baroque, welcome as it often is (one has gotten to see many more exhibitions of Baroque art than ever before, to read engrossing popular books such as Jonathan Harr’s The Lost Painting, and to derive some perverse pleasure from Dan Brown’s botching of Bernini in Angels and Demons),4 rarely helps anyone come closer to understanding what the Baroque is really all about.

Despite a number of excellent studies, the academic interest in the Baroque leads to its share of problems as well. One is that academic studies so often put the cart before the horse. Articles and books on the Baroque court, the Baroque church, the Baroque state, Baroque dance, Baroque politics, Baroque theology, Baroque science, Baroque history, Baroque x, are legion, but generally seem to have little sense of what they mean, specifically, by the adjective “Baroque,” except to the extent that they might assume that anything “of” the seventeenth century is automatically Baroque. This is of course not the case. The Baroque is a phenomenon of the seventeenth century, but the seventeenth century does not somehow “equal” the Baroque. One need only think of
Francis Bacon, René Descartes, or Isaac Newton—all of the seventeenth century, none of them Baroque. Still, most scholars seem to think of “Baroque” and “seventeenth century” as essentially interchangeable. At the other extreme are those who treat the Baroque primarily as a suprahistorical phenomenon. This is a tendency encouraged by Heinrich Wölflin, first in his *Renaissance und Barock* of 1888 and then more so in his *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe* of 1915, and even earlier on, although relatively little note has been taken of it, by Nietzsche in his aphorism “Vom Barockstile” of 1879. It is a tendency, however, that improperly unties the Baroque from its historical mooring. Not that there is anything improper about understanding the Baroque suprahistorically, as long as one remembers where and when it comes from and has a good sense of what it originally was.

Helen Hills diagnosed the situation of the Baroque in similar terms in 2011, writing at the start of her anthology, *Rethinking the Baroque*: “In recent years the idea of ‘baroque’ or ‘the baroque’ has been seized upon by scholars from a range of disciplines and the term ‘baroque’ has consequently been much in evidence in writings on contemporary culture, especially architecture and entertainment. Most of the scholars concerned have little knowledge of the art, literature, and history of the period usually associated with the baroque. A gulf has arisen. On the one hand, there are scholars who are deeply immersed in historical period, who shy away from abstraction, and who have remained often oblivious to the convulsions surrounding the term ‘baroque’; on the other, there are theorists and scholars of contemporary theory who have largely ignored baroque art and architecture.” Hills’s anthology was an important intervention, but some years later still has not opened seventeenth-century scholars to abstraction or induced theorists to immerse themselves in seventeenth-century art, architecture, and literature to the extent one might have hoped when it first appeared. More interventions are necessary—studies focusing on seventeenth-century literature that, in the context of the art and architecture that would come to be known as Baroque, proves to be Baroque as well. Mine is one such study.

The Baroque is an aesthetic phenomenon of what we might call the “long seventeenth century”—c. 1580–1730, up to 1750 when including later Baroque music as well as the last phases of German and Czech Baroque architecture—primarily in Southern, Western, and Central Europe. Some manifestations can be found in Northern Europe as well as in Latin America of the same or a slightly later period, and some temporal expansions are appropriate, in both directions: backward to the so-called Hellenistic Baroque (one thinks of the *Barberini Faun* in Munich’s Glyptothek or the *Great Altar of Zeus* in Berlin’s
Pergamon Museum) and forward to, among others, German Expressionist drama and the postmodern Neo-Baroque. Not that the Baroque ever called itself Baroque. The appellation came later, usually in less-than-flattering references to the excesses of its art and literature, but “the Baroque” took hold, established itself firmly by the mid-to-late nineteenth century, and was quite thoroughly articulated, theorized, and historicized at the turn and in the first decades of the twentieth century.9

Between the historical and suprahistorical, we encounter the problem that the vast majority of studies that actually address the Baroque as what it is, that historically circumscribed aesthetic phenomenon, tend, when they are not pursuing yet another analysis of Walter Benjamin and his theory of allegory, to focus on styles and themes.10 It is essential to remember that without the seventeenth-century aesthetic phenomenon we would never have had the term “Baroque” itself, and so it could never have been employed to describe either earlier or later arts and letters, on the one hand, or other phenomena of its age, such as politics, religion, science, history, etc., on the other. The historically bound and the suprahistorical: these have been the pillars of Baroque scholarship, and the tradition remains strong, even though there have been numerous innovative, interdisciplinary, sometimes inspiring and compelling investigations of the Baroque over the last few decades—by Bal, Benthien, Braidier, Buci-Glucksmann, Calabrese, Deleuze, Hallyn, Hills, Johnson, Lahiji, Maiorino, Maravall, and Panadero, to name a few.11

For all that excellent work, we have come much closer to knowing, but still do not know well enough, what the Baroque is. Certainly, most of us know it when we see it, thinking most likely of a Caravaggio or Rubens painting, a Bernini sculpture, a Borromini church, or the rhetorical excesses of some seventeenth-century poem or drama. But when confronted, say, with a Pieter de Hooch painting like his Courtyard of a House in Delft (1658, Fig. 1, Plate 1), we either do not see the Baroque or, given the declaration that it is a work of the Baroque, we are no longer sure that we really do know it when we see it.12 This might be one way of describing the point of this book: progressing from the knowing-it-when-we-see-it of the styles we have come to associate more or less automatically with the Baroque to the not-knowing-it-when-we-see-it—at least not so quickly and not without a little help—of the compositional principles underlying those styles and thus their conceptual ground. Once we have understood this, we will be in a position to recognize—at the end of Part One—just what a transgressive, Baroque work of art a painting like this de Hooch really is. And, as we will then see, just what makes a work of literature Baroque.
All thematic, historical, and philosophical approaches are useless for the understanding of the literary text, the painting, the sculpture, or the architectural work if they do not grow out of close reading, out of careful and persistent attention to what is actually going on in the text as text, the painting as painting, the sculpture as sculpture, the architecture as architecture. Close readings of works of art and architecture are not infrequently dismissed as “formalist,” as if it were a dirty word, and it is my sense that fewer and fewer works of literary scholarship undertake such close reading. Too many skip lightly across the surface of the works, cherry-picking the evidence of a particular theme, historical context, discipline, or idea. Too many put their argument too far in the foreground while allowing the object of the argument to languish in the background. Among even some of the most exciting studies of the arts, too many skip forward, on the basis of snippets of textual analysis, to tours de force of intellection and imagination inspired by the works, but thereby risk losing and frequently enough do lose touch with them. Perhaps I will be faulted for not going far enough beyond the works of art and literature I discuss, for example into more historical than aesthetic considerations or into the manifold
theoretical paradigms that could be brought to bear on my argument and readings—and perhaps I will be faulted for being quite frank, even polemically so, about the sacrifice of text to context—but I hope not to be faulted for losing touch with the works themselves.

The Book

The purpose of this book is to show that German literature of the seventeenth century both is Baroque and confirms what the Baroque is—the latter by articulating the Baroque aesthetic in a medium, literature, and in lands, German-speaking, removed from its origin. In order to do so, I will: first, read the Baroque aesthetic in its roots in European, particularly Italian, art and architecture; second, read the articulation of that aesthetic in the Buch von der deutschen Poeterey of 1624, Martin Opitz's (1597–1639) founding work of German Baroque literature; third, pursue an extended close reading of the manifold performance of the aesthetic in arguably the most important German drama of the seventeenth century, Andreas Gryphius's (1616–1664) Leo Armenius of 1646; fourth, illustrate it through a series of shorter readings of canonical works of the period, including a) the most famous carpe diem poem of the period, by Opitz, and a poem by Paul Fleming (1609–1640) that further explores the devolution of personal identity we find in Opitz's formulation of love, b) Fleming's famous kiss poem, c) poems by Opitz, Gottfried Finckelthaus (1614–1648), Philipp von Zesen (1619–1689), and Christian Hoffman von Hoffmannswaldau (1616–1679) that deploy Petrarchistic conceits, d) a formally exceptional sonnet by Gryphius, e) the first great German novel and the only one from the seventeenth century still widely read today, H.J.C. von Grimmelshausen's (1622–1676) Simplicissimus of 1668; and fifth, conclude by attempting to echolocate, as it were, a poem by Opitz.

This book, then, is a collection of readings. Over the course of not a few years, I have come to my understanding of what the Baroque is through intensive readings of works of both art and literature, before immersing myself in theories of and scholarship on the Baroque, and then through repeated re-readings of those works. The readings of art, essential to the understanding of the literature, are close but mostly brief and are confined almost entirely to Part One, since this book is concerned primarily with literature. Two future books, I hope, will concern themselves exclusively with Baroque art and architecture. It is also easier, at least at the outset, to be brief and yet comprehensible in explicating the composition of works of art than that of works of literature, for in terms of the analysis of a work itself, it is easier to see the
details of composition, to see form, to see what a viewer describes, and perhaps even to explore the aesthetic implications of what we see. Still, those implications are often more readily accessible in the reciprocal reading of art and literature, by which I mean that my readings of literature should further support the readings of art that lay the groundwork for them, and works of art will play a role in some concluding consolidations of the readings of literature.

The effect of my readings will be to incorporate German literature into the European aesthetic phenomenon called Baroque. Only after the conceptual grounds of styles and themes and with them the recognizable principles and characteristics of the Baroque have been sufficiently determined would one then be in a position, were that one's aim, to speak of politics, dance, religion, science, history, late Hellenistic sculpture, late twentieth-century culture, etc., as being specifically Baroque. Before I can get to the readings of literature, however, what constitutes the Baroque must be addressed through the discussions of art and architecture and of Opitz's seminal poetics of 1624, the grounding work not only of German Baroque literature, but of modern vernacular German literature itself. In the first two parts of this book, then, we will already see how the principles of that art and architecture and the conceptual foundation they disclose were transported across national and media boundaries into German literature.

Scholarship and the Baroque Period

In general terms, the history of Baroque scholarship for much of the last century or so has been a history of receiving and rejecting Wölflin's antithetical definition of the Baroque vis-à-vis the Renaissance. In the field of literary scholarship, it has been a history of first transferring and applying Wölflin's categories to the literature of the seventeenth century and then, gradually and laboriously, discovering that there is not complete agreement between the arts and that there are continuities between Renaissance classicism and humanism, on the one hand, and the Baroque on the other. Gerhart Hoffmeister traces these histories in the introduction to his Deutsche und europäische Barockliteratur, arguing that "das ahistorisch vorgehende Systembilden war vielfach zu sehr antithetischen Denkmodellen verhaftet, als daß es der Vielfalt der Phänomene im Kontext der Zeit gerecht werden konnte. Gerade die Kunsthistorik ist seit Wölflin zu der Einsicht gelangt, daß die aufeinanderfolgenden Epochenstile nicht in einem antithetischen Verhältnis zueinander stehen, sondern gradualistisch ineinander übergehen." It is, of course, unfair to accuse Wölflin of being ahistorical, since his antithetical
stylistic model was precisely the result of historical investigation and comparison and only subsequently led to a more suprahistorical hypostatization of some fundamental oppositions between recurring Classical and Baroque phases. The stylistic model was precisely the result of historical investigation and comparison and only subsequently led to a more suprahistorical hypostatization of some fundamental oppositions between recurring Classical and Baroque phases.\(^{19}\) Historical analysis and abstraction into conceptual categories are not mutually exclusive, but rather, in the best of cases, inform one another.

What concerns me more is that the recognition of a “Vielfalt der Phänomene” has, over the decades, led scholars to an extreme diversification of the Baroque—e.g., its subdivision into ever smaller historical units such as “pre-baroque,” “early baroque,” “high baroque,” “late baroque,” “rococo-baroque” (an impossibility, in my view), and so on. In its ever greater historical, geographical, thematic, and even confessional specificity (the debatable, and as the present book will implicitly demonstrate, ultimately unsupportable distinction between “Catholic Baroque” and “Protestant Baroque”),\(^{20}\) this has succeeded in obscuring the very notion of the Baroque. At the same time, I would argue, this proliferation of Baroques, like the proliferation of supposedly Baroque areas of knowledge and inquiry (politics, religion, science, history, etc.), could itself be seen as Baroque, even if unintentionally so.

The continuous subdivision into variously qualified Baroque periods in turn led to the virtual abandonment of the Baroque as such by a great many scholars, perhaps especially scholars of German literature. Hoffmeister told us in his 1987 book that “‘Barock’ ist ein in der Forschung äußerst umstrittener Begriff, den man aufgrund seiner fragwürdigen Verwendbarkeit neuerdings zu vermeiden sucht,” and from Hans Gerd Rötzer we learn that “die Versuche, das Barock als eine Einheit zu fassen, selbst als eine Einheit der Widersprüche in Begriffe zu fassen, sind gescheitert”; in 2003, Hoffmeister would then reiterate the call to avoid using the term Baroque.\(^{22}\) This, of course, does not prevent scholars from continuing to use the supposedly misleading or useless term or from implicitly presupposing precisely the kind of antithetical model they deem insufficient. Indeed, Hoffmeister himself, after saying they are to be avoided, proceeds to employ freely both the term Baroque and the Baroque-Classicism antithesis. This we can take as one sign of the fact that, much as some might want to, we cannot entirely relinquish thinking in terms of discrete periods and of the antitheses that help constitute them, even while acknowledging that the discreteness and antitheses may not be absolute.

Literary history and art history always return to periodization, for it is an inherent category of historical thinking. Pointing to the often stark differences among the poets and artists accommodated under the term Baroque and weary of the attempts to define the term and the debates surrounding such attempts, many scholars decided over the last decades that “seventeenth-century literature and art” or “Early Modern literature and art” constitute
sufficient designations. Such conclusions, based on the recognition of differences within and continuities between periods, reflect what I view as a middle stage of scholarship—a stage of exhaustion—between a previous, more or less antithetically grounded determination of the period and a following return to periodization. The challenge for this next stage, the stage in which this book could be said to find its place, is to discover the grounds on which what was previously held to diverge can be seen to converge, to discover the fundamental tendencies of the period that can accommodate the multiplicity of phenomena, that reveal commonalities within the age and discontinuities between the ages that supersede, respectively, the previously adduced differences and continuities. The new periodization may eventually be proved wrong in various ways, but this prognosis does not make the project any less necessary for our understanding of the cultural productions of different ages.

Discontinuities within an age do not preclude a fundamental relation, and continuities between ages, be they formal or thematic, do not disprove a more significant antithetical relation. Rather, the antithesis always, of course, presupposes and thus to some extent contains the thesis, and a subversive discourse or practice cannot help but inhabit the discourse or practice the grounds of which it questions. An antithetical relation is just that—a relation.

Thus the rejection of Wölfflin—on the grounds that continuities can be adduced between the Renaissance and the Baroque and that there are seemingly unbridgeable differences between works he considers Baroque—does not hold. Moreover, the problem literary scholars over the last century have increasingly experienced in the application of Wölfflinian categories to literary phenomena does not lie in some hopelessly doomed enterprise of analogizing textual and visual art. Indeed, since the term Baroque was first applied to seventeenth-century cultural productions with regard to the visual arts, any discussion of the Baroque in literature must operate, at some stage, on the basis of such an analogy. The real problem in the use and abuse of Wölfflin, I believe, is, first of all, that his delineation of the Baroque is one that emerges almost exclusively from considerations of style and yields stylistic categories that are not always easily transferred to textual analysis (e.g., linear vs. painterly or plane vs. recession), and, second, that a vocabulary had not yet evolved that could sufficiently ground his stylistic differentiations in conceptual terms.

Of course, one can, as many do, consider all the problems that have arisen from the period designation Baroque and its seemingly inherent uncertainty and then simply decide to discard the notion altogether. I would argue, however, along with Jeremy Robbins in his treatment of seventeenth-century Spanish literature, that such uncertainty is itself Baroque. The Baroque has a
curious way of resurrecting and reasserting itself. Not only do those who proclaim the intention of discarding the term often find it impossible to do without it in practice, but also, as I have already indicated, in the quarter-century or so since Maiorino’s book, there has been a veritable renascence, as it were, of Baroque studies that explicitly frame themselves as studies of the Baroque.

Still, Christopher Braider concludes in 2004, there is “no clear consensus about what the term baroque means.”\footnote{23} A quarter-century before Braider and a decade before Maiorino, Murray Roston, who would clearly disagree with Hoffmeister on the legitimacy of the term Baroque, wrote that “if the baroque has now won recognition as an art form in its own right, the source of its aesthetic impulse remains in dispute.”\footnote{24} It is to the resolution of this dispute—or, if not, at least to the dispute itself—that I hope to contribute.

**System and Excess**

The stylistic divergence of the Baroque from the Renaissance that Wölfflin articulates—here we arrive at the argument at the heart of this book—resides, even though Wölfflin was not thinking in such terms, in the radical divergence of their respective attitudes toward the idea and practice of system. It is the critique of system that grounds the Baroque aesthetic and that can be seen to determine essentially all of the works of European art and most of the works of German literature belonging to the canon of the Baroque. In many cases this may seem counter-intuitive, for example in Opitz’s poetics, the focus of Part Two. Baroque poetics are often seen as straightforward rule-books for the production of poetry and as composed on the model of systematic Renaissance poetics such as Julius Caesar Scaliger’s *Poetices libri septem*. Even in recent scholarship, Opitz’s poetics is still seen in this way.\footnote{25} I will argue, however, that Opitz’s project is ironically unsystematic, indeed anti-systematic—in other words, that already at the start of German Baroque literature, that movement’s foundational work questions its own foundation and ushers in a literary age that will, as a whole, subvert—most often playfully—the systematic age that preceded it, by which I mean Renaissance classicism and humanism.\footnote{26}

The primary means of this subversion and what I consider the overriding characteristic of the Baroque that justifies the use of the term is excess, but in a more fundamental and thorough sense than it has in common parlance. Both as a thematic element and as a formal characteristic, in the eighteenth century and later it was excess, as *Schwulst*, that was used reductively to denigrate the art and literature of the Baroque.\footnote{27} Here I rehabilitate excess—in all its manifestations, formal, thematic, figurative, etc.—as an aesthetic function, as an
idea central to the cultural productions of the age, and as both the subject and
the object par excellence of Baroque practice and celebration.

In scholarship since the 1970s, it has been customary to acknowledge the
excess of Baroque texts and other cultural productions, but then to determine
that the excess is superficial, cloaking a fundamental systematicity under the
surface, and thus, as John Cull writes, just a "sugar-coating of playfulness [...] as a method in their system." In contrast, I will argue that excess is constitutive of the Baroque, even if paradoxically constitutive, since excess is inimical to the very notion of coherent construction, debilitating even as it constitutes. Excess is a term that encompasses many other signifiers that circulate in the literature on the Baroque—terms such as immeasurable abundance, surplus, spontaneous and astonishing profusion, continuous proliferation, teeming fecundity, wanton growth, copious and luxuriant increase, etc.—but while all of these terms can be accommodated in one way or another by the idea of system, excess is the only one that indicates an actual breach, a radical violation, not only of the boundaries of aesthetic and social propriety, but most generally and significantly of the closure of system. My articulation of the Baroque as a critique of the systematic foundation of the Renaissance is itself, of course and ironically, a systematic undertaking that attempts to define and thus to establish a certain unity, but here it is a unity in scare quotes, a ‘unity’ that rests on artistic and textual phenomena characterized precisely by irreducible non-unity.

"BAROQUE"

A brief remark on the word “Baroque” is in order. There has long been disagree-
ment over the origin of the word as it was first employed in art history. There are those—such as Erwin Panofsky in his essay “What is Baroque?”—who insist that it derives from “baroco,” a mnemonic device for a syllogistic figure denoting false or deceptive conclusions: “[I]t came about that the word Baroco (French and English Baroque) came to signify everything wildly abstruse, obscure, fanciful, and useless.” Panofsky rejected out of hand the other common derivation—a word denoting an irregular, misshapen pearl—claiming that it "is most improbable both for logical and purely linguistic reasons." But there are many others, from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, for example Gilles Ménage and Johann Joachim Winckelmann, until our own time, for example Timothy Hampton in his introduction to Baroque Topographies, who emphasize its derivation from the Portuguese “barrôco” for a distorted pearl. If one approaches the Baroque from the standpoint of its relation to
system, however, there is no need for disagreement, for both derivations provide a meaning of the word that quite clearly reflects its system-subverting character. Baroco—obscure, abstruse, fanciful, and deceptive—implies reasoning that diverges from and crosses the boundaries of strict systematic articulation and formulation and that fails to achieve the system's goal of certainty. And barrôco—a lopsided, non-spherical pearl—can easily be seen to imply, for example, the breaking and overflowing of boundaries, the ex-centric, the asymmetrical, the rupture of perfect form, the idiosyncratic, the irregular, the overabundant, and, in general, excess. Everything, in other words, that is incommensurable with system.
NOTES

1 Quotations from the primary texts analyzed (Opitz’s poetics, Gryphius’s Leo Armenius, Grimmeßhausen’s Simplicissimus, and multiple poems), following a first citation in an endnote, are documented in the text. All other quotations and references are documented in the endnotes to each part. Giancarlo Maiorino, The Cornucopian Mind and the Baroque Unity of the Arts (University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 1990), 1. The second half of the title of Maiorino’s excellent book seems to echo the title of Irving Lavin’s influential book, Bernini and the Unity of the Visual Arts, 2 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), although I take Maiorino’s meaning to be that a particular aesthetic is at work in the various arts, thus bringing them together, as opposed to Lavin, who argues that unity is a central characteristic of Baroque works of art. In this book, I draw into question Lavin’s (and many others’) notion of unity in Baroque art.

2 This pun had great currency in the 1990s, even to the point of having been used as a catchy title for an exhibition at The Contemporary in Baltimore in 1995–1996. See Lisa G. Corrin and Joaneath Spicer, eds., Going for Baroque: Eighteen Contemporary Artists Fascinated with the Baroque and Rococo (Baltimore: The Contemporary and The Walters, 1995).


5 Just in my direct experience, for example, this was the case at a 2005 meeting of the German Studies Association, where eight sessions on “Baroque and Modernity” constituted a conference-within-the-conference, but from my perspective this symposium was unable to achieve any significant insight into the relation between the Baroque and modernity because most everyone speaking and commenting, including scholars of German literature, seemed actually to mean “seventeenth century” whenever they said “Baroque.” And this despite the fact that there was already at least one fascinating and well-known model for approaching the relation between Baroque and modernity: Christine Buci-Glucksmann, Baroque Reason: The Aesthetics of Modernity, trans. Patrick Camiller (London: Sage, 1994). It was the case again at a symposium on Paul Fleming at the University of Erlangen in 2009—see Was ein Poëte kan! Studien zum Werk von Paul Fleming (1609–1660), ed. Stefanie Arend et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012)—where, despite a number of excellent lectures, there was substantial resistance to understanding the Baroque as before all else an aesthetic phenomenon that requires devoting primary and intense attention to its artworks and texts. At a recent business meeting of the Society for German Renaissance and Baroque Literature (SGRABL Summit, University of Minnesota, February 2016), not only was there some fierce resistance to the use of “Baroque” as anything other than an historical marker, but a significant number of those present even militated against the designation “Early Modern,” favoring “Premodern,” an impossibly broad, essentially useless category, especially when one considers the affinities between the Baroque and the modern that Buci-Glucksmann and a number of others have explored. There was talk of changing the name of the Society—more out of concern over the diminishing attention the field receives in the U.S., it seemed, than for any substantial intellectual reason—and one even more meaningless name, something along the lines of “Earlier Literature” (earlier than what, I wonder?), was actually floated as a possibility. It is
experiences such as the first and last of these three that may offer some explanation for diminishing attention to German Baroque literature in the United States.


7 *Rethinking the Baroque*, ed. Helen Hills (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2011), i.

8 While I have given some thought to and occasionally discussed with colleagues aspects of the canon of Baroque music that reflect the aesthetic phenomenon as I will argue we must understand it, I am not able to argue with authority regarding the music of the period and so will leave that to any musicologist who may find it rewarding to pursue.

9 Jane Newman devotes her book, *Benjamin's Library*, to the history, from the perspective of Walter Benjamin’s *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, of these articulations, theorizations, and historicizations in what may be called a *tour de force* of tertiary literature. Tertiary is of course what *Wissenschaftsgeschichte* of literary scholarship—in its relation to its object, literature—always is. See Jane O. Newman, *Benjamin's Library: Modernity, Nation, and the Baroque* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011). Newman’s is, as she writes, an attempt to rescue those debates about the Baroque, including Benjamin’s contribution, from obscurity “by focusing on the important role the Baroque played in theorizations of European modernity that exploded onto the world stage” in those decades (2). In other words, understanding the Baroque is not Newman’s primary or even secondary concern. Her concern in analyzing *fin-de-siècle* scholarship on the Baroque is understanding a different period and different, not primarily aesthetic, phenomena through the Baroque. This cannot help but amount to an instrumentalization of the Baroque itself. And yet how can one do even that without first having a notion of what the Baroque is, rather than just how things called “Baroque” may have served these other purposes? *Benjamin's Library*, in the end, is not on the whole a book about German Baroque literature, or even, for that matter, really about scholarship on Baroque literature as it pertains to understanding that literature, but rather about political, philosophical, and cultural concerns contemporary to, informing, and evinced by that scholarship. Even in the one, long section of a chapter that presents a sustained reading of a work of Baroque literature, Gryphius’s *Catharina von Georgien*, what is at stake is less the play itself than “understanding Benjamin’s reading of Andreas Gryphius’s shockingly literal allegorical play […] in the context of the confessional stew created by Benjamin’s contestation of Warburg scholarship” (21). The fine insights in Newman’s reading of the play are extensively encumbered and ultimately overwhelmed by historical and theoretical contexts, the context of Benjamin’s articulation of allegory, and, as Newman herself asserts, “the emblematic cocoon that surrounds the Catharine play” (84).
Mine is not another Benjamin book, although I will of course use his insights into Baroque drama where I find them useful: Walter Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, vol. 1, bk. 1, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1974), 203–430. Christopher Braider has commented on the lack of connection between studies of this Benjamin book on the Baroque *Trauerspiel* and the object of Benjamin’s own study: “Critical Theory chiefly focuses on Benjamin’s *Ursprung* independent of German Baroque drama as such. However, in a talk at the University of Colorado, Boulder, in Fall 1999, Samuel Weber evinced an incipient interest in the drama at least to the extent of checking Benjamin’s claims against some of the texts”: *Baroque Self-Invention and Historical Truth: Hercules at the Crossroads* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 32. This focus on Benjamin continues unabated, as we can see, for example, in Nadir Lahiji’s 2016 book, *Adventures with the Theory of the Baroque and French Philosophy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016). Newman’s *Benjamin’s Library* makes, even if in the tenuous manner I have asserted, the connection Braider had decried as absent in Benjamin scholarship.

Mieke Bal’s *Quoting Caravaggio: Contemporary Art, Preposterous History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999) is a book that developed out of Bal’s work on the plenary lecture she presented at my symposium on “Baroque Re-Visions” at Melk Abbey and the Austrian Academy of Sciences in Vienna in October 1996 (see pages 2 and 16–18). She isolates a few phrases from the invitation to the symposium and turns them into straw men against which she can cast her project, which in the end is actually very much in the spirit of what the symposium had hoped to achieve: see my introduction, “Vorwort: Äquivoka Anmerkungen zum vorläufigen Projekt einer Definition des Barock,” in *Barock: Neue Sichtweisen einer Epoche*, ed. Peter J. Burgard (Vienna: Böhlau, 2001), 11–14, and the essay version of Bal’s lecture in the same volume: “Auf die Haut / Unter die Haut: Barockes steigt an die Oberfläche,” 17–51. The other studies I refer to here are: Claudia Benthien, *Barockes Schweigen: Rhetorik und Performativität des Sprachlosen im 17. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Fink, 2006); Christopher Braider, *Baroque Self-Invention and Historical Truth*; Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *La folie du voir: De l’esthétique baroque* (Paris: Gallilée, 1986) and *Baroque Reason*; Omar Calabrese, *Neo-Baroque: A Sign of the Times*, trans. Charles Lambert (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992); Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold*; Fernand Hallyn, *The Poetic Structure of the World: Copernicus and Kepler*, trans. Donald M. Leslie (New York: Zone Books, 1990), especially the chapter entitled “Thinking the Ellipse,” 203–230; Helen Hills’s anthology, *Rethinking the Baroque*, and her own contributions to it; Christopher D. Johnson, *Hyperboles: The Rhetoric of Excess in Baroque Literature and Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010); Lahiji’s *Adventures*; Giancarlo Maiorino, *The Cornucopian Mind and the Baroque Unity of the Arts*; José Antonio Maravall, *Culture of the Baroque: Analysis of a Historical Structure*, trans. Terry Cochran (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986); Paul Francis Panadero, *‘Die Karnevalisierung des Barock: PREDIGIÖSE ZEICHEN, GROSSE AUSDEHNUNGEN UND DIE ‘REALISTISCHEN AUGIEREN DER ERFAHRUNG im Theater Calderóns und Shakespeares,' in Barock: Neue Sichtweisen einer Epoche, 289–320. The only book included in this list that addresses specifically German Baroque literature is Benthien’s, because, even though there are a number of points on which I disagree with it (one of which I will address in my reading of Hoffmannswaldau), it is an innovative and sophisticated exploration of a wide range of that literature, a reading that pursues a fascinating theme and figure—silence/speechlessness—that is at the same time, especially in the context of poetry and perhaps even more so drama, always more than just theme and figure, namely always necessarily also a matter of textuality. As
The two books are at different stages of completion: *Caravaggio’s Calling: Dissimulation and Doubt* and *Skew: Bernini’s Roman Chapels and the Asams’ Munich Church*.

I will restrict myself to Western and Southern Europe. One could extend the investigation and the examples to Bohemia (perhaps especially the work of Christoph Dientzenhofer and his son Kilian Ignaz, but also that of the Asam brothers, Egid Quirin and Cosmas Damian, who were occasionally active in Bohemia as well as in Bavaria) and elsewhere in Europe, but there is only so much room here. I will address the Asam brothers in my study of Bernini’s Roman chapels. Extending the investigation to England is more problematic: one’s first question, as perhaps with Netherlandish art, might naturally be how one could find the Baroque, which one tends to link so closely with the Catholic Counter-Reformation, in a Protestant land, but I think this question can be answered, especially with reference to Christopher Wren, John Vanbrugh, and Nicholas Hawksmoor, and I hope to do so in a future study of what I call the “Veiled English Baroque.” Confession does not strike me as decisive in determining a commitment to the Baroque aesthetic; indeed, all of the German Baroque literature I investigate in this book was written by Protestants, with the possible exception of Grimmelshausen, who is thought to have converted to Catholicism.

Wolfflin has been accused of other things as well, most insistently perhaps of being little more than a formalist, which is a favorite accusation by art historians of analyses of works of art that focus on what one actually sees in them more than on historical contexts and on iconography, which might yield better understanding of a work, but frequently enough do not. Misreadings of artworks due to insufficient attention to the works themselves, misreadings where aspects of works are described that are clearly not in evidence or where the formal composition is misrepresented, are legion. Even an art historian whose work I greatly admire not too long ago referred to Wolfflin as an “arch-formalist.” Two decades earlier, however, Marshall Brown had already argued convincingly against such a view, concluding that “Wolfflin’s own five paired categories of the understanding [in his Principles of Art History] are tools for interpreting the meaning of the artistic act and never a merely formal or analytical apparatus”. “The Classic Is the Baroque: On the Principle of Wolfflin’s Art History,” Critical Inquiry 9, no. 2 (December 1982): 404. While I cannot agree, for reasons that will become apparent, and as enticing as the notion may be, with Brown’s reinscription of the Classical as the Baroque (on the basis of “an oscillating balance of sympathy between them,” 385), I think he is correct in pointing out that Wolfflin’s Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe is a favorite whipping post, but one that those holding the whips, as is usually the case, cannot do without: “Those who criticize Wolfflin’s apparent oversimplifications almost invariably do so in the service of convictions about the complexity and difficulty of style formation that they have unwittingly learned from him” (380). Even if one wishes to insist that he was a reductive formalist, one still has to acknowledge, I think, that the resultant insights into Classical and Baroque art are generally accurate.

The northeastern German Protestant Baroque is often categorized as Wortbarock, ‘word Baroque,’ as opposed to the southern German and Austrian Catholic Baroque, which is seen as Bildbarock, ‘image Baroque.’ For a discussion of this differentiation, in the context of a larger discussion of allegory, see Rüdiger Campe, “Continuing Forms: Allegory and translatio imperii in Caspar von Lohenstein und Johann Wolfgang von Goethe,” Germanic Review 77, no. 2 (2002): 128–145, especially 129 and 141n8.

One finds all sorts of other “Baroques” as well—post-Baroque, contemporary Baroque, etc.—but perhaps the most amusing is the “Ultra-Baroque,” which in its very tautology—tautology, in its repetition, being construed as a virtual identity of two statements or ideas, where the apparent identity is of course never truly identical—reflects the non-self-identity, the non-unity, that I will argue is a significant aspect of the Baroque. See Ichiro Ono, Divine Excess: Mexican Ultra-Baroque (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1996) and Mabel Moraña, “Baroque / Neobaroque / Ultrabaroque: Disruptive Readings of Modernity,” in Hispanic Baroques: Reading Cultures in Context, ed. Nicholas Spadaccini and Luis Martín-ESTUDILLO (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2005), 241–281. The notion of the Ultra-Baroque strikes me as either superfluous or a mistake, insofar as it is defined as “the baroque of the baroque” (Ono, 83) and “utilized to designate extreme forms

of baroque style, ‘rococo’ or ‘churrigueresque’ (Moraña, 269). Through its excess one could say that the Baroque is already a superlative, so that “the baroque of the baroque” would be the logically impossible superlative of the superlative, and the Churrigueresque seems very much a part of Baroque excess, while the Rococo is sooner a move away from than an intensification of the Baroque, if the latter were even possible.

Hoffmeister, Deutsche und europäische Barockliteratur, 1; Hans Gerd Rötzer, “Schwerpunkte der neueren Barockforschung,” IASL 3 (1978): 170; see also Herbert Jaumann, “Barock,” in Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturwissenschaft: Neubearbeitung des Reallexikons der deutschen Literaturgeschichte, ed. Klaus Weimar et al., 3rd ed. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1997), 1:200–201. In a 2003 online article, Gerhart Hoffmeister asserts that “because there existed no convincing congruence with the multiplicity of styles in the various arts (architecture, music, painting) and literary genres (novels, plays, lyrics), it is counterproductive to assert a specific ‘Baroque style’ as a common denominator for all forms” and that “recently the tendency has been to avoid the fluid term ‘German Baroque’ altogether” (Hoffmeister argues instead in favor of “Literature of the Early Modern Period”): “German Baroque Literature,” The Literary Encyclopedia, first published September 26, 2003, https://www.litencyc.com/php/sttopics.php?rec=true&UID=1332.

For a sophisticated defense of Wölflin, see Brown, “The Classic is the Baroque.”

Jeremy Robbins, in describing seventeenth-century Spanish literature, a literature whose scholars seem to have much less trouble calling it Baroque than is the case with German literature, writes of “a culture of uncertainty taking hold of the artistic imagination”: The Challenges of Uncertainty: An Introduction to Seventeenth-Century Spanish Literature (London: Duckworth, 1998), 10.

Baroque Self-Invention and Historical Truth, 5. One could continue here with a further history of attempts to come to terms with the Baroque, but since Braider has done this so well and succinctly, I refer readers to pp. 5–9 of his book, which may be the best book yet written on the Baroque, a critical tour de force, but one that has a significantly different focus from mine. Like me, Braider is concerned with the conceptual ground of the Baroque, but he seeks it in temporality. He recognizes many of the characteristics of the Baroque that I will be addressing (see especially page 8), but then takes them as a given and theorizes that what brings them together is their relation to history, “the experience of unsettling secondness Pascal articulates with Montaigne in view” (12; emphasis in original). I, on the other hand, take a step back to ask what the common conceptual ground of the Baroque in its original manifestation, as aesthetic phenomenon, might be. Braider’s book earns criticism, however, for its uncritical adoption of a conventional bias about German Baroque literature among twentieth-century theorists of the Baroque, but one that I hope my book will demonstrate is mistaken. Echoing the Benjamin scholars he criticizes for not engaging with the object of Benjamin’s study (see note 10 above), Braider remarks, in a vast generalization: “Composed in a German that is hard to read, and adopting forms that show little of the fineness its French, Spanish or Italian counterparts display, German baroque literature was largely obsolete even in its own day, constituting a corpus only Benjamin-like antiquarians could love” (22). This statement is misleading; German Baroque literature is no harder to read for an educated German-speaker than Shakespeare is for an educated English-speaker. The fineness of the poetry of Opitz, Fleming, Zesen, Gryphius, and Hoffmannswaldau, of the novels of Grimmelshausen, and of the drama of Gryphius and Lohenstein requires, as one might expect and as should become apparent in these pages, actual engagement with the texts, even though it may not rise to the level Braider expects (it was at that point, after all, a very new literary language). And
the literature was certainly not obsolete in its own day, when one considers that “its own day” spanned more than 60 years and reverberated even beyond that—at least until the stultifying ‘classical’ literature and literary theory of Gottsched and the denigration of the Baroque by Winckelmann in the context of his rapture over the classical, both in the mid-eighteenth century—or when one considers the intensity and breadth of scholarship on the Baroque in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and then again in the 1960s and 1970s—when it was not at all unusual to write either one’s doctoral or one’s postdoctoral thesis on the Baroque—and, indeed, ever since. Braider may have made this remark, however, less out of conviction than out of a desire to set up his following claim, that “[t]his antiquarian obsolescence emerges, moreover, as a deliberate feature of one of German drama’s most prestigious exemplars, the tragedy of Sophonisbe [...] by the ‘German Seneca’ Lohenstein” (22).


Hoffmeister, for example, writes of “die von der Renaissancepoetik und -praxis abhängige Dichtung der Opitzschule” and points out that it is seen to constitute a “pre-baroque classicism” (Deutsche und europäische Barockliteratur, 1). Recent scholarship continues in this vein, e.g., Dirk Niefanger, Barock (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2000), 83–92, or Jörg Wesche, who writes of the “präskriptiven Anspruch der Anleitungsapoetiken” with specific reference to Opitz: “Barock,” in Metzler Lexikon Literatur: Begriffe und Definitionen, ed. Dieter Burdorff, Christoph Fasbender, and Burkhard Mennighofer, 3rd ed. (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2007), 70. For more such views, see the text and notes of Part Two, on Baroque poetics, which will demonstrate that Opitz himself, while he uses Renaissance poetics, does not depend on them in the way Hoffmeister and most others believe.

See Maiorino, especially 1–3.

The most famous and influential jeremiad against the Baroque was that of Johann Joachim Winckelmann, who has widely been considered the father of modern art history. See his “Abhandlung von der Fähigkeit der Empfindung des Schönen in der Kunst und dem Unterrichte in derselben” of 1763, in Winckelmans Werke in einem Band, ed. Helmut Holtzhauer (Berlin: Aufbau, 1969), 138–166. There he claims that the works of artists such as Caravaggio and Bernini lack beauty, arguing, for example, that Caravaggio’s paintings “cannot” be beautiful, “denn sie sind der Natur des Lichts zuwider” (161). This only proves that Winckelmann was severely limited in his seeing, that his view of the world and of art had not progressed beyond the relatively simple clarity of the Renaissance.

John T. Cull, “The Baroque at Play: Homiletic and Pedagogical Emblems in Francisco Garau and Other Spanish Golden Age Preachers,” in Writing for the Eyes in the Spanish Golden Age, ed. Frederick A. de Armas (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2004), 237. The specific system Cull means here is the Jesuit “system of prayer.” Cull’s study concerns the use of emblems by the Jesuits as playful excesses designed to make their doctrine more palatable (on emblem, excess, and system, see my reading of Grimmelshausen’s Simplicissimus in Chapter Five of Part Four). See also Calabrese, who discusses excess at length and relates it both to the (Neo-)Baroque and to what he would call the destruction of system (see especially the third chapter, “Limit and Excess,” 47–67). However, Calabrese, who is concerned with defining a cultural system he calls the Neo-Baroque, repeatedly posits the rehabilitation of excess as or in system, even though his definition of excess correctly demonstrates its incommensurability with system.

Erwin Panofsky, “What is Baroque?,” in Three Essays on Style, ed. Irving Lavin (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 9. Panofsky wrote his essay in 1934 and only added his first long paragraph on “baroco” in a much later version, according to the editor sometime after
1960 (203), where he also added a footnote to a Spanish-language essay of 1934 addressing this etymology (editor's note 1 on page 207). Even after all that time he still seems to have been unaware of or to have failed to acknowledge at least two treatments of the relation between "Baroque" and "baroco" that appeared in the two decades preceding his first version, one by a well-known scholar and one by an already renowned thinker (the editor also fails to mention them): Karl Borinski's *Die Antike in Poetik und Kunsttheorie: Von Ausgang des klassischen Altertums bis auf Goethe und Wilhelm von Humboldt*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Dieterich, 1914), 118, 199, 303, and 308 (Borinski, 1999 and 308, traces the relation between Baroque and baroco back to Baltasar Gracián in his *Arte de ingenio* of 1642 and revised *Agudeza y arte de ingenio* of 1648, where Gracián refers to such a syllogism) and Benedetto Croce's 1925 essay, "Il Concetto del Barocco," *La Critica: Rivista di Letteratura, Storia e Filosofia diretta da B. Croce* 23 (1925): 129–143, especially 129–130. Panofsky's rejection on linguistic grounds of the derivation from a word for irregular pearl could be a function of portraying the derivation as being definitively "from Latin verruca and Spanish barrueca" (19). The French *baroque* derives from Spanish *barrueco*, but more closely from Portuguese *barrôco*; however, it is unclear whether this derived from Latin or another source. One can find assorted conjectures about the origin in various etymological dictionaries, including a derivation from Spanish *barrueco* or "wart" (this clearly related to Latin verruca for wart). Panofsky's objection on "logical" grounds does not hold, as my argument should show.


PART ONE
MODELS
Art and Architecture:
Bernini, Borromini, Velázquez,
Rubens, Fracanzano, De Hooch, et al.
Ein Bild stellt sich dar als das Unübersichtliche, Unlogische, Unsinnige. Es demonstriert die Zahllosigkeit der Aspekte, es nimmt uns unsere Sicherheit, weil es uns die Meinung und den Namen von einem Ding nimmt. Es zeigt uns das Ding in seiner Vielbedeutigkeit und Unendlichkeit, die eine Meinung und Ansicht nicht aufkommen lassen.

Gerhard Richter
In order to see the subversion of systematics I am talking about, and because one cannot separate the literary from the artistic Baroque if the term itself is to remain meaningful and useful, it is necessary first to compare the architecture, sculpture, and painting of the Renaissance to that of the seventeenth century. Moreover, approaching Opitz’s poetics by way of art seems to be invited by the doctrine of *ut pictura poesis* that reigned from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment and that Opitz himself, as it happens, explicitly invokes when he writes in a poem that “der Pinsel macht der Feder / Die Feder widerumb dem Pinsel alles nach. [...] edles mahlen [sey] / Poeterey die schweig’ / und die Poeterey / Ein redendes Gemäl’d und Bild das Lebe.”

I trust it will become apparent why Gerhard Richter is right in what he declares about pictures, but only up to the second clause of the final sentence and no further.²

In making this comparison, I bracket out Mannerism.³ Mannerism is a specific movement of approximately the middle half of the sixteenth century, falling between the Renaissance and Baroque, while some art historians see the Baroque as a return in some ways to the classicism of the Renaissance. On my view, the justification for seeing the Baroque as a return to Renaissance classicism—with all the harmony, stability, and clarity the latter implies—lies in its realistic representation of nature and in its turn away from that very obvious Mannerist departure from the naturalism of the Renaissance.⁴ One need only compare the naturalism of Caravaggio’s, Bernini’s or Rubens’s figures (1610, Fig. 2) with a Bronzino or with the distorted perspectives, the impossible proportions, and the stretched-out figures of a Parmigianino or, on top of all that, the supernaturalism, almost surrealism of El Greco. Parmigianino’s *Madonna of the Long Neck* (1540, Fig. 3) looks, after all, as if she’s just had a session on the rack, and the radical recession of the *eight* columns in the right background of the painting serves to mock accurate perspective. In this regard, Baroque painting and sculpture are far subtler. In what appears to be a return to Renaissance naturalism, the Baroque actually eclipsed the Renaissance by achieving the greatest verisimilitude in painted and sculpted representation that has ever been attained.⁵ However, this naturalism is only one aspect of Baroque art, and it creates the context for a much more forceful subversion of the systematic principles underlying Renaissance art.
One might say that Mannerism paved the way for Baroque subversions, but that the Baroque recognized a more effective means of subversion in the use or deployment of the naturalism of the Renaissance. An effectively subversive discourse or practice always necessarily inhabits the discourse or practice it subverts.

Especially in the early stages of this first part of the book, which grounds my readings of German Baroque literature, I focus on Italian art and architecture, not German, because of its exemplarity—Italy and more specifically Rome being the cradle of the Baroque—and because I am concerned with the nature of the Baroque in general and with pursuing the source of its aesthetic impulse regardless of artistic medium and national boundaries. As the argument progresses, I turn my attention increasingly to Flemish, Spanish, and finally Dutch Baroque painting, to which the points I make about the Italian Baroque can easily be seen to apply.

The introductory comparisons of Baroque to Renaissance art and architecture are mostly quite brief, serving primarily to point up essential contrasts
and to point out essential components of the Baroque aesthetic. As these become established, I will dive more deeply into analysis of individual works, especially Bernini’s *David* and then, in the last third of Part One, paintings by Velázquez, Rubens, Fracanzano, and de Hooch.

**BAROQUE VERSUS RENAISSANCE, REVISITED**

In one of the quintessential and certainly most familiar works of the Renaissance, Leonardo’s *Vitruvian Man* (c. 1490, Fig. 4), we can see not only that age’s concentration on regular, undistorted forms, but also, schematically, the desire to make nature, in the form of man, as well as art, in the form of an artist’s rendering of the human body, fit into a system of boundaries, centering, and coherence. In Cesare Cesariano’s illustrations for his 1521 translation of Marcus Vitruvius Pollio’s *De architectura*, we find another *Vitruvian Man*, albeit
Leonardo frames the human form within an intersection of the two grounding forms of Renaissance systematics, the circle and the square. In Cesariano we find the same, except that he goes to exceptional lengths, namely dramatic inaccuracy in the representation of the human body, to make the square fit perfectly in the circle, which in turn fits perfectly into another square. Cesariano dots his systematic i by drawing crossing diagonal lines that start at the corners of the outer square, run directly through the intersection of the circle and the corners of the inner square through the tip of the man’s middle fingers and touching the tips of his big toes, and that intersect at his navel. A greater focus on the center, both formally and thematically, is difficult to imagine. The will to system is unmistakable. 30 years earlier, Leonardo did not go to such lengths. That he actually, due to his accurate representation of the human form, calls attention to the failure of that systematization does not, however, diminish the significance of the attempt. We might then take these images as a basis on or against which to consider the art and architecture of the Renaissance and Baroque.
ARCHITECTURE

Turning first to architecture, the plans of any number of sacral buildings—let us take Bramante’s plans for St. Peter’s and his Tempietto as examples (c. 1505 and c. 1502, Fig. 6 and 7)—and the treatises of Leon Battista Alberti and Sebastiano Serlio demonstrate the Renaissance concern for perfect proportion, the repeated use of circles and squares, symmetry, and, above all, the idea of the center. Serlio’s many variations of church plans in his *Seven Books of Architecture* would reflect, in a kind of summation, the fixation on centered structure at the heart of the architecture of Renaissance classicism (Fig. 8 and 9, from *Book Three* and *Book Five*, respectively).7

Keeping Leonardo, Cesariano, Bramante, and Serlio in mind, we can see how the buildings of the age reflect these conceptual foundations. For example, Alberti’s San Sebastiano in Mantua (1460, Fig. 10, 11). Reflecting central tenets of Alberti’s 1452 *De re aedificatoria*, it is a free-standing, central-plan church, indeed one of the two archetypical centralized plans, namely the
Fig. 6
Donato Bramante, St. Peter’s, Rome, Plan, 1505.

Fig. 7
Donato Bramante, Tempietto, Rome, Plan 1502.

Fig. 8
Sebastiano Serlio, Plan of Bramante’s Dome, 1540.
Fig. 9
Sebastiano Serlio, Plan for a Temple, 1551.

Fig. 10
Leon Battista Alberti, San Sebastiano, Mantua, Façade, 1460.

Fig. 11
Leon Battista Alberti, San Sebastiano, Mantua, Plan, 1460.
Greek cross (the other being the circle), with its square in the center. San Sebastiano stresses coherence through this centering, but also in the symmetry of both façade and plan and—of great significance to Renaissance architects—in the equal width and height of its façade, which imply the perfect proportions of a square. Regarding Alberti's Sant'Andrea in Mantua (1471, Fig. 12), aside from the equal width and height of its façade, of note is, as Janson points out, yet another manifestation of Renaissance architectural coherence in the "complete continuity [of the façade] with the interior of the church, where the same colossal order, the same proportions, and the same triumphal arch motif reappear in the nave walls; the façade offers an exact 'preview' of the interior." Commissioned to complete the façade of Santa Maria Novella in Florence (1470, Fig. 13), Alberti refashioned a Gothic façade in his Renaissance idiom. He added the striped corner piers, the four Corinthian columns, and the classical central portal on the lower level, the latter of which, in conjunction with the two original side doors, emphasizes the façade's anticipation of the tall central nave flanked by two smaller side naves that the visitor finds upon crossing the threshold into the church. Alberti’s more significant contributions to the façade—the attic across the entire width and the second story—bring us back to what we witnessed in Leonardo and Cesariano: he not only includes circles in the scrolls and pediment of the second story and the long row of
circles within squares across the attic, as well as the circle (the window) and square intersecting on the upper level, but he also renders the façade a system of three equal squares. By adding the attic to the first story, Alberti transformed it into a rectangle twice as wide as it is high or, given the vertical division at the center of the main portal, two equal squares. He then added the third square that, together with the massive curved scrolls on either side of it, constitutes the second story and that is centered on top of those two squares. (In order to recognize the lower squares, one need only imagine or draw a vertical line down from the peak of the pediment and a horizontal line across the top of the cornice above the attic.) Alberti thus achieved equal height and width in this façade as well.

By contrast, when we consider the façade of Francesco Borromini’s San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane (commonly known as San Carlino; interior completion 1641, first story of façade completed 1667 by Borromini, remainder of façade and bell tower completed 1677 by Bernardo Castelli Borromini; Fig. 14), we find a radical departure from and critique of the Renaissance architectural idiom. Here is a church that accommodates itself to its site, rather than asserting independence from it, insofar as Borromini, first, made it fit a small and irregularly shaped plot and, second, had to incorporate into the façade and plan of the church the late sixteenth-century fountain, representing the River
Fig. 14 Francesco Borromini and Bernardo Castelli Borromini, San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane, Rome, Façade, 1665–1677.
Tiber, at the southwest corner of the then Strada Pia and Strada Felice, now Via del Quirinale and Via delle Quattro Fontane. Alberti or Bramante might have balked, or even abstained. Not Borromini. Perhaps the peculiarities of the site suited his imagination, but in any case the church we see appears to have been inspired by them. Virtually everything in his church and the attached cloister challenges Renaissance classicism, to the extent that it does not obliterate it. Here I will address only the façade, the main church interior, and the Barberini Chapel ceiling.

With Alberti’s façades in mind, we cannot help but notice that Borromini’s is distinctly top-heavy (Fig. 15). The first story, completed by Borromini himself, already conveys this top-heaviness with its dramatically protruding main cornice. The upper façade, completed by Borromini’s nephew Bernardo, then emphasizes the top-heaviness by rendering the entire façade, like some other well-known Baroque churches (one thinks of San Matteo in Lecce or of St. Johann Nepomuk in Munich), far taller than it is wide—and with a destabilizing effect entirely different from the height achieved with the towers of Gothic cathedrals. The two parts of the façade—the lower with its serpentine, concave-convex-concave flow and the upper with its triply concave wave, interrupted by a convex oval aedicule and accentuated by a massive concave oval medallion—each display dramatic curves and undulations, as do

Fig. 15  Francesco Borromini and Bernardo Castelli Borromini, San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane, Rome, Façade, 1665–1677.
Borromini's lantern and his nephew's bell tower (Fig. 16). Everything here constitutes a playful subversion of the flat surfaces of Renaissance church façades and campanili (one thinks of the campanili in Mantua, Florence, and Venice, squares all, or the circular tower in Pisa), a subversion that is exaggerated yet further, even if conceivably not intended by Borromini, in the tension between the curves and undulations of the respective halves of the façade. The amalgamation of curves, folds, and undulations can be seen to undermine precisely the kind of clarity those earlier structures display, confusing rather than comforting those who approach it.10

This confusion is part of the nature of the Baroque façade, particularly in its relation to the church interior: the Baroque façade, as Deleuze has also pointed out, undermines the clarity in that relation between exterior and interior.11 The result is disorientation on the part of whoever enters the building. In his Sant'Andrea al Quirinale (1661, façade 1676), sometimes considered a less radical example of Baroque architecture than Borromini’s San Carlino, Gian Lorenzo Bernini set this disorientation vividly into play when he gave his church a semi-circular portico, semi-circular steps (and a semi-circular
transom window for good measure) protruding from the classical aedicule of the façade (Fig. 17). It is tempting, if one wanders along the Via del Quirinale, to view Borromini’s shockingly undulating façade of San Carlino, begun in 1665, as a response to the classicizing façade of his rival’s then new, 1661 church a two-minute, 180-meter walk away from Borromini’s 1641 church. Tempting until, that is, we are reminded that Bernini only began his aedicule and portico in 1670, three years after Borromini’s suicide in 1667. Perhaps, then, the disorientation Bernini effects with his façade is less a reaction to than a reception of Borromini’s distortions of classical forms. Bernini’s façade—also much taller than it is wide, because Bernini, in a subtler distortion, makes the aedicule the entire façade—encourages visitors to anticipate a traditional Renaissance classical structure (while at the same time hiding, along with the walls to each side, what lies behind that portico and façade), only then to have them cross the threshold into a dramatically and multiply oval space that is decidedly not classical (Fig. 18). Moreover, one not only moves from a circular space into an oval space, but Bernini forces us, as he was also doing at St. Peter’s Square, to cross into a transverse oval (Fig. 19). Entering a transverse oval disturbs our perception of space in a way that a longitudinal oval, a longitudinal rectangle (e.g., the long naves of a gothic cathedral or the barrel-vaulted nave of St. Peter’s in Rome or St. Michael’s in Munich), or even a circle does not. Walking through a doorway, especially the doorway of a church, is of course an action of moving forward, toward the altar, being drawn forward by the logic of the space and the symbolism of the altar, but a transverse oval brings the visitor up short: one hesitates—almost or actually stops—in the liminal, uncertain space that is the threshold, and one is discomfited.

This disorientation characterizes the experience of the Baroque church interior by itself as well, without even considering the relation of outside to inside. Besides playing with hidden light sources—a both literal and figurative obfuscation prevalent in the Baroque—the oval dome of Borromini’s San Carlino (Fig. 20, 21) confronts the viewer with repeated, disturbing shifts in line and an orgy of ovals and competing forms. That, at least, is the overwhelming impression on the visitor, even if there is a mathematical rationale behind them, but then, even so, the product of the excessive and playful mathematical consciousness that was Borromini’s.

On the other hand, many Renaissance structures, in their employment of a circular dome and semi-circular arches imposed on a square base, echo Leonardo’s or rather Cesariano’s intersecting circles and squares and present clearly ordered and easily comprehended spaces. Indeed, in comparing these architectures one can again see the divergence of the Baroque from the
Fig. 17 Gian Lorenzo Bernini, Sant’Andrea al Quirinale, Rome, Façade, 1661–1676.
Fig. 18  Gian Lorenzo Bernini, Sant’Andrea al Quirinale, Rome, Dome and Side Chapel, 1661.

Fig. 19  Gian Lorenzo Bernini, Sant’Andrea al Quirinale, Rome, Dome from Entrance, 1661.
Fig. 20  Francesco Borromini, San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane, Rome, Dome, 1641.

Fig. 21  Francesco Borromini, San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane, Rome, Dome, 1641.