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PETER GREENAWAY AND THE BAROQUE : WRITING PUZZLES WITH IMAGES

by

SUSANA MADEIRA DOBAL JORDAN

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Art History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The City University of New York

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Abstract

PETER GREENAWAY AND THE BAROQUE :
WRITING PUZZLES WITH IMAGES

by

Susana Madeira Dobal Jordan

Adviser: Professor Romy Golan

The work of Peter Greenaway poses a complex challenge since it ranges from films to artworks and tends to push against the limits usually accepted for both domains. The themes of his work, such as death, violence and sexuality, mixed with games and different kinds of measuring can be polemical. Furthermore, the treatment that they are given eschews well-known solutions, thus compelling the viewer to take an active role in order to enjoy the work. In this study the Baroque is proposed as a key to relating different aspects of Greenaway's work that would otherwise appear chaotic and incoherent. The term Baroque refers to a historical period, but also, and importantly, to a topic that has been given attention by both art and film critics who do not limit the period exclusively to the seventeenth century. The Baroque is seen instead as an ensemble of strategies that have informed the production of different works at present time. The aim of this thesis is to find the basic strategies of Greenaway's work that resulted in different formal and thematic manifestations linked to what has been conventionally identified as a Baroque aesthetic. Film and artwork are analyzed together, with intention of identifying how similar conceptions of an idea can be translated into different domains.

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Finally, thanks to Peter Greenaway, whose intriguing work has inhabited my thoughts in recent years, and in one way or another will continue to echo in the years to come.

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INTRODUCTION

The work of Peter Greenaway has received growing attention since research for this dissertation began, with many books and articles being published every year. This interest can also be felt in seminars and meetings in which his work appears as a constant theme in oral presentations. It was with mixed feelings that I viewed this interest in his work: on the one hand, one becomes suspicious of belonging to the mainstream of academic research, since the theme seems to have become fashionable, especially in Brazil; on the other hand, having become so popularized, his work has also raised the complicated challenge of offering a new approach to it. In spite of the fashionable theme, it seemed worthwhile to believe in this topic and try to solve the question of why the work was capable of arousing so much attention. After all, if the work seemed suggestive to so many people, it must have been because it was deeply connected with the cultural experience of our time. The choice of an approach to his work should therefore respond to the double need of not repeating what has already been said about it and of trying to find the key for the general interest in the subject. The answer came with the study of the Baroque and the choice of considering also the other part of Greenaway's work that in general has been neglected, which is his artwork.

It is not difficult to guess why the Baroque was defined as a starting point, since some of Greenaway's films are deliberately set in the seventeenth century. The study of the Baroque, however, proved that it was much more than a chronological matter. If Greenaway's production ranges from films to paintings, drawings, collages, writing and curatorial work, his sources are correspondingly wide. The Baroque appeared not as a mere source for quotation of paintings eventually restaged in his films but as a general

attitude that permeated his whole work and can be found in Baroque art, drama, music, literature or philosophy. The revision of the Baroque undertaken in the last decades and also addressed here, suggests that it must be deeply connected to our own time somehow. There are actually some critics who do link Greenaway's films to the Baroque, but a systematic attempt has not yet been made at elucidating his films and artwork with the Baroque as a key.

It must be said, nevertheless, that the Baroque is but a choice of an approach that, as rich in associations as it proved to be, cannot be taken as exclusive of other approaches. It would in fact be contradictory to sustain this, as it is proper of the Baroque to deny closed unities, be they in terms of painting composition or in terms of a philosophical understanding of our basic thought structures. The Baroque is therefore a period of combinations and recreations, historically fixed but in constant dialogue with other cultural and historical moments. Greenaway's work, and particularly his artwork, is also linked to what is done in a section of contemporary art that has no evident link to the Baroque. These connections are reviewed throughout the dissertation and they demonstrate flexibility in our consideration of the Baroque as a key to his work, as well as the close association of this work to what is presently being produced in general terms. In truth, but a short step would be needed to connect the two poles: perhaps what is produced in contemporary art is indeed close to the Baroque. The scope of this dissertation, however, is not to discuss the presence of the Baroque in contemporary art, but rather to investigate it uniquely in relation to Greenaway's work. Naturally, a path may be opened by the close association between the two and there are in fact some critics, such as Omar Calabrese, who have analyzed contemporary art works as manifestations of what he called the neo-Baroque.

The definition of the Baroque used throughout the dissertation is not tied to a single perspective nor to a historical period. The term "historical Baroque" was used when referring to the Baroque of the seventeenth century. In the other cases, the term Baroque is used to refer to the Baroque developed at the present time, which implies its origin in the seventeenth century. "Contemporary Baroque" is the term employed to mark a distinction between the historical and the contemporary Baroque. Following the example of many of the studies on the subject, the term Baroque employed here is a result of a construct made up of different approaches, as it will be seen in the next section. The perspectives are diversified but not arbitrary. Omar Calabrese identifies the Baroque work itself as being multifaceted, Severo Sarduy makes his definition of the Baroque oscillate between science and art, and Deleuze proposes a kind of thinking that could take place in *n-dimensions*. This characteristic can be extended to a theoretical approach of the Baroque that tries to cover different aspects of it. The main preoccupation, however, is to determine the basic processes of conception of a work of art within a Baroque framework, and for this, Foucault's epistemology or Deleuze's philosophy offers the appropriate tools for this undertaking.

The Baroque is related to different manifestations, specific formal devices and strategies such as the reference to the labyrinth, the use of serializations, the choice of creating games. When using different perspectives for approaching a theme, one risks getting lost in a possible dispersion. However, the aim of this multifaceted approach is the opposite, namely, to cover the multiple manifestations of the Baroque in Greenaway's work. The use of the Baroque as a resource for analyzing Greenaway's work is not an attempt to confine it within a definition, but rather to find the references that can contribute to understanding its strategies and meaning.

The Baroque has also been a theme in film criticism since the end of the 1950s. The source for this discussion originally came from studies of Baroque art and literature; however, since then different authors have been analyzing films from this perspective.[1] In their discussion, these authors often warn the reader about the difficulty of establishing a definition for the term Baroque, but the fact is that there is a "coincidence" in the films chosen to be seen from this perspective. Obviously the coincidence is not gratuitous: the definition may seem to be imprecise but there is clearly a group of films that do work within the same frame of reference, meaning not only the works they allude to, but also the strategies used to create their script or their *mise en scène*. The discussion about the Baroque cinema was also used in our analysis of Greenaway's films, and like the authors who have discussed those films, we have maintained the reference to a Baroque that can be traced not only in cinema, but in art and literature as well.

The source material for this research on Peter Greenaway ranged from texts related to his work to texts that studied the Baroque in general. The Baroque proved to be a concept of great complexity since it has been a subject of myriad authors who explore diverse perspectives in their approach. Therefore, before we begin to examine Peter Greenaway's work, we must first identify the definitions of the Baroque that have guided our analyses. Although the authors who have written about the Baroque explored different issues related to it, their perspectives are more complementary to each other than exclusive. In fact, authors like Severo Sarduy and Omar Calabrese, for example,

[1] See for example, the magazine *Vertigo*, that is dedicated to film criticism and that in the year 2000 released a whole issue about the Baroque on cinema. *Vertigo*. Special Issue: Projection Baroques. (Paris: Jean-Michel Place et Sueurs froides-Vertigo: Marseilles: Musées de Marseille, 2000).

resorted to various aspects of the Baroque on which to base their arguments, as will be seen shortly. In the following sections, we will present an overview of the source material used for this dissertation.

The Baroque as a key

The Baroque as it will be considered here is a concept that has been used in art history and in film theory. The recurrence of this concept in both areas is opportune, considering that the work of Peter Greenaway encompasses both artistic and cinematographic production. However, the versatility of the term "Baroque" may generate some confusion, as it is ultimately related to definitions that must explain such diverse domains as art and cinema. Moreover, the ambiguity of the term may appear exacerbated by the fact that it has been used to define a historical Baroque as well as a contemporary Baroque. The apparent complexity of the term "Baroque" will not, however, represent an obstacle. On the contrary, it has been an important concept for different authors and can be useful in establishing the link that relates aspects of Greenaway's work that would otherwise seem unconnected, such as strategies used to conceive a film or an exhibition. In order to avoid the apparent vagueness of the term Baroque, we will begin by searching for its roots in a brief revision of its use both in art and film criticism. This historical retrospective demonstrates that the Baroque has been used as a key by authors who have sought a concept capable of encompassing artistic and cinematographic productions that ultimately define part of contemporary culture as well.

Since the term is used to refer to a larger cultural panorama, it is easily confused with another term employed to label our time within a single concept, which is "Postmodernity". In fact, there are many affinities between what has been called a contemporary Baroque and what has been considered to be Postmodern, but there are also ways of differentiating the two terms. It is not the scope of this dissertation to extend the term Baroque to define most of contemporary artistic production, but to use it as a key to specifically decipher Greenaway's artistic and cinematographic work. Therefore, it will be within this particular case that the difference between the two terms will be found; in other words, Greenaway's affinity with the Baroque can be read too as an affinity with Postmodernity since his work is in constant dialogue with contemporary artistic production. However, his work also has its own peculiarities that legitimatize the reading of it as authentically Baroque. The similarity and the difference between the terms Baroque and Postmodernity will be addressed in the conclusion, when the analysis of Greenaway's work will have offered the elements to demonstrate why, in the case of Greenaway, the Baroque is a better key than Postmodernity .

The choice of the Baroque as a key was also deeply informed by the work of the philosopher Gilles Deleuze. If this appears to introduce one more variable to a definition apparently so hazardously threatened by multiple perspectives, the actual function of the reference to Deleuze is to justify the very choice of a multiple perspective about the Baroque theme. In his extensive work, Deleuze maintained a coherency that led him to study, among other subjects, the Baroque in the work of Leibniz. The coherency to which I refer stems from the affinity between what Deleuze searched for in his study of cinema, for example, or in his concept of the "rhizome," and his analysis of Leibniz's work. The course of Deleuze's thinking determined his choice of subjects and his

approach to them. He explored the basic presuppositions that underlie the development of philosophy in order to select a different tradition, that is, one that has been neglected and therefore affected the development of various sciences. What changes in this neglected tradition is a way of thinking that reverberates in the way linguistic, history, biology and other sciences elaborated their fundamental concepts and conceived a possible approach to their specific subject. Hence, as we will see, if we consider Deleuze's concept of "rhizome," the dilemma of the historical and the contemporary Baroque is no longer an impasse since they are allowed to co-exist; furthermore, if we follow Deleuze, an approach that feels free to refer to a Baroque in historical, formal or philosophical terms is not necessarily incoherent, although it may not be orthodox Art History. But what is most important is the fact that, far from being a theoretical *tour de force*, the choice of a multiple perspective is suggested, or we can even say, imposed, by Greenaway's work itself. His references to the Baroque do not stop at historical facts but rather are extended to a formal, cultural and philosophical positioning also related to the Baroque. Thus, with the aim of covering the many aspects proposed by his work, we must employ a critical approach that contains an equivalent versatility.

The Baroque in Art

While Renaissance artistic production was soon recognized as an important paradigm in Art History, for a long time the Baroque remained undervalued as being a mere synonym of exaggeration and bad taste. It was only at the end of the nineteenth century that Heinrich Wölfflin made the first step towards a rehabilitation of the period

with his *Renaissance and Baroque* (1888).[2] In this comparative study of the two historical eras, Wölfflin analyses different aspects of the art produced in both periods in terms of oppositions. With different formal categories serving as his point of departure, Wölfflin poins out opposing but systematic solutions found in the painting, sculpture or architecture of both periods. Wölfflin's categories will prove to be useful in our study of movement as a Baroque quality, in chapter 2. Although our understanding of movement is not restricted to a formal aspect, the investigation of its different configurations in Greenaway's work will offer a significant beginning to understanding movement as a conceptual category as well. In this way, what appeared to be only an aesthetic choice will reveal itself as a consequence of a far-reaching attitude. Movement assumed formal configurations because it was implicit in the Baroque idea of a larger volatility that permeated everything, surfacing as formal traits, but also making meanings within words oscillate and produce enigmatic Baroque poetry, for example. Wölfflin's categories will inform this double perspective. They help to identify movement as a recognizable formal quality, but they also suggest an understanding of it as a basic strategy for organizing an exhibition or mounting a collage, as in the case of Greenaway's work.

The idea of the Baroque gains complexity in later approaches that also consider historical determinants, but the importance of Wölfflin's initial step should not be overlooked. With his comparisons, Wölfflin situated the Renaissance and the Baroque side by side, implying that one way or another, there was no hierarchical value to be attributed to each of those two aesthetic choices. Furthermore, Wölfflin is still a recurrent reference in many studies of the Baroque because, although his categories were

[2] Heinrich Wölfflin, *Renaissance and Baroque* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1966).

conceived to work in oppositional terms, they do help to determine some important Baroque traits, even when the Rennaissance is not being considered.

After Wölfflin, the concept of the Baroque gained new perspectives. Authors like Arnold Hauser, Giulio Argan or Victor L.Tapié did not limit their approach to formal traits, but rather linked the formal characteristics of the Baroque to social, economic and historical events. The historical context of the Baroque is usually associated with the Counter-Reformation, that is, with the need for creating art capable of counteracting the growing influence of the Reformation - the schism that occurred in the Catholic church in the sixteenth century which became the basis for the founding of Protestantism. Considered within this perspective, the Baroque would have a different manifestation in countries where either Protestantism or Catholicism had a major influence. However, this approach mostly contemplates the influence of the Church in art while there were other important variables in the same period. The Baroque can also be associated with absolutism and, most of all in France, with a Court art in which the State would resort to monumentality in order to reaffirm its power. Used by the Church or by the State, the Baroque would be a tool for persuasion, which means that, in general, grandiosity, eloquence and impact would be sought after in the artistic production of the period. On the other hand, the seventeenth century is also the time in which the power of the bourgeoisie is overcoming that of the aristocracy. As a consequence, the official art sponsored by the State responds to the demand of the ascending class for a more conservative and practical art. In countries where the influence of the bourgeoisie is not concentrated only in the government, but rather permeates society in general, art becomes less dependent on official commands since a new public has acquired the financial means to purchase it. This will also provoke some changes, such as a tendency

to include elements from everyday life as themes in and of themselves, or to present traditional religious, mythological or historical subjects with a contemporary approach.

The fact that historical events may also be used to explain the Baroque does not lead to a dogmatic explanation of the period. On the contrary, from this brief exposition of the different elements at play in the social panorama of the period, it can be concluded that a definition of the Baroque is the result of a series of choices. The conclusion is that, ultimately, one must have flexibility with regard to how precise one can be in defining a period. The variables are too diverse to provide a single, exact definition of the Baroque: the influence of the Church, of the State, or of the bourgeoisie in a specific region, or the differences between countries, not to mention the specificity of the artists working in the same context, are all determinants of the art that is produced in a specific period.

None of the authors mentioned above speaks about a single Baroque. Giulio Argan, for example, makes it a point that the historical panorama was such that it was important to produce art driven BY ideological persuasion, either religious or political, and this is found in the painting, sculpture or architecture of the period. Argan recognizes at the same time that the Flemish artist, on the other hand, had a greater autonomy as he was no longer associated with great sponsors like popes and princes.[3] After explaining that different social contexts make it difficult to define the Baroque as a single style, Arnold Hauser, in his turn, mentions that what can be found in common among the different manifestations of the Baroque is that they all departed from the same philosophical transformation announced by Copernicus in the previous century. When Copernicus stated that the Earth spun around itself and around the Sun, the universe lost its center, man was no longer the hub of Creation and together with these

[3] Giulio Argan *L'Âge Baroque* (The Baroque Age) (Geneve: Éditions d'Art Albert Skira, 1994), 19.

assumptions consciousness of the infinite would echo in the different manifestations of the Baroque.[4]

After briefly explaining this philosophical point of departure, the remainder of Hauser's text focuses mostly on the social variables that were decisive in different countries. Copernicus's discovery would attain greater weight, however, in the approach to the Baroque undertaken by Severo Sarduy; but before addressing him we must first mention the work of Eugenio D'Ors, who, in the 1930s, dared to formulate the first trans-historical definition of the Baroque. Although D'Ors makes rather arbitrary leaps in his approach to the subject, his work has remained an important reference that has inspired more recent studies of the Baroque. D'Ors's main idea was that the Baroque was limited neither to geography or chronology, nor to artistic production. For him, the Baroque was a kind of reasoning that could be verified in painting, sculpture or architecture, but could also be identified in, for example, scientific hypothesis. By means of different, and at times rather disparate examples, Eugenio D'Ors builds a definition of the Baroque that is more a suggestion of what it can be than a precise definition of it. The model would prove to be fruitful. Severo Sarduy departs from Copernicus's discovery to investigate how it reverberates on different levels, which includes artistic and scientific production as well. Although he is more rigorous in his argumentation, Severo Sarduy, like Eugenio D'Ors, does not limit the Baroque to the seventeenth century.[5] In fact, both belong to a gallery of authors who have been studying the Baroque also as a contemporary manifestation, such as Omar Calabrese, in Italy, Alejo Carpentier in Cuba, or Christine Buci-Glucksmann and Guy Scarpetta, in France.

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[4] Arnold Hauser. *Historia Social da Arte e da Literatura* (The Social History of Art and Literature) (São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 1995),452.

[5] See Eugenio D'Ors. *O Barroco* (Lisboa: Vega, undated) and Severo Sarduy. *Barroco* (Lisboa: Vega, undated).

Working with artistic and scientific production in order to define the Baroque, Omar Calabrese proposes the term "neo-Baroque" to define a contemporary version of it. Departing from, for instance, the theory of fractals or contemporary artworks, Calabrese enumerates a series of characteristics whose recurrence define the Baroque, such as serialization, fragmentation, excess, metamorphosis, labyrinth.[6] Many of these elements are present in this dissertation, although they are discussed considering mostly other authors who have also analyzed them. The work of Calabrese must be mentioned as one more approach to the Baroque that did not limit itself to the orthodox delimitation of a historical period, but his reading of it as a general way of defining the cultural panorama at present surpasses the aims of this dissertation.

Alejo Carpentier also overcame a chronological definition of the Baroque, since he considered it to be the essence of Latin America. Carpentier mentions an "eternal return of the Baroque" that he identifies in Proust, or in modern architecture. However, his most original contribution was to read Latin America as essentially Baroque, given the mixture of European and native cultures and races, and to propose this very Baroque tendency as a means of cultural resistance to the region.[7] Departing from a deep knowledge of the historical Baroque, Christine Buci-Glucksmann also investigates the period as a recurrence that overcomes chronological limits. She focuses her approach either on the importance given to vision in the Baroque, or on Baroque reasoning as present in the work of Walter Benjamin and Charles Baudelaire.[8] Although Buci-

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[6] Omar Calabrese, *Caos e Bellezza: Immagini del neobarocco* (Milano: Domus Academy, 1991) and *A Idade Neobararroca* (Neo-Baroque: a sign of the times) (Lisboa: Edições 70, 1988).

[7] Alejo Carpentier, "L'éternel retour du baroquisme" in *Magazine Littéraire* 300 (June 1992), 27 – 31.

[8] Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *La folie du voir: De l'esthétique Baroque* (Paris: Galilée, 1986); *La Raison Baroque: de Baudelaire à Benjamin* (Baroque Reason: the aesthetics of modernity) (Paris: Editions Galilée, 1984). For a reference to the Baroque in cinema see also Christine Buci-Glucksmann's, "L'Oeil

Glucksmann's interest in the Baroque as a means of rendering thought visible was very useful in the formulation of this dissertation, she is mentioned at this point mainly as an example of an approach that is far from superficial, but yet does not search for its basis in historical facts. Buci-Glucksmann bases her arguments on an interpretative choice as she elects a theme, such as what she terms the "*folie du voir*", to serve as a guide in developing her arguments about the Baroque. Multiple strategies at play in the Baroque are therefore corroborated by means of examples taken from art and literature, but mostly by means of a well constructed argument that little by little reveals a link between characteristics that are often associated with the Baroque, but not often related to each other.

These different perspectives on the Baroque are not mutually exclusive, and, when necessary, will be given greater attention throughout the dissertation. A reading of the Baroque that relates it to a historical moment seems limited if we consider the later development of the critical texts about it. Such a reading may, however, turn out to be useful since Greenaway himself builds some of his artworks, such as the exhibition *The Stairs* to mention but one example, based on the association of the Baroque to the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, as will be seen in chapter 1. Nevertheless, this will not be the main focus in our analyses of Peter Greenaway's work. Although the allusion to that historical period may confirm the connection with the Baroque, we are more interested in how the Baroque appeared by means of other types of references, such as the concept that guided the organization of an exhibition curated by Greenaway,

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Baroque de la Caméra" in *Raoul Ruiz*, eds. Christine Buci- Glucksmann and Fabrice Revault D'Allones (Paris: Dis Voir, 1987) 9-41.

Flying over water (chapter 2), or the structure of one of his films, *A Zed and Two Naughts* (chapter 3).

Baroque in Cinema

The reference to the Baroque in cinema studies began in 1960 with the first issue of the French magazine *Étude Cinématographique*, which would come to play an important role in the debates on film criticism in the following decades. It is not by chance that a magazine that sought a serious approach to cinema would begin by relating some film productions to a broader cultural phenomenon. That first issue was entirely devoted to the theme *Baroque and Cinema*, and contained articles that ranged from comments about the Baroque in general to analyses of specific films, or the work of specific filmmakers. Relating cinema to the Baroque was a means of ascribing a stronger cultural status to it, as cinema appeared side by side with other artistic manifestations like painting or sculpture. However, this was not enough to validate the relation between cinema and the Baroque. The debate would not have reached this point if the Baroque had not already become a broader concept not restricted to a historical period. Unless one wishes to make a joke (as Greenaway did when he took a series of photographs of characters that had supposedly lived in the seventeenth century when photography had not yet been invented), it would be a chronological impossibility to relate cinema to the Baroque.

In the debate about the Baroque in art, the term defined a series of characteristics that could also be found in cinematographic production, such as the taste for movement, the recurrence of the themes of death and melancholy, the presence of the labyrinth

suggesting a structure based on an indefinite progression, exuberance of forms, the preference for games and for the spectacular, a realism that can be artificially reinforced in order to achieve greater intensity, the body and (religious) ecstasy as a theme, the confrontation with the broader issue of the human condition, the penchant for riddles, allegories and metaphors, all of these are traits that form the puzzle in which the term "Baroque" will appear. Some authors will enumerate a series of elements; others will take a single idea and from there will develop the concept of the Baroque in all its ramifications. Although this concept may appear to be vague, there is in fact a consensus about it and another magazine dedicated to the same theme may serve as a confirmation of this. Forty years after the first issue of *Étude Cinématographique*, another French magazine on film criticism, *Vertigo*, published a special issue about the Baroque in cinema. The discussion had become much more specific and relied on the contribution of many other texts that investigated the theme in the time that has ELAPSED since 1960, when the first issue of *Étude Cinématographique* appeared. Yet, the theme of the Baroque was still controversial.

In one of the articles in the special issue of *Vertigo*, Antoine de Baecque identifies the Baroque as a construction limited to a specific moment of film criticism which followed the release of the film *Lola Montès*, by Max Ophuls (1955), and culminated with the first issue of the magazine *Étude Cinématographique* mentioned above.[9] He argues that the notion of the Baroque was a construction at the service of the "politique des auteurs", a view defended mainly by the critics from the *Cahiers du*

[9] Antoine de Baecque, "Du concept au fétiche: penser un nouvel âge du cinéma. La critique et le Baroque". *Vertigo*. Special Issue: Projection Baroques. (Paris: Jean-Michel Place et Sueurs froides-Vertigo: Marseilles: Musées de Marseille, 2000). 25-30. In another article, Hervé Aubron makes a brief retrospective of the recovery of the term 'Baroque' in art and film theory. Most of the authors he mentions were the main authors also used in this dissertation. See Hervé Aubron, "À rebours", in idem. 5-16.

Cinéma, who, by identifying the particularities of different filmmakers, justified filmmaking as a practice capable of a sophisticated means of articulation. According to de Baecque, the notion of the Baroque would later be substituted by the notion of mannerism in cinema, and both would mean more or less the same, that is, a cinema that favors the connection between cinema and painting, and that recycles old references. If we agree with de Baecque, the term Baroque seems to be only a theoretical construct situated not in the seventeenth century, but rather in the twentieth century; more precisely, in the 1950s and 1960s.

However, at least two reservations may be entertained against his argument. First, if the term Baroque responded uniquely to a demand of film criticism defended by the "politique des auteurs," how could we explain the special issue of a magazine dedicated to Baroque cinema in the year 2000? It is true that the term Baroque was initially applied at a time when film criticism sought to authenticate cinema as a cultural experience that deserved attention. Thus to link cinema to the Baroque was a way to affirm the richness of a medium that might otherwise be seen as mere trivial entertainment. Nevertheless, this does not invalidate the discussion that has been undertaken since then, and that has gone on to delineate a special practice in cinema whose definition comprises either specific films or the work of some filmmakers. The term Baroque should not be regarded as a label that confines a film within a single definition, but rather as a concept that helps elucidate the strategies at play as well as the meaning of the work. The discussion of the Baroque has endured for so many years because of a corresponding production that evolved using similar references and which resulted in a coherent ensemble of works investigated by different theorists.

The second counter-argument to the possibility of Baroque cinema being exclusively a product of the "politique des auteurs" is offered by the work of Peter Greenaway. The oscillation between film and artwork has confirmed the possibility of employing the same ensemble of ideas that defined the Baroque in different media. Greenaway is surprisingly absent from the issue of *Vertigo* that discusses the Baroque. He is mentioned in a single article along with other two other filmmakers in what could possibly be called a list of Baroque filmmakers, but there is no further investigation of his work. This absence seems even less justified if we consider his affinity with other films that have been defined as Baroque. Furthermore, some of Greenaway's films are indeed situated in the seventeenth century and this was not a fortuitous choice. Historical reference was avoided as an exclusive means of authenticating his affinity with the Baroque, but it can be used at this point to argue that the theoretical construct of the Baroque is less arbitrary than it may appear to be.

The discussion about the Baroque did begin as a discussion about the art and literature of the historical Baroque. The development that succeeded this discussion permitted the creation of works in different domains that maintained some characteristics in common. These characteristics are definable and coherent and range from a formal device to an abstract conception of time and space, for example. In order to cope with such a diversity of manifestations, it seemed necessary to surpass the segregation of film, literature and art criticism. Therefore, authors who have dealt with the Baroque often support their arguments with references to different domains of artistic creation. In order to explain why a specific strategy is found in very different works of Peter Greenaway, it seemed necessary to first establish a common ground not limited to the superficial traits of Baroque aesthetics. The philosophical approach of

Gilles Deleuze offered the appropriate tools for investigating Greenaway's work, since it revealed the very basis of the Baroque way of conceiving reality. There is no special chapter related to Deleuze in this dissertation; however, his work is a constant reference that has helped to decipher links between, for example, works of art and films which would otherwise seem unrelated. It is important, then, to also specify Deleuze's contribution to the analyses of Greenaway's work.

Deleuze and the Baroque

Although Deleuze wrote specifically about the Baroque, his contribution to this dissertation is not limited to his book on the theme. Deleuze's interest in the Baroque and in Leibniz, the philosopher on whom he centered his study of the Baroque, can be justified on the basis of an affinity between what he found in the Baroque and what can be found in the whole of Deleuze's work. It is not by chance that Deleuze mentions in an interview that we live in a time of crisis of human reason, and that in order to save or rebuild reason we turn to the neo-Baroque, which situates us closer to Leibniz than to Voltaire.[10] This comment may offer a clue to Deleuze's own choices, as he was opposed to a historically dominant tradition in philosophy so pervasive as to affect different domains beyond philosophy itself, and that ultimately lead to limited conclusions in diverse scientific areas. In *Logique du Sens*, Deleuze began by exposing the basis of a neglected philosophical tradition, and enphasized this perspective, for example, in the analyses of the work of Lewis Carroll. Because the Baroque belongs to this alternative tradition, it is possible to resort to Gilles Deleuze's texts to explain different aspects of

[10] Gilles Deleuze, *Pourparlers* (Negotiations)(Paris: Minuit, 1990), 221.

Greenaway's work. Hence, it is necessary to introduce some of the concepts proposed by Deleuze in order to understand how they can be useful in our analyses.

Beginning with the Baroque itself, Deleuze chose "the fold" as the concept better able to define it; by the fold he meant, basically, the possibility of an indefinite progression. If the neo-Platonic tradition favored a hierarchical derivation from an original One, Leibniz, through whom Deleuze approaches the Baroque, would speak of monads, that is, units that contained a system in themselves, but that combined in different ways with other indefinite series of monads that constitute the universe. Therefore, in place of absolute Cartesian essences, the Baroque would propose a sea of relations that would instead define each thing. Deleuze mentions that Baroque mathematics conceives the object as pure functionality, because instead of an essential form the object becomes a series of declinations. Within this new status, the object no longer refers to matter but instead to a temporal modulation.[11] It is not difficult to locate the reverberations of this same idea in different moments in Deleuze's writings: in his concept of "image-mouvement", for example, objects no longer exist in themselves but appear related to each other and in constant variation; in his analyses of the structure of power, Deleuze demonstrates how the State works in a combination of hierarchical and segmented relations; in his praise of the simulacrum, Deleuze denies the platonic conception that separated essence and appearance and attributed more value to the copy, which would be closer to the essence than to the simulacrum.[12] Yet the idea that also

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[11] Gilles Deleuze, *Le Plis: Leibniz et le Baroque* (The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque) (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1988), 24-27.

[12] See respetively, Gilles Deleuze, *Image-mouvement* (Cinema) (Paris: Minuit, 1983), 86 ; Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Mille Plateaux: Capitalisme et Schizophrénie 2* (A thousand plateaus: capitalism and schizophrenia) (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1980), 273-4; Gilles Deleuze, *Logique du Sens* (The Logic of Sense) (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1994), 302-309.

translates similar presuppositions and that may better justify its use in the context of the Baroque was the concept of the rhizome.

The rhizome represents an alternative to overused models of thought unable to cope with diversity. Deleuze points to the model of the tree, whose logic pervades, for example, such different domains as biology, linguistics and psychoanalysis, as based on a duality between the things and their representation, that is, still related to the platonic One. He also mentions the model of the root which tries to cope with diversity but is still linked to linearity and to a secret One. The rhizome is the image he found to substitute these two models and to translate the idea of multiplicity as the basis for thought. Thus the rhizome implies the possibility of many combinations without a beginning or an end and, mainly, without a center or a hierarchy. The result is not chaos, but an ideal book, for instance, that would exist in "n-dimensions", as Deleuze says; in other words, a book not tied to subjectivity or to an object, but rather a book capable of including everything, working simultaneously within different dimensions. The rhizome abolishes derivation to establish dimensions, moving directions not subordinated to an origin, but coordinated with other rhizomes.

Such a concept turns out to be very useful in a reflection about the Baroque because it justifies its revival in the present and also explains much of its content. If Deleuze sees the rhizome as an anti-genealogy because it implies a constant movement and metamorphosis in different directions, a contemporary Baroque cannot be an impossibility. When the Baroque is considered in a single dimension which ties it to specific historical events, it remains bound to the seventeenth century. However, considered in different dimensions that include historical facts and a series of practices in literature, arts and science as well, it becomes possible to envisage how a specific way

of thinking that underlines the Baroque can find echo in the present. Adopting the logic of the rhizome, ideas can reverberate in another moment while sustaining a degree of affinity with the previous moment, and also generating their own configuration. The rhizome is "anti-genealogy" because there is no reproduction linked to a single origin in its logic, there are, instead, only reverberations, lines of fugue. It is easy to understand why there would be resistance to this idea. Deleuze often comments on how pervasive the tree model has been to our way of thinking, adding that many have a tree in their heads but the brain is a herb rather than an arborescence .[13]

The rhizome suggests a solution to the chronological issue in the Baroque, but it also gives a foundation to the perspective adopted by different authors who analyzed the subject. As mentioned before, Eugenio D'Ors was the first to consider the Baroque as a variety of manifestations. After him, authors who wrote about the subject incorporated this variety either in the diversity of Baroque manifestations they considered, or in the critical material on which their argumentation was based. Wölfflin, for example, is a constant reference, but in addition to him we may also find references to such diverse approaches as those by Eugenio D'Ors, Foucault, Deleuze or Sarduy. This diversity exists because the revival of the Baroque is far from being a matter of formal devices, but rather a radicalization of assumptions inherent in the historical Baroque. Deleuze appears on the scene as a thinker who plays a central role in explaining how the contemporary reflection about the Baroque became possible. The debate about the Baroque seems to illustrate much of what he stated as the alternative to the tree-shaped model of thinking, since it views the subject from different perspectives and it is not afraid of assuming the very possibility of a contemporary version of the Baroque. It

[13] Deleuze, *Logique du sens*, 24.

becomes clear, then, that a contemporary Baroque refers not only to a contemporary artistic production, but also to a critical approach that must adapt itself in order to respond to its subject.

The aim of this dissertation, as has been stated previously, is not to consider the Baroque as a means of explaining the present moment, but rather as away of deciphering Greenaway's work. Therefore, the reference to Deleuze must prove useful in analyzing the work in question. If Deleuze relates the rhizome not to a copy, but to a map, the map itself is the theme of an exhibition and a film by Greenaway. This is not a mere coincidence; it stems from a deeper affinity between Deleuze's theorizing and Greenaway's production. As will be seen in chapter 5, Greenaway's map does not lead to any final destination; it is above all the course that is stressed, and the map is made up of indefinite exits. Deleuze and Greenaway are emphasizing in this way a process of constant movement within a labyrinth of possibilities. If Deleuze speaks of sequences of segments in lieu of hierarchies, Greenaway's work is dominated by grids and serializations that juxtapose units on the same level. Most of Greenaway's films follow a storyline, or at least his feature films do, but the narrative's linearity is constantly menaced by the need to break it with paradigmatic associations as if the story were crowded with rhizomes that kept referring to other rhizomes. Deleuze's contribution does not address the entirety of Greenaway's work but it does assist in finding the mechanisms at play in both his films and artistic work. Once they are identified, it becomes clear that the Baroque, seen through the eyes of Deleuze and others, ultimately becomes the result of multiple perspectives that nevertheless have elements in common. Deleuze contributes, as we will note throughout the dissertation, by defining the bases of this coherence.

The Bibliography related to Peter Greenaway

During the five years that followed the approval of the topic of this dissertation, I was able to gather abundant material about Peter Greenaway. Immediately after the theme was approved in 1996, I went to Paris on an exchange program between CUNY/Graduate Center and the University of Paris. My aim was to begin gathering material and to attend courses on cinema, which I had already been doing in New York, so as to further prepare myself for the undertaking I had just committed myself to. This exchange program proved to be very useful. Professors R. Odin, R. Bellour, and M. Marie taught courses that helped me take the initial step towards some chapters of this dissertation and exposed me to the theoretical background necessary to developing the papers about Greenaway, which I wrote and submitted to them. I was also given the opportunity to collect bibliographical material by visiting libraries and bookstores. During my stay in Paris, I visited the British Film Institute (BFI) in London, where I saw Greenaway's early films for the first time. Besides the libraries, I also explored second-hand bookstores in every city I visited and often found out-of-print books. Finally, friends who knew about the work I was doing sent books and catalogues that turned out to be valuable contributions.

The research material consisted of books about Greenaway, articles in specialized magazines on cinema, mostly *Cahiers du Cinéma* and *Positif*, occasionally magazines on art, catalogues of his exhibitions and some web sites where I found either articles about him or information about his artwork. An extensive source of material was provided by Greenaway's own writing and interviews, widely published in magazines,

catalogues and books about him. Greenaway is one of the best exegetes of his work, as he is always open to discussion and usually writes the texts in his exhibition catalogues. Reference to critical material is made often by way of his writings and through scattered articles about him that are mentioned throughout the dissertation; however, there are a number of books related exclusively to his work that deserve mention.

Alan Woods proposes a list of themes present in Greenaway's work, mostly in his films, but sometimes also in his artwork.[14] He mentions relevant topics such as water, still life, maps, or Darwin's theory of evolution, but he rarely dares to step beyond a mere reference to the Greenaway work in which the theme is present. Woods relies extensively on Greenaway's writings, which punctuate all his texts and shed light on each of the proposed themes. Throughout his book, Woods often refers to artists and filmmakers who have influenced Greenaway, sometimes linking his work with that of other artists, thus contextualizing Greenaway within a larger sphere of contemporary art. There are also two extensive interviews at the end of the book, in which, once again, Greenaway makes remarkable comments about his work.

Amy Lawrence introduces her book with a brief biography of Greenaway and an explanation about the main themes of his work. She also gives special attention to his early films in the introduction before analyzing seven of Greenaway's feature films in the following chapters. Although her book ends abruptly, without a conclusion and without relating the films to each other or to Greenaway's work in general, it offers good critical essays about specific films.[15]

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[14] Alan Woods, *Being Naked Playing Dead: The Art of Peter Greenaway* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1996).
[15] Amy Lawrence, *The Films of Peter Greenaway* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press,1997).

The expression "cinema of ideas," often used by Greenaway to refer to the kind of cinema he is interested in, served as the title for the book written by the Italians Benciveni and Samueli.[16] *Peter Greenaway: Il cinema delle idee* begins with a brief summary of all of Greenaway's work, including not only all his films up to that date (1996), but also works in theater, television and exhibitions. The book is extensively illustrated with film stills and samples of Greenaway's artwork – collages and drawings, and bring explanations about recurrent topics in Greenaway's work that recall his encyclopedic project. These inserts provide brief explanations to references commonly made in his work such as, for example, Jorge Luis Borges, John Cage, William Shakespeare, Baroque gardens, Land Art, etc, which give an idea of how Greenaway organized his own productions. Despite the book's impressive graphic design, which mirrors Greenaway's attention to the visual presentation of his films and catalogues, it cannot be said that the critical content shares the same sophistication. The subsequent chapters are organized by themes called "obsessions" that refer to cataloguing, symbol, body and game, but these are explored very superficially. The book also contains one more revealing interview with Peter Greenaway at the end, as well as the text he wrote to accompany the twenty-four books made about the film *Prospero's Books*. Finally, *Il cinema delle idee* was also useful as a reference because of the extensive, rare and well-reproduced graphic material it contained.

Domenico De Gaetano offers a deeper analysis of Greenaway's work, beginning with an introductory exposition of his main themes and of the context in which the early films were made. These films, to which the author dedicates more than half of his book,

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[16] Alessandro Bencivenni e Anna Samueli, *Peter Greenaway: Il Cinema delle Idee* (Genova: Le Mani, 1996).

are discussed on their own merit, as well as in relation to structuralism and the film production in the 60s. De Gaetano's analyses are usually insightful, and he is one of the few authors who mentions the relationship between Greenaway's work and the Baroque, though he does not adhere entirely to this perspective. He recognizes that there are many affinities between the Baroque and Greenaway's work, such as the formal and thematic reference to that period; the use of wit that he identifies as the creative symbol of the Baroque and that is often present in the humorous combinations in Greenaway's references to encyclopedic lists; or even the strong association of image and word present both in the Baroque and in Greenaway's work. However, De Gaetano believes that the "controlled complexity" that characterizes Greenaway's work betrays a need for order that does not correspond with the instability that underlies the Baroque.

De Gaetano, to provide a basis for his argument, begins by using Greenaway's claim that he is a classic-apollonian rather than a Dionysian.[17] This discussion is mentioned in the dissertation,[18] but it can be said here that although Greenaway's discussions of his work contribute to deciphering it, what he says can also be contradicted by examples taken from his body of work. It cannot be denied that the urge to impose an omnipresent order capable of embracing the whole world is present in many of Greenaway's productions, either in his films or in his exhibitions. However, neither can it be denied that this order is repeatedly affirmed, only to be undermined. On the other hand, regarding the Baroque, we will see in chapter 1 that if the art of that period is usually associated with excess and intemperance it nevertheless does not safeguard it from the calculation and schemes so dear to the artistic production of that

[17] Domenico De Gaetano, *Il Cinema di Peter Greenaway* (Torino: Lindau, 1995), 57.
[18] See pages 44-46 and 206.

period as well. The last chapter of De Gaetano's book is, not surprisingly, called "Le opere neobarocche" and analyzes the different layers of meaning in Greenaway's films *Prospero's Books* and *The Baby of Mâcon*: we do find Baroque theatricality and visual opulence in both films, but De Gaetano points out the cunning structure that plays simultaneously with different levels of interpretation. If the films can be called "neobarocche", this suggests that neither they nor the Baroque are dominated exclusively by overt instability or unrestraint.

Bridget Elliot and Anthony Purdy are more at ease in relating Greenaway's work to the Baroque.[19] They begin by identifying it with the visual excess of his films, and they also mention that the affinity with the Baroque can be partly explained by some of Greenaway's constant collaborators, like Sacha Vierny (cinematographer) and Michael Nyman (musician) who had already demonstrated interest in the period before working with the filmmaker. The authors mention that the Baroque is present not only as formal characteristics in the work of Greenaway, but also in the frequent images of death and decay that are reminiscent of the Baroque discussion of the human condition. However, the link between Greenaway and the Baroque becomes more evident when they consider the use of allegory. Their discussion on the theme uses as a point of departure Walter Benjamin's emphasis on the same concept in his study about Baroque drama. In this dissertation, allegory is considered to be one of the four aspects that identify the Baroque in Greenaway's work, and it will be discussed in chapter 4. Although they introduce the discussion of the Baroque, Elliot and Purdy do not read Greenaway's work only from this perspective. Instead, they identify important traits of the filmmaker's work, which

[19] Bridget Elliott and Anthony Purdy, *Peter Greenaway: Architecture and Allegory* (West Sussex, U.K.: Academy, 1997).

they exemplify and analyze relying mostly on Greenaway's films and sometimes on his exhibitions. As often happens, their book carries an interview with Greenaway at the end that corroborates their sharp criticism of his work.

Another important contribution was made by David Pascoe, who explores Greenaway's work in general, at time paying special attention to a specific film, but deliberately choosing to comment on sources other than the films.[20] As a result, he incorporates into his discussions paintings quoted by Greenaway or artwork made by him and relates them either to the film or to the idea being developed at that point. David Pascoe is one of the few authors who dedicates a special chapter to Greenaway's artwork, in which he discusses how the filmmaker associates his research in cinema to his exhibitions.

Greenaway's artwork consists of drawings, paintings, collages and curatorial work. The bibliography about this subject comprises mostly catalogues, in which Greenaway comments on his own work. There is a clear intention, in the catalogues, of recreating in a book the concept that guided the exhibition rather than of showing it in the traditional way catalogues describe exhibition content. If Greenaway is interested in exploring the possibilities of each media he works on - either film, painting, collage, drawing or an exhibition – it is not different in relation to the production of a catalogue. The exhibition must function in the new context, which involves the way each page is designed and their sequencing in the book. The catalogues represented, therefore, an important bibliographical source for this research and allowed, for example, the analysis of the exhibition *The Stairs* in chapter 1.

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[20] David Pascoe, *Peter Greenaway: Museums and Moving Images* (London: Reaktion, 1997).

There are some examples, however, of critical texts from different authors who have written about Greenaway's artwork that are either part of a catalogue related to his artwork, or part of a book written in partnership with Greenaway. Leo Steinmetz is the co-author of a book in which he comments on thirteen themes of Greenaway's work, each

of them associated to a specific film.[21] The book is extensively illustrated with Greenaway's artwork related to each theme, and commented on by Greenaway himself. Paul Melia and Alan Woods are the authors of a catalogue of a major retrospective of Greenaway's artwork.[22] Each of them wrote an essay about Greenaway: Paul Melia related Greenaway's works to the artistic context of the period in which the work was produced, and Woods, in a more interpretative text than in his own previously mentioned book, analyzes Greenaway's artwork proposing some themes as guidelines to it, such as the idea of frame, pespective, maps, body, and the association of text and image. Woods sometimes relates the artwork to the films, and interviews Greenaway about his work in general, and specifically about his artwork. In another catalogue, Magali Arriola also offers an overview of Greenaway's artwork, identifying its main themes and sometimes relating it to his films.[23]

Like most of the authors mentioned above, our interest in addressing Greenaway's artwork came also from a desire to consider how the shift to a different media, an exhibition or a collage for example, could continue or complement ideas developed in cinema. Unlike those authors, however, this dissertation pays attention to

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[21] Leo Steinmetz and Peter Greenaway, *The World of Peter Greenaway* (Boston: Journey, 1995).
[22] Paul Melia and Alan Woods, eds. *Peter Greenaway: Artworks 63-98* (Manchester: Cornerhouse and Manchester University Press, 1998).
[23] Magali Arriola, "Peter Greenaway: cinema e pintura, ubiqüidades e artifícios" in *100 Objetos*. Cat. (Rio de Janeiro: Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil; São Paulo: SESC, 1998). 16-31.

specific works or projects that are considered in their own right. Greenaway's artwork is usually associated with film productions, but not always. An exhibition may deserve, therefore, to be examined in itself, despite the fact that it does relate to Greenaway's work in general. The project *100 Allegories to Represent the World*, for instance, discussed in chapter 4, stands on its own, is not related to any specific film production and offers an example of how contemporary Baroque can be at play in artwork that combines high technology, mythology, and many of Greenaway's obsessions. Interest in the artwork, then, was guided mainly by the question of how the Baroque could be present in artistic production as well, even when it was not necessarily linked to a film. If we demonstrate that this happens in the case of Greenaway, the Baroque will appear as an unequivocal (contemporary) source so cohesive as to offer a link to the multiple strategies present in Greenaway's diversified work. The theoretical discussion about the Baroque, that has incorporated numerous, and at times vague, definitions, will, thus, finally materialize as thought translated into images.

The Outline of the Dissertation

The first part of the dissertation is dedicated to demonstrating that despite all the excess usually associated with the adjective "Baroque," the period does rely on more than a chaotic and luxuriant ornamentation. There is instead order, sometimes elaborated to the extreme. There are also some governing aspects that are combined in an intricate manner that give that historical period its identity. Thus the first part proposes elements that define the Baroque, and that can also be identified in Greenaway's work. The four

chapters in this part are dedicated to the ideas of representation, movement, melancholy and allegory. Each chapter begins with a combination of fragments taken from Greenaway's work, that together suggest a direction to be followed in the development of that chapter. The association of fragments was used as a means of revealing the close relation between examples taken either from films or from Greenaway's artwork. The image formed by these fragments, which is a sort of puzzle, is then used in order to explain different aspects of the theme both in Greenaway's work and in the Baroque. In the second part of each chapter, a single work by Greenaway is analyzed, either a film or an exhibition, chosen mostly as a way to demonstrate how that aspect could govern the structure of a whole work. The alternation between his artwork and films gives evidence of how coherent his work can be. If a theme underlies the structure of a film script, for example, the same theme was often developed in order to respond to a different medium, such as a series of graphic works or an exhibition. Although much attention has been given to Greenaway's films, the same could not be said about his artwork. Greenaway's artwork is often used to illustrate books about him, but usually it is not given more focused attention or remains analyzed mainly in relation to his films. As a result, systematic attempt to examine an exhibition or a whole series of works are very rare. Perhaps because of this, the best exponent of Greenaway's artwork up to this point seems to have been Greenaway himself, who writes the texts in most of the catalogues of his exhibitions. Like his interviews, those texts can be elucidating and are often used throughout this dissertation.

Writing itself turns out to be a domain in which Greenaway also feels at ease, and he has developed a style of his own in which irony and sarcasm are recurrent. It is however, in his films and in his artwork, that he best demonstrates an ambiguity in his

work, since, in addition to dealing with different themes such as death, sexuality, and cultural inheritance, he also develops a reflection on artistic language. Therefore, his artwork can offer the grounds to discuss themes related to cinema (which happens, for example in the exhibition *The Stairs*, discussed in chapter 1) just as painting or architecture can be a theme in his films (*Zoo- A Zed and Two Noughts* and *The Belly of the Architect*, respectively).

The diversity of Greenaway's production reveals a preoccupation with representation itself, hence involving a reflection on the cultural means through which representation becomes manifest. It is in this context that the Baroque can achieve a major importance, as it offers the possibility of introducing themes that interest Greenaway, at the same time as he maintains a dialogue with a cultural tradition of the past. If Greenaway's work is full of references to the work of other artists, this happens because he is concerned with culture itself, and its manifestations through art or through objects. Furthermore, he is interested in stretching the limits of what is considered as art, something that he achieves by using cinematographic devices in his exhibitions, by dealing with traditional artworks in an ironic manner, or by mixing references to traditional art history with mundane objects.

The task of deciphering his work cannot be reduced to an analysis of its particularities. There is a need to relate his work to a major field of artistic production that can respond to Greenaway's ambitious project of not only making a statement about certain themes, but also of placing his own work within a certain frame. The Baroque offered the guidelines for this task. It does not exhaust the sources used in Greenaway's work, but it does offer a productive path to exposing the connections between the dispersed fragments of his diversified artistic production.

The second part of the dissertation follows a direction opposite to the first one, as it demonstrates that in spite of all the complex articulations at play in the Baroque, the chaotic and luxuriant ornamentation usually associated with it can be justified in itself. Consequently, it appears as a manifestation of a general drive to affirm materiality and to ultimately dissolve the solidity of the intricate grid of cultural references. If the Baroque can be considered an articulation of historical facts and cultural strategies, it also celebrated the less controlled domain of pathos, physicality and other recourses capable of destabilizing reality. We need only recall Caravaggio's religious themes transformed into mundane scenes, the corporeal appeal of Rubens's characters, Gongora's poetry and his enigmatic metaphors or the destabilized reality of Calderón de la Barca's *La Vida es Sueño*: each of them responded to a specific geographic context with its own historical complexities, but somehow they responded also to an experience shared by their time, which assumed very different configurations while maintaining several basic common traits.

While it may be dangerous to fall into such generalization as we consider different countries, we also run the risk of being paralyzed when we think of extending this period to the present. A totally different historical situation would render such a comparison impossible. Nevertheless, the argument can be sustained only if historical facts constitute the main perspective in studying the Baroque, and not the articulation of different domains that include also the artistic production of the period, and that which seemed to be its determinants. These determinants range from a given attitude towards the world as evidenced in the choice and treatment of certain themes, to fundamental strategies of thought that may govern the composition of a painting or the conception of the solar system – see for example Severo Sarduy's inspiring approach to the Baroque

that will be commented upon later. What is borrowed from the Baroque is therefore an amalgam of references and also attitudes that were once at play in a historical period. If the first part of the dissertation is centered mostly on four elements that could define the Baroque and that are also present in Greenaway's work, the second focuses on the forms of transgression and dissolution implicit in the Baroque and violently affirmed in Greenaway's films and artwork. This second half of the dissertation also offers a possibility of changing the direction of our arguments. The point of departure consists of some of Greenaway's themes that are addressed in order to demonstrate how they can relate to the four concepts previously proposed as the constituents of the Baroque.

Thus chapter 5, which opens the second part, considers the game as a theme only to point out how the artificial constructions affirmed and reaffirmed by means of alphabets and numbers do in fact state the impossibility of such a mathematical order. This can be seen in Greenaway's film more overtly related to the game, *Drowning by Numbers*, but also in the serializations and repetitions of his artwork, analyzed at this point. The themes discussed before reappear as little by little it is revealed that the game cannot be dissociated from the ideas of movement, representation, and melancholy. The following chapter discusses how the overflowing of the borders suggested by the artificial games can be translated into the experience of the body, more specifically, in the unbridled and vicious behavior of Spica, or in the erotic games of the lovers in the kitchen of the restaurant, all of them characters of the film *The Cook, the Thief, his Wife and her Lover*.

The last chapter analyzes the film *The Pillow Book*, considering how the Baroque drive to materialize was reaffirmed in a film that makes no overt reference to that period, but that finally celebrates the fusion of writing and physicality. The pieces of the puzzle

seem to match at last as the ideograms written on the lovers's bodies condense many of the themes discussed before: representation is directly referred to in the drawing of the ideograms; a general movement destabilizes fixed meanings as it links dispersed elements in Sei Shonagon's lists or in Greenaway's notion of time in this film; melancholy is reaffirmed in the experience of love and unavoidable loss; allegory's gathering of fragments is repeated in the strategies at play in the ideogram, in the haikus, in the lists, or in the general structure of this film, which plays with metaphors and juxtapositions. Greenaway's artwork is also recalled in order to justify the presence of some elements of the film. They are not necessarily linked to the film but they provide information about Greenaway's building of his work. In general, his artworks are analyzed for this very reason: they do not illustrate the film, they at times develop new ideas, sometimes equivalent concepts to the films, proposing new questions in the domain of art or offering different perspectives to what was explored in the films.

I cannot finish this introduction without acknowledging that if there is a thread that permeates all the chapters, that would sometimes emerge and often remain submerged, this thread has been borrowed from the texts by Gilles Deleuze. At a certain point in the dissertation, he was called a "Baroque philosopher," but his reemergence throughout the text perhaps justifies the title. His and Felix Guattari's conception of the rhizome, can also be borrowed as a metaphor for this research: the Baroque itself, the way it has been considered in this dissertation, is but a web of rhizomes, each of them represented by different writers, or different domains, or different historical/geographical contexts, or different folds to be indefinitely unfolded, if we want to remain with Deleuze's metaphor to define the Baroque. The same can be said even more radically about the work of Greenaway: a myriad cultural references working as

interconnected rhizomes and an extensive gallery of critics each of whom approach the theme from a particular perspective.

Writing about Greenaway's work was therefore a matter of finding one's way in infinite possibilities within this labyrinth of rhizomes, of gathering from among them the appropriate pieces to complete the puzzle. What this dissertation endeavours to provide is not a final word on Greenaway's work, but rather a possible thread of thoughts capable of interrelating the many aspects of his work that would otherwise seem to be incongruent. In order to follow this trail, it became indispensable to work with authors who offered a variety of perspectives both on Greenaway's work and on the Baroque. If there appears to be no hierarchy of perspective, Deleuze's texts underlie many of the arguments and the structure that linked them. It should not be forgotten, however, that Deleuze himself defended a type of thinking that could be developed rhizomatically, that is, not alone.

As the dissertation was written in Brazil, a final observation must be made about the bibliography. When there is a translation of a book to English, the title in English is mentioned in the first note where the book appears. If there are quotes, the translation into English is always mine.

PART I

What is the relationship between a tomato, an airplane and the Baroque?

There is this shimmering bag in the shape of a tomato on the cover of a magazine sticking out of the back pocket of the airplane seat, on which the following question is written: "Are we all Baroque?" A question haunts my mind during this flight, one that concerns the idea of flight itself, which is so precious to Peter Greenaway: how to fit all the pieces together and begin writing the dissertation. Yet, so much is already suggested in this first puzzle: the revival of the Baroque has overcome the limits of the academic world and become so popular a theme as to deserve to appear, almost casually, on the cover of an inflight magazine.

The unusual bag in the shape of a tomato on the magazine cover recalls the Baroque world in which words and things have been allowed to change places freely, to intermingle, to separate, to reunite in a different combination. The question "are we all Baroque?" refers to an exhibition of Brazilian sacred art of that historical period, presented in Paris; the magazine editor felt that this was enough to justify the unanswered question lingering on the cover. Among the myriad aspects to be investigated in Brazilian culture, French curators had chosen a specific one. Sacred images had been gathered from museums, churches and private collections and put together in the *Petit Palais*: impressively large and restless statues gathered under dramatic lighting.

There was not a word about the exhibition in the text inside the magazine. The writer Afonso Romano Sant'Anna, well known in Brazil, preferred to say how much the country in general has a Baroque culture. In one of those arbitrary coincidences that

Greenaway explores so much, *Saint Anne* herself figured frequently in the exhibition, eighteen times to be precise, mostly as the image of Mary's mother teaching her daughter from an open book. Saint Anna usually appears sitting on a decorated throne wearing a richly ornamented dress, replete with all the folds and movement that so thoroughly pleased the Baroque taste and that crowded churches with statues floating in convoluted clothes.

One of those figures offers a suggestive image to begin with (fig.1): the golden dresses of the two women, Saint Anne and the Virgin Mary mingle with the golden ornaments of the chair on which the mother is seated, and everything, their eyes, their tormented dresses, their hands, converge on an object at the center: a book. Walter Benjamin says: "The Renaissance explores the universe; the Baroque explores libraries. Its meditation is devoted to books."[24] Add some opulence to this library scene so that we may begin entering the Baroque world of Greenaway, and we either conjure up the round steps by the mannerist Michelangelo pouring onto the floor in the Laurenziana Library Staircase, reproduced in the film *Prospero's Books*; or we remember all the references to books and writing that crowd Greenaway's films.[25] Baroque taste would not miss the opportunity to astonish the eyes, even if the subject was knowledge and an open book. "The cognitive ideal of the Baroque, the storing, symbolized in the huge libraries, is achieved in the writing as an image."[26] We begin to form an idea about what the Baroque is emerge in the Baroque, but the question on the magazine cover remains

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[24] ["A Renascença investiga o universo, e o Barroco, as bibliotecas. Sua meditação tem o livro como correlato."] Walter Benjamin, *Origem do Drama Barroco Alemão* (The origin of German tragic drama) Translation, introduction and notes by Sérgio Paulo Rouanet (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1984), 164.

[25] For a discussion about the book in Greenaway's work, see David Pascoe, chap. 6: "The book depository", 158-192.

[26] ["O ideal cognitivo do Barroco, o armazenamento, simbolizado nas bibliotecas gigantescas, realiza-se na escrita enquanto imagem."] Ibid., 206.

unanswered. In fact, the casual presence of the Baroque on a magazine cover had been made possible most likely because of a much earlier revival of the Baroque.

Baroque's revival had begun with the re-evaluation of that period promoted within the domain of art history (a movement that began as early as Heinrich Wölfflin's rehabilitation of the Baroque period in *Renaissance and Baroque* (1888), and in *Principles of Art History* (1921)), but was undertaken also in film studies already in the early sixties. (The first issue of the French magazine, *Étude Cinématographique*, which would come to play an important role in the debates on film criticism in the following decades, was entirely devoted to the theme *Baroque et Cinéma*.) It is within the context of this atmosphere that the question "are we all Baroque?" can be posed. It could be said that, if it were not for the very reason that our own day and age has become somehow Baroque, the question and the general interest in the subject would not be possible.

Although some writers have defended a re-emergence of the Baroque in our time, the theme will be treated here exclusively in order to investigate the work of Peter Greenaway. It can be inferred that Greenaway, whose work is so Baroque and has received some recognition, albeit also with reservations from some critics, is not working alone.[27] He is also reacting, as radically as he does, to something that belongs to the present and that can be identified also in the contemporary works that influenced him. Therefore, the Baroque aspect of his work would most likely respond to something that seems to be present in our own time. The study of the Baroque can offer a universe of references that may answer many of the puzzles that crowd his films and artwork, and

[27] In his book *Being Naked Playing Dead*, Alan Woods analyzes the work of Greenaway sometimes relating it to the work of contemporary artists such as Kitaj, Francis Bacon, Gilbert and George, Richard Long, Robert Wilson, John Cage, etc – an association confirmed by Greenaway himself in some of his interviews.

that would otherwise remain unsolved. It is not a matter of finding the obvious key in restaged or quoted paintings of the period present in his films; rather, it is a matter of a certain positioning in the world: a materialist skepticism, a taste for using artifices, an indirect way of saying things, an option for metaphors, for games, a tendency to avoid beauty and to privilege the unbalanced, or at least, not to search for an incorruptible order or an ideal.

As the Baroque is investigated, more affinities with Greenaway's work appear. Elements that seemed to be isolated in his work suddenly reveal their mutual connection as if there were a web of underground links, and this web forms the map of Baroque aesthetics. As a first step to understanding this map, four concepts have been proposed in the present study in order to define the Baroque. They will be used throughout the first four chapters in which different manifestations of the proposed concepts are examined in Greenaway's work. After defining how representation, movement, melancholy and allegory can be identified in Greenaway's work, each of these concepts is examined as a guideline to analyzing a single work by Greenaway, either a film or an exhibition.

The four concepts proposed here were considered as being basic to defining the Baroque, but they do not exhaust the theme or the possibilities of Baroque manifestations in Greenaway's work. The enumeration of characteristics of the Baroque present in Greenaway's work would be surprisingly long, and the task of tracing all the astonishing coincidences might prove as engaging as a detective story. However, we can postpone this pleasure and instead of indulging in the coincidences floating on the surface like a dead victim on the water (suggestive imagery with which to begin entering Greenaway's world), we should look deeper for the intrigue that resulted in the presence

of so many corpses in Greenaway's films. After all, more than those manifestations, what conjoins Greenaway's work and the Baroque is the kind of structuring thought at the origin of both of them. It is necessary, therefore, to begin with an archeological examination of the Baroque.

CHAPTER ONE

REPRESENTING REPRESENTATION

What is the relationship between a girl and her Court staring at you, a corridor with mirrors and a playwright with a missing ear sitting in a chair?

They are all chronologically related to the Baroque: the girl and her followers are looking from the painting *Las Meninas*, by Velãzquez; the corridor is supposedly a hotel where the characters from the film *Last Year in Marienbad*, by Alain Resnais, wander - the real location for the interior scenes and the geometrical gardens being in two German castles built at the time of the Baroque; finally, the playwright, dressed in the fashion of1658, as Greenway explains, is an actor who plays the role of a playwright and whose portrait was in the exhibition *The Audience of Mâcon*, by Greenaway. Chronology, however, is still little more than coincidence floating on the surface.

A description of the painting by Velázquez introduces *The Order of Things*, the book in which Michel Foucault analyzes the epistemological ruptures that separated the Renaissance from the "classic age," which he identifies as having begun in the seventeenth century, and the classic age from the modern age that began in the nineteenth century.[28] The painting offers an example of how representation itself became represented once things and language were no longer identified with each other. Foucault investigates how this rupture influenced formulations in three different domains: natural history, the study of grammar, and economy. The main difference in the first rupture is marked by the fact that similitude was no longer the absolute rule

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[28] Michel Foucault, *Les Mots et les Choses* (The order of things: an archaeology of the human sciences) (Paris: Gallimard, 1966).

allowing for a world of infinite connections. In the former order, the microcosm could echo the macrocosm, science and magic were not separated, or, as in one of the examples used by Foucault, the skeleton of a bird could resemble the skeleton of a human being (another suggestive imagery with which to begin entering Greenaway's world, haunted by birds, flights and falls). Ultimately, both words and things lead to God and to the idea that in the beginning, there is a transparency between the word and what it designated. With the onset of the modern age, identifying the origin of words became less relevant than tracing the metamorphosis to which each word was exposed. Foucault explains the corresponding changes that occurred in the different domains he investigates in the book. To put it succinctly, he states that what will characterize the modern age is the positioning of the human, this "recent invention," in his words, as the center to which either the natural order, language or economic rules will converge. However, what interests us most here is still the moment before, when we left the Court gazing at us in Velázquez's painting and entered a corridor.

The corridor mentioned in the beginning is crowded with mirrors, curly ornaments, and whispered fragments of phrases ("it would have been in 1928 or 1929 ...", " ...on my way ...to meet you..." "darkening mirrors...moldings...marble") that refer to the ornaments on the wall. The camera is slowly sweeping the corridor, introducing the Baroque atmosphere that will be developed throughout the story. The film is *Last year in Marienbad* (1961) by Alain Resnais, a film that is a common reference in texts about the Baroque in cinema, and a filmmaker that Greenaway often mentions in his interview as an important influence to him.[29] The background voice

[29] See, for example, Greenway's comment in an interview to Alan Woods: "I believe that cinema is at its most successful when it acknowledges its own artificiality. As in a fine painting synthesis, you can experience and appreciate the content and see how that content has been arrived at – when you can see the

describes the hotel in a fragmented manner: it comments on the ornaments, curly door-frames, stucco, moldings, paintings, and drawings that the camera shows and that reveal a geometrical garden such as the ones we will see outside the hotel later in the film. The overcharged interior setting is located in the Nymphemburg and Schleissheim, two Baroque castles in Bavaria, Germany. Nymphemburg's gardens themselves were designed by Carbonet, a pupil of Le Nôtre, who had laid out the gardens of Versailles for Louis XIV in the second half of the seventeenth century. Their geometrical order, and accurate sense of theatricality revealed in different environments and exuberant statues, perfectly accommodates the Baroque taste for gardens with a tamed and overtly artificial nature.

When questioned about the relationship between his work and Fellini's films, Greenaway answered that although he likes Fellini's early films, he does not respond to his taste for sentimentalism and prefers the "more disciplined and *apollonian* Resnais."[30] It must not be by chance, therefore, that Versailles is indirectly related to the castles and to the film *Last year in Marienbad*: the corridors that originally sheltered a festive Court fond of opera, banquets and fireworks relate to the aristocratic characters that wander in the hotel in the film, while the mythological figure chosen by King Louis XIV to be

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portrait and the brush-strokes that make it – so in cinema. For me – in cinema – there are few who can do this. Resnais, for me, has been the finest example – especially in *Last Year in Marienbad*." in Alan Woods, 240. This film was also in the short list of films that Greenaway showed to his crew in preparation to the production of *The Draughtman'sContract*: see Domenico De Gaetano, 51.Besides, it is probably more than a coincidence the fact that Sacha Vierny, the cinematographer who worked in many of Greenaway's film, was also the cinematographer of *Last Year in Marienbad*. For an analysis of *Last Year in Marienbad* as an example of the Baroque in cinema see Cyrill Neyrat, "Errance dans les ruines circulaires," *Vertigo*. Special Issue: Projection Baroques (Paris: Jean-Michel Place et Sueurs froides-Vertigo: Marseilles: Musées de Marseille, 2000), 39-50.

[30] Agnès Berthin-Scaillet, "Entretien avec Peter Greenaway," *Avant-Scène* 417/418 (December 1992/January 1993), 7.

celebrated in the garden of Versailles was none other than Apollo himself.[31] In addition to setting the tone for the configuration of the historical or the contemporary Baroque in (classic) France, the apollonian figure may suggest an aspect that is usually ignored in the way the adjective "Baroque" is arbitrarily associated to something excessive and unbridled.

For Foucault, the *episteme* of the seventeenth century will be marked by a fundamental relationship with *mathesis*, which enabled even immeasurable things to be organized in a successive order. By *mathesis*, he did not mean that mathematics became the origin of all knowledge, but rather that new domains could be created once all empirical knowledge could be ordered in a system of signs based on the principles of identity and difference. Signs themselves will be utilized as tools for analyzing and ordering; as the marks of identity and difference; and as keys for a taxonomy.[32] The historical Baroque will therefore be attracted to the "tableau" in which this yearning for order will find an appropriate configuration capable of organizing things according to their affinities.[33]

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[31] "Versailles should not be only a refuge or a place for distraction and amusement, but also propose a new ordering of space that would symbolize the new order of the State, or of the world itself. The identification of the Sun-King with Apollo did not stem only from a reference to mythology, but referred to a political calculation: being the conductor of the Muses and the creator of the universal harmony, Apollo represented the objective of Louis XIV, who presented himself as the new leader of the Christian world which he meant to pacify and rule. Therefore, the garden symbolized the principle of order that governed the organization of the State and the progress of civilization." ["Versailles devait non seulement servir de refuge ou de lieu de distraction et d'agrément, mais proposer également une nouvelle ordonnance de l'espace qui symboliserait le nouvel ordre de l'État, voire du monde. L'identification du Roi-Soleil avec le dieu Apollon ne procédait pas seulement d'un jeu de références à la mythologie, mais ausi d'un calcul politique: conducteur des Muses et créateur de l'harmonie universelle, Apollon incarnait l'objectif de Louis XIV, qui se présentait comme le nouveau chef d'un monde chrétien qu'il s'agissait de pacifier et de gouverner. Ainsi le jardin symbolisait-il le principe d'ordre qui régissait l'organisation de l'État et la marche de la civilisation."]. Ehrenfried Kluckert, "Les jardins Baroques," in *L'Art du Baroque*, ed. Rolf Toman (Cologne, Könemann, 1998), 154.

[32] Foucault, 71.

[33] "The deep vocation of the classic language was always to make a 'grid': be it a natural discourse, a compendium of truth, a description of things, a corpus of the exact sciences, or an encyclopaedic dictionary." ["La vocation profonde du langage classique a toujour été de faire "tableau:" que ce soit

It is not difficult to recognize this world compartmentalized in grids and taxonomies in Greenaway's ninety-two maps, ninety-two victims of the Violent Unknown Event; one hundred windmills; one hundred objects or one hundred allegories to represent the world; one hundred stars counted by the skipping girl in *Drowning by Numbers;* one hundred stairs; Prospero's twenty-four books that gathered all the necessary knowledge for someone who has been shipwrecked on an island to reconstitute his kingdom; a frame catalogue; or the many references to alphabets and numbers in his films. All of them reveal the desire to organize either for the simple reason of finding affinities between things and creating closed systems from them, or in order to envelop the entire world in a secure bubble of similitudes and small differences. How far we are from that idea of excess, disorder and chaos with which the Baroque is commonly associated! However, something may begin to undermine this tranquil paradise. We will see in later chapters that so much yearning for order will not necessarily correspond to an appeased world, just as the figure of Apollo with whom Greenaway associates himself may become less evident when we face all the corpses and rotting matter in his films. We are, however, still in the corridor with mirrors and curly ornaments.

The mirrors in the Baroque setting can stand for a repetition that works either to create a second reality, destabilizing the notion of reality itself, or to denote the very process of representation. After all, we have already crossed to the other side of the mirror when, in the painting *Las Meninas*, our usual expectations are inverted by an audience that faces us, the spectators, the painter, and the absent kings, whose own faint

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comme discours naturel, recueil de la vérité, description des choses, corpus de connaissances exactes, ou dictionnaire encyclopédique"] Ibid., 322.

reflection we can observe in a mirror at the back of the room. In Foucault's analysis of the painting, the absence of the royal figures on whom everything converges signals the rupture between signs and things that allowed representation itself to be represented in the seventeenth century. A sign itself could now be conceived through knowledge, comparisons, ordering. As a result, it becomes possible to envisage both the means by which signs interacted and the arbitrariness of their link to meaning. Greenaway will explore this same process many times, in verbal puzzles that toy with double meanings of words spoken by his characters, in recurrent motifs that can reappear in his work with a different meaning, or in arbitrary enumerations suggested by the alphabet (the girl in *ZOO*, or the words beginning with the letter "h" in *H is for house)*. One example may be useful to clarify this process of revealing the arbitrariness of the signs by accumulating meanings in them.

One of the collages made by Greenaway related to the film *The Falls* (1980) gathers together objects and images that have to do with the word "falls" stamped on a piece of fabric. The film is a fictional documentary in which chance plays an important role. It tells the story of people suffering from a disease after having been exposed to the VUE – Violent Unknown Event – that occurred on a summer night. People were chosen to take part in the documentary because of their names, all of them beginning with the letters f, a, l, l. Without wanting to linger too long on the film at this point, suffice it to say that what is of interest here is the arbitrariness of the names that leads also to the arbitrary aspect of the words illustrated in the collage (fig. 2). "Falls" can mean the fall of a pilot whose face we see, the fall of a bird represented by a feather (in Greenaway's world, everything that flies, falls), a waterfall or a season – all being present as images. In the same way that other ensembles will be developed in lists and series in

Greenaway's work, or in the Baroque *tableau* mentioned by Foucault, a single word can embrace its own diversified universe of meanings. Therefore, this is a territory devoid of fixed associations, where meaning must be discovered at each new apparition of the word or image.

It comes as no surprise, then, when we at last advance further towards the postponed end of our ornamented corridor at the beginning of *Last Year in Marienbad*, we will arrive at a room where we meet an audience - the guests of the hotel - who appear to be watching a play. The camera delays our arrival at the scene for some time, insisting on slowly showing the guests in the audience one by one. When we are finally shown the actors, they are pronouncing the last phrases of the play, the same phrases that we will later hear from the mouth of the main couple in the film. We have crossed the mirror again: the gardens outside the hotel were in the drawings hanging on the hotel walls, representation is within representation, the actors in the play say the words that the "real" characters of the film will pronounce later on.

The postponement of the central point of attention, as had happened in Velázquez's painting, will persist throughout the whole film. The story spins round and round, encircling an empty nucleus the consistence of which we are never able to decisively affirm. A monotone background voice murmurs fragments of a story that had supposedly taken place earlier, when a woman seems to have promised her lover to meet him again at the hotel the following year. She denies this; he insists. The film is already summarized in the first scene, when the camera delays ~~in~~ showing the main characters by wandering through the corridors, and finally exposes the audience, then the play, where a couple in front of a painted background panel depicting a garden, coincides with the couple we will see later many times in the real garden. The impossibility of going

straight to the scene, the lingering attention to the ornaments in the corridors, to the audience, and to the play, all stress the implausibility of trying to see clearly through the bewildered memories of an irrecoverable love affair.

In Severo Sarduy's comments on Baroque mechanisms, he mentions a process through which a series of signifiers trace an orbit around a central signified that can be inferred, but that is always absent.[34] Through this process, the Baroque leaves an always incomplete and unreachable project of signification that seems so well translated here by this film. We will see this hall of mirrors exemplified also in Greenaway's projects and films, especially in *ZOO*, haunted by an infinite game of reflections and metaphors. We can, however, catch a glimpse of hope because in the image proposed in the beginning of the chapter, we have met among the audience whom we encountered after leaving the corridor, an author who lacked an ear sitting in a chair. Perhaps he may grasp our attention and allow us to stop circling the empty center.

Our illusion may not last, as he is one more of Greenway's deceptive creations. To arrive to this point the author is described in a text by Greenaway as someone who has passed through a knot of intrigues to finally be sitting watching the play as a servant brings him some beer. He is reflected in other characters that reappear in Greenaway's work and that echo Greenaway himself, that is, the figure of the artist that is present in some of his films. But soon this reflection will lose its already feeble consistency as it multiplies in other mirrors. The author is actually one in a series of one hundred actors dressed as historical characters who would have participated in the play represented in the film *The Baby of Mâcon*. This ensemble was selected from a group of eight hundred

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[34] Severo Sarduy, "Por uma ética do desperdício" in *Escrito sobre um corpo* (Written on a body) (São Paulo: Perspectiva, 1979).

film extras who played the audience in the film and who were photographed wearing costumes related to the Baroque period in which the story takes place, more precisely, in the year 1658. All of the pictures were exhibited with a subtitle that identified them as fictitious characters of that time, and some, like our author, also received a biographical note containing intricate details of their lives.[35]

The choice of using photography was not arbitrary. Greenaway thought it a good opportunity to play with the notion of historical authenticity with which photography is commonly associated. But the process of questioning meanings begins with the very notion of history applied to films. Greenaway comments that in cinema our notion of historical illusion comes in part from a consensus of opinion about what the past is, arrived at by means of researching texts, images and artifacts of a given time. Nevertheless, this consensus is premised also on a fictitious reconstruction of the period in question. Both sources are actually based on our own notions of what constitutes the past, to such an extent that at the end, he can only conclude that "the very best historians can only be intelligent speculators."[36]

The pictures are already presented at the beginning with this caption: "Here are one hundred historical portraits. They are fakes."[37] Although the clothes and the subtitles try to situate the images in the period, several easy devices are used to dissolve any illusions, such as various incongruous details of the clothing and the use of photography itself. Even though photography perpetuated the pictorial tradition of the historical portrait, it was invented two centuries after the supposed period of the pictures. Because of the obvious rough forgery, the aim would be rather to point to our own ways of

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[35] Peter Greenaway, *The Audience of Mâcon* (Cardiff (UK): Ffotogallery and Wales Film Council, 1993).
[36] Ibid.,2.
[37] Ibid., 1.

recreating history: in other words, a Baroque reflection on representation itself. The author's missing ear further reinforces the emphasis on representation, as it is most likely a reference not to an author, but to an artist, Van Gogh.

It appeared that we had met the infanta Margarida[38] and the missing sovereigns, and then passed through the corridor, finally meeting the author, when in fact we remained in the same empty circle of a Baroque audience. Velasquez's painting, Resnais's film and Greenaway's portrait that compose the image proposed at the beginning of the chapter are closely related since they affirm three times that the Baroque creates labyrinthine paths to divert the attention of the spectator from the content to representation itself. In the film by Resnais and in the photographs by Greenaway history loses its solidity in the sea of recreations. The author himself, either because of his Van Goghian missing ear, or because he is an impossible picture of a past character, has been dematerialized in a mere forgery. We have now entered the territory of *Don Quixote*, who pursues ghosts of the romances of chivalry that guide his perception of reality. His world has become a deceiving universe of reflections, where even his references fail to reconstitute reality. All that is left is the very process of perception itself, where meaning does not respond to reality, but instead to a chain of representations of it.[39] This is the world of the grid/*tableau* mentioned by Foucault, when he analyses the historical Baroque. If Greenaway's reference to the period goes

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[38] The Infanta Margarida actually appears in a film by Greenaway, *Drowning by Numbers*, as he comments that the skipping girl was dressed like Velazquez's infanta. Naturally, this quote is not arbitrary. It points to the kind of reference that inspires Greenaway to create his work and also corrobates his link with the Baroque. See Peter Greenaway, *Fear of Drowning – Règles du Jeu* (Paris: Dis Voir, 1989), 11.

[39] "The truth of Don Quixote is not in the relationship between words and world, but in that thin and constant relation that the verbal marks weave among themselves. The deceived fiction of the epics became the representative power of language. Words come to close themselves in their nature of signs." ["La vérité de Don Quichotte, elle n'est pas dans le rapport des mots au monde, mais dans cette mince et constante relation que les marques verbales tissent d'elles-mêmes à elle-mêmes. La fiction déçue des épopées est devenue le pouvoir représentatif du langage. Les mots viennent de se refermer sur leur nature de signes."] Foucault, 62.

beyond a formal reference, we may find an equivalent attitude in relation to representation in some of his works.[40] It may be time, then to see if this can, for example, be a principle governing an exhibition.

The Stairs and the representation of seeing

The Stairs is the name of one of Greenaway's exhibitions in which stairs were used as a device to stress the act of seeing itself. They were distributed in various locations throughout Geneva, in order to emphasize representation, as it will be seen, and refer to diverse scenarios, that are usually unnoticed, but not without a role.

There were stairs in the garden and in the hotel where the couple wandered in *Last Year in Marienbad*. Staircases have been a major scenic device in cinema as well as in architecture, since they afford an opportunity to introduce movement and also mystery or pomp. The illuminated character framed by a doorway at the back of the room in *Las Meninas* was climbing stairs. Stairs create an aura around the entrance of major characters in films, or they can also be the pathway to a descent into the darkness of secret basements, a good location for hidden objects and crimes. Within the context of the Baroque architecture and painting, stairs could be used in an ostentatious manner, but they also successfully suggest the idea of passage: passage to another reality, either ascending or descending – Greenaway's exhibition *Le Bruit des Nuages* is about flight and fall – or simply the act of going itself, not arriving; after all, we have seen that the Baroque is fond of circling around its object without ever reaching it.

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[40] Alan Woods investigates Greenaway's artwork and films considering the use of frames, words, texts, scripts, strips of films and the denial of perspective. Although he does not name them as means to represent representation, these elements can be understood as such. See Alan Woods, "Fields of Play" in Melia and Woods, 20-31.

Observed in minute detail, one step after the other, the stairs physically create a homogeneous structure based on repetition, a structure that is close to the idea of a grid, a succession of one rectangle after the other. Among the examples listed before of numbered ensembles in Greenaway's work,[41] there was one that seemed to be out of place because it does not relate to numbers: the *Frame Catalogue* which appeared on the list because, like numbers, it basically serves to point to the act of representation itself. The series repeats a structure common to many of Greenaway's drawings and paintings, based on the use of the grid. Together with the series *A Framed Life* (figs. 28 and 29), both from 1989, these are among his most abstract works because they are devoid of any subject but the frame itself. The entire series is based on aligning rectangles of the same size in grids, on varying the color of their contents, the width of the rectangle's contours, and occasionally introducing into them a few shapes representing an almost-language, lost Xs, As, triangles made out of the diagonal of the rectangles, lost numbers and letters, unreadable handwritings. We no longer need an audience to divert our attention from what is represented – now, we get stuck in frames obsessively repeated with few variations that point to the fundamental process of language, based on the principles of similitude and difference. We need to step back a little in order to find the link between these grids and the stairs.

Earth and water are represented in tones of brown and intense blue, each layer being limited by straight horizontal lines in an early painting by Greenaway, *Landscape Section: Geological Diagram*,1968 (fig. 4). In another work, a chaotic firmament has been sliced in thin vertical stripes of the same size, intercalated with a white background that may stand for a symmetrical vacuum, in *Stellarscape: Verticals*, 1968 (fig. 5). We

[41] See above page 46.

have left the reign of Baroque gardens ordered in geometrical shapes to find nature divided into stripes, rectangles and squares in these series.[42] Nine years later, it became unnecessary to resort to a subject: straight lines and angles suffice in the minimalist shapes of the series *Pointillist Relief*, 1977 (fig. 6), that remind us of the sequential and abstract works of Donald Judd and Carl Andre. Greenaway did not abandon drawing, painting and collage, but like the minimalists had been doing since the 60s, he reduced his shapes to elementary ones and worked basically with the idea of small variations and repetitions in the combination of geometrical shapes. If the artists had challenged the choice of materials and the disposition of sculpture, Greenaway's "reliefs," which give the impression of juxtaposing thin layers similar to Andre's metal leaves, are not sculptures, but rather appear as if they aspire to be, creating the impression of a relief, and acting as a sort of *trompe l'œil* – a game of illusion particularly appreciated in the Baroque. We will get to a point, twenty years later, in the exhibition *The Stairs*, where the almost-steps of the *Pointillist Relief* will re-acquire a figurative aspect, though not without a reminiscence of its origins.

Among the framed images in the exhibition, we can gaze closely at a piled up range of symmetrical horizontal stripes, each of which contains a perfect circle. It is one of the few close-ups in the whole series of frames in Greenaway's exhibition *The Stairs* in Geneva, 1994, and the piled stripes are a detail of pleats and buttons of the coat belonging to the statue of a reformer (fig. 8). The close-up leaves the head of the statue

[42] Paul Melia comments on the influence of a group of British artists contemporaenous to the production of these works, who worked with the association of art and science. The rigid geometry imposed to nature is understood, therefore, "as questioning both rationality and the utopian claims made for technological progress on which the optimism of the post-war period was founded". Though briefly, he also mentions the American minimalists as an influence to Greenaway. See Paul Melia, "Frames of Reference" in Melia and Woods, 10.

outside the frame, calling attention to the abstract and repetitive nature of the coat that echoes the steps present in other frames showing different staircases in the city.

The exhibition is the first one in a series named *The Stairs* that would be presented in ten different cities and which deal with the language of cinema, trying to solve its limitations in the context of an exhibition. One hundred small staircases were spread throughout the city, all of them in the same format with only a different number of steps. On the top of each, there was an optical device that showed a part of the city in a frame. The audience could participate in editing their own film by choosing how long to stay in each of the stairs and establishing their own sequence. The range of sensations would be wider than in cinema, as Greenaway himself comments, adding that he found a solution to solve the problem of not being able to make a twenty-four hour-long movie in order to defy cinema's limitations. This solution was envisaged in his film, *The Belly of an Architect*, and had to do with allying cinema to architecture and doing what the main character, Kracklite, does; that is, to mount an exhibition.

> Make an exhibition of the various events and ideas – a three dimensional and 'live' manifestation which could evoke all the human senses (and not just the two prompted by cinema) and could respond to a demand for materiality, for the multiple viewpoints, for the desire to place the material in the hands of the viewer and not the director, and could make some sense of the long term time-problems. Better still, make ten exhibitions where each could enlarge one particular aspect of the problem.[43]

The result is *The Stairs*.

This first exhibition deals with location, and the rest would explore other aspects of film language, such as audience, the frame, acting and properties, the last meaning, the symbolic quality that objects may acquire when used in painting and cinema.[44]

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[43] Peter Greenaway, *The Stairs – The Location – Geneva* (*London*: Merrell Holberton, 1994), 40.
[44] The second exhibition took place in Munich, 1995 and dealt with audience and projection. See Peter Greenaway, *The Stairs – Munich – Projection* (London: Merrell Holberton, 1995). The theme "props" was

Although the one hundred locations followed no specific sequence, - the very notion of narrative in cinema was also challenged in the exhibition - there are several connections among them that work to expose aspects of film language, as well as the city itself, and indirectly, as always occurs in any of Greenaway's lists, they also offer a repertory of themes present in his own work. However, the possible connections with the Baroque that most naturally interest us here mingle with the elements in the exhibition that characterize Greenaway's work in general. We will begin, then, with the factual references to the seventeenth century in order to reach a more interpretative link with the Baroque.

John Calvin, who played an important role in the Reformation period, lived part of his life in Geneva, where he exerted a strong influence with his activities dealing with religious as well as practical issues as covered by his theological writings and his conceptions of education and social order. His legacy would remain in Reformed churches in Europe, and later in North-American Protestantism. The sixteenth century would be the stage for the Reformation, led by figures like Martin Luther and John Calvin, who developed some of Luther's ideas, and for the Counter-Reformation, represented in the Catholic reaction to the Reformation.[45] The Council of Trent (1545-63) ruled on the Catholic doctrines contested by the Protestants, revitalizing the Roman

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explored in the group exhibition *Spellbound*. Hayward Gallery, London, April 1996. The other exhibitions related to *The Stairs* did not happen.

[45] For a good explanation of the religious crises see Victor L. Tapié, *Baroque et Classicisme* (The age of grandeur: Baroque art and architecture) (Paris: Pluriel, 1980), 91-99. Hatzfeld's denial of the possibility of an extemporaneous Baroque is based on the associatioN of it to two aspects historically located: absolutism and Counter-Reformation, which inspired the notion of a religious and national collectivity. See Helmut Hatzfeld, *Estudos sobre o Barroco*, trans. Célia Berrettini (São Paulo: Perspectiva and Ed. da Universidade de São Paulo, 1988). Giulio Argan also associates the Baroque to the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, particularly when he evaluates the importance of the image in the context of the latter, or when he shows an ambiguous attitude translated in architecture and painting related either to a Reformist or a Counter-Reformist positioning. Giulio Argan, *L'Âge Baroque* (The Baroque Age) trans. Arnaud Tripet (Geneva: Éditions d'Art Albert Skira, 1994), 17-18, 77-78.

Catholic Church in Europe, though it could never heal the schism provoked by the Reformists. The Counter Reformation, among other themes, also established a revision of the Catholic imagery that would be reflected in the Baroque art of the following century.[46]

When Greenaway speaks of properties, as one of the elements of cinema language to be investigated in future exhibitions, he means the symbolic aspect of objects in cinema, a theme he would explore in other exhibitions not related to *The Stairs*, such as *100 hundred objects to represent the world* or *Flying over water*. In this pursuit, he again ties his work to the Baroque and Catholic understanding of the persuasive power of images and of the physical world that would be thoroughly explored in the pomp of monumental churches and would prove to be useful as well in the colonizing task of the missionaries in the New World. Seeing acquires, therefore, an essential role in context of the Baroque as an instrument of the alliance between religious and political power in Europe and in European colonies, producing the necessary wonderment and persuasion that would help to support the political panorama of the period.

The framed detail of the reformer's coat joins with other choices in alluding to the traces of the Reformation in the city: the tomb of Calvin in the cemetery, the Calvin College, the statues of the four reformers in the Parc des Bastions, and indirectly, the detail of a mitre, "symbol of Roman Catholic hierarchy at one time so feared and despised in the Calvinist city."[47] Together, they suggest the social and religious context of the Baroque that would reappear in the references to the rivalry between Protestants

[46] For further readings on the Counter-Reformation's move towards a sensitive religion translated by cult images and devotional objects see Victor L. Tapié, 93.
[47] Peter Greenaway, *The Stairs – The location – Geneva*, 25.

and Catholics in *The Draughtsman's Contract*. The Baroque may emerge even in Greenaway's iconoclast tone when he mocks this very context by framing a staircase surrounded by the Law Court, the Lutheran Church and the entrance of the "quaintly named Passage of the Chickens," concluding that "here is represented an uneven triumvirate of Justice, Reformed Religion and Tom-foolery."[48] We begin to see that the recreation or references to the Baroque will take place with a certain degree of irony.

We are now under the *Allegory of the missionary work of the Jesuits*, 1691-94, in Sant'Ignazio Church, Rome, a painting that appears in the catalogue of the exhibition *The Stairs* and is briefly mentioned by Greenaway. Saint Ignatius himself, the founder of the Jesuit order and a main figure in the Counter-Reformation, appears on a cloud carried by angels and is surrounded by the allegories of the four continents known at that time – a reference to the missionary work in foreign lands. The fresco by Andrea Pozzo representing the apotheosis of Saint Ignatius is painted on the large vault of the church nave, and depicts a multitude of flying creatures who mingle with architectural elements in *trompe l'œil*. The gothic aspiration towards an uplifted spirituality represented in elongated cathedrals, has been translated, in the Baroque context, into painted bodies which ascend through the church's walls and ceiling, and float towards an illuminated Heaven. Even such a spiritual theme would not escape from the Baroque need to show the very strategies of creating illusion, exemplified here by the use of the *trompe l'œil*.

Before becoming an exhibition, *The Stairs* was contemplated as a film about a painter fascinated with the seventeenth century, who wanted to make a "grandiose Italian Costume Drama," and another ceiling painting, *Resurrection*, based on drawings left by the same Andrea Pozzo. Again, the Baroque is the target for irony, as the "crowd

[48] Ibid., 17.

scene in the air" would contain "eight named characters and eight hundred flying extras," in an overt mockery of the Baroque dreams of grandeur. However, it is also the same attitude of revealing the illusionist effect that will inspire the recreation of the painting and its association to cinema:

> The painting sought to make a comment on the conundrum of pastiche and the deceit of trompe l'œil – and on the special pretense of the painted surface, especially within the criterion of the Baroque, which can be used as a metaphor for the cinema itself – a phenomenon of total spectacle employing every means possible, but especially light, to fabricate illusion and make propaganda for an Act of Faith and for the suspension of disbelief – essential both for the Church and the Cinema.[49]

The white wooden staircases spread throughout different parts of Geneva, therefore created makeshift pulpits where not only could the city be seen, but the very act of viewing materialized by means of those small structures furnished with optical devices for framing. It was not only cinematic language that was at stake in different (and cinematographic) frames but also the very notion of vision that is celebrated in those elevations from the ground. Considering the Baroque as a type of "thinking in images," the world might become an opportunity for spectacles which could range from the common objects appropriated by the Counter-Reformation conveying religious meanings, to street scenes carefully framed in contemporary Geneva.

At first, *The Stairs* can appear to be associated with *Land Art*, a movement which originated in U.S. in the late 60s with artists like Richard Long and Robert Smithson, who explored local elements in deserted landscapes in order to create their work.[50] Their intervention in different environments was displayed in open spaces, challenging the gallery as a privileged place to exhibit art, at the same time that they experimented with

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[49] Ibid., 37.

[50] For a brief comment on the influence of the land artists on Greenway's early films see Alan Woods, 82.

unconventional materials. If *The Stairs* claims to make environmental art in common with *Land Art*, it refused to introduce another element into the chosen space, or to resort to archaic symbols or to the sublime, like some of the land artists did.[51] By reducing the intervention to a device used for observing this very space, the project proposed the city itself as a theme, but also placed the beholder in the uncomfortable position of having to spy through a hole. No spectacle on the other side, no clouds or flying figures ascending towards heaven this time: only the banality of street scenes and places.

If it were really only this - street scenes - it could already be perceived as a comment on our modern yearning to see, a viewpoint thoroughly explored by photography since its beginnings, and one which would have in the genre of "street photography" one of the major representatives of urban celebration, and urban voyeurism. An equivalent mechanism would be further accentuated in cinema, where the audience is allowed to remain in darkness while observing the unraveling of other people's lives. This very act was embodied in *The Stairs* by means of white wooden structures that hid the observers from the city and the passers-by. Christine Buci-Glucksmann, as will be seen later, bases her studies of the Baroque on the notion of vision itself, celebrated in this exhibition. However, what the moving audience sees through the optical device is more than a range of arbitrary street scenes, and insofar as vision itself is an important theme, there are still other elements guiding the choice of frames. If the Reformation could be represented by means of selected images, it will not

[51] Greenaway comments that he related to a reading of Land Art rather as a way of mapping and measuring the landscape, as is exemplified by an unfinished project of marking a landscape with a grid or by his reference to landscape in his early films. See Alan Woods, "Arts of Painting: an Interview with Peter Greenaway" in Melia and Woods, 136. In this sense, we can read *The Stairs* as a kind of mapping of Geneva, that is, a creation of his own map of the city.

be difficult to unveil a number of Greenaway's themes spread throughout the city and captured by the frames.

The frames themselves, which had served as a motif for the aforementioned series of paintings, will reappear: a gateway, a doorway, or an arm and a breast of a statue framing Mont Blanc. These frames are deliberate and the text by Greenaway may comment on their nature of frames within frames – we may recognize the Baroque circling its empty center in this hall of mirrors echoing successive frames. A framed public chess board in a park suggests the recurrence of games in Greenaway's work either in series of paintings, or in films, where they appear in the form of alphabets, numbers, or in the whole intrigue of *Drowning by Numbers*. For Affonso Ávila the Baroque is marked by a "game-like pact" manifested in art by aesthetic invention, but that should not be interpreted as free formalism, since the game is followed by a profound skepticism, a consciousness of the transitory human condition and a passionate approach to the senses.[52]

It is at this point that we may separate Greenaway from his occasional affinity with the minimalists, mentioned in the case of the *Pointillist Relief* series. If there is a game of forms serialized with small variations, this game is but a part of a vast Baroque universe. We soon begin to find many references to death in *The Stairs*, even if they are presented with the usual detached and ironic tone. Frame 88 shows, for example, a statue of a boy and a horse, and deals with a common form of death among Greenaway's characters (fig. 9): "Near here in 1884 a young Italian rider got into difficulties whilst bathing his high-spirited horse, and despite heroic attempts to save him, he drowned.

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[52] AffonsoÁvila. *O Lúdico e as Projeções do Mundo Barroco I* (São Paulo: Perspectiva, 1994). See also here, chap. 5, *Accumulating numbers and playing with meanings*.

From this viewpoint of the sculpture, the boy's hand breaks the silhouette of his horse's back – it could be the waving hand of a drownee."[53] In the detail of the reformer's coat, the head was left outside, but perhaps it may not seem to be entirely because of a formal choice: soon we see the busts in gardens associated with decapitated heads and we find the mentioning in the text of a local hero whose body was decapitated and left to rot in public. Such excesses seem to have more affinity with a Baroque ambiance than with the minimalists.

Water appears in different ways, as fountains, lake, pumping house, or well. It is a major theme in Greenaway's work. Although it is often associated with death, here it carries other, quite different, connotations. The first image already inverts its usual morbid association: "At the centre of the composition is the fountain in the lake, the most contemporary of symbols for Geneva, an eruption of white spume, a sexual motif for beginnings. All life starts with water."[54] We will find this same water blast rising among buildings in frames of other parts of the city. We may also remember it, when in frame 52 we find the statue of young naked David with a raised arm receiving a water jet on his chest while his right foot lies on the decapitated head of Goliath. Death, water, glory, a mythological figure, a symbolic statue of a character (like many others also framed), corporeality: welcome to Greenaway's Baroque world. The only missing major element seems to be the grid and all of its variations.

Nevertheless, the enumeration of frames, one after the other, creates a grid-like effect depicting different parts of the city. Every list in Greenaway's work will keep this structure of parallelisms and differences that have the grid's same absence of a center.

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[53] Greenaway, *The Stairs – The location – Geneva*, 88.
[54] Ibid., 1.

This is, however, a dynamic grid. The many staircases that appear in the frames, as well as the alleys and paths with cars and people passing by, suggest the idea of constant movement. Each frame was photographed both by day and by night in order to make apparent the transformations provoked by the variations of light and by the moving passers-by who appeared and disappeared from one moment to the next. Other places were approached from different points of view, working in a double way, both exemplifying the cinematographic notions of shot and reverse shot and challenging the Renaissance notion of an ideal viewpoint. One of the staircases which took advantage of tracks that were in a factory, was positioned in order to accentuate the mobility of the viewpoint, in addition to exemplifying a cinematographic form of "traveling". These changing images accomplish a game of variations of variations, as each frame is already at least two of them. This inconsistency is again not foreign to the Baroque world. After all, we know that the Baroque column is not a straight and solid vertical cylinder, but one that ascends in tormented turns around its circumference. The impossibility of conceiving the world as a conglomerate of static unities will occupy our next circling around the Baroque.

We may begin, however, to draw several conclusions from this initial approach to Greenaway's work. The reference to the Baroque does not consist simply in a series of historical facts sometimes mentioned by him, nor can it be taken as a mere formal reference to, or a quote from, works from the seventeenth century. We can already glimpse a more complex web that also embraces fundamental principles which guided the Baroque artistic production and that reappear in Greenaway's work. The grid is one of these principles: not the grid alone, but what it implies: a collection of elements, an emphasis on representation itself and the unveiling of its own strategies, the instability

paradoxically implicit in the gathering of equivalent cells one after the other. The possible reference to the minimalists and Land Art affirms the dialogue between Greenway's work and the artistic production of his own time. Nevertheless, he keeps himself coherent with his own choices and these references cannot stand up to a closer evaluation without showing a consistent link of his works with the Baroque.

Movement will be the next principle to be examined; as happened in the case of representation, it is one more of those principles that seem to dictate manifestations of the historical Baroque as well as Greenaway's own version. It is also becoming evident that if we have considered one particular trait of the Baroque, this was done mainly as a means to clarify the strategy used in a work by Greenaway. The four elements chosen to serve as a means to investigate the Baroque do not, however, operate in isolation. Movement is noticeable in *The Stairs*: it is implicit in the act of moving from one place to another in the city in order to look through the frames; it is also implicit in the very act of climbing the stairs; it is present in the opposition of day and night reinforced in the catalogue of the exhibition; it is finally evident in the moving city that the spectators observe through the optical device. If representation is represented in this exhibition, it appears not as a steady Renaissance point of view, but as a dynamic action that transform the world observed and the observer into an interrelated and dynamic whole.

CHAPTER TWO

MOVING BAROQUE

What is the relationship between red footballers, intricate routes and micro-grains?

All of them are images taken from Greenaway's artwork and they refer to movement, which is a quality that reverberates throughout the whole Baroque. The red footballers belong to a playing field crowded with swarming fragments; the routes lead to nowhere, they are but a reference to passage; the micro-grains are passing through a process of metamorphosis. The three works were made over a period of almost twenty years: they demonstrate that a theme persisted in Greenaway's work during this long time, but, paradoxically, what remained was a need to represent instability. This instability is not gratuitous, or the result of a historical period marked by crises and insecurity, as the historical Baroque is often interpreted. Instead, the instability affirmed both in the Baroque and in Greenaway's work makes a deeper statement: there are no fixed truths and every possible unity is exposed to different relations with other unities that give it an (unstable) identity.

As a result, the artistic manifestations of the historical Baroque will bear witness to a unanimous volatility: compositions in painting will be marked by diagonals and ascensions, façades may wave in a combination of concave and convex curves, poetry will play with the unstable meanings of obscure metaphors, musical composition will explore the fugue - the juxtaposition of a theme with few variations giving an idea of an endless sequence. In the case of the contemporary Baroque, we have seen in *Last Year in Marienbad* a story with no anchor, that is, a story based on a fact that may never had

happened; contemporary composers like Michael Nymann, who created the music for many of Greenaway's films, or Philip Glass, will explore the progressive repetition of themes that are reminiscent of Bach's compositions; in relation to art, Omar Calabrese will speak of rhythm, repetitions, labyrinths, metamorphosis, dissipation, distortions and disorder.[55] But before movement ends up in a conceptual dissipation, we should search for its origin in the Baroque.

When Heinrich Wölfflin proposed new criteria for art history, based not only on national or individual elements, but also, and predominantly, on formal characteristics that would make a story of vision possible, he was comparing the art of the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. He chose several categories to point out formal oppositions that may be taken as the manifestations of a deeper change. Wölfflin's main categories were: the linear and the painterly, composition in planes or through recession, the open and the closed form, multiplicity and unity, and finally clarity of the subject.[56]

In the passage from Renaissance to Baroque, forms lost a defined contour that was replaced by the notions of volume and by a general interaction with their environment, which meant that they could be shaped by light rather than by their own particular and isolated existence. Themes could be chosen because of their suggestive pictorial quality but even if they were originally static themes, they would assume a pictorial (in opposition to linear) configuration, and this happened because the pictorial was mainly in the eye itself and not in the object. Colors, in their turn, no longer existed

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[55] See Omar Calabrese, Caos e Bellezza : Immagini del Neobarocco (Milano, Domus Academy, 1991). Or see also his comment about the neobaroque: "It [the neo-Baroque] is found in the search for forms – and in its valorization – in which we observe the loss of integrity, of globality, of ordered sistematicity in exchange to instability, polidimensionality, mutability." ["Encontra-se na procura de formas – e na sua valorização -, em que assistimos à perda da integridade, da globalidade, da sistematicidade ordenada em troca da isntabilidade, da polidimentionalidade, da mutabilidade."] in Omar Calabrese, *A Idade Neobarroca* (Lisboa, Edições 70, 1987),10.

[56] Heinrich Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History* (New York: Dover, undated).

in themselves, fixed to the objects, but depended on the conditions of luminosity. "We see that the emphasis lies no longer on being, but on becoming and change."[57] The same principle will govern changes in architecture and sculpture, where the idea of ephemeral effects provoked by different points of view and lighting will prevail.

Compositions could no longer be based on planes when depth of field began "pulling" the beholder's eye towards the bottom of the painting. Sculpture could acquire a projective tendency and façades would play with alternate planes and points of view in opposition to the classic frontal perspective emphasised in the Renaissance. We could add to Wölfflin's examples another way of breaking with the plane and solidity - that of the wavy surface, such as Borromini's façade of San Carlino alle Quattro Fontane and Sant'Ivo della Sapienza, in Rome, that play with the concave and the convex. And if we allow ourselves to free-associate, in the manner of Greenaway's writings, we may take the opportunity to mention some of his paintings, in the *Blackboard* series, *The Waves* and *Waving*, which refer to this abstract way of suggesting movement by transforming a straight line into an undulation.[58] The waves are confined in three limited layers and within frames in the first one; in the second, words on the screen refer to different meanings (a water wave and a waving hand), both strategies, as well as the reference to water, being common in Greenaway's work.[59] They are mentioned here, to begin introducing some perturbation, some unrest that, as we will see, will reverberate throughout his entire work.

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[57] Ibid., 52.

[58] These paintings are only available on the web (www.fortlaan17.com/greenaway/menu.html) and belong to a series called *Blackboard Paintings*, 1999. The two of them commented on here are numbers 6 and 24.

[59] We have already met this recurrent scenario involving water and the waving hand of a drowning person, in the exhibition *The Stairs* (fig. 9). We may begin, thus, to envisage how ideas can shift freely from a figurative to a more abstract work and maintain its identity.

If movement is implicit in Greenway's artwork, it will most likely be present in his films as well, and we may also begin to examine the subject in terms of formal composition in cinema. Flatness began to disappear much earlier than the Baroque, when perspective had begun to be represented in the painting of the fifteenth century. Nevertheless, it took some time for the space to be thoroughly explored and the characters in the scene to be spread along it without the need to occupy the same plane. In cinema, it would take some decades after its invention for camera movement and depth of field to be explored in a more elaborate way. Orson Welles is generally mentioned for his use of depth of field, as he worked with different planes within the same frame to represent different scenes. His camera also moved freely in daring trackings that crossed the scene, ignoring obstacles that our eyes would not be able to avoid (see the initial scene of *Touch of Evil*).[60] For Deleuze, Welles's and Renoir's innovative use of depth of field consists of interrelating the different planes that had already been explored in cinema in a dissociated manner. In painting, and eventually, in cinema, the Baroque introduced a closer link between the scenes, which could be underlined, for example, by lighting that connected the various planes or by a composition that guided the viewer's eye to a main aspect of it.

In cinema, Greenaway's frame composition tends to be the opposite of this, as he prefers symmetry and flatness in long shots that, in general, avoid movement.[61]

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[60] Among the characteristics of Welles's work that associate it to the Baroque, Scarpetta mentions the deformation of space provoked by the use of high and low angle shots, and of wide angle lens that give the impression of an accelerated movement. Guy Scarpetta, *L'Artifice*, chap. 4 – "Du Baroque au cinéma" (Paris: Grasset, 1988), 193. Deleuze considers the depth of field in the perspective we have mentioned here, seeing an evolution in cinema language similar to the equivalent changes that occurred in painting according to Wölfflin. Gilles Deleuze, *Image-mouvement* (Cinema) (Paris: Ed. de Minuit, 1983), 42-43.

[61] Greenaway has been related to the Renaissance because of his use of symmetry in fixed frames but also because of reasons that cannot be taken exclusively as characteristic of the Renascence, such as the reference to narrative and figurative painting (see Florence de Meredieu, "Le peintre à la caméra" in Daniel Caux and others, *Peter Greenaway* (Paris: Dis Voir, 1987), 40-59 (see particularly, pp. 42-43)) or

However, if we look at the waves in Greenaway's artwork that point to movement, we can observe an equivalent to it, as a merely formal device, in his films. The static aspect of "primitive" cinema was denied by depth of field and also by the tracking, exemplified for Deleuze by Dreyer's use of it. The analogue to Dreyer's flat shots of faces is his use of a tracking that explores the flatness of the image. There is a parallelism between this, and Greenaway's option for static and symmetrical framings together with his trackings, which reveals a formal coherence within the work of both filmmakers. We may feel disturbed when we repeatedly see the camera calmly sweeping the scene in Greenaway's movies, as if it were indifferent to what is happening, not following the movement of the actors (a tracking along the kitchen in *The Cook, the Thief, his Wife and her Lover*, for example).

The refusal to follow the actors is deliberate, and corresponds to Greenaway's more general attitude of stressing the intervention of cinema language and avoiding the realism of commercial films. "Usually, film is perceived as a 'slice of life'. My *parti pris* is to make a film that wants to be definitely cinema, that is, artificial." [62] His camera emphasizes theatricality in its distancing; the editing should not flow, but be perceived, he says, and there is no need for the actors to be natural when they say their texts. His use of tracking, instead of simply exploring the depth of field, slowly sweeps the scene, indifferent, nevertheless, to the movement in it. A crowd working in the kitchen in *The Cook* or the fantastic creatures traipsing about in *Prospero's Books* seem, thus, to carry

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to a vaguer idea of erudition, implicit in Greenaway's quoting of other paintings, see Bernard Benoliel, "Un homme de la Renaissance," *La Revue du Cinéma* 475 (Octobre 1991), 70-71). This last article, by the way, begins by mentioning the painters quoted in Greenaway's films, and with the exception of Pierro della Francesca, all the others are painters who produced their work in the seventeenth century (Georges de La Tour, Caravaggio, Vermeer, Frans Hals).

[62] ["Habituellement, le film cherche à être perçu comme 'une tranche de vie'. Mon partis pris c'est de faire un film qui se veut résolument du cinéma, c'est-à-dire artificiel."] Noël Simsolo and Philippe Pilar, "Peter Greenaway – L'infini cerclé de vide," *La Revue du Cinéma* 415 (April 1986), 23-27.

out their activities while the camera passes by them not following the direction of their movement. Both the emphasis on movement and on artificiality relate the tracking to a Baroque manner.

Movement was not a category in itself, but was implied in Wölfflin's scheme of oppositions between the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. It was present in ephemeral lighting that bathed the scene, in architectural façades, in sculptures that tended to move out of their niches, in open compositions which, though they could be complete in themselves, nevertheless referred to a "*hors champ*" (to something outside the frame). We need only remember the Baroque audience mentioned previously to have an example of this incompleteness. Wölfflin speaks of closed and open form: instead of symmetry, a diagonal; instead of static harmony, tension; instead of a whole, a fragment. "The significant element of form is not the scaffolding, but the breath of life which brings flux and movement into the rigid form. In the one case, the values of being, in the other, the value of change. In the one case, beauty resides in the determinate, in the other, in the indeterminate."[63] We can now address our red footballers, the intricate routes and the micro-grains.

Red Footballers (1972) is a work in oil and collage that shows different pieces of paper and brushstrokes in many tones of red, spread in a rectangle divided by two horizontal lines (fig. 10). Greenaway comments that the work makes a reference to the " 'spot the ball' competitions on the soccer pages of English national newspapers where footballers kicked at thin air so that the reader could accurately place the ball where it should be." [64] Some modifications were introduced to the original game in the

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[63] Wölfflin, 135.
[64] Peter Greenaway, *Papers* (Paris: Dis Voir, 1990), 72.

newspaper – instead of one ball, there are many of them, arbitrarily placed in different spots with a number or a letter written on them. Instead of a team of footballers, we see only two of them, almost imperceptible among so many stains of red, one sitting as if his image had been cut from a photograph of the whole team, the other having just a head amidst colorful stains. Greenaway also mentions fragmented pitch markings, colors of football teams and "subversive Soviet soccer defectors still in hiding." But the stronger impression is still that of a confusion of red and pink stains.

However, we may ascertain an attempt at order amidst this confusion: the white balls are numbered from one to six, one and two in the highest rectangle, three to five in the one in the middle, six in the lowest one. The letters are also distributed with some order: A, B, C, D above; two Es in the middle. Adding all the white balls, we get to number twelve, which is written in black at the left corner of the painting.[65] There are two football players, one almost invisible, hidden among dots but with an arrow pointing to him and the other in the rectangle below him. Ball number six is carefully placed next to a footballer's head, which is circled with a black line, making one more ball out of his head – not an improbable association, if we remember the ease with which decapitated heads are recurrent in Greenaway's work. These numbers and letters do not seem to refer to any other kind of order beyond the alphabet and numbers themselves. They will reappear many times in Greenaway's work with the double function of either referring to a possible order amidst chaos, as they do here, or to point to the opposite, to the arbitrariness of numbering and especially of lists based on alphabetical order.

The work consists of a rectangle containing an ensemble of messy red stains and pieces of paper; but it is a rectangle which is certainly not by chance shaped in the

[65] About the symbolic use of numbers in Greenaway's work, see Domenico De Gaetano, 38-48.

golden section (2:3) of a film's photogram, and of many paintings. This rectangle is carefully divided in three by horizontal lines as if they were actually three surfaces glued together. Numbers and letters are distributed among them following a sequence that begins at the top and finishes at the bottom. It seems confusing but it is a game: there are implicit rules governing it, movement happens within defined parameters, the player is wearing a uniform and has fragments of other players surrounding him, revealing that he belongs to a team. Movement here is implied by the overall impression of chaos because of the many red fragments, but its apparent arbitrariness has traces of order (circles, rectangles, numbers, letters, sequences).

The use of collage also adds to the impression of movement: although all space is filled, there is a general idea of a profusion without end that could be seen as another manifestation of Wölfflin's reference to a Baroque open composition. It is as if more brushstrokes and more pieces of paper could be indefinitely added to the surface. Numbers and letters point to the beginning of a series. There is still a number of fragments of red grids stressing even more the possibility of an endless continuation. The tumult of red footballers contained within a frame can be read as a strategy generalized in Greenaway's work: take a dispersed and apparently chaotic ensemble and make it fit into a grid, a list, an exhibition, a text, a film, a series or a rectangle. The soundtrack of his films, for example, translates into music the same rule of many of the series in his artwork: progressive cells grow by an accumulation of repetitions and small variations. In different instances of his work one finds the same attitude of juxtaposing parts and leaving implicit an infinite sequence.

For Gilles Deleuze, inspired by the work of Leibniz, the image that governs the Baroque is the fold. The fold is based in the monad containing parts that in their turn

contain other parts in an indefinite progression. In Leibniz's conception of the universe, matter does not refer to a Cartesian absolute but to a fluid body, which is the product of relationships and not of a fixed essence. The subject himself is vulnerable to a changing world: he contains and is contained by it, crossed by vectors in all directions, and he can apprehend not an object, but a variation.[66] (We may recall in *The Stairs* the moving images of the city seen through each fixed frame, or the pairs of frames showing different points of view of the same place, or further still, the deliberate choice to show in the catalogue each of the frames in two moments, by day and by night: they are all witnessing this same turbulence that shakes any possible fixed truth). In Baroque mathematics, absolute values gave place to pure functionality: the object cannot be separated from a series of declinations, it belongs to a mathematical function that mines its essence, it is a "mannerist object," Deleuze says, because it has become event.[67] The fold is much more ancient than the Baroque, but it was only at that time that it was assimilated in all its potentiality. The Greeks, Deleuze says, could not profit entirely from it because they were too attached to circularity and proportion. It was necessary to conceive the infinite, the incommensurable, so that the fold, and its potential for profusion, could appear.

In a world governed by the fold, one turbulence provokes another, but within the first one, many others are also triggered in an infinite succession.[68] We will find this same turbulence echoing many times in Deleuze's work. No turbulence can happen

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[66] Speaking about point of view, Deleuze says: "It is not a variation of truth according to the subject, but the condition in which the truth of a variation appears to the subject. This is the very idea of the baroque perspective" ["Ce n'est pas une variation de la vérité d'après le sujet, mais la condition sous laquelle apparaît au sujet la vérité d'une variation. C'est l'idée même de la perspective baroque."] Gilles Deleuze, *Le Plis: Leibniz et le baroque*, 27.
[67] Ibid., 24-25.
[68] Ibid., 24.

alone: the choice of Leibniz is not arbitrary and Leibniz himself, who was already contained in Deleuze's thought, would continue unfolding in his other books. An image of the curve that does not touch one point, but infinite ones, the implicit intricate web evoked by it, reappears in other texts by Deleuze in which the idea of movement and of a universe in constant transformation provide the guidelines for his philosophy. Hence, it is not only in Deleuze's book about Leibniz and the Baroque that we may find an inspiration to understand some of the strategies of Greenaway's work, but also in other texts where similar preoccupations are recurrent. Those texts, besides Deleuze's book about Leibniz and the Baroque, will offer us the guidelines to discuss the idea of movement as it was understood in the Baroque conception of the universe. We shall also examine how Deleuze conceived the appropriation of movement within cinema. Once it is demonstrated that the notion of movement can be as pervasive as to offer the bases for structuring thought, or also for producing one kind of cinema, it becomes more clear why there could be works like Greenaway's *Routes*, and how this work may connect with Baroque references apparently so distant from *Routes*.

The point where the curve touches a tangent has given place to infinite curves touching infinite points in *Le Plis*: there is an implicit concept here that the essential is not the search for the ultimate point, but the understanding of a Whole in motion. If Leibniz talks about a flux-matter, belonging to a swirl of relationships that made absolute values impossible, it is again the idea of a movement, here related to the image, which will guide Deleuze's approach to Bergson in his studies on cinema. The definition of image-movement is based on a revolution in science and Bergson's project of creating a philosophy capable not of describing an epistemology of sciences, but of proposing new concepts that would correspond to this revolution. At the basis of this revolution is

the negation of movement conceived as a succession of privileged instants, of poses, which give way to the idea that movement consists of arbitrary moments which can only capture a "flux-matter" (the same expression as in his study of Leibniz). If the ancient dialectics were based on transcendent forms actualized in movement, modern dialectics would work from the idea of production and confrontation of points that are immanent to movement. The difference relies basically on the perspective that quality can no longer be thought of as being external to matter; rather, qualities are in themselves vibrations that change together with time, and matter cannot be conceived of outside this pattern. Bergson would demonstrate that cinema belongs to this new conception of movement, even though it would take some time for it to assume its true potentiality. This would happen only when the camera was no longer obliged to be fixed and when montage assured mutual implications between shots. It is then that that center will fade, and a universe submitted to variation will be sustained only by a web of actions and interactions: we may not be able to speak even of atoms, a possible ultimate point, but rather of interatomic influences.[69] The image coincides, therefore, with movement itself, that is, it belongs to this impalpable changing context.

When Bergson explains perception as a process by which many images are filtered by a "living matter," we again encounter the image of the bundle of lines touching infinite points. Perception is exposed as the means by which a multifaceted "living matter" filters some of the images received and transforms them into other

[69] "Me, my body, will be an ensemble of molecules and atoms incessantly renewed. Can I speak of atoms? They are not different from worlds, from interatomic influences. It is a matter state too hot to distinguish solid bodies in it. It is a world of universal variation, universal undulation, universal lapping: there are no axes, no center, no right and left, no high and low..." ["Moi, mon corps, ce serait plutôt un ensemble de molécules et d'atomes sans cesse renouvelés. Puis-je même parler d'atomes? Ils ne se distingueraient pas de mondes, des influences interatomiques. C'est un état trop chaud de la matière pour qu'on y distingue des corps solides. C'est un état trop chaud de la matière pour qu'on y distingue des corps solides. C'est un monde d'universelle variation, universelle ondulation, universel clapotement: il n'y a ni axes, ni centre, ni droite ni gauche, ni haut ni bas..."] Gilles Deleuze, *Image-mouvement*, 86.

images that are in their turn sent away to meet other living matter, to pass through other transformations, and so on.[70] The received image itself is submitted to fragmentation: it is not the whole image, but the aspect of it that can relate to other images in the "living matter," which is assimilated and transformed. The "living matter" is the screen that prevents the images from being echoed indefinitely without change. We can visualize this universe of pathways, roads, arrows, *Routes*. Why would Greenaway make a series named *Routes* that consists only of lines and small arrows, making curves in a bundle, an abstraction of pure movement (fig.11)? Perhaps for the same reason that, among the twelve books Prospero brought to his island, books that were actually by Greenaway, one of them was named *The book of motion:*

> This is a book that at the most simple level describes how birds fly and waves roll, how clouds form and apples fall from trees. It describes how the eye changes its shape when looking at great distances, how hairs grow in a beard, why the heart flutters and the lungs inflate involuntarily and how laughter changes the face. At its most complex level, it explains how ideas chase one another in the memory and where thought goes when it is finished with.[71]

In the Greenawaynian Baroque world movement could not be conceived without also becoming flesh, being actualized in the body, in falling apples, growing beard, inflating lungs and laughter. We shall address this further on. For now, we shall explore in the *Book of Motion* only its deliberate choice of motion itself as one of the essential things necessary to reconstitute Prospero's kingdom.

This book that has to be "held down with a brass weight" because at night, "it drums against the bookcase shelf," this book that "is always bursting open at its volition" and therefore is "bound around with two leather straps buckled tightly" offers

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[70] Ibid., 91-92.
[71] Peter Greenaway, *Prospero's Books* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1991), 24.

the imaginary testimony of a general restlessness. The *Routes* series could be made because it responds to an ontological positioning: from rotting matter to changing meanings, everything contributes to the same instability, to the same absence of center, to the same series of indefinite elements tied together only by mutual relations. The Baroque itself, its revival, or its re-creation, would respond to this same process. If perception can be explained as a process of filtering a web of images that would reverberate indefinitely, a similar motif will materialize in another text by Deleuze, when he speaks about the rhizome. It is the rhizome that can offer us a hint of an answer to the difficult question about the possibility of a contemporary restaging of the Baroque.

We now find the third reappearance of the bundle of infinite lines touching infinite points: "there are no points or positions in a rhizome, as can be found in a structure, in a tree, in a root. There are only lines."[72] The concept of a rhizome is presented by Deleuze and Guattari in opposition to a longer tradition of a tree model of thinking that sustains different domains such as linguistics, psychology, biology, and philosophy. While the model of the tree relies on ramifications from an ultimate origin, the rhizome supposes many origins, interconnections, lines of fugue. This model is similar to the one proposed when the process of perception was explained.

If a multifaceted "living matter" filters the received images, the concept of the rhizome will propose that instead of considering something from one point of view, different lines coming from different points should be allowed to cross it; instead of hierarchic structures of power, a system of lateral communication; instead of

[72] ["Il n'y a pas de points ou de positions dans un rhizome, comme on en trouve dans une structure, un arbre, une racine. Il n'y a que des lignes."] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Mille Plateaux*, 15.

psychoanalyses, a schizo-analysis for which the unconscious does not have a center emanating its meaning but is produced in the very process of analysis and through the connection with different other rhizomes. If the tree proposes the verb "to be," the rhizome proposes the conjunction "and...and.... and"[73] – we know already that we are in the territory of grids and lists.

The authors will say that there are those who have a tree in their heads, but the brain is more like a herb than a tree.[74] The arbitrary growth of the herb fits this model of multiple connections better than the tree, whose branches are tied to a trunk, to preconceived meanings established by structures of power. If in *Image-mouvement*, movement was conceived, through Bergson, as being not a succession of poses, but rather as an arbitrary apprehension of changing matter, then when a similar principle is transposed to the rhizome, we find a rule according to which any point in a rhizome can be connected to any other point. The rhizome is like that "black screen" that allowed images to stop echoing and be transformed. Similar to the living matter, it is equally multifaceted because it can be connected to different semantic chains, to organizations of power, to science, to arts, to social struggle.[75] Finally, in their proposal of a new thinking based on the rhizome, the authors regret that history has been considered from a sedentary point of view. They therefore demand a revolution in history, that would be a narrative of the nomads, that is, a narrative with no fixed guidelines, but which would be woven from the bundle of lines coming from different directions. We may now consider how the Baroque is woven into this tissue fabric, in order to arrive at how was it possible to recreate it in a contemporary context.

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[73] Ibid., 36.
[74] Ibid., 24.
[75] Ibid., 14.

In a tree model concept of history, a contemporary Baroque is impossible because the historical and social conditions that created it are not the same today.[76] But a contemporary Baroque has been accepted by different authors who choose to think "rhizomatically." One of the first to do so was Eugenio D'Ors, whose text *The Baroque* inaugurated an interpretation of the movement as a permanent cultural style, not limited by geographical or chronological boundaries. D'Ors identified different moments of the Baroque in architecture, painting, literature, philosophy, music or more arbitrary categories, ranging from art to abstract qualities or things. He would mention, for example, a professor of History of Medicine who classified as Baroque the discovery of blood circulation.[77] Although D'Ors's associations are sometimes too remote, his leaps from one thing to another ultimately yield a unification of the disparate pieces that may suggest the figure of a vast Baroque. In this sense, the historical Baroque, limited as it was by history itself, by specific conditions that allowed thought and expression to progress only up to a certain limit, may seem to be not so much Baroque as instead, the modern age may turn out to be. New conditions allowed full development of the Baroque's potentialities, and of a kind of thinking that was evoked by D'Ors but more deeply investigated by Deleuze.

It would take some time for theory itself to be capable of assimilating the consequences of a Baroque that was not limited by formal characteristics. When in 1960 the first issue of the journal *Etude Cinématographique* was released, its theme was

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[76] For an angry denial of a contemporary Baroque based on this argument see João Adolfo Hansen, "Pós-moderno e Barroco," *Cadernos do Mestrado* (Rio de Janeiro: UERJ, 1994), 28-55. It is an otherwise persuasive analysis of Baroque literature, whose characteristics, specially "emulation," can offer in itself the bases for a counter-argument against his resistance to a contemporary Baroque. After all, it is also the very emulation of ancient sources so much appreciated by the historical Baroque that will play an important role in its revival by Greenaway. Greenaway himself is (superficially) quoted by the author as being part of a (superficial) attempt of an impossible Baroque resurgence.

[77] Eugenio D'Ors, 79.

"Baroque and Cinema." The articles ranged from analysis of the Baroque in general, to analysis of specific films and filmmakers. While the texts were sometimes enlightening, and sometimes unable to avoid stereotypes, they nevertheless had in common a broad attitude that assumed the possibility of a contemporary Baroque.[78] After the generalizations of D'Ors were overcome, what remained was the freedom to dissociate the Baroque from historical events and to dig deeper into the characteristics that would allow its later reappearance. This is what the first issue of *Etude Cinématographique*, whose preface announced the serious approach to cinema theory that the journal has been developing since then, would accomplish with its articles: cinema, a moving medium, was not seen as Baroque in and of itself, but it could participate in a broader cultural context which reinforced the Baroque, and which justified cinema itself as a reliable cultural product.

Subsequent to this first issue, many authors have found different solutions to explain a contemporary Baroque: Severo Sarduy, whose study of the Baroque deals with everything from scientific notions to literary and artistic traits, uses the term "relapse" (*retombée*) to explain the echoes of the Baroque in different domains and moments; Guy Scarpetta would sign his preference for the expression "a return to" instead of "a return of" the Baroque, meaning that this return could not go unmarred by the present itself; Omar Calabrese, who also works with scientific notions to explain what he calls a "neobaroque," enumerates different characteristics of the Baroque that have been

[78] We may find, for example, respectable Jean Mitry prey to the idea of the Baroque as a chaotic overflowing of passions, and therefore, preferring to place Orson Welles as a classic filmmaker. See Jean Mitry, "Cinéma et Baroque: essai d'approximation à propos D'Orson Welles," *Étude Cinématographique – Baroque et Cinéma* 1-2 (Spring 1960) For a more precise reading of Welles and the Baroque, see Guy Scarpetta, *L'Artifice*, especially pp. 192-196. In the same magazine mentioned above, Marcel Brion writes about how movement permeated different instances of the Baroque, from architecture (including the importance of stairs), to painting (including the ceilings with visionary flights), and to a general understanding of a world in constant becoming. Marcel Brion, "Baroque et Esthétique du Mouvement," in idem.

actualized in contemporary culture; Alejo Carpentier sees the Baroque as not being limited to a singular moment, but as the essence of Latin America, based as it is on the mixture of European and native cultures and races.[79]

These writers have in common a "rhizomatic" attitude towards the Baroque, i.e., they do not take it as a fixed concept in time, but as a rhizome capable of constant transformation and of associating with various other rhizomes coming from different directions. A similar approach will be developed here since the Baroque is seen not as belonging to a single moment in history or to a single writer who theorized about it, but as an ensemble of lines, of different definitions crossing it: the Baroques of Wölfflin, Deleuze, Buci-Glucksmann, D'Ors, Sarduy, Argan, Hauser, Carpentier, Walter Benjamin, Peter Greenaway, a magazine in an airplane, an exhibition of Brazilian art in Paris, etc. Only when it is considered within this vast web, can a study about the Baroque better examine it, assimilating within the scope of its own strategy the very means that the Baroque itself used either in literature, in art, in science, in philosophy, in music, in buildings or in gardens.

A stable unity is mined in the Baroque context not only by a sought-after complexity but also by an inevitable instability. The complexity is implicit in the myriad of objects of different kinds gathered in some of Greenaway's exhibitions or also in the many references with which he works – see for example the analysis of his *100 Allegories* in chapter 4. But unity is also denied in the way movement is the origin of many of Greenaway's series. "It should not be ruled out that these panels should prepare themselves to be reworked, updated, erased, readdressed and rewritten – this has always

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[79] Severo Sarduy, *Barroco*; Guy Scarpetta, *L'artifice*; Omar Calarese, *Caos e Bellezza: Immagini del neobarocco* and *A Idade Neobararroca*; Alejo Carpentier, "L'éternel retour du baroquisme" in *Magazine Littéraire* 300 (June 1992), 27 – 31.

been the nature of a blackboard's existence and purpose."[80] The choice of a blackboard in the series that Peter Greenaway comments on is not arbitrary. The blackboard affords the instability of a surface always in the process of being made and remade, the very idea of a constant becoming developed in many of Deleuze's writings, including his study on the Baroque.

In the "indefinitely cavernous world" of Leibniz that Deleuze investigates, everything can be submitted to an infinite unfolding. Instead of a solid essence, an immense labyrinth of entrances; instead of a circle, an infinite spiral; or in Greenaway's version, instead of a static One, a grid of unfolding *Micro-Grains*. In this early work of 1967, creatures of uneven contour develop little by little in a grid, acquiring protuberances that soon force them to become tri-dimensional, and that ends up taking the shape of feet and wings, the very limbs of movement (fig.12). It is the grid itself that, as in many other works, has assimilated movement in its sequencing, in this way resuming the double process by which movement will be assimilated to a cumulative juxtaposition. As we have already quoted Deleuze as saying, it is not the verb "to be" that governs the Baroque, but the conjunctions "and...and...and." The *Micro Grains* gather in one (moving) image both schematic aspects hidden in the red chaos of *Red Footballers* and the dynamism of *Routes*, the routes that connect all changing rhizomes.

It may at times prove difficult to hide how *moving* the discovery of such a coherence can become in the development of a work, a coherence both in time and in different means used by Greenaway throughout his career. The *Micro-Grains* make visible many associations that continue to reverberate in Greenaway's work: the use of grids, serialization, flight, absence of a center, accumulation, a schematic thought, that

[80] Peter Greenaway, Blackboard Paintings, 1999 (note 57).

can be associated with strange living matter (either still lives or human flesh), with the creation of categories or their arbitrariness. It is not rare to find authors who write about the Baroque, who cannot help being caught up in the swirl of associations that contaminates their texts with a cumulative fervor. Greenaway himself, as it will soon become apparent, offers a good example of this. Eugenio D'Ors was one of the first to be unable to resist the temptation of gliding from one rhizome to another, from an enumeration of painters who were gradually more and more Baroque, to stating that a harbor is not Baroque, but the ocean is.[81] Deleuze would translate such a thirst for infinity by making everything fit into "the fold: the Baroque invents the infinite work or operation."[82] Perhaps the authors end up writing in that way because they have reached the double sense of the "moving" Baroque. Like so many words and symbols appropriated by the Baroque, this adjective cannot be anchored in a single meaning, even less so if its first association is with movement itself.

We may find an equivalent succession from one meaning to the other in Deleuze's writings about cinema. If in *Image-mouvement* he dealt mainly with a physical movement, in *Image-temps* this movement is instead associated with an existential transformation. Consequently, what he investigates in the cinema of the neo-realists is the matching of reality and imagination. If in a previous moment in cinema the objects could exist in themselves, having a function according to the situation, the neo-realists introduce the notion of things and places that can only acquire their value after being perceived by the characters and the spectator. This difference marks the change from a cinema of action to a cinema of the observer in which reality and imagination

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[81] Eugenio D'Ors, 135-136.
[82] ["Le plis: le Baroque invente l'oeuvre ou l'opération infinies"] Gilles Deleuze, *Le Plis*, 48.

have become indistinguishable. Deleuze mentions, not unintentionally, a writer to whom *Last Year in Marienbad* is the last of the neorealist films.[83] *Last Year in Marienbad* is where we had found our Baroque audience and where reality glides in corridors and gardens and mirrors and souvenirs with no possible anchorage. For the moment, I will resist developing a chain of associations that would exemplify how imagination and reality are so intermingled in Greenaway's work: we shall leave this Baroque trait for a later occasion. What interests us here is how the Deleuze who wrote about the Baroque could be so coherently Baroque himself, in his work as a whole.

The concept of image-time incorporates metamorphosis into the notion of movement, which should be a phrase heard as a voice-over while you look at *Micro-Grains I*.[84] As with the neorealist characters, Baroque art allows no immunity to the world. The commonly mentioned example is that of the ecstasies of Saint Theresa, by Bernini; however, the Baroque gallery is vast: the recurrent Saint Sebastian with his body punctured with arrows and with a surprisingly sensuous expression; the less remembered Ludovica Albertoni, also by Bernini; as well as all the engaging flights of celestial figures in church ceilings, Ruisdael's unquiet landscapes, voluptuous images by Rubens and Caravaggio, huge contorted columns in Italian Baroque churches, as if verticality itself had to become a spiral and assume more tension, and so on. All of them

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[83] The text he mentions is by André Labarthe, in *Cahiers du Cinéma* 123 (September 1961) in Deleuze, *Image-temps* (Cinema) (Paris: Minuit, 1985), 16.

[84] A metamorphosis that embraces both the subject and the object, shaking the limits between truth and imagination: "There is no more neither truth nor appearance. There is no longer either an invariable form nor a variable point of view of one form. There is a point of view that belongs so much to the thing that the thing does not stop transforming itself in a becoming identical to the point of view. Metamorphosis of truth. It is because the artist is the *creator of truth* that truth cannot be achieved, found or reproduced, it must be created" ["Il n'y a plus de verité ni apparence. Il n'y a plus ni forme invariable ni point de vue variable sur une forme. Il y a un point de vue qui appartient si bien à la chose que la chose ne cesse de se transformer dans un devenir identique au point de vue. Metamorphose du vrai. Ce que l'artiste est, c'est *créateur de vériteé*, car la vérité n'a pas à être atteinte, trouvée ni reproduite, elle doit être créée"] in Gilles Deleuze, *Image-temps*, 191.

share the same "moving" quality that tries to grasp the attention of an indifferent spectator: a work of art had to be able to stir emotions, to arouse pathos. We are far from that Renaissance fixed point of view, from which the spectator contemplated a harmonic static scene that conveyed a hint of a transcendent Ideal. It matters little that the subject may still be religious, it will have to be translated into the same appeal to this very material world, inflated with tension and passion.

Christine Buci-Glucksmann will mention "*il furore*" as the extreme of the Baroque aesthetics, an alteration of the spirit caused by passion, enthusiasm and madness. For her, the Baroque is guided by a madness of seeing ("folie du voir") that transforms everything into simulacra and spectacles, that transforms thought itself into something visible. We will have other opportunities to investigate her engaging writings on the Baroque. For now, we finish with the *Micro-Grains*. How humble they have become amidst so much *furore*, and yet, they may still stand for this general metamorphosis that embraces observed and observer and is manifest by its gradual deformation and sprouting of legs and wings. This timid movement will end up in an exhibition, the very choice for exhibitions themselves offering, like cinema, a good opportunity to celebrate vision, but here, to celebrate movement as well, in the act of *Flying over Water*.

Flying over Water

In 1997, Greenaway held an exhibition at the Fundació Joan Miró, in Barcelona, based on the myth of Icarus, which, despite its title, is centered on falling into water, rather than on flight itself. Similarly to *The Stairs*, his exhibitions, more than his films, offer a new opportunity for a staging of many aspects of Greenaway's universe. Perhaps

this occurs because the exhibitions are less restricted by the need for a narrative, and can therefore bring to more an extreme point the emphasis on a paradigmatic instead of a syntagmatic structure. This choice allows parallelisms and an endless proliferation of examples for each of the items, resulting in an exhibition structured like a monad with many monads inside it. Greenaway himself often comments in the preface of the exhibition catalogues that the exhibitions are made with the deliberate purpose of trying to surpass the limitations of cinema language (the limitations he mentions are mainly the time for looking at each part of the exhibition, not limited by the director's will, and the possibility of exploring other senses besides vision and hearing). If in his films, the narrative flux can be delayed by parallel elements that keep reflecting the story laterally, as it will be seen in the case of *ZOO* (chapter 3), in the exhibitions, and particularly in this one, this same mechanism can be developed more freely. This structure can be better visualized if we think of the grid that punctuates many of Greenaway's art works: it is always a matter of putting cells together, one beside the other, with no converging center, and with some "equivalence" among them as the governing rule.

There is, however, a theme developed throughout all the parts of this exhibition: that of the myth of Icarus. In order to escape from the labyrinth and the tyranny of King Minos, his father, Dedalus, built him wings made out of wax and feathers and advised Icarus not to fly close to the sun, otherwise the wax would melt. Icarus disobeyed his father and had a tragic end, falling into the sea. The exhibition investigates the myth, exploring many aspects of it, and seizing the opportunity to comment on the desire to fly, its manifestations in European culture, in addition to once more stating a theme that is recurrent in Greenaway's work: the fall, rather than the flight itself. Insofar as flight may also be mentioned, in Greenaway's universe, it appears more as a means of

reaffirming our very material condition and the implicit impossibility of attaining weightlessness. The opening words in the preface present the double aspect to be developed in the exhibition: the simultaneous universality of this desire and its impossibility.

> The desire to fly is universal. To fly as a bird, to fly as a spirit, to ascend to the Heavens, to escape gravity, is a human aspiration of long standing and wide appeal.... Every culture in every age sooner or later, covertly or openly, expresses such a desire. And yet it is an impossible dream. We, as unassisted individuals, are never going to be able to lift off and float and fly. Gravity has fashioned our bodies to keep our feet on the earth.[85]

Here again, Greenaway is not distant from the Baroque. We have seen already how flight itself appears in the Baroque paintings in church ceilings, but besides this specific example, flight can be seen as belonging to the general Baroque affinity for movement, and to a confrontation between an aspiration to ascend and an emphasis on matter itself.[86] The exhibition *Flying over Water* will be investigated with an emphasis on how movement as a Baroque aspect was expressed in the context of a work by Greenaway. This means that the theme is present through a cumulative structure reminiscent of the grid, and that the fall was the aspect of the chosen myth given most attention.

There are many other moments in Greenaway's work where the fall reappears in an equivalent situation, related both to flight and water. The recurrence of these same motifs is so clear as to tempt us to make a hypertext out of this text, that is, to "click" on

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[85] Peter Greenaway, *Flying over water* (Barcelona: Fundació Joan Miró and London: Merrel Holberton, 1997), 15.

[86] For Eugenio D'Ors, classic forms tend to fly, while Baroque forms tend to weigh, *O Barroco*, 90. Deleuze comments on the double vectors at play in the Baroque, pulling towards high and low, *Le Plis*, p. 41. Christine Buci-Glucksmann, speaks of an oscillation between a Baroque materialist passion for the body and a fall to the top, relating the fall in the Baroque to the expression of an excessive desire: see *La folie du voir: De l'esthétique baroque* (Paris: Galilée, 1986), 172 and *La Raison Baroque: de Baudelaire à Benjamin* (Baroque reason: the aesthetics of modernity) (Paris: Editions Galilée, 1984), 222. We can observe, then, the rhizome "flight" being crossed by different vectors-authors, making out of it a multifaceted surface.

each theme with a mouse and allow it to echo countless times, in so many different scenes of films, and drawings or paintings, or objects of his exhibitions. This would be a strategy more loyal to Greenaway's work, as it would repeat the playing with parallelism and it could count on the image to say things, to reformulate and disentangle his puzzles, to reproduce the wonderment of images, the wonderment of seeing, so much explored by the Baroque itself. This would also be a way of avoiding linearity and to stay closer to a work that dealt, instead, with juxtapositions. If movement could be literally represented by flight and fall, there are other conceptual ways through which it permeates the whole structure of the exhibition and the first one could be the negation of linearity itself. By this, unity is denied, one thing can be many at the same time, no illustration appears alone, as it is always surrounded by others that bring new nuances to its unstable essence.[87]

In this way, we may find the father-and-son relationship between Dedalus and Icarus repeated in a painting by Caravaggio, *Saint Mathew and the Angel* or in a painting by William Blake, *Elohim creating Adam*. The reference to these paintings, however, maintains the myth in the sacred realm of art history. Other parallelisms will mine these associations, trying to bring the myth down to earth, and sometimes employing a derisory tone to achieve this. Different aspects of the myth are thus represented in the exhibition, by means of elements that refer to the myth, to Greenaway's work, to

[87] It should be remembered that these comments are made from the exhibition experienced as a book. Nevertheless, the disadvantage is less than it seems, as the catalogues of Greenaway's exhibitions are carefully made to suffice in themselves, recreating the exhibition by means of texts and illustrations relatively independent of the physical exhibition itself, but so connected to its conception, that the images in the book are not photographs of the physical space of the exhibition, but images that reenact in the physical space of the pages of the catalogue the associations suggested in the original installation. The elaborated graphic project of the catalogues, and the Prospero's books made by Greenaway, may confirm his preoccupation to allow the exhibition to be fully re-experienced by means of the catalogue, and his reverence to the book itself, as an important means to convey his ideas – just as cinema and exhibitions can do.

everyday objects, to art history or history itself, or further still, to his own cumulative strategies. We may find, for example, in the item "the purification: drinking and blessing," a stone basin designed to contain Holy Water and an aluminum drinking-fountain "producing the smallest bubbling or trickling of water after the application of thumb or finger or fist to the pressure-tap."[88]

We will often witness this same irony commenting on some minor aspect of the myth, making very concrete translations of it. After all, it was announced at the beginning of the catalogue that flight is impossible because the feet are prisoners of the ground: the myth will therefore be tied to this very reality. Water is again represented in "the water sample encyclopedia" which shows thirty glass jars numbered and labeled with the information about the nearby sources from which it was collected (lake, pond, cistern, ditch, etc). The jars carefully placed with an equal space between them remind us once more of the grid and repeat the structure of the whole exhibition. We may zoom outwards from this specific item and we will see a row of other items in the exhibition, each of them labeled, each of them containing a row of images from different sources. There is no possible stability for a single item, everything multiplies in indefinite echoes and everything is defined by its relationship with its equivalents. Using Deleuze's terminology, we may call these items monads, or rhizomes, or a body without organs, that is, a body open to unusual associations.

The theme of flight suggests another form of movement, not related to a dislocation in space, but to a transformation in nature. Metamorphosis itself is mentioned and also suggested by the presence of many elements that refer to birds. Ovid's fascination with metamorphosis becomes the vehicle for Greenaway's

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[88] Peter Greenaway. *Flying over Water*. 48.

fascination with it. Greenaway observes that Ovid commented on the twins that sprang from the eggs resulting from Leda's passion for Jupiter, who had disguised himself as a swan (Leda, by the way, is also present as an image in the exhibition). Greenaway also speaks of other "mixed parent progeny created by apparent bestiality" giving birth to the Sphinx, the centaur, the mermaid, the chimera, harpies and Gorgon. He also takes the opportunity to update the list speaking of "more recent additions, like the werewolf and the vampire, not to mention Batman and the Spiderman."[89] In the Baroque version practiced by Greenaway, flight cannot be lived if it does not belong to a vast cultural repertory. Although the cultural reference is present, there is a determination to make the spectator also "live it" by means of the use of different media. Movement, therefore, is not something to be observed by an unaffected spectator, it is instead, sought in order to be a moving experience.

Water and air, flight and swimming may be also allowed to appear as exhilarating experiences, carrying an awareness of their sexual connotations but instead interest lies mainly in the possible rapture that the sensation of weightlessness may cause. Again, if only we could click our hypertext and watch the parade of images: Icarus is said to have been confused by the bluish color of sky and sea; a hundred electric fans blow air in every direction in one part of this exhibition; sea-nereids float in blue water in *Prospero's Books*; the illusion of water is recreated in a spectacle of light effects in the Venice exhibition *Watching Water*; birds fly and a feather floats over nocturnal fields in a series of drawings, and so on. Yet, soon a splash may break the spell, elation is evoked only to be destroyed, this parade is nothing but a prologue to another one, more profuse and tragic and crude.

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[89] Ibid., 90.

Item 29, "The big splash," shows bodies splashing in water while the text in the catalogue summons up other splashes: "Sappho falling into the Aegean and Hero falling into the Hellespont, and Ophelia falling into the Avon and Virginia Woolf falling into the Ouse;"[90] Kracklite falls to death (*The Belly of an architect*), the draughtsman and the three husbands drowns (*The Draughtsman's Contract* and *Drowning by Numbers*), Jerome drinks poison (*The Pillow Book*), twenty three drowned corpses are taken out of the Seine (*Death in the Seine*) and the list could be longer than this. In the same way that flight turns into fall, the water that once appeared in the exhibition suggesting purification, will be evoked many other times, associated with death as in these splashes or when it spills out of a coffin, as a reference to Icarus'ss death. Nothing can be arrested in a single meaning and reality itself multiplies in many possibilities as it is regarded as undifferentiated from imaginary sources.

Falling and drowning, the two mains aspects of the myth explored in this exhibition ironically called *Flying over water*, echoes events that happened in Greenaway's early life and which he mentions in the catalogue, like witnessing an aircraft disaster in an air-show, the first image of Icarus seen by him in Tate Gallery, or a remembrance of an eleven-year-old schoolfriend who drowned in a pond floating out on a varnished door. These events are treated with the same nonchalance with which he comments on the myth of Icarus: the fields where the air-shows used to take place are now employed for agricultural purposes and are said to "have long lost their potential for terror and excitement," while the place where the friend drowned was named Eagle Park Pond. "a name not without flying reverberation."[91] In a Deleuzian way, Greenaway

[90] Ibid., 92-93.
[91] Ibid., 89 and 92.

refuses to attribute a psychological meaning to these early events and does not take them as the ultimate source for his obsessions. Together with the recurrent character of the ornithologist, an occupation shared by his father, they have their original strength weakened when they are revived in so many other versions, each of them adding new aspects to the first one. In a world without center, in a world governed by the grid, it is through simultaneity and juxtapositions that meaning is constructed, and not through an original center. This way of thinking allows image itself to assume its potential to recreate experience less by means of an intricate narrative than by means of a progressive juxtaposition that adds meanings at each new element of the sequence.

When reality and imagination assume an identical weight, images are valuable because of their evocative power, and the fact that they exist as images already gives them enough consistency to become real. Even the reality of the myth will be put into question, producing a text rich in conjectures about different possibilities related to the story of Icarus. We will then see new rows of possibilities about the origin of the winged creatures, about the possible mythological owner of a third pair of wings shown in the exhibition, about how many splashes have ever occurred, about possible verdicts from the autopsy of Icarus's body, and so on. All of these enumerations of possibilities function as a means of destabilizing reality as a single version: it is always a matter of making it endlessly proliferate to the point where what remains real is only the means by which reality is lived and reorganized on an imaginary level. Like cinema, an exhibition will therefore be another way of recreating a particular kind of reality, as Greenaway states in this comment on another of his exhibitions: "Perhaps one day we will have a truly satisfying cinema, as we may perhaps one day reach an understanding for a totally satisfying exhibition. 'Virtual reality' will not be enough, 'real reality' is what is desired,

though I, for one, would think that still a poor mimetic charade, and would choose an 'unreal reality'."[92]

If reality has been fractured to the point where any given element becomes a part of a multiple whole, the work of art itself will also lose its unity. Bernini, architect and sculptor, one of the major artists of the historical Baroque, would talk about "il bel composto," a coagulation of architectural, sculptural and pictorial materials, a composition in architecture whose meaning came from the reading of heterogeneous elements such as paintings, statues, columns, chromatic and luminous organization of space.[93] Deleuze, whom we may call a Baroque philosopher, when commenting about the notion of the rhizome, would imagine an ideal book capable of embracing everything, historical determinations, concepts, individuals, groups, social formations, a book in *n-dimensions* that would oppose the Classical or the Romantic book based on interiority or on the substance of a subject.[94] We can easily recognize how much Greenaway fits into both projects: the exhibition *Flying over Water* plays with different sources of images and, in general, as was also seen in *The Stairs*, his exhibitions are created with the declared purpose of mixing the languages of cinema and art. It would not be difficult to enumerate many examples in his work where the unity of the work of art is menaced by the use of heterogeneous sources: this can be seen from a mere collage of his to a major project for a whole exhibition. The examples would witness the same yearning to embrace everything, to provoke every kind of sensation, to play with excess,

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[92] Peter Greenaway, *Watching Water* (Milan: Electa, 1993), 11. Or, in other terms, Christine Buci-Glucksmann comments on how the Baroque opposes the progressive modernity of the plenitude of the form and of the Subject as identity and center, by means of the instability of forms in movement opening over a divided and divisible structure of the real. See Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *La Raison Baroque*, 173.

[93] Mentioned by Omar Calabrese, *Caos e Bellezza*, 57.

[94] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Mille plateaux*, 16.

to propose a swarming whole. We are back to the stirring *Red Footballers*, to the proliferating *Micro-Grains*, to the dynamic *Routes*. And how far we find ourselves from the silence of the classic harmonic unity.

Yet, this scenery is stained with death. We have seen already how Icarus entered into a large gallery of fallen characters in Greenaway's work, and the exhibition will be swarming with references to death and corpses. We are now in the grandiloquent terrain of pompous Baroque funerary monuments. We have met Icarus's coffin spilling water and the text will not miss the opportunity to instigate more disaster without ever forgetting its strategy of making images proliferate. We will make up for the absence of an image from the exhibition with a long quotation that may well exemplify the taste for making a cruel spectacle out of death:

> There is a dark, back-alley gallery space where the Icarine fatality is reenacted. It is a dark area centred on a large and gloomy aquarium. The concrete floor is wet. Here dolphins could be tortured or whales butchered or turtles stripped alive from their shells. Or crabs with claws fastened with wire-bands are kept dubiously fresh and alive, ready for scalding on the kitchen stove. You can smell the steam of boiling crabs. We can feel the dangerous combination of water and electricity, perhaps the electricity of static energy, of friction between naked body and air, as Icarus falls at great speed through the Aegean sky, like a meteorite burning itself up before the final splash in froth and steam.[95]

Crudeness and cruelty are not rare in Greenaway's work. The yearning for disaster should not be strange to Baroque art, which always aims to provoke commotion. Cruelty can be seen as one more manifestation of excess: the same intensity with which life is celebrated in breathtaking proliferations, will also serve to guide booming deaths and immense grief. Forms would not be heavy if they could only fly: it is because they succumb that the Baroque emphasized both the potential fall and perishable

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[95] Peter Greenaway, *Flying over Water*, 82.

materiality.[96] We will once again find an audience represented by a hundred empty chairs in one of the rooms of the exhibition where the spectator is invited to sit and wait for Icarus's triumphant return, only possible if the myth had had another ending. The humorous presence of a landing platform for the event, and the photograph of an aligned film audience wearing 3D glasses in the catalogue, hides an irretrievable loss that will assume less light configurations in other moments of Greenaway's work. Suddenly, that swarming Baroque scenery may turn out to be painfully empty and Dürer's *Melancholy*, surrounded by measuring paraphernalia, will lean her head against her arm, in a gesture of tired despair.

As a Baroque element, movement was used in diversified ways in the seventeenth century: it destabilized façades; it resulted in columns that rotated on their axes or in dynamic painting compositions; it crowded poetry with obscure metaphors that avoided static certainties; and it was used in a less literal sense in the quest to disturb the beholder's passivity by presenting him or her with a work full of pathos. Movement also found innumerous translations in Greenaway's work: in his series that explores variations of a single theme; in an overall preference for tumult; in his *Routes*, which placed movement in the boundary between abstract lines and the suggestion of the dynamism of roads; in the apparent disorder of a football game. The exhibition *Flying over Water* exemplifies the many aspects of the interpretation that movement could be given, ranging from the reference to a physical movement implicit in flying and falling, to a more conceptual translation as a way to destabilize meaning. No element in the exhibition could receive a single version: water had to come from different sources, the

[96] Both aspects were the guidelines for the film *The Belly of an Architect*, that Greenaway considers the most autobiographical of his films. For a good analysis of how the idea of fall is developed throughout the whole film, as well as the ideas of representation, mentioned before as fundamental to the Baroque, and of reproduction, see David Pascoe, 121-157.

relationship between father and son had to be exemplified by different paintings, flying was a concern of Icarus and of innumerable pilots, most of them unsuccessful, mentioned throughout the exhibition. The myth of Icarus itself was reduced to a collection of elements: wax, bees, wings, wind, water, bird bones, a big splash, etc. In different instances, each possible unity, whether the myth or one of its elements, had to be fractured in many parts as if an overall pursuit of movement did not allow any possible stability.

Insecurity had already been suggested in the bitter irony of the exhibition's title. Instead of the exhilaration of flying over water, what was instead greatly stressed in the different fragments that formed the exhibition was the despair of the fall. No surprise then that in a final irony the exhibition ends with a "welcoming frame" supposedly set to a triumphal return of Icarus to earth, but that inversely can only affirm its less triumphal drowning. The movement of the soul, pursued in Baroque art, may be here leaning towards loss and melancholy.

CHAPTER THREE

BAROQUE MELANCHOLY

What are Adam and Eve doing with a set of nine brass weights and a heavy sphere lying on the ground?

All the items refer to falling, which implies on gravity, weight, and also knowledge. For Walter Benjamin, melancholy justifies the presence of both mourning and ostentation in the Baroque drama. If on the one hand there is the unavoidable grief due to the conscience of the fleeting nature of life often reaffirmed in that context, on the other hand, there is the need to escape from the everyday banality reaffirmed in the use of ostentation.[97] The grandiosity of funerary Baroque monuments is a testimony of the pompous treatment given to melancholy. However, Benjamin mentions also another kind of melancholy in the Baroque drama, as he associates it to immersion, that is, to reflection that succumbs to the weight of things only to better investigate their labyrinths. The escape from reality is translated in this case not in ostentation, but in a contemplative devotion to the objects. It is in this context that we find the elements mentioned above. Melancholy in the work of Greenaway evokes grief, mourning, lavishness and obsessive investigations as well.

Adam and Eve re-appear various in Greenaway's artwork with many declared associations related to them. They are present, for example, as a real naked couple in a glass case in the exhibition *A hundred objects to represent the world*, where they

[97] Benjamin, especially chap. 3.

"demonstrate mythology, sexual congress, origins, Genesis, voyeurism, marriage, idealism, realism, exhibitionism."[98] We will see that there is more to it than this.

The nine brass weights are part of another exhibition, *Some Organising Principles*, that took place in Wales in 1993 (fig. 14). Greenaway comments in the catalogue that he wanted to "excite in a way that perhaps the seventeenth-century antiquarian museums or the *Wunderkammern* excited" before the following century, when the museums began to separate items into fixed categories. He gathers objects, then, "to demonstrate human ingenuity and human obsession in the great determination man has to count, number and measure every phenomenon he experiences – which is a most significant wonder in itself."[99] The nine brass weights are part of this wonder.

The heavy sphere on the ground belongs to a third exhibition, sponsored by the Louvre, entitled *Flying out of this world*. It is a work by Odilon Redon that closes a selection of drawings from different artists chosen by Greenaway.[100] Yet, the three elements, Adam and Eve, the sphere and the brass weights are somehow related to that audience waiting in vain for a returning Icarus. All of them compose a scenario dominated by melancholy and its associations with wisdom and loss. We may find ourselves once more circling around an empty center, though now we are equipped with measuring paraphernalia.

The fall of Adam and Eve assumes a larger existential reverberation than the fall of Icarus. When the couple reappears in the exhibition *Flying out of This World*, facing a

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[98] Peter Greenaway, *100 Objects to Represent the World* (Stuttgart: Hatje, 1992).
[99] Peter Greenaway, *Some Organising Principles*. (Swansea: The Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, The Wales Film Council, undated, unpaged).
[100] This exhibition belongs to a series ("Parti pris") organized by the Louvre in which the museum invited someone outside the domain of art history to curate an exhibition by selecting drawings from their collection. Greenaway was the second guest. Jacques Derrida was the first – his theme was the blind. Julia Kristeva was also invited to the same project in which she participated with the theme "heads."

flying angel, Greenaway risks a conclusion: "Perhaps the real punishment in the Garden was to be de-winged." This is what we are indirectly reminded of when we meet the couple naked in a vitrine glass display case in the exhibition *One Hundred Objects to Represent the World* (fig. 13). There they are, devoid of all idealization possible in a drawing, real flesh, real bodies, no wings to allow them to fly over water or out of this world. Eleven versions of them are presented in the catalogue in different representations by different artists where Adam and Eve appear eating the apple, covering their bodies or being expelled from paradise. How do they function within Greenaway's work so as to deserve to be mentioned so many times?

The answer begins Eve's temptation in paradise: " 'You won't die!' the serpent hissed. 'God knows that your eyes will be opened when you eat it. You will become just like God, knowing everything, both good and evil.' " (Genesis 3:4-5). When, in another context, Greenaway refers to the exhibition where Adam and Eve are in a glass case, he casually adds some new explanations for what they represent, and among them, he mentions "forbidden knowledge."[101] The serpent's alluring promise of absolute knowledge turns out to be the knowledge of their own bodies, the conscience of their nakedness which they would immediately try to hide, the knowledge of their hopeless separation from all the creatures in paradise and from God Himself, and above all, of their own mortality.

This fall from paradise may be echoed in the fall of the twenty-three characters in the Seine, heard as a splash in the film *Death in the Seine,* followed by corpses being dragged out of the river one by one and carefully catalogued by two employees of the

[101] Greenaway recalls the exhibition in another catalogue, where he mentions that Adam and Eve were put in the glass case "to represent man and woman, male and female, innocence, modesty, forbidden knowledge, sex, sin, exploitation, sensationalism, provocation, embarrassment, beginnings, God and Genesis." Peter Greenaway, *The Stairs – The location – Geneva*, 16.

local morgue. The camera systematically sweeps over each of the bodies, repeating the same movement again and again, with a disturbing detachment. The framing of the corpses is a reference to Mantegna's *Body of Christ*, with its unusual viewpoint of having Christ's blemished feet in the foreground. However, the feeling of it is closer to another painting, the *Dead Christ* by Holbein, discussed by Julia Kristeva in her book about depression and melancholy.[102] In Holbein's version, Christ is left alone, with no saints or weeping Virgin Mary by his side, only the crudeness of his realistic corpse lying on a narrow space, resembling a tomb. No transcendence for this dead Christ; no transcendence for the real Adam and Eve in the glass case. Christ having vanished already, there remains in Greenaway's world only a real couple playing the role of Adam and Eve.

But there remains also the irrefutable power of religion and of art to represent our own anxieties. As Julia Kristeva comments, the rupture between Christ and his father, or between him and human beings, has a cathartic power to represent the internal drama through which every subject passes in life, in the process of constituting his or her own individuality. We may find that Adam and Eve expelled from paradise will reverberate in the desperate Christ on the cross: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The melancholic, according to Kristeva, does not recover from this separation, which she attributes rather to a separation from the mother. This mother, however, is less the physical mother than the idea of an absolute unity, with no individual contours separating us from an outside. The same unity, or separation, may be staged later in life in the experience of love. Melancholy and depression lead to a growing distancing from

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[102] Julia Kristeva. *Soleil Noir: Depression et Mélancholie* (Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia) (Paris: Gallimard, 1987).

the world - hence the represented indifference, a growing undermining of every sense, until the victim, not tied by any links, desires his or her own death as the only means to end the despair and radically reunite with nothingness. We will see soon how this drama was staged in one of Greenaway's films. But first, we should examine how melancholy can be related to the Baroque.

The association between the Baroque and melancholy stems from two aspects of the latter: the tendency towards contemplation of the melancholic and the affinity with the theme of death. The fact that reality becomes indistinguishable from fiction can be understood as a consequence of a melancholic vision: the immersion in one's own interiority, characteristic of a melancholic contemplative state, creates a veil between the self and the world. Seen through this veil, reality becomes dimmed. It may therefore be represented in the distanced way that we have already seen many times in Greenaway's work, either in the examples when death and horror are displayed with a certain coolness, or in strategies like his cataloguing and enumeration, as well as a certain use of the camera movement (a tracking that crosses the scene, indifferent to the characters's movements).

The same contemplative state is proper to meditation, and melancholy will hence be associated with knowledge. When we recall Benjamin's comment on the Baroque as being fond of libraries, while the Renaissance investigated the universe, we may envisage this in pages and pages of handwritten texts reappearing in Greenaway's artwork and films, or Prospero leaning on his books in his island, or the books made by Greenaway at the time of the film *Prospero's Books*. The meditative absorption implicit to readings and books may acquire a more afflicted manner in the figure of Hamlet, usually referred by authors who mention a melancholic state typical of Baroque

characters. It is the case, for example, of Walter Benjamin's analyses of the figure of the Prince in German Baroque drama: a prince too human, vulnerable to hesitations and ailing meditation. Death can be evoked in this context both because it brings salvation to the melancholic, and because it drowns the person in an abysmal mourning. For Benjamin, meditation is typical of mourning.[103]

Our nine brass weights may begin to acquire some sense. They belong to a vast list of numbers, categories, alphabets, grids, and lists themselves that crowd Greenaway's work. The obsession with measuring that the exhibition *Some organising principles* illustrates in an ensemble of disparate devices gathered from different museums, may be read as a result of the distanced viewpoint of the melancholic. The world is approached by means of numbers, scales, games and in the exhibition there will be no lack of references to Greenaway's work, be it directly by means of his own artwork - Prospero's books created by him or some of his series and grids; or indirectly by suggestion of his themes – a collection of butterflies, for example, belong to that same Icarian world investigated earlier. We should not be surprised when the key is given to us, for free, in the exhibition itself: item six shows a "central image for the exhibition," the engraving *Melancholia*, by Albrecht Dürer (fig. 15).

A winged creature leans heavily on its arm, writing in an opened book laid upon its lap, surrounded by measuring devices such as a scale, holding a compass and with a grid of sixteen numerals arranged in a way that their addition when counted across each horizontal or vertical row, as well as from the diagonal, always yield the same result of 34. Although the key is given by Greenaway himself, what usually resonates in our mind

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[103] Benjamin, 163. For the association between Baroque, melancholy, death and mourning see also Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *La Raison Baroque*, especially pages 213-215.

when we see his films is his obsession with numbers, rather than the origin of them. We should not forget another detail of this engraving when we leaf through the pages of the catalogue of another exhibition, *Flying out of This World*. Our nine brass weights did not stand only for their measuring property. As weights, they share the impossibility of flight with the Adam and Eve that we have previously met facing an angel, and with the figure of a winged but heavy Melancholia. They assume also another configuration in the left-hand corner of Dürer's engraving, the numerical exactitude of the brass weights being translated into a precise geometrical and round shape, equally heavy.

Revelation comes from immersion; for Benjamin, based on other interpretations of melancholy, thinking and earth are closely associated in the melancholic, whose eyes are fixed on the ground, and whose investigative drive is attracted to the center of the world.[104] The sphere by the feet of Melancholia recalls the symmetry suggested by the compass in its hands. The wings and the remote sea on the left are related to the desire for escape proper to the melancholic. Yet, the sphere is lying on the ground, like an anchor to a reflective Melancholy.

We will again meet the same sphere in *Flying out of This World*, ensemble of drawings related to flight, chosen from the Louvre collection. The sequence of drawings begins on the ground, then flight is initiated, characters reach the skies, the stratosphere, then they begin falling, ending in hell and on the ground again. The first image is a drawing by Odilon Redon, called *The Prisoner* (fig. 16). Despite the title, Greenaway prefers to call the character beside the ball "a philosopher," even if he does it with his usual tone of mockery: "And who is the philosopher? He has a chunky face like a Disney dwarf and is as ball-headed as the ball itself. Is he Daedalus contemplating

[104] Benjamin,175.

difficulties with gravity?"[105] We need but to remember Dürer's engraving to see how a Disney dwarf can become a philosopher: the ball, a dark heavy perfect sphere, echoes the shape of the bald head, but also of the prisoner's closed eyes, everything leading to the same attitude of deep thinking associated with melancholy in Dürer's engraving.

It is no surprise when, after an apotheosis of flight, the exhibition ends up with a descent into hell, a hanged man, and finally, another ball by Redon (fig. 17), now alone, the ball we had met by the side of our Adam and Eve AT the beginning of the chapter. Like them, whose punishment was to be de-winged, the first illustration is presented with an unambiguous perspective: "As a bold and unequivocal instructive, we start with a simple volume that will never fly."[106] And then, through the work of many artists, the exhibition celebrates the wish to fly: from an ecstatic possibility, in an apotheoses of clouds and sky and wings and floating vests to tortured bodies succumbing to its weight, surrounded by demons, or condemned by its own massive corporeality. We end up with a simple ball on the ground again, now invested with a "reflective" weight: "Redon's philosophical sphere, but bereft of its philosopher. (...) A heaviness and a next-to-nothingness, the earth and an atom all in one."[107]

How much is contained in this simple earth-atom: from the desire to embrace the whole world demonstrated in so many of Greenaway's exhibitions, to the disillusion of God's sentence to Adam: "you will return to the ground from which you came. For you were made from dust, and to the dust you will return" (Genesis 3: 19). Or, bringing it back to our Baroque context, Deleuze would say that the Baroque is the art of the *informe*, not because of a negation of form, but because of a folded form that exists only

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[105] Peter Greenaway, *Le bruit des nuages – Flying out of this world* (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1992), 16.
[106] Ibid., 16.
[107] Ibid., 176.

in a "landscape of the mental," a matter-force able of becoming, unfolding, an incessant event.[108]

It is an event curiously capable of celebrating multiplicity and death at the same time: for Christine Buci-Glucksmann the Baroque subject is affected by a nothingness not without properties, but multiplied in many; hence he becomes a prisoner of being nothing, a nothing unfolded in abundance and moved both by enjoyment and a drive to death,[109] just as we could observe in the exhibition *Flying out of This World*. In fact, we have seen that this was a deceptive title because the drawings turn out to prove that flight is impossible, or again, ends in a fall. We will see now how the melancholic mourning around an empty center will translate, in cinema, into another descent, triggered by a fall from the sky, but restated into rotting matter.

A Zed and Two Noughts

There is a BBC documentary mixed with paintings by Vermeer, and animals, many animals, and deteriorating bodies, and mourning, and death and birth, and rigorous symmetries, and an irremediable lack of symmetry, and countings, and word plays, and an apparent total lack of sense in this mixture. The film is *ZOO – A Zed and Two Noughts* (1986) and tells the story of two brothers who, after having lost their wives in a car accident, embark on curious experiments in search of an explanation for their grief, and, ultimately, for life itself. While watching a part of the documentary about the evolution of the species, Oliver, one of the brothers, comments: "Why did we come all this way slowly and painfully, second by second, for my wife to die by a swan?" –

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[108] Deleuze, *Le Plis*, 49-50.
[109] Buci-Glucksmann, *La folie du voir*, 172-179.

because the film works not only with the usual linearity of the narrative, but with other levels of it not necessarily effective in making the story flow, that is, with parallel and metaphoric levels with a strong visual appeal, we may find ourselves in a similar position to Oliver watching the documentary: we are bewildered and looking for a way to untie the knot. Yet, again, it is the Baroque that can offer us the key to solve this melancholy and organic elegy developed through themes common to both the Baroque and Greenaway, such as the taste for games, the avoidance of any idealization of the body, the insistence upon revealing the fictitious aspect of the work, death and melancholy itself translated into an investigative drive guided by a primordial loss.[110]

Among the authors who have written about the Baroque, Eugenio D'Ors was one of the first to propose it as a permanent cultural style, not limited in time or space. He thus identified Baroque elements in different areas, in architecture, literature, painting, philosophy, music or in more arbitrary categories, departing from art and its preconceived fields to abstract qualities of mere things. By accumulating examples, a unity ends up emerging from amongst them. Watteau, for instance, appears at the end of a sequence in which there is a growing manifestation of the Baroque in the representation of landscape. In this sequence, which begins with Poussin, and passes through Claude Lorrain, landscape becomes gradually less associated with human beings and becomes more like mere atmosphere. One more step and he would arrive at Turner, and then the impressionists, whom he mentions. In Watteau the human figures are still

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[110] "For the melancholy look, as well as for the Baroque look, the body announces itself as forever lost and too present." ["Pour le regard mélancolique, comme pour le regard Baroque, le corps s'annonce toujours comme perdu et trop présent."] Buci-Glucksmann, *La Raison Baroque*, 215. For the association between neo-Baroque and melancholy, both in cinema and literature, see Denilson Lopes, *Nós os mortos: melancolia e neo-barroco*. Rio de Janeiro, Sette Letras, 1999. This published doctoral dissertation inspired my reading of the Baroque because of its subject and also because of the daring to contaminate the text with the pleasure of writing, that in his case went as far as to change the structure of the book to fragments.

present but they have become minuscule, therefore giving more space to the landscape as an atmosphere. These tiny figures, says Eugenio D'Ors, if seen through a magnifying lens, would be like a miniature of a woman by Rubens, whose heavy brushstrokes would reveal a "blistered beatitude of flesh, an aureole of animal health that drives away the necessity, or even the possibility, of any psychology"[111] (which can immediately bring to mind many characters in Greenaway's films, such as the robust body of the architect in *The Belly of an Architect* or of the masculine characters of *Drowning by Numbers*). If on the one hand there is a sensuous appeal to these figures, on the other, D'Ors demonstrates that in those paintings the landscape begins to dematerialize, losing the constructions and ruins that could moderate the movement of dissolution. He comments, for example, that the sea could be Baroque in opposition to the harbor, or even that the horizon would be Baroque in opposition to human figures and constructions (we cannot help remembering the distant sea in Dürer's engraving mentioned before, not related to the Baroque itself but to the melancholy we are about to identify in the Baroque). In other words, although D'Ors's associations begin to be too remote, he is suggesting that the Baroque is fond of formlessness, and that it receives different manifestations. What can we say then of all of those dead animals whose bodies gradually deteriorate in front of Oliver's camera in *ZOO?*

One of the opening scenes in the film brings up the motto that will be developed throughout it. A swan[112] has crashed into the windshield of the car in which the wives of

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[111] ["uma beatitude empolada da carne, essa auréola de saúde animal que afasta a necessidade, a possibilidade inclusive, de qualquer psicologia."] Eugenio D'Ors, 139.

[112] Greenaway comments that he had chosen the swan because of its mythological association to Jupiter, and mostly because it is a kind of bird apparently not supposed to fly, that is, his reference to mythology is to some extent ironic. See Michel Cieutat and Jean-Louis Flecniakosks, eds. *Le Grand Atelier de Peter Greenaway* (Strasbourg: Les Presses du Réel and Université des Sciences Humaines de 1998), 56. We can

the two main characters were, and they have both died. The two brothers walk out of a building that is framed in such a way as to form a symmetrical composition. Each of the brothers carries a bouquet. The classical architecture of the building in the background, the warm light bathing everything, the handsome brothers, the flowers in their hands, the rigorous symmetry, all of this suggests a control of devices in order to build an elegant scene. Yet, the conversation is about the activities of the bacteria in a dead body, as Oliver, one of the widowed brothers, says: "I can't stand the idea of her rotting away." The effect of the garden and its minuscule characters in Watteau's painting is repeated here not only on a visual level, but in the opposition between the columns and arches of the classic scenario, and in the dialogue contrasting with all of that solidity. The film will develop this motif of compositions that are artificial in their rigorous symmetry, into a story in which everything leads to dissolution and death.

This game of opposition may seem contradictory to the views of Eugenio D'Ors, for whom the Baroque is close to nature. However, Severo Sarduy, who also studied the Baroque as not being limited to a historical moment, identifies in it a drive towards the formless but also the use of artifices, of metaphorical games, and the taste for an indirect language that justifies the artificial symmetry of many of the frames in *ZOO*. Using the term *retombée* (relapse), Sarduy investigates the coherence between the episteme of a period and its aesthetic manifestations. He follows the changes in the conception of the universe from Copernicus to Galileo and Kepler in which the circle would gradually give way to the ellipse, and a static conception of the position of the planets would give way to the universe conceived as a dynamic system. Departing from this point of view

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recognize the apparition of this heavy bird beside Greenaway's Adam and Eve, whose punishment was not to have wings.

based on science, Sarduy suggests that equivalent phenomena occur in other domains such as painting, sculpture, literature and films. He calls this repetition a relapse, and he identifies them mainly in the historical Baroque. Some examples, however, occur at present, as is the case of cinema.

Although Sarduy continues the work of Eugenio D'Ors with more rigour, they both converge at several points. D'Ors, in his profusion of examples of the Baroque which also embrace both scientific discoveries and artistic manifestations, comments hastily that the Baroque could also be manifested in a psychological disposition in which the conscience of a subjective unity is menaced, as in the "pathological states of loss and unfolding of personality."[113] Severo Sarduy, in his turn, identifies the Baroque excess and the proliferation of hyperboles around an empty center, elided, never reached and forever aimed at, what Freud would identify as the maternal breast, excrement, and his metaphoric equivalent in the Baroque, gold.[114] For Sarduy, the failure of this search would provoke the use of language no longer in the functionality of fixed meanings, but above all as a game, circling around and around something never mentioned.

It is not difficult to associate this search with Oliver and Oswald, the characters in the film who transform the pain of loss by means of a metaphor into an experience with decaying animals or into a vain search for an explanation in a documentary about the evolution of the species. The game, common to much of Greenaway's work, appears in the film in the scenes where Alba's daughter plays with the alphabet, quoting names of animals in alphabetic order. This game, as it happens in the film *Drowning by Numbers*, and in much the same way that happens with the progressive stages in the TV

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[113] Eugenio D'Ors, 96-7.
[114] Severo Sarduy, *Barroco*, 94-5.

documentary watched by the brothers, marks the progression of the film, calling attention to the course of the match. The spectator becomes aware of the distance from the beginning and the end of the film through the evolution of the alphabet and of the scenes of the documentary, and in this way is led to perceive everything with the distance of someone who follows a match. The distant look in the eyes of Dürer's *Melancholia* holding a compass can be seen here in the obsession of the two brothers with measuring their grief by means of a useless scientific measuring of the decay of the animals's dead bodies. The experiments with them, the progression from an apple to a human being, also follows the history of evolution narrated in the documentary.

In a universe no longer conceived as a fixed Earth, or with a fixed Sun, everything moves inside a system. In the Baroque, signified and signifiers are not tied to each other; they belong to a game of variable combinations, in such a way that a signifier always depends on

the context in which it appears in order to assume a specific meaning. The apple Oswald picks up from Alba's bedside table becomes the first thing to be recorded in its process of decay. Adam and Eve had already been mentioned in a dialogue between the brothers in the funeral home. The apple is associated with room of Alba, the only survivor, and with Adam and Eve, but in both cases it may assume opposite connotations of a beginning and an end: Alba survived, losing a leg, but she will not escape from a tragic end.

There are, however, better examples of the dislocation between signifier and signified, because they are less impregnated with already learned symbolism. The variations of the apparitions of a zebra in the film seem to be arbitrary: the head of a zebra appears in a cage; a toy zebra lies on Alba's bedside table; Venus, dressed in black

and white, talks to an employee of the zoo about zebras; one of the characters, Catharina Bolnes, is dressed in underwear with zebra-like stripes; and the shirt of Van Meegeren, posing as a painter, is also striped like a zebra. Disconnected images are therefore gathered in the same signifier. It can be argued that the black and white of the zebra may imply the complementarity and the symmetry that are insistently shown in the film, and desperately sought by the brothers. It is safer, however, to read this recurrence of the zebra as one more way to bring the game to the surface; after all, in the arbitrariness of this recurrence, the artificiality of the story's construction becomes evident, since the theme of the zebra does not contribute to advancement of the plot.

The zebra appears more like one of those strange elements of dreams, elements that are apparently absurd and whose altered meaning cannot be grasped at first, but which ends up surrendering to a more careful examination, revealing itself as a disguised element of a recent experience. The zebra may therefore cease to be so arbitrary or to be a mere element signaling the presence of a game: the accident that kills the wives of the two brothers happens in front of an Esso advertisement with a striped jumping tiger; in the tiger's cage in the zoo, which we see next, there is a head of a zebra; the women in the film are somehow associated with zebras or their colors; the painter in the *tableau vivant* that reproduces a painting by Vermeer wears a black and white shirt while he paints a naked woman.

We may conclude that the zebra is a disguise for desire, of the object of desire lost in the place of the accident to which the brothers return in search of clues, in search of pieces of the glass of the car window or of some impossible thing that could bring back what was lost. Severo Sarduy associates Baroque language with the process in which something repressed and associated with certain drives is always returning

through the disguise of metonyms and metaphors. [115] The result of the repetition around this repressed content would be a language which seems to turn around itself, around its own condition of an endless game. The zebra would be, therefore, one more apparition in addition to the pieces of glass swallowed and vomited by Oliver, as well as the documentary he watches, and the deteriorating animals, a repetition of his own melancholic experience of loss.

The idea of the fall itself, which we have already seen with Icarus, reappears in the film with more clear connotations. A swan collapses from the sky onto the windshield of the car, killing the wives of Oliver and Oswald: this initial fall triggers the fall of the two brothers into nothingness, in a Baroque attempt to produce signs and language around emptiness. This celestial fall is not without associations to the fall that reveals to Adam and Eve the sensuality of their bodies. The Baroque fall does not allow transcendence: even if it can still be associated with images of flight, this flight never aims at an ethereal heaven.

In Greenaway, as in the Baroque in general, all possibility of transcendence is immediately brought down to earth. Religion is a farce in the film *The Baby of Mâcon*, and love, a game of interests in the film *The Draughtsman's Contract*. In the case of *Zoo*, were it a mediaeval or a romantic love, mourning would be lived through a profusion of idealized memories of the absent beloved. With the Baroque, the same Baroque of the wooden Brazilian figures of saints dressed in clothes of fabric, with glass eyes and human hair, grief is translated not with abstract images, but into the very concrete appeal of animals rotting in front of the camera. And then what could be sweet memories of the absent beloved become, for example, an apple – the first organism to be

[115] Ibid., 71-75.

sacrificed. Following the same biological evolution of the TV documentary, the apple would be succeeded by a bowl of shrimps, a Dalmatian dog, a swan, a fish, a gorilla, a crocodile, a zebra, all of them rotting and carefully registered frame by frame.

If on the one hand we may identify a Baroque appeal to corporeality, on the other, the bodies are inevitably driven to death. The profusion of Baroque funerary monuments may well exemplify the death drive that Sarduy points out as always missing but always indirectly announced in the Baroque. In the work of Greenaway, the same drive may be directly mentioned in so many corpses, or in the case of *ZOO*, in the crudeness of decaying bodies. The decomposing animals lose their creature contours and they pass through a metamorphosis to become indefinite, in the same way as the brothers who had lost the contours of their own images assured by the existence of the dead other, the pair that they now miss. Oswald puts a mirror in front of a zebra fish and comments: "an identical image as can never be found." This is the reason for the bewilderment of all the main characters: they miss their image in the mirror.

Nevertheless, if everything seems to precipitate into formlessness, there is also an opposite movement, less shocking visually because it is less explored, but which is deliberately mentioned. In *The Belly of an Architect* the time of the development of the cancer that devours Kracklite's stomach coincides with the nine months gestation of his son. In *ZOO*, the brothers decide to die, as well as Alba, the mother, but only after they have guaranteed their continuity in their children. Death is therefore doubly empty, first because of the lack of transcendence expressed by the deterioration of the body, and then in the connotation of an accomplished cycle affirmed in its association to birth. In the Baroque world, dominated by the absence of fixed points, death itself cannot be seen as a final stop, but as a moment in a larger system. Death will reoccur by different means in

the film, through metaphors that make the film work on parallel and equivalent levels. The characters are found, therefore, watching parts of two projected films, one that is the result of their experiments with decomposing animals, and another that shows the creation of life on earth through the evolution of the species: once more opposite movements, of life and death, reveal themselves simultaneously. That which was a personal case is therefore inscribed into a larger and anonymous sphere of life and death on the planet.

We have already seen that in this scenario of deterioration, creation appears as an opposition, but there is still another element that resists it. There are many framings in the film composed in a rigorous symmetry, and that seem to be out of place in a film about the impossibility of this symmetry, not on a formal level, but in terms of human destiny. If visually symmetry seems to dominate the film in terms of plot and characater development, symmetry appears as an element of fate that condemns one to an end, to the maximum dissymmetry in formlessness, in death. Hence, to the main characters, finding their own reflection in the other, the symmetry they lacked, condemns them to cease to exist, as if what justified life was only the painful search that moved them.

Alba meets her twin who, like her, does not have legs. She is so convinced of the success of this discovery that she decides to assign to him, and not to one of the real fathers, the paternity of her children. She decides then to die, in the symmetrical room, with each of the brothers placed beside her. The brothers, who, like the creatures mentioned in Plato's *Banquet*, are Siamese twins separated when they were children and condemned to recover their other half, become little by little, after Alba's death, more and more alike. They search for a way to be reunited by wearing special clothes that allow this to occur, or by asking Van Meegeren, the doctor, to make an operation to glue

them together again. Before the operation can take place, they become so much like each other that Alba's daughter cannot tell the difference between them, and at this point, they decide to die. "An identical image such as can never be found." Oswald had said. It cannot be found because the Baroque universe is not made of symmetries of exact correspondences, it is rather a universe where an imbalance is necessary in order to allow movement to take place: the Baroque does not affirm the perfect circle (the man of ideal proportions fitted in a circle and in a square in the drawing by Leonardo Da Vinci, for example), but the bi-centered ellipse (the elongated characters of El Greco); not the One from which everything stems, but a multiplicity where everything interacts (Brueghel advancing the Flemish Baroque); not the idealizations, but the imperfect bodies; not the insistence on a solar and harmonic world, but the recurrence of a nocturnal (Rembrandt) and chaotic world.

And since there is no fixed point of origin in the Baroque, movement happens not because of a derivation or an attraction to the platonic One from whom everything originates, but because of multiplicity and the confrontation of opposites. If birth justified death, symmetry justified dissymmetry. The insistence on symmetry acts like that silent zebra, never mentioned, and yet uncomfortably present and enigmatic. Surrounded by the perfection of symmetrical compositions, the general atmosphere of imbalance and decay becomes even more of an affliction. Symmetry may appear as a counterpoint, as the underground reason for all dissymmetry. It may be visible in *ZOO*, but, contrary to the ideal proportions celebrated in the Renaissance, symmetry is now unreachable, and what is celebrated is the turmoil of the bodies (see, for example, the restless characters from the paintings by Rubens and Caravaggio).

Christine Buci-Glucksmann, whose texts have inspired part of this reading of *A Zed and Two Noughts*, mentions a Baroque furor, a passionate and melancholic furor, but above all, the furor of vision not restricted to the historical Baroque but echoing in Walter Benjamin, Baudelaire, Kiefer, Rainer and others. In the indefinite serialization of which the Baroque game consists (present in Greenaway's series of artwork), in the emphasis on *trompe l'œil*, in metonymy, metaphor, excess, and in the recurrent overflowing of barriers, everything has to become visible, to materialize, as grief transformed into deterioration in the film. But this excessive visibility is not concerned with verisimilitude; it emphasises instead simulation, a spectacle capable of seducing the eyes even if in its exaggeration it may reveal its own condition of forgery.

The *trompe l'œil* much used in the Baroque paintings deceives for a brief moment, but soon it reveals the illusion inherent in it: *trompe l'œil* shows, thus, less the represented object than the fact that it is itself represented. In a similar way, the actors of *ZOO* came from the theater tradition because Greenaway was interested not in them looking natural but in having them stress the act of representation itself. For the same reason, he says he does not follow the actors with the camera, as is common in American cinema. The distanced look of the camera accentuates the theatricalization; it keeps the scene from becoming too real, "real" in the sense of what has become conventionally accepted as such in cinema. Besides the acting, there is still the choice of a script and of a process of editing that may bring to the surface the poetic possibilities of cinema: instead of trying to make editing invisible, that is, of trying to make the film flow without the spectator noticing the montage, for example, Greenaway wants the

spectator to notice the devices he used in order to build the story.[116] Thus, not everything in the film functions towards the progress of the plot, and a single idea may be repeated several times by means of metaphors, as has already been demonstrated.

The Baroque furor mentioned by Christine Buci-Glucksmann occurs in a celebration not only of what one sees, but above all, of seeing itself. In the first scene when the documentary appears, we see a dark room, as dark as the one in which we are probably sitting to watch the film, and a shot in which the projector light occupies a central point. The following scene shows smoke, water, stones and vapors as the narrator describes the conditions of the beginning of life on Earth. The sun is framed in a central position similar to the way the light coming from the projector in the dark auditorium is framed: the creation of the world with the presence of the sun becomes a metaphor for the creation of a world performed with a camera. The insistence upon revealing its own code appears more discreetly, at the beginning of the film when we see one of the brothers turning the film in the camera, as he takes pictures of a gorilla with a missing leg. On the one hand, the image wants to say everything without a word: one of the brothers works in the zoo with this gorilla, and Alba, like the gorilla, will be missing a leg after the accident; the other brother works with a tiger, the same animal that appears in the advertisement at the location of the accident. On the other hand, the close up of the camera anticipates the future experiments with the decaying animals and already calls attention to the mechanism of apprehension of the real, photography, the principle of registering frame by frame which, when projected later on will animate the process of deterioration.

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[116] Interview with Peter Greenaway by Nöel Simsolo and Philippe Pilard, 27.

Since in Baroque everything has to be said many times, and in different ways, there is still the painting by Vermeer, reproduced in a scene that is prepared by Van Meegeren, the doctor who amputated Alba's legs and who has the name of a famous forger of Vermeer's paintings. One of the paintings by Vermeer that is restaged in the film is *The Art of Painting* (c. 1666-67), a work that Vermeer did not sell even when he was experiencing economic difficulties at the end of his life, and that most likely contained a statement about his whole work. An artist is shown painting a model dressed as Clio, the muse of History, with a historical map hanging on the wall. Greenaway, in one of his free associations, has substituted for Clio Van Meegeren's assistant wearing a huge red hat, a reference to another painting by Vermeer. In order to maintain the reference, she holds a book and a trumpet as Clio does in the painting. In a film that makes it a point to underline the process of creation, it cannot be by chance that this painting was chosen.

Vermeer's theme in this painting is painting itself and he represents it by means of the figure of the painter and his canvas, by the model and the map in the background, which connects him to the historical past of the Netherlands (the map represents the seventeen provinces into which the Netherlands had been separated by the time the painting was made), and to his ambition of producing a work representative of his own nation. The map and the canvas in the painting are like the photographic cameras and the staging of Vermeer's paintings in the film: they are references to the process of creation that the artists elected as their theme, and they affirm the commitment to historical tradition.

Van Meegeren, the forger, is the double of the painter, the double of Vermeer, and the double of Greenaway in the sense that he stands for Greenaway himself, as do

other characters/artists in other works of his. (Venus de Milo is another personification of Greenaway, as she writes a book in the film that Greenaway actually wrote, entitled *The Obscene Animals Enclosure.*) Different from the painter, Van Meegeren does not have a canvas in front of him, but a camera. However he wears the same shirt with stripes that the painter does: we know the zebra stripes already, the same black stripes that in the first scenes appear as the gates of the cage where the black striped tiger wanders impatiently, having the head of a striped zebra close to him. The model holds the book and the trumpet, according to the traditional way Clio is represented in allegories, as the character in the painting does, but other than the huge red hat she is not wearing anything. Greenaway has laid bare the model, leaving evident the desire implicit between the painter and the model. (The other painting by Vermeer that he has chosen to stage follows a similar scheme. In *The Music Lesson* a woman plays the piano while a man observes her on her right).

The Baroque is reaffirmed in different manners in this painting and its recreation in the film. The naked Clio, who is half History and half desire, demonstrates the process by which the past is melancholically ruminated on, meaning the past does not exist without first passing through the filter of the present. Hence the quote is used because there is nostalgia for the past, but it occurs by means of transformation and profanation of the original. It would be meaningless to repeat the same thing in a different historical context, but the reference can be recreated in such a way as to recover the intensity of vision that it once bore. The Baroque attitude is marked by this reflective melancholy that longs for the past, and recreates it not only in copying an ancient work, but also in finding a way to reaffirm its original expressive strength.

This knowledge that is never immune to its subject, that looks to the past but does not simply copy it, that does not even copy reality but rather the perception of it, this knowledge is dramatized in the work as a creation and in the process of the search for meaning undertaken by the brothers. "I am trying to eliminate false clues," says Oliver, as he searches for an explanation for his loss in the scenes of the documentary about evolution. Oliver grills Alba with questions about the accident that will not lead to anything either: what was the color of the clothes she was wearing, where had they been, what had they bought, which way was the wind blowing at the time of the accident? The deterioration of the animals will offer one more false clue that he will try to avoid but that he cannot resist following. The way the brothers surrender to the images of animals in decay could not be thought of if there was no pleasure in this very destruction, in this immense dissolution.

The experiments with the animals will not lead to any specific result besides showing the blurring of the edges, the end of order. The brothers have a plan to free the animals from the zoo, to set them free from the categories into which they were confined: the animals loose in the city would be like the brothers lost in a sea of questions. Beta, Alba's daughter, builds her own zoo. In one of the cages she puts a spider and a fly because they are both brown. In this same scene where the arbitrariness of categories is ridiculed, little Beta realizes that the two brothers have become identical, undifferentiated from each other. When everything becomes a whole without contours, the movement of life ceases: the brothers decide to die and to register their own deterioration. But Clio, the painter's model, had no clothes on her; the inquiry around Alba leads the twins to a relationship with her – the apparently objective investigation is contaminated with desire, the origin of their search for meaning. The final registering

undertaken by the brothers could not work because it was made by a machine without a subject; if the animals had rotted in front of the camera, this happened because they rotted simultaneously in the brother's grief.

Alba had already warned them about the snails that used to look for human sweat in the bicycle seat on her property. In another scene, Oliver plays with snails and tells Venus that he likes them because they help the process of deterioration of the body. They are the ones who will boycott the brothers's experiment, as they invade the machines, cover their bodies and provoke a power shortage. Once again we realize that despite the Baroque attempt to to make systematizations, to create architectures, to control, even in an absurd manner, the unrolling of facts, all these mechanisms will be condemned to fail; nothing is more opposed to the rationality of the project than the hazard of snails and all the irrational charge they bear in their condition of animals.

We cannot comment on Greenaway's Baroque zoo without mentioning the presence of animals. They are also inscribed in a long tradition of metamorphoses, which was already present in the origin of the term "grotesque," that means a kind of relief used as an architectural ornament showing figures that are half human, half animals or plants. We have already seen how metamorphoses became a theme in one of Greenaway's exhibition, *Flying over Water*, in which humans are associated to birds. Animals seem to emerge every time reason stops being sovereign. "The body cannot be seen as human, because it has fallen into the condition of the animal,"[117] says Rosalind Krauss, referring to the recurrence of bodies associated with animals in surrealist photography. Perhaps it is here in the work of the surrealist photographers, the "masters

[117] Rolsalind Krauss, "Corpus Delicti," in *L'Amour Fou*, Rosalind Krauss and Jane Livingston (New York: Abbeville Press, Washington: The Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1985), 60.

of the *informe*" according to Krauss, that we may find the best clue to the animals in Greenaway's zoo.

Humans and animals do not arrive at the point of fusion in one single creature, but many times in the film they appear interchangeable. Besides the evident link between human and animal bodies in decay, Venus, the seductive character in the film, has a special link to zebras, whose cage she visits, and Van Meegeren, who operates on Alba, also treats animals. Greenaway saw a television documentary about the decomposition of a rat that triggered the idea as it was used in the film.[118] The naturalist responsible for the experiment on the program said his dream was to shoot the decay of an elephant. Such a morbid apotheosis is not very different from the obsession of the two brothers, who film the decomposition of eight different animals. In *ZOO*, it is not the animals themselves, but the absence of order, of defined boundaries, implicit in the process of their decay that suggests the irrational. If we remember the surrealist photographs, the fragmented bodies, mutilated, distorted, unrecognizable or at least transformed in strange manners in the photographs by Man Ray, Boiffard, Raoul Ubac, Hans Bellmer, then we know immediately that we are not far from the bodies of the brothers covered with snails, Alba's trunk without legs, or of so many other anomalies in other films by Greenaway.

The term *informe*, proposed by Bataille, suggests to Krauss the key to surrealist photography: "Allergic to the notion of definitions, then, Bataille does not give *informe* a meaning: rather, he posits for it a job: to undo formal categories, to deny that each thing has its 'proper' form, to imagine meaning as gone shapeless, as though it were a spider or an earthworm crushed underfoot. (...) The boundaries of terms are not

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[118]Simsolo, 25.

imagined by Bataille as transcended, but merely as transgressed or broken, producing formlessness through deliquescence, putrefaction, decay."[119] We do not need more examples to identify here the ambiance of *ZOO*, or the ambiance of Greenaway's zoo where the cages have been opened, the signifieds are mingled and dissociated from a single signifier or vice-versa. We will get back to Bataille eventually, as Greenaway's drive to make ideas into organic matter is not exhausted in this film - on the contrary, it is something that is pursued through much of his work. However, we need now to find the link between Dürer's black and white Melancholy with her measuring instruments and the twin's rotting animals.

We have encountered the figure of Melancholy together with Adam and Eve, the philosopher's sphere and the nine brass weights, the images proffered at the beginning of this chapter. They may seem to be rather aseptic in face of all the images of decay in the film. However, they already suggest the melancholy drive to measure (that deserved a whole exhibition curated by Greenaway, *Some organizing principles)*, as well as its irremediable link to the ground, which in the film was translated by the impossibility of transcendence materialized in real, dematerializing bodies. Those rotting animals are "rampancy, boundlessness, the unthinkable, the untenable, the unsymbolizable. But what is it? Unless it be the untiring repetition of a drive which, propelled by an initial loss, does not cease wandering unsated, deceived, warped, until it finds its only stable object – death."[120]

In another work Julia Kristeva examines the abjection of the self as ultimately based on an inaugural loss responsible for the foundations of our own being. The

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[119] Krauss, op. cit. 64-5.
[120] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror* (New York: Columbia University, 1982), 23.

concept of the abject is of a different order from that of the formless, but if the latter could help us to understand the reference to animals in the film, the abject offers clues into the behavior of the twins. Kristeva's analyses coincide in many points with the grief of the two brothers, their investigative drive, their rupture of categories, their yearning to measure, and so on. Although Kristeva's analyses do not touch the Baroque that is also in question here, it pervades much of this investigation of the film, triggered as it also by an initial loss that for her is responsible for much of the melancholy nature, as well as the feeling of abjection. Adam and Eve having been banished from heaven, or Oliver's and Oswald's wives having been killed, there remains the strays, without destination, condemned to ruminate on their grief, as they circle around a center whose emptiness is disguised by a profuse production of signs.

And if these signs can only point to incompleteness, can only bring testimony to an unstable reality, to ellipses instead of circles, to dissymmetry instead of symmetry, to endless grids instead of receding centers, can we possibly accept that the Baroque is limited to a single historical period? It seems rather to be an immense web that may take shape as robust images, but that in fact embraces a whole intricate conception of the universe – from brass weights, contorted columns, waving façades, pompous monuments and historical events, to a specific understanding of what in human nature ought to be unveiled.

Melancholy is therefore a concept that finds different translations in the work of Greenaway, with the film *ZOO- A Zed and Two Noughts* being but one elaborate version of it. The challenge when confronting Greenaway's diversified work is to find an association between, for example, heavy objects on the ground - such as the nine brass weights or Redon's spheres - and the twins's experiments with decay in the film.

Melancholy and its association with grief, knowledge, loss and measuring, offered the link to the different configurations of a similar cause at work both in Greenaway's films and in his exhibitions. Naturally, melancholy is not exclusively Baroque, and, if Benjamin mentioned it when he studied the Baroque tragic drama, it has been also a subject for writers who were not interested in this period. Yet, together with other elements, melancholy is part of Baroque behavior and the writers who have investigated it outside of this context can also help to bring some light to its manifestations. It is only through an understanding of the motivations at play in a work that we may be able to situate it within a certain cultural milieu, which in this case we have identified as being comprised of references to the Baroque. Melancholy thus provides one more piece of the puzzle with which we may, little by little, begin to envisage a coherent image of Greenaway's work.

CHAPTER FOUR

FRAGMENTS, RUINS, DEATH AND ALLEGORIES

St. John the Baptist is lingering in the seventeenth-century garden of a country house reading a handmade postcard from Rome. The telephone rings inside the house. We know the call comes from a red telephone booth, but who is calling?

The four films (*The Baby of Mâcon, The Draughtsman's Contract, The Belly of an Architect, Dear Phone*) represented in the scene above do not necessarily use allegories but they can exemplify some aspects of them. Allegory is the process by which an image may acquire a different meaning from its normal use. This occurs by means of a displacement and a reassembling of fragments, resulting in a form of expression appreciated in the historical Baroque. Walter Benjamin examined the use of the allegory in Baroque drama and offered an explanation for its use based on various reasons. Allegory is associated with the contemplative attitude of the melancholic, whose distancing from the world allows the projection of subjective meanings that subverts common sense. It is also associated with the figures of the Prince and the intriguer, characters in Baroque drama whose tyranny and malevolence are equally open to imposition and subversion of meanings. Different from Good, which is related to action, allegory is closer to Evil, which is related to knowledge, which, in its turn, is also associated with melancholy. Allegory corresponds also to a general tendency towards re-utilizing the cultural material from the past. Finally, it is associated with fragments, that is, either with parts from diverse sources gathered in a single ensemble or with the literal image of the lacerated body that must die on stage in order to become an allegory.

Allegory's central position in the Baroque can hence be explained by its capacity to link dispersed characteristics and provide them with an adequate means of expression.

It will come as no surprise to learn that allegory is also often used in Greenaway's work. Firstly, there is his declared antagonism to a realistic approach in cinema which has already been discussed, as well as his desire to use cinematographic language in order to play with the different meanings attached to the same thing: "We emit many messages simultaneously, even if not all of them are received. Each word has a variety of meanings and nuances that are received in different ways in different contexts. Cinema is really in a position to sustain many meanings. I want to deliberately create a rich cinematographic structure, recognizing the diversity of so many meanings: literal, symbolic and metaphoric."[121] This diversity of meanings can be hidden in a single signifier; on the other hand, different signifiers can mask a single meaning. This essential instability will be the basis of Greenaway's and the contemporary Baroque's re-appropriation of cultural references from the past.

We have seen already how Vermeer's paintings were referenced with an ironic restaging in *A Zed and Two Noughts*. As this is a constant in Greenaway's work, we will have other occasions to examine the same process, particularly in the case of his references to classical mythology. The resort to allegory responds also to his search for a way to combine image and text without the first being a mere illustration of the second. The image should therefore be the message itself, or as happens with emblems, the text should clarify or add something new in its commentary of the image. Greenaway wants

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[121] ["Siamo soliti emettere molti messaggi simultaneamente, anche se non tutti vengono necessariamente recepiti. Ogni parola ha una varietà di significati e di sfumature che sono recepiti in modo diverso in contesti diversi. Il cinema è veramente in grado di sostenere molteplici significati. Io voglio creare deliberatamente una struttura cinematografica ricca riconoscendo la diversità di tanti significati: letterale, simbolico e metaforico."] in Jonathan Hacker and David Price, *Il Cinema Secondo Greenaway*, transl. Gabriella Contini (Parma: Pratiche, 1996) , 42-43.

to apply a similar strategy to cinema: "If I try to develop what I consider to be a metaphoric cinema, I have a great desire to talk about the personification of the emblem, to visualize a concept, be it historical or abstract, and this is what I labor to do in my cinema."[122]

Adam and Eve may now be re-approached within a different perspective. What reverberates at this point is less the condemnation that provoked the exile of the couple from heaven and their subsequent grief, than the serpent's promise of forbidden knowledge. For together with the consciousness of their own bodies, the Fall distanced Adam and Eve from a paradise where everything converged on God. The couple found themselves instead in a material world where names no longer corresponded simply to things; language now embraced abstract notions and consequently, as humans, they were granted the dangerous liberty of judging. Hence, Walter Benjamin associated allegorical language with Evil and Satan, and since it was being applied in a world where Truth has been discarded, it develops into a miscellany of fragments and references without aim, while simultaneously affirming the ephemeral condition of the very material world it celebrates. Allegory would therefore only point to human misery.

Yet, for Benjamin Baroque drama still deserved to be recovered and investigated either because it bore a testimony to its time, or because, even if he praises the beauty of fragments and ruins which dominate those plays, he "saves" the Baroque drama by pointing to the cases where totality had not been completely neglected. Two such

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[122] ["Si j'essaye de développer ce que je considère comme un cinèma métaphorique, j'éprouve alors un grand désir de parler de la personnification de l'emblème, de visualiser un concept, qu'il soit historique ou abstrait, et c'est que je m'efforce de faire dans mon cinéma"] in eds. Michel Cieutat and Jean-Louis, 49. In the same book, Chrisitian Bouzy, in his article "Le mythe d'Icare dans les livres d'emblèmes aux XVIe & XVIIe siècles," investigates the traditional use of emblems and the interaction of image and text in them. Although Greenaway's allegories may sometimes have a moralistic tone, there is, however, a great difference between those onlder examples and Greenaway's distorted appropriations of images of the past, which usually make ironic comments on them.

examples are the miracle element present in many of the plays alluding to the presence of God, and the allegories developed through a complex intrigue that does not end up scattered but rather achieves a resolution in which pieces can ultimately be put together, thereby forming a comprehensible whole.

Instead of tracing the affinities of Greenaway's work to the Baroque drama, which are many, we will return to the scene proposed above and try to investigate Greenaway's use of allegories in order to make some sense out of that collage of fragments so remote from each other. We had left John the Baptist lingering in the Baroque garden. He actually belongs to a series named *Audience* (1993) painted by Greenaway, and related to his film *The Baby of Mâcon*. (fig. 18). The series of paintings shows the silhouette of an undifferentiated crowd with some variations in the color and arrangement of the anonymous rows of heads. Among them there are also drawings in black and white that show the face of the audience: a male face repeated in rows that varies its expression or moves its tongue lasciviously. Greenaway's comments on this series and on the audience in general include mention of historical examples of severed heads in his usual detached manner.

Among the works in this series there is a John the Baptist Game, which consists of seven stages related to sexual relations, the last one being "decapitation." It may be tempting to use this image to confirm the accusations of misogyny directed at Greenaway. After all, this game is related to a film where a woman is raped to death as a punishment for her greed and jealousy, and not by chance do we find here John the Baptist, his severed head leaving implicit a revengeful Salome. However, the garden where we previously met John the Baptist is the stage for another intrigue where women also played a calculating and fatal role: the film *The Draughtsman's Contract*.

Greenaway's comments on the drawing offer other clues to this reference since John the Baptist is presented as having switched from a performer surrounded by followers in the desert, to the victim of Salome's performance, making "an exhibition of himself at his own decapitation."[123] The head is painted with a double shadow, bringing to it the instability of meaning that we have seen before in his work; we should bear this in mind so as to better reconsider the film.

The virgin in *The Baby of Mâcon*, the film related to the drawing of John the Baptist, pretends that her brother is her son, and uses him to forge a profitable miracle. She undergoes a transformation in which she reverts from winner to loser, similar to what happens to the main character of *The Draughtsman's Contract*. Neville, the draughtsman, first appears in the film as the arrogant character who imposes sexual favors on the mistress of the house, but he ends up trapped both by her daughter, who obliges him to serve her in a similar way, and by a wider intrigue that culminates in his murder. It is true that women in Greenaway's films tend to dominate the plot and trigger the sequence of events, but it is also true that they belong to a web where meaning is never fixed and therefore they can hardly be reduced to a singular meaning connotation.[124]

The audience is approached, then, from the point of view of a similar inversion of roles. If we return to the *Audience Series*, we will see that in the drawings where members of the audience turned their faces to us, there are participating faces that recall the active audience in *The Baby of Mâcon* (figs. 26 and 27), which wanders about the

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[123] Leo Steinmetz and Peter Greenaway, 129.

[124] Greenaway defends himself from the accusations of misogyny by arguing that he inverts the passive role attributed to women in commercial cinema. See the interview in Alessandro Bencivenni e Anna Samueli, 132.

stage commenting on the play, hardly capable of distinguishing fiction from reality.[125] This participation is not necessarily positive. The lecherous expressions in the drawings suggest the connotation attributed to the audience in the film, whose intervention in the play that they are watching can ultimately bring awful consequences to the characters.

Like the fooled crowd of believers who lacerate the baby in order to take away a miraculous souvenir of his body, the audience of the play, and especially Cosimo, the weak ruler who is also in the audience, instigates the bishop to impose a penalty that would result in a terrible death for the maiden. The reaction that marked this film's reception in many countries against the violence it contains stems from an innocence similar to Cosimo's attitude, who weeps at the death of the child and is reminded by a lady of his entourage that they were only watching a play.

The use of allegory implies therefore a distancing from the observed scene affirmed through different devices in the film such as the swinging male figure who introduces and concludes the plot of the play, the presence of the audience amidst the characters, or the last shot that begins with the play and opens to its audience and finally to a second audience, insisting on revealing its symbolic strategies and forcing us into in a position of another conniving audience.[126] However, what makes the violence so excessive is also the fact that, on some level of reality, the actors do die on stage, the maiden was indeed a virgin raped to death, the agnostic son of the bishop is torn apart by the cow and the child's body is ripped apart by a crowd of deceived believers.

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[125] For the critical position of the audience in some of Greenaway's work, see the explanatory book by Bridget Elliott and Anthony Purdy in which the authors discuss different aspects of Greenaway's work, especially the use of allegory in many of his films. For the authors, allegory being a device that demands an effort from the viewer to interpret it, its use instantly tries to change the passive position of the audience. For audience associated to allegory see chap. 1; for examples of the theme of the audience in Greenaway's work see p. 73.

[126] For a discussion about the different levels of interpretation of this film, see De Gaetano, chap. 5.

In addition to the shot at the end that reveals the allegorical nature of the film, there is also an attribution of responsibility for those murders working on two different levels: First, there is the Church, which takes the child from his sister only to continue to exploit the faith that the believers have in him, doing so in a crude way, by gathering money from the selling of the supposedly miraculous liquids of his body, from tears to blood. The audience, however, also shares the blame in this game. As has been seen, it instigates the murders, and witnesses the succession of atrocities without doing anything to prevent them, on the contrary, it empathises with the staged violence in a manner not very different from an ancient mob in the Coliseum, or in a more recent version, to a mob watching a commercial film whose main appeal is gratuitous violence.

The series of artworks related to this film, as well as the photograph already commented upon,[127] are all related to the audience, the actual main characters of this often misunderstood allegory of unrestrained power. Greenaway himself confirms this in an interview: "I would like to think that the most powerful thing about *The Baby of Mâcon* was its idea of 'audience' – cinema audience, theatrical audience, audiences in general – and the obsession with voyeuristic sex, violence and sensation at the end of the twentieth century. It was intended, in part, as a comment on contemporary voyeurism." In a world where our numbness to violence tends to grow with every passing day, the news that assails us on a daily basis have become a distant reality, perhaps even more distant than the staged brutality of the film, whose capacity for stirring negative reactions may be larger than that of a real fact.

In the interview Greenaway goes on to stress the self-conscious and artificial devices used in the film: "The North American press complained vigorously about the

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[127] See page 50.

multiple rape. They couldn't understand the seventeenth-century resonance of sacrifice and religiosity, and certainly could not make the twentieth-century connections. The film was made and shown at a time when officially sanctioned state policy in Bosnia legitimized the wholesale rape of Muslim women in a policy of deliberate humiliation."[128] Thus, this third film staged in the seventeenth century (the other two are *The Draughtsman's Contract* and *Prospero's Books)*, reaffirms that the choice of a period in the past is ruled by more than an aesthetic revival.

We have been examining how different Baroque strategies of thought and artistic expression were applied in a contemporary context, and the use of allegory belongs to this same process. If Greenaway avoids realism it is not only for the sake of the luxurious possibilities provided by the Baroque aesthetics, but rather because realism itself can be more deceiving than an artificial representation of it. Cosimo's innocence before the staged play, his inability to distinguish fiction from reality, does not prevent him from participating in its cruelty because, as a representative of the ruling class in the film, he shares with the church the same pitiless attitude towards others. He belongs also to the same group that sacrifices another almost innocent person in a different context, in the garden where we left John the Baptist.

In *The Draughtsman's Contract*, Neville draws what he sees, being unable to read the signs placed before his eyes. He will pay a high price for this inability, as the signs culminate in his unavoidable entanglement in another intrigue out of which he does not escape alive. Hence, the enacted allegorical reality obliges the spectator to read the world as an intricate web, or as a multi-faceted rhizome, where one has to work

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[128] For both quotes see Bridget Elliott and Anthony Purdy, 121. See also the authors's discussion of violence in Greenaway's films in relation to Artaud's theatre of cruelty, in which they point to the fact that in the case of the filmmaker, violence is shown with a deliberate distancing – pp. 67-70.

simultaneously with different levels of meaning, from the signs of cultural inheritance to the hidden intentions of surrounding intriguers.

The pieces of clothing spread about in the garden that Neville innocently includes in his drawings in *The Draughtsman's Contract*, suggest that reality should be read as signs waiting to be deciphered. In addition to the house, the shirt and the garden (fig.19), we also see a statue in one of the drawings. In the film this representation of Hermes parodies an old habit of ornamenting gardens with statues bought from trips abroad. Having no statue, but wanting to acquire some status, the absent owner, Mr. Herbert, has hired a man to pose among his guests as different statues in various places in the garden. He condenses some of Greenaway's usual themes, such as forgery, cultural signs, and social arrogance. And together with Persephone, another mythological figure who is mentioned three times in the film, they have an allegorical role as their respective stories echo some aspects of the film's plot.

Hermes being the one who leads the living creatures to the kingdom of the dead, he suggests the destiny of Neville, who draws him. Persephone, whose myth is related to fertility, appears as a reference to the pact between mother and daughter in the myth and in the film in order to provide an inheritor to the family. But there is also a less evident allegorization in the film that is related to space. This is one of the rare films by Greenaway that was shot outdoors (the other one is *Drowning by Numbers*); usually he prefers studios because of the better control of lighting that they afford. But the garden is not a gratuitous choice as it suggests the theme of fertility responsible for triggering part of the intrigue. It offers, however, a "tamed" nature, crowded with geometrical shapes providing the artificial stage for a tortuous intrigue.

A similar confrontation between nature and culture will take place in *The Belly of the Architect*. Returning to the image presented at the beginning of the chapter, we met John the Baptist holding a postcard during his walk in the garden. The postcard belonged to a series related to this film and consists of a collage of postcards showing monuments of Rome, where the story takes place, and handwritings by Kracklite, the architect, who sends messages to Etienne-Louis Boullée, another architect who lived in the eighteenth century. Kracklite is a mediocre architect who is in Rome to mount an exhibition of Boullée's work, which he admires. The architectonic solidity of Rome is deliberately opposed, in the film, to the sick body of Kracklite, who learns that he has stomach cancer and anticipates his imminent death by committing suicide at the end of the film. The postcards repeat this same opposition between body and buildings by juxtaposing torn pieces of pictures of monuments and statues, thus reducing the architecture's massiveness to mere stripes of paper and alluding in this way both to Kracklite's physical deterioration and to the very process of allegory – its metaphorical device and the collage of different fragments. We should also remember that, for Walter Benjamin, laceration is the ultimate condition of the human body in order for it to become an allegory.

We find then, in John the Baptist's hand, a postcard showing the image of an ancient statue without a head, a portrait of a man wearing a suit, and Kracklite's handwriting (fig. 20). The collage offers an answer to Greenaway's aim of combining text and image in a way similar to the ancient emblems mentioned before.[129] The text refers to someone Kracklite had met on the train, a film director who used to be a

[129] See page 127.

carpenter, had few ambitions in life, and who still plunged his hands in sawdust in order to please his wife. The character embodies both Kracklite's failures and his sick corporeality translated into sawdust. The images show an average, suited citizen, together with a beheaded ancient statue – each of them, incorporating in their own way some kind of limitation. We should remember that John the Baptist himself appears in another work (fig. 18) as a decapitated head, and bodies without heads are also a constant reference in the exhibition *The Stairs* analyzed in chapter one. All these bodies seem to lose their integrity only to become one of the fragments that make up an allegory. They are affirming that, ultimately, flesh perishes and as a result what survives can only remain in a symbolic level, as an allegory to be echoed in future times or as a cultural legacy, such as the surviving Roman architecture.

As happened in *The Draughtsman's Contract* and in *A Zed and Two Noughts*, *The Belly of the Architect* does not advance only on the level of the plot; instead, it keeps mirroring itself, and adding layers of meaning by means of different images within it. If the baby of Mâcon had to be lacerated to become the allegory of human greed, jealousy, and barbarity, Kracklite's decay, echoed in pieces of statues spread throughout different locations in the film, recalls the involuntary and natural laceration bestowed by death. Therefore, our John the Baptist holding the postcard in the tamed garden resumes, both of them, him and the garden, two different aspects of human misery developed in Greenaway's allegories: on the one hand, John the Baptist as victim of the misery that stems from human will, triggered by historical, social or psychological concerns; on the other, the misery provided by nature itself, the postcard resuming human frailty in the face of death. We have already met a similar ambivalence in the case of the twins in *A*

Zed and Two Noughts since their personal grief is mirrored in a larger cycle of life proposed by the BBC documentary they watch during the film.

But the telephone was ringing in our initial image: is there a way out? Hermes, the messenger between the kingdom of the living and the kingdom of the dead had already appeared in his Latin version through the name of Mercury, which is also the name of the car that Alba was driving at the moment of the fatal accident that killed the wives of the twins in *A Zed and two Noughts*. His figure is also associated with science, ruse and trickery, but he tends to act in favor of the mortals. The presence of this mythological messenger in the garden is not gratuitous, neither for the plot of the film, nor for our imaginary collage of the fragments of Greenaway's work. After all, the ringing telephone stands also for communication and belongs to *Dear Phone* (1977), an early film based on an intricate plot whose main element, the only one to appear on the screen, is the telephone hidden in red London booths. The booths are surrounded by traffic and passers-by – a figurative version of Greenaway's abstract *Routes* (fig. 11) – while the voice-over, permeated by the signal of ringing phones, narrates a tangled intrigue involving sex and death, related to a succession of phone calls.

The main characters in *Dear Phone* have the same initials, H. C.: the movement of the traffic and the passers-by belongs therefore to this unstable context of different persons with the same initials, different and confusing phone calls, intricate relations between different characters who entangle and disentangle among themselves. The plot seems to lead to no special point apart from this traffic, while it is mentioned that one of the characters makes long trips to the beach in order to make phone calls from a cabin whose rust he likes to observe. We seem to be in a fortuitous web of human relations while matter rots on the beach. We cannot help remembering another ringing phone in

an unusual context: the insistent telephone resonating amidst fire in Tarkovsky's film *Sacrifice*. But Tarkovsky used to call for a spiritual redemption, which seems impossible in a Baroque context, devoid of God and fond of materiality. If our Hermes remained in the garden, it is not because he still corresponds to a god, but because as a sign he may still be able to convey Mr. Herbert's desire for status and Greenaway's play with fiction and reality. His mythological meaning also suggests a yearning to communicate. The ringing telephone is hence just another version of Hermes himself.

For Benjamin, the Baroque drama did not achieve anything if its allegories remained as dispersed fragments without a link to gather them in a totality. If ultimately humans are condemned to decay, either physically or morally, as is pointed out in Greenaway's works, there seems to be no way to avoid the gratuitous fragments of the succession of quotations in his allegories. However, there may be more than this. The scattered pieces of the puzzle do form a whole: Persephone, Hermes, the painting on the wall, the many dialogues referring to the film's plot in a metaphorical way, all these elements work together to build some sense out of the intricate plot of Greenaway's first feature film, *The Draughtsman's Contract*.

What is at stake in that film, as it is also in *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* as well as in *The Baby of Mâcon* is an allegory of power, its devastating strength developed through a myriad of elements that keep mirroring each other instead of simply being organized in a linear narrative. The allegory is then saved from a fortuitous fragmentation as the pieces can hold together in order to make sense in a single film. Besides this, there is also redemption from human decay. As happens in *A Zed and Two Noughts*, *The Belly of an Architect* and in *The Pillow Book*, the father in *The Draughtsman's Contract* also dies, but only to give room to his newborn son. If flesh is

condemned to decompose, its existence is however affirmed in its continuity. The architect dies leaving no substantial work; the draughtsman has his drawings burnt after his death; the biologists leave no revealing results from their experiments, yet all of them leave a descendant.

Nevertheless, life is still reaffirmed in a second way. We can finally refer to the Baroque as an aesthetic luxuriance because now we no longer run the risk of reducing its excess to flamboyance devoid of sense. The overabundance of ornaments is now tied to a grid, to both a physical and a philosophical idea of movement, to melancholy, to allegory, and all of them bear a multi-faceted testimony to a cultural experience. The ornament also dares to be only itself: ornament, glinting shapes, a tomato-shaped bag, religious images, colors, curls, mirrors, velvets, wigs, light, blue water, flesh. It is a "cinema of ideas," as Greenaway likes to define his work, but these ideas are not without exhilaration. Life is marred by a death that is affirmed and reaffirmed, carefully dissected in all its materiality. Yet, it is life itself that is equally celebrated. Even when the celebration may receive the methodical sound of the phone ring, the methodical division in a taxonomy, methodical repetitions and internal mirroring, still there is a yearning to communicate, to make films or artworks. Or, even if the celebration occurs amidst a tight web of morbid intrigues there is still the choice to accentuate a general vigor in vehement ornaments. Allegory is used, therefore, not to mask reality through a meaningless scattering of it, but to restore its intensity by means of a collage of fragments.

100 Allegories to Represent the World

If allegories occur dispersed in Greenaway's films, in this project they become the main motif. The strategies used to build an allegory are therefore deliberately exposed and played with. Mechanisms used in a more restrained manner in the allegory present in many of Greenaway's films are here deliberately exaggerated. The need no longer exists, in this series, for a narrative that will be intersected by dispersed allegories interrupting its flow. Now there is an interrupted flow to begin with, a succession of one unity followed by another, each of them containing a fragment of a narrative that relates neither to the previous nor to the next one. The succession repeats and deepens what was already seen before: hence we find other versions of the postcards, Hermes, the garden, decapitation, as well as many other themes of Greenaway's work systematized in one hundred allegories.

The project took place at the University of Strasbourg Human Sciences in 1995, and included more than one hundred residents of the city who presented themselves in order to pose naked and impersonate different characters of different mythologies, from Greek, to Christian and a "Greenawayian" collection of myths. The result is a catalogue of human bodies exposed frontally page after page, holding a few attributes related to their characters and surrounded by, or sandwiched between, images and texts gathered by means of digital technology. A text by Greenaway comments on each of the allegories, setting the tone for their reading, telling a summarized version of the myth, and giving some information about the sources for the images used in each of them.

The use of allegories organized in an ordered way results in an encyclopedia not only of Greenaway's themes, but also of the Baroque strategies that were investigated here. The circle closes and we are back to the same serial structure of the grid: an accumulation of cells is connected by means of parallelism, and not by a sequential link

of cause and effect. In order to achieve this it was necessary to work with the idea of movement translated into the instability of meanings; a melancholy approach allowed the distancing necessary to dig up old myths without forgetting the original sin; and finally, the use of allegory put together the pieces and resuscitated dispersed fragments.

Allegory is born from the will to rescue the past from oblivion; however, once displaced, the borrowed elements receive a different meaning from the original. Greenaway himself regrets that biblical and mythological knowledge tends to disappear as new generations are no longer interested in it.[130] If at first Greenaway's position as well as his choice of these kinds of characters to figure in his one hundred allegories may point to a conservatism on his part, one does not have to go much further to acknowledge that his re-appropriation of the past is not too concerned with authenticity. The same liberty with which he had appropriated paintings by Vermeer in *A Zed and Two Noughts* will guide his re-staging of mythological and biblical characters. Like Vermeer's woman with the red hat, the characters of the allegories are presented naked, stripped of their aura and invested instead with a strong appeal by means of their bare corporeality. The diverse elements used in the digital collage slightly change their meaning once they are placed close to the character they should help to identify. Therefore, it is not only the characters themselves who acquire a different connotation, but also all the objects and imagery borrowed from photographs, paintings and engravings once displaced suffer a shift in their original meaning.

If we take, for example, *Allegory 38*, we may see different strategies that demonstrate how transient meaning is once its signifier is dislocated to a different context. This time it is not John the Baptist but another decapitated character who is

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[130] Interview in Michel Cieutat and Jean-Louis Flecniakoska, eds., 51-52.

referred to, and he is not alone. Orpheus, the divinity related to music, was killed by women who took revenge for his fidelity to his dead wife, Euridice, and had parts of his body and his severed head thrown into a river. Greenaway simplifies his story and makes conjectures about why the Thracian women killed Orpheus: his usual nonchalance permeates his version of the myth, demonstrating how lenient is his commitment in reviving mythology. Although this is a concern of his, this revival can only take place if it fits into his ironic tone, if it works with the digital technologies used to express it, and if it matches a miscellany of other references with which the myth interacts. Still, we may ask whether, if the fading myths were to remain immaculate, they should be able to also call attention to themselves. Furthermore, is it not characteristic of allegory itself to renew the elements it borrows from the past?[131]

The head of Orpheus is separated from his body and appears beside the severed head of Saint Cecilia, a Christian saint also associated with music, and who was decapitated for professing her faith (fig.21). A strange affinity gathers in the same allegory characters from very different contexts who have in common only their association with music and the fact that both of them were decapitated. But there is still more than this: the two characters became a target of worship. When the gods learned about the terrible crime of the Maenads towards Orpheus, they instituted a wave of plagues as a punishment on their country that was to cease only when the head of Orpheus was recovered and a temple built in his honor at the same place. Cecilia, in her turn, became Saint Cecilia after her martyrdom. If heads separated from their bodies

[131] Benjamin, 36. See also the essay by Craig Owens in which he discusses the dismissal of allegory in the theoretical discourse of art history, in opposition to its use in contemporary art. "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism," part 1 and 2 in Craig Owens, *Beyond Recognition: Representation, Power, and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California, 1994). For the renewal of the past by the allegorist, see p. 54.

were once valuable trophies in primitive cultures and acquired similar connotations in mythology,[132] substituting the thought and power of the enemy as objects of reverence, we may assume that the severed head appears in Greenaway's allegory if not with a different, at least with an additional meaning.

We have seen already how the lacerated character that appeared in German Baroque drama died in order to achieve immortality by means of allegory. The brutality that took place in those plays will also be found again in Greenaway's revival of Greek mythology, which abounds in examples of unthinkable and most cruel punishments and revenges. Nevertheless, barbarism is not restricted to Olympus: the gallery of saints also conjured up in some of the allegories provides other examples that are more realistic but not less grotesque. If this is not enough, there are still the characters of Greenaway's personal mythology, who also haunt the series with uncontrolled sadism (see for example The Inquisitor, The Executioner, The Doomsday-Man, The Inkmistress).

In *The Draughtsman's Contract*, the terrible murder could be explained as a critical allegory of the British dominant class of landowners in the seventeenth century; in *The Baby of Mâcon*, the horrible crimes could also be read as an allegory of the alliance between the rulers and the Church in Baroque France dominated by Italians; in *The Cook, the Thief, his Wife and her Lover*, the stuffed librarian who died suffocated with books in his mouth was also a crude allegory of Philistinism during the Thatcher period. We may ask now how so much violence can be justified in this series, given its recurrence in such disparate cases and with no apparently possible reference to one specific reality.

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[132] For the value attributed to the severed head in different cultures and myths, see Juanito Brandão, *Dicionário Mítico-Etimológico*, Vols 1 and 2 (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1997), 200-201. The same source was consulted for the references to mythological characters.

The answer comes from the double level in which Baroque allegory is generally used: if on the one hand, it could reverberate with historical events contemporary to it, on the other, it is a comment on human existence in general. We have seen already this level at play in the case of melancholy provoked by grief, and we meet again another somber view of human existence now irremediably linked to the destruction of the other, as it is fully illustrated in these one hundred allegories.[133] We do not need to evoke again the gallery of babies in Greenaway's films that counterbalances this sinister view. We may instead only punctuate our paragraph with the image of someone who was left behind: young, freed, angelic Ariel jumping off the film frame at the end of *Prospero's Books*. This figure of innocence is evoked only to remind that together with Greenaway's crude view of the human drive towards destruction, there is often an opposite apology to life. After all, if on the one hand the spectator is invited to identify with the morbid yearnings of the audience of *The Baby of Mâcon*, on the other, there is Ariel, jumping out of his fantastic island and coming towards us, outside the screen. In his work, Greenaway thus offers the double testimony of the renewal of life and the worship of characters somehow related to its ravishing, a worship legitimated by cultural inheritance.

Because the severed heads in the allegory of Orpheus were of divinities related to music, they refer both to an activity of the mind and to a corporeality from which they were isolated. This same ambiguity echoes in other elements in the allegory of Orpheus, and with a clearer message. The concentric circles behind Orpheus are a quotation from the encyclopedia by Robert Fludd, a British philosopher fond of occultism, who lived

[133] Among innumerable testimonies that refuse to endorse an illusion of a human nature driven essentially to be kind, see for example Leo Bersani's study on Freud in which he identifies a destructive impulse inherent to love that Freud envisaged, but preferred to leave between the lines. Leo Bersani, *The Freudian Body* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).

between the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. Greenaway explains that the circles "display the connections of God, the angels and the planets to the Moon and the Earth in a spiraling descent to the uttermost depths of matter."[134] The circles appear in this sequence of three allegories related to music, in which they reproduce the descent by beginning on the top of the first allegory with Apollo, and finishing at the feet of Marsyas, the musician who dared to challenge Apollo. Having lost, Marsyas was punished in a terrible way, flayed by Apollo himself - a punishment that Greenaway felt comfortable to describe minutely, following the course of Apollo's knife on Marsya's body. In the allegory of Orpheus, the celestial circles are in the middle of the descent and their center culminates in a red halo that encircles Orpheus's sex.

We have had a chance already of observing that everything that flies, eventually falls in Greenaway's world. The rapture that music could potentially induce is therefore immediately chained to the crudest materiality that does not avoid the sadistic elements already present in the myth itself and that is carefully emphasized in Greenaway's text. If Fludd's dark sky crowded with angels and planets culminated in sex, the halo also lost its celestial affinities, becoming thus red and being strategically placed on Orpheus's body. Not satisfied with a single reality, the staff Orpheus holds is immediately doubled in its symbolism by the reference to its phallic connotation.

Besides being pushed down to earth, Fludd's circles also become a vinyl disk in Greenaway's text. In this unstable panorama of moving signifiers and signifieds, a "double red decapitation line" separates Orpheus's head from his body and we are told that they belong to a music score yet to be written. Naturally, the music could not be

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[134] Peter Greenaway, *100 Allegories to Represent the World* (Strasbourg: Université de Sciences Humaines de Strasbourg and Paris: Adam Biro, 1998), 243.

ready in this world of no fixed meaning. Thus the "two blood-red lines" function like the many drafts with scribbled words that appear in other allegories of the series: it is always a work in progress impossible to be appeased. after all. music itself is associated with a melancholy disconsolation. being the "manufacturer of the unsettled heart, creating impossible yearnings never to be consummated." [135] And finally, in case we need solace, however remote it may be, we can look to the serpent who also did not linger in a single sense, and who gave up some of the malignity with which it is usually associated, by becoming a musical clef at the start of the red score. The pervasive impulse to allegorize shakes each of the fragments of this allegory, doubling them in order to evoke a new meaning in the context of the allegoric assemblage.

It happens, actually, that many of the characters in the series are themselves doubled by their shadow (The Greenman), a silhouette (The Hermaphrodite), a reflection (Narcissus, Ganymede, The Typhon), or for being brothers (The Door-Keeper, Leda, Castor and Pollux), couples (Hero and Leander, Noah and his wife, Jupiter and Juno, Adam and Eve), companions (Minerva and her "servant Amazon," The Maths Boy – father and son), for representing different ages or moments (Day, The Midwife, The Cartographers, Agatha), different concepts (The Anatomist, The Allegorists, Pathos, Painting, The Ambassadors), variations in the character (The Executioner – master and apprentice; The Spinners - Arachne and Ariadne ; The Wrestler – Atlas and Hercules; The Epicuress – Venus, Minerva and Juno) or to indicate mere quantity (The Runners, The Gorgons, The Page-Turners, The Pimp – and his harem).

Doubling and causing instability, an attitude that we have already identified within the Baroque, is therefore a deliberate strategy that works inside each of the

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[135] Ibid., 243.

allegories and in the project as a whole. If the series is organized in one hundred units, each of them is allowed the possibility of doubling itself in many ways. The characters are photographed invariably standing up and facing the camera, but their identity is not unequivocal, it depends both on the many elements placed around them, or on the other characters that help to define them. The multiplication to which many of them are submitted undermines the compositional claim for a singularity.

If we consider the project as a whole, a variation can also be observed in the repetition of elements from one allegory to another. Most of them are fragments borrowed from different encyclopedias, which may or may not acquire a different nuance each time they are used. The disks by Robert Fludd, which reappear several times in the series, have already been mentioned. It is also the case, for example, of Vesalius's studies on anatomy, which serve well Greenaway's treatment of a disenchanted corporeality not disguised by idealizations, but crudely exposed in the material reality of human organs. Among the many visual quotes by Vesalius, we can take the allegory of The Anatomist, presented as an invader of private spaces:

> He could reveal to the world not only the superficial misdemeanours of the exterior of the naked corpse that he pawed and trawled alone in his nocturnal morgue, but also its interior felonies. He could view the scars and wrinkles and blemishes that had been so assiduously concealed in life by clothing and powder, false hair, padding and props, crutches and dye, and he could lay bare the body's concealed interior with its hidden inadequacies and malformations. An alcohol-swollen liver? An undelivered foetus? A black heart? A withered soul? [136]

It may seem contradictory that Greenaway, who so likes to proclaim his disdain for a realist cinema, appears at this point to disallow the use of artifice in physical matters. This is however an ambiguity inherent in the conception of the project since the

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[136] Ibid., 221.

characters appear bluntly naked but depending chiefly on props to become allegory. The artifice is therefore used not to mask reality, but to insist on how tangible truth is, even the conceptual truth of allegories and myths.

When nature is personalized in the Baroque, it does not assume an interiority, as occurs in Romanticism; instead, nature is deprived of a soul.[137] Thus it is no surprise to find another anatomist, in an unfinished project by Greenaway, this time involved with an impossible task. Among his aborted plans for films, Greenaway mentions *Augsbergenfeld*, which was the story of an anatomist who dissected bodies in search for their souls.[138] The idea for the project would not have been possible if there were not hints of it in his previous work: the anatomist who searches for a material manifestation of the soul among corpses is another manifestation of the contradiction implicit in those naked mythological figures unsatisfied with their immaterial existence.

The Baroque does not converge on an Ideal, it works instead with the multiple, that is, shifting meanings may be associated with the same signifier and there is also an emphasis on the very material reality in all its multiple bodies. For a last example, we may recall the maternal figure of Prospero's wife in the film *Prospero's Books* framed by the camera that slowly goes down from her tender face to her belly, that she opens to expose her entrails. The image is certainly borrowed from Piero da Cortona - another anatomist and encyclopedist who lived in the seventeenth century, and appears in *Allegory 17* of Greenaway's series, which shows Callisto. It shows the same opposition between delicate traits of the face and the floating hair, giving way to an unexpected revelation of her insides. The incompatibility of soul and corpses, or of feminine beauty

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[137] Benjamin, 209.
[138] Michel Ciment, "Une conflagration de l'art – entretien avec Peter Greenaway," *Positif* 368. (October 1991), 46.

and entrails demonstrate the insistence on affirming the impossible evasion from materiality. Following the same principle, mythological characters become naked bodies in Greenaway's one hundred allegories.

It is tempting to stop here and begin to trace all the references to other works by Greenaway that reappear in these one hundred allegories. Although this could be entertaining, perhaps the reader would not be amused with such ready solutions, without having a chance to make associations and play with the puzzle by him or herself. It may suffice instead to quickly mention some of them just to make the point that these allegories may constitute Greenaway's encyclopedia of his themes as well. We will meet fliers, for example, as in *The Falls*; allegories related to the garden, as in *The Draughtsman's Contract*; architectural drawings associated to bodies, such as in *The Belly of the Architect*; references to water, numbers and games, as in *Drowning by Numbers*; books and overt violence as in *The Cook, the Thief, his Wife and her Lover*; naked bodies and letters, as in *The Pillow Book*. The list is endless and is mentioned here only superficially. It is not only a matter of themes and it could continue referring to concrete elements, characters and artworks used by Greenaway in his films and in these allegories as visual sources, capable of translating the approach to the world that we have been investigating into a Baroque manifestation. We may concentrate instead on the idea of an encyclopedia, which links this project to Greenaway's work in general, and more specifically to the film *Prospero's Books* (1991).

The film begins in this way: a slow tracking shot sweeps the scene crowded with moving characters and the whole film will repeat this pattern of swarming compositions occasionally accentuated with splashes into the water or a shower of floating leaves of paper. Everything moves in the fantastic island of Prospero. As if the choreography of

the extras and of Caliban were not enough, there are also digital effects that fill the frame with juxtaposed images and texts. The narrative is denied fluidity and is then intersected with references to Prospero's twenty-four books, an innovation added to the original play *The Tempest*, by Shakespeare. This allowed the theme of encyclopedic knowledge to be reinforced, as the books given to Prospero by his friend Gonzalo when he was exiled offer him all the necessary knowledge to rebuild a kingdom on the island. Bridget Elliot and Anthony Purdy speak of museum films in Greenaway's works: "In these films, the syntagmatic (or metonymic) axis of plot and narrative (the axis of combination) tends to be disrupted by the paradigmatic axis of selection, foregrounded by various strategies of metaphor and display." [139] This is exemplified by the thirteen bodies covered with calligraphy in *The Pillow Book*, and we could add other echoes, such as the thirteen drawings in *The Draughtsman's Contract*, the experiments with the animals in *A Zed and Two Noughts*, or the books in this film.

We cannot speak of *100 Allegories to Represent the World* as the ultimate encyclopedia of Greenaway's themes because there can be no ultimate center in the Baroque. If the narrative of a film can be crossed by a paradigmatic axis that interrupts it with metaphors, we have seen a similar process at work in the repeated elements throughout the allegories, deliberately pointed out in the text that accompanies them. The same occurs with the theme of the collection of knowledge considered in the work of Greenaway as a whole. There is no central metaphor or allegory to guide an interpretation of his work, there is instead something similar to Deleuze's "corps sans organe," a body whose parts are irremediably interconnected, crossed by vectors coming

[139] Bridget Elliot and Anthony Purdy, 90.

from different sides and forming thus an unstable but cohesive state linking all the organs.

If we stopped to analyze the books given to Prospero, we would find a similar concentration of Greenaway's themes that could also be unfolded from them. In addition, the allegories themselves are crossed by other encyclopedic books, many of them from the Baroque period (by Vesalius, Diderot and d'Alembert, Robert Fludd, Athanasius Kirchner, Linnaeus, Ellenberger, Baum and Dittrich, and why not, Noah and his encyclopedic Ark) and which dilute the project in a gallery of mirrors. Therefore this project repeats the structure of the grid that has been echoing in different works, and makes of the allegorical encyclopedia itself just one more echo. The strategy of constructing series allows the elements to communicate among themselves like cells in a grid, i.e., they communicate by means of parallelism. By being placed in different cells, they do not necessarily depend on the previous or the next one, but rather on the whole ensemble. The result is a collection of equivalents, which in this case form an encyclopedia of mythological characters (including characters from classic mythology, from the Bible or from Greenaway's own myths).

However, there is the possibility that this dream of ordering the whole world in a grid may turn out to reveal an unavoidable flaw. The play by Shakespeare has been read lately as one more piece in the colonizing gaming board. Prospero fled Italy and Europe in a vessel carrying all the knowledge that would allow him to educate his daughter and tame the island: not a bad metaphor for the European pretensions in the colonies. But we should not expect innocence from Greenaway. Once the story is through, once Miranda is married and Prospero can finally return to Italy, Prospero himself throws the books into the water, echoing Neville's burnt drawings at the end of *The Draughtsman's*

Contract. "Creating is a desperate attempt to create an order so that we may understand the surrounding chaos. For this, we imagine all kinds of strategies that, ultimately, reveal themselves as futile."[140]

If Greenaway assumes the frailty of the encyclopedic project, his work nevertheless indirectly reaffirms its very origin. Or, in other words, if the Greek gallery of myths or the Christian gallery of saints are intermingled and somehow ridiculed, there are plenty of allegories in which the characters are surrounded by (reassuring) books. They are one more of those elements repeated along the series, treated either with disdain or mostly with reverence. We may find for example two brothers who "are protecting literature from Philistines" (*Allegory 52, The Door Keeper*), the ones that could perhaps have avoided the murder of the librarian by the philistine thief in the film *The Cook*. Allegory itself is a choice made by those who are interested in preserving culture from oblivion, even if those elements from the past are submitted to transformations. However, this past is not just any past.

The second group of allegories, called "*The Engine*," is formed by The Anatomist, standing for scientific curiosity and the crude materiality of the body; Juno, standing for a scorned Queen of Creation who contemptuously carries an astronomical globe; and finally Europe, who majestically carries a globe, that "favours Northern Europe, so that its most extensive watery margins and expanses can be appreciated." [141] We can parallel Greenaway's use of allegory with that of Robert Rauschenberg, who also

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[140] ["Créer c'est une tentative désespérée pour créer de l'ordre afin de comprendre le chaos qui nous entoure. Pour cela nous imaginon toutes sortes de stratégies qui, en fin de compte , se révèlent futiles."] Greenaway's words in the interview by Michel Ciment. "Une conflagration de l'art." 42.
[141] Peter Greenaway, *100 Allegories*, 221.

dealt with an accumulation of images and who also made a work entitled *Allegory*.[142] Rauschenberg shares with Greenaway the same disavowing comment on the very cultural material upon which they base their work, but Greenaway's sources are different.

The allegory of Flora shows her name above her head, a name that had been appropriated by a fat food industry: "the generic title for plants and trees and fields and forests has been borrowed to imply what is generally perceived as a butter substitute."[143] The reference is part of Greenaway's attitude of stripping the myths of their aura, but different from Rauschenberg, Warhol, and many others who based their work on the imagery of mass culture, his sources are usually more focused on a specific field of inspiration. Mythological characters and saints already belong to a realm other than consumer culture; however, if we take the case of photographs, which may appear to be more mundane, the ones he quotes have already been granted an aura by the traditional history of photography. August Sander, Duchenne de Bologne, Hippolyte Bayard, or the more contemporary Bernd and Hilla Becher, who appear as another reference to the encyclopedic project, may receive the same disdainful treatment generally dedicated to other cultural elements, but they do belong to a gallery of sanctified photographers.

Contemporary artists who make use of allegory do not escape from affirming the very elements they tend to disavow,[144] and it is no different with Greenaway, though his sources are not the same. It turns out that the culture he affirms while denying it, is the very one embodied by sovereign Europe carrying the world beneath its arm. The Baroque that once insisted on avoiding rules that could stabilize meaning, has been

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[142] For more about Rauschenberg and the use of allegory also by contemporary artists see the essay by Craig Owens mentioned before (note 128).
[143] Greenaway. *100 Allegories*. 263.
[144] See again Craig Owens.

transformed here into one more rule. The idea that the rule should be broken is one that seems to inform much of Greenaway's work; but then this idea is disrespected and a center is indirectly proposed. In this center we find the references to a European culture that is at the same time mocked and nurtured. The actual process of allegory permits this ambiguous attitude: on the one hand, different fragments are taken from different sources only to be put into question by means of the ironic treatment they receive; on the other hand, there is the attempt to rescue from oblivion the very sources for the allegories, the mythological and biblical texts that constitute the basis of European culture.

We have not exhausted the theme of the allegory, for, being integral to the Baroque, its use responds to different levels from political concerns to considerations about human existence. "Allegory is no longer a viable method of communication – if it ever truly was, since it was often used to communicate clandestine messages – but a certain complexity of the human condition could be handled that way."[145] Acknowledging that nowadays the word "human" can hardly be used without revealing the simplification implicit in it, we may assume that what is embraced by this word here is an existential posture that emanated mostly from a Christian and European ideology, and that, despite the nuances achieved in other continents, it is still at play in diverse cultural manifestations. The tower of Babel appears in the background of some of the allegories, representing the claim for universality of the whole series. Nevertheless, we can no longer avoid the fact that for many cultures of the globe that is carried by the person representing Europe, the tower of Babel itself does not have any significance. Therefore, the "human" here, refers actually to more or less that same group for which the tower has some meaning, the group that once worshipped mythological entities who

[145] Greenaway, *The Stairs – The location – Geneva*, 46.

lived on Olympus, who later studied the Bible and today goes over both sources in what perhaps could be more appropriately seen as a melancholy detached manner.

Among the themes that permeate the whole series of allegories, the recurrence of the text of the Genesis that narrates the episode of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden should be emphasized. The text is said to be there in order to point to a beginning, or to remind us of the Original Sin, or of "Original Lechery." It is usually superimposed with naked bodies but it may also be manifested in other ways. The apple is reproduced several times and a reference to the "Original Satanic snake" is identified, for example, in the zigzag markings of an American banknote (*Allegory 84, Midas*). Adam and Eve themselves are framed in one of the allegories, even as they, the first sinners, "God's humiliated experimental guinea pigs" are present with the usual insouciance. We have seen already how this theme is linked to melancholy and we may expect that, since it is insistently mentioned in this series, it may also play an important role in the concept of allegory.

The Spinners introduce a series of five allegories which are "exotic, nostalgic, and most importantly, melancholic." Ariadne and Arachne were two spinners who, like the other characters in the group, were condemned to an unfortunate fate. Ariadne was left by Theseus after helping him to slay the Minotaur and flee from Dedalus's labyrinth. In Greenaway's simplified version, Arachne committed suicide after having challenged Minerva in a spinning competition. In another version of the myth, the goddess spared her life and transformed her into a spider that would spin until death. Spinning is mentioned in a declared association to plotting, and the spinners actually spin together Greenaway's own plot of different themes that fit into the concept of allegory developed in this series: "We use them as an analogy for plotting and spinning and have placed

them in a garden and framed them within the margins of an encyclopedia. Every garden is a desire to return to Eden. Every encyclopedia is an attempt to build a library in one book. Gardens and libraries together make an ideal utopia. We wish the melancholy Spinners well in this paradise." [146]

Greenaway's steps are large and leave a lot of empty space between them. We have to find the links that reunite Eden, the encyclopedic project, melancholy and allegory. We have seen already that the fatal bite on the apple gave access to forbidden knowledge but condemned humans (those who followed the biblical doctrine) to agonize, haunted by the concepts of blame and sin. The banishment from paradise also placed human beings in a dilemma between the nostalgia for heaven and the desire of knowledge. The two options seem to be irreconcilable, or, in Greenaway's terms, they can only co-exist on a utopian level: "Gardens and libraries make an ideal utopia." The attempt "to build a library in one book" refer to the wish of gathering every possible thing in a single unity – the exhibition *100 Objects to Represent the World* made a parody of a similar wish. If "every garden is a desire to return to Eden" this occurs because every garden reminds us of the lost unity inherent to the human condition, and represented in the bible by the expelling from Paradise, as it was discussed in the previous chapter. Melancholy stems from the distress of not being able of re-uniting either in a paradisiacal garden or in a library that contains every possible thing.

We have already left behind the melancholy biologists sunk in reflections about human existence in *A Zed and Two Noughts*. The one hundred allegories, like the one hundred objects mentioned above, gather very diversified information that should provide the utopian unity longed for either as a garden or as an encyclopedia. We are

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[146] Ibid., 255.

now sunk in an amalgam of cultural references, carefully arranged in one hundred units, throughout which a significant portion of our cultural past is ruminated at the same time that the recurrence of the Garden of Eden and of Greek mythology puts us in a position of questioning the preconceived ideas that generated the very material of the allegories. Are we going to succumb like the twins? Again we should return to a scene from *The Baby of Mâcon*, to look for a hint of how the allegories are supposed to work in relation to the viewer.

The child has been killed and Cosimo is inconsolable. The nun that belongs to his entourage offers him solace: "Sir, it is only a play...with music. Do not distress yourself." It is not only the introduction of music at this point that is ironic. There is black humor here as it is indeed a play but the baby, the virgin, and the bishop's son do die on stage. Cosimo's inability to separate himself from the represented scene may turn out to not be so absurd. But his reaction is involuntary and an uncritical approach to the play is not what the film seems to suggest. The cruelty implicit in the film *The Baby of Mâcon* is denounced by the fact that the spectators of the play being performed adhere to plot, making it advance to an atrocious end. In the case of this film and also in the allegories in question, spectators are invited to assume a critical perspective by means of realizing the devices used to create the work.

We have seen already that the audience of the film *The Baby of Mâcon* is not invited to play the game of violence proposed in the plot. We suggest instead that a critical attitude should be assumed and many devices, such as the inclusion of another audience, that is, those who watch the play, will be used to create a critical distancing. We may find here another important role of allegory as, by means of resuscitated references, which are submitted to transformations, it proposes also a distancing from an

immediate content that should instead be carefully deciphered. The many fragments of handwriting reaffirm the artificial construct at play in the allegories. A painting by Holbein, *The Ambassadors*, (*Allegory 57* – see comment on it below, page 223) is itself commented on and deciphered. The text brings to light the painting's allegorical strategies that do not differ much from the strategies used in the whole series (mostly, the choice of objects and their positioning in the composition which provides them with a symbolic meaning). Allegory itself is one of the allegories (*Allegory 14*), divided into a group of four characters to account for the complexity of the theme, each of them holding attributes borrowed again from Robert Fludd's Encyclopedia. This *mise en abîme* proposed by an allegory within a group of allegories again directs the attention of the reader to the very strategies of meaning in question here.

The counterpart for all of the conceptual stratagems at play in the allegories is the fact that if on one side of the scale they struggle to reveal their own artificiality, on the other side are all those naked bodies and wet stains and burnt surfaces in this realm of digital effects. The audience supposedly should remain aloof to the staged violence in *The Baby of Mâcon*, because after all, "it is only a play, with music" – but at Cosimo's level of reality the actors do die. The reader should leaf through the allegories in a detached manner, looking skeptically at the attempt to rescue mythological characters from oblivion, but one cannot avoid their nakedness and a general appeal to the physicality of the images. Fragments of walls from different Italian cities also compose some of the images, their origin being carefully pointed out in the text, thus stressing their reality as fragments of real cities, that is, parts of an urban skin full of connotations of something mundane, but also of a shared cultural tradition.

Consequently, Allegory placed on the Baroque stage is far from being a mere abstraction. It is a concept, but it has been dressed with clear contours that render it intelligible not only by the intellect, but also by the senses. It echoes finally, the very condition of Adam and Eve expelled from paradise. Having bitten the apple of knowledge, they became aware of their own physicality at the same time that the whole world turned out to be a vast encyclopedia waiting to be explored, swarming with interesting trails, even if the exploration is made with melancholy nonchalance, somewhat nostalgic for the Garden of Eden, somewhat blemished by the grief of the lost patriarchal paradise and also the grief due to a new and irrevocable mortality. The trails that compose the allegories are very diverse, but they do communicate with each other by means of unsuspected links. The role of the allegory is to reveal these connections, explaining then how one element can re-emerge in a completely different context.

Fragments, ruins and death comprise the Baroque allegory re-staged by Greenaway. Fragments are its necessary raw material, offering the components with which to create the conceptual image proposed by allegory. They respond both to the contemporary Baroque fondness for quoting different works, and to the historical Baroque tendency to use a coded language as in, for example, poetry. Ruins received a literal translation in the fragments of Italian cities that are part of some of the allegories in the analyzed series, but they can also be taken in a more figurative sense, as they can also refer to the very act of dislocating fragments and making historical references in the allegories. Finally, death, a necessary presence for the apotheosis of the Baroque drama, according to Benjamin, appeared as a manifestation of cruelty, a constant element in Greenaway's work. The artificiality of the allegorical procedure permits cruelty to be treated with a critical distance, the same distance that Greenaway wants the spectator to

have as he resorts to a cinematographic language that avoids realism. The examples in the first part of the chapter, which were mostly from Greenaway's films, anticipated his use of allegory to comment on violence and to eventually mention mythological characters. However, the series *100 Allegories to Represent the World* develops both of these aspects in a more consistent way, in addition to revealing Greenaway's fidelity to the very culture whose blemishes he ironically reveals.

Allegory closes the group of four elements that were proposed as keys to Greenaway's link with the Baroque, and which was preceded by representation, movement and melancholy. The separation of the elements was necessary in order to make them intelligible, but it is not difficult to see how they communicate with each other. Representation is evidently a theme in the allegories, given its process of collecting fragments and associating them, instead of using easier forms of realism. The choice of allegory offers an opportunity to discuss the very process of representation, what is further emphasized by the inclusion of allegory itself as one of the items in the series (*Allegory 14: The Allegorists).* The choice of using allegories also confirms Greenaway's need to make clear his own strategies for constructing his work, that is, the need to make evident the act of representation. Movement is present in the instability of meanings, as parts of each allegory can assume a different meaning once they are placed in each new context. Finally, melancholy was a theme expressed in the many references to Adam and Eve, in its association with several mythological characters or in the indirect reference to melancholy behavior and its immersion in thoughts. This detachment from reality is, in a certain sense, the necessary attitude for the abstraction implicit in the allegorical language. Although reference to the seventeenth century has often been mentioned within the works seen up to this point, the association of

Greenaway's work with the Baroque cannot be limited to this chronological allusion. The presence of the four elements mentioned above in different or almost all of his works, confirms and deepens his association with the Baroque, which appears as a possible key capable of deciphering and linking elements that could otherwise seem disconnected.

PART TWO

Representation, movement, melancholy and allegory were concepts chosen to define some of the major themes at play in the Baroque. They also offer the key to part of Greenaway's production, but they do not exhaust either the Baroque or the work of Greenaway. There are still some aspects that were not covered by these concepts; furthermore, they were separated in order to permit a more clear presentation about what has been considered to be the Baroque. However, it is in fact their connection that better identifies the Baroque conception that informed the production of the works. Thus, this second part of the thesis will have a double aim: one will be to demonstrate how those concepts operate together in some of Greenaway's work; and the other will be to recover several important elements that were left behind. After all, there are still some significant aspects of Greenaway's work that are recurrent and that have not been mentioned up to this point although their presence seems evident and unavoidable.

We will, therefore, explore the link capable of uniting seemingly incongruent aspects of Greenaway's work. If all the naked bodies present in Greenaway's films seem to have any relation to, for example, the recurrence of alphabets and numbers in his films, once these elements are examined with greater care, their connection with the Baroque appears. This Baroque is revealed in materialism, or in the denial of any idealization that could be represented in the bodies, or rather, the Baroque aesthetics expressed in the taste for games, or in the insistence on revealing the fictitious aspect and the stratagems of every work, which are reinforced by the resort to numbers and letters. Baroque excess, one of the first reasons why the Baroque was initially dismissed in the history of art, may appear as a deliberate choice once transgression becomes a

rule. Greenaway produces works that seem to follow rigid norms, but these norms emerge only to be defied: a liquid may leak onto the rigid grid in Greenaway's artwork, dissolving it; or the aim of the mathematical game may irrevocably lead to putrefaction and death, as in the film *Drowning by Numbers*. The body, always present in the emphasized corporeality of many of the film characters, does not conform to rigorous schemes; it overflows the limits imposed on it, and overt violence can be punished with cannibalism. Finally, the appeal to materiality can be so strong as to not allow representation to remain an abstract concept.

If allegory was a means to present a concept through images, this process becomes more radical as writing itself may be forced to assume some materiality. The apotheosis of the Baroque can be well exemplified by this metamorphosis of writing becoming body, if we consider that every representation acquires some sort of materiality; or of body becoming writing, if we consider that every image becomes a sign to be read. The Baroque paradox is finally solved: on the one hand, there was the delight of making quotes (in the first chapter, Benjamin reminded us that the Baroque is fond of libraries) and writing by means of them (Greenaway affirms that he is fond of a cinema of ideas); on the other, there was the reaffirmed materiality so highly appreciated in the paintings of the historical Baroque. As writing materializes in the body of Nagiko's lover in the film *The Pillow Book*, it is again the result of past experiences of her own and of literary sources; this writing will be blemished by death and a melancholic grief, but it will have accomplished the task of transforming flesh into writing, or, to put it in differently, of making a puzzle with images.

CHAPTER FIVE

ACCUMULATING NUMBERS AND PLAYING WITH MEANINGS

The girl strangely dressed like a character from a Velázquez painting is skipping rope and counting the stars. She is in the opening scene of *Drowning by Numbers* (1988) and while she counts, enumerating a miscellany of names that vary from actual stars to invented names, the names of literary characters from Greenaway's work, as well as the names of some painters and artists, a noisy, drunken couple passes by her. She remains indifferent. She is counting and skipping and like her friend Smut, a boy of about her age, she will be busy throughout the whole film counting in one way or another, an action that seems to keep them at a safe distance from the surrounding events. The counting actually only appears to preserve them temporarily, as both will die.

We are already familiar with the combination of death and measurement from Dürer's *Melancholia* and the film *A Zed and Two Noughts*. However, my interest here is in the use of the game. It governs the film *Drowning by Numbers*, it is implicit in much of Greenaway's artwork and it also permeated many Baroque artistic and literary works. Allegory itself can be seen as a game of combinations and interchangeable meanings. But the game is not fortuitous; it is not only a matter of playing with different pieces. Considered within the Baroque, it has other consequences; it may govern a series of aesthetic options and respond to an existential positioning in the world.

The oldest Cissie, one of the three characters named Cissie in *Drowning by Numbers*, asks the girl why she only counts up to one hundred, and she answers that after this, everything would be the same. We can easily recognize the same one hundred

in other instances of Greenaway's work: one hundred allegories, one hundred objects to represent the world, one hundred stairs. Or we can locate the repetitive circuit the girl may also be talking about in the sequence of death and birth present in most of his films, including this one.[147] But there is more. While she jumps, she has her eyes raised towards the stars as if her skipping body could itself take off from the ground. There is, however, no room for illusions: in the foreground at the right of the frame one can see a hanging dead bird, as often appeared in still-life paintings. This dead bird announces the ambiguity that is usually explored in this kind of painting and that will also be in question in the film: on the one hand, the presence of life carefully announced in close-ups of insects and fruits or in the sensuality of the youngest couple engaged in kisses, hugs and sexual games; on the other, the frailty of life – besides the three drowned men, the skipping girl will end up lying on the ground run over by a car, and Smut will hang himself. What is Greenaway's game about?

The use of numerical codes is justified by Greenaway himself as an alternative to the dominance of narrative in cinema. He searches for a visual cinema, not a textual one, and therefore, a schematic plot signalled by numbers may set him free to explore other characteristics of cinematic language. Furthermore, he mentions the use of numbers in twentieth-century art, which he enumerates together with the use of alphabets, maps and grids[148] - all being common elements in his own artwork, as we have seen already in the

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[147] Besides the reference to Velázquez, the character of the girl was also inspired by the painting "Mystery and Melancholy of a Street," by De Chirico. In his urge to attribute sense to every element in a scene, Greenaway comments on the different symbols related to the skipping girl in Michel Ciment, "De l'underground au post-modernisme," *Prestige et Cinéma* (Geneva) (September 1988).

[148] Melia and Woods.135. In another interview, Greenaway mentions the use of numbers and classifications in twentieth century literature (James Joyce and Georges Perec), justifying the use of lists as an alternative to traditional narrative and also as an important means of classification used by Western scientists of the 18th and 19th centuries. The identification of the same procedure in different domains reveals his need to root his own choices in artistic, literary and scientific production. It also announces the diverse situations in which this same procedure will reappear in his work, from a criterion for organizing

case of the grids. For Rosalind Krauss, the use of the grid in modern art is related to a separation between the "real" world and perception, as it stresses the surface of painting itself as a means of representation.[149] Likewise, by means of representing an absurd situation in which there seems to be no limit between the audience and the play, Greenaway searched to create a distance between the viewer and the film in *The Baby of Mâcon*. Like the grid, the numbers dispersed throughout the narrative in different objects in the scenes in the film *Drowning by Numbers*, serve also to remind the viewer that that film about games is a game itself, following a sequence with rules previously set up.[150]

The plot here is as unrealistic as the audience that interfered in the play in *The Baby of Mâcon*, and the repeated intrigue between mother and daughter equals the symmetry in the script of *The Draughtsman's Contract*. Three women, all of them named Cissie, mother, daughter and granddaughter, successively drown their husbands following the logical sequence of a game, like the countless ones that are played around them throughout the course of the film. In addition to the sequence of murders, the film keeps mirroring itself in successive metaphors such as the Dead-Catch game where one by one each of the male characters are eliminated and have to lie on the ground playing dead, predicting what will later happen to them. There are also references to paintings in the film, related to the plot, or other elements, such as the first scene commented on previously, which by their improbable recurrence have a similar effect of revealing the

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an exhibition to the means by which a script may be written. For this second interview see Christopher Hawthorne, "The Salon Interview – Peter Greenaway."
http://www.salonmagazine.com/june97/greenaway970606.html

[149] Rosalind Krauss, "Grids," in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernists Myths* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1994).

[150] Greenaway himself painstakingly enumerates all the scenes where the numbers appear, but not without irony. He states that he does this for those who may doubt that all the numbers from one to one hundred were really in the film, but puts his own precision in doubt by adding that "there are other possible lists." Peter Greenaway, *Drowning by Numbers* (London: Faber & Faber, 1988), 116-118.

current game of representation. Cinema in general is itself seen by Greenaway as a sort of game:

> Cinema is like an elaborate game with rules. The aim of the game is to successfully suspend disbelief. The audience has been well trained over some eighty years of practice. Necessary circumstances are darkness and a bright projection – bulb and screen. The audience agrees to enter a dark space and sit facing in one direction. They will be prepared to sit for some two hours – usually in the evenings.[151]

In Greenaway's work rules can be obsessively stressed and adhered to at first, only to be subverted later. If the aim of cinema is to suspend disbelief, he makes an effort to wake up the spectators from any illusion of reality on the screen, and remind them that disbelief is the best position. Therefore, metaphors and numbers seem to be an appropriate way to keep viewers distant from the scenes represented in front of their eyes. Strategies of commercial cinema are also denied because of the way the characters subvert roles usually associated with their gender. Women are not victims, they manipulate men and are closer to villains, although their evilness may be diminished by the fact that their partners are deliberately constructed as weak characters in Greenaway's films.

We may however, raise the question of whether this is a real subversion or an involuntary way of revealing what is in question in the usual victimization of female characters. If their weakness is generally used to emphasize male strength, Greenaway's inversion may instead reveal the fear implicit in the need to represent them as victims. After examining some of his films, the three Cissies who murder their husbands can be

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[151] Peter Greenaway, *Fear of Drowning – Règles du Jeu* , 83. In this book about *Drowning by Numbers* Greenaway himself comments on some of the metaphoric and allegoric devices used in the film. See for example his references to mid-Victorian landscape painting in the film in page 33; or for his allegoric use of Rubens's painting *Samson and Delilah*, see 117-120.

considered within a larger gallery of women whose cruelty is overtly exercised towards their partners. Women may thus be represented in a different way, but only to respond to ancient male anxieties.[152] Nevertheless, we can still speak of a more radical inversion in a broader sense, since, as Greenaway himself comments, at the end of the film the innocents are abused, the good are not rewarded and the bad remain unpunished - which is another way of reversing a common morality reaffirmed in much of commercial cinema.

Drowning by Numbers can also be considered in light of a much earlier film, *Vertical Features Remake* (1978), that simulated a documentary in which scholars tried different combinations of the sequences of landscapes with vertical elements left by another scholar, Tulse Luper, the same character who also appeared in *The Falls* and *A Walk Through H*. Each version of the film was mathematically edited according to rigorous counting, only to be later rebuffed by the next proposal. The final and fourth version ends up undermining the counting, as it is the most lyrical, not divided in equal or proportional parts, but more freely associated the music and the image, allowing the viewer to finally appreciate the exercise of trying to weave together the rural landscape according to the criterion of a vertical formal feature.

We can recognize the same device in Greenaway's artwork either in the earlier *Landscape Section: Geological Diagram* (1968) in which geological layers are piled up as horizontal blue stripes (fig.4); in *Stellarscape: Verticals* (1968) where the study of the universe is reduced not to a system of counting but to geometrical shapes (fig. 5), or

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[152] For a reading of the representation of male anxieties and the female roles projected by them, see Thomas Elsaesser "Games of Love and Death or an Englishman's guide to the galaxy," *Monthly Film Bulletin LV*/657 (October 1988), 290-293. Although I do not agree with the author's Oedipal reading of the film, he has an undogmatic understanding of the female characters, and of sexuality as conceived by both male and female characters in this and other films by Greenaway.

in the later series *Falling into water* (1997) in which white or blue water is enclosed in squares and rectangles organized in grids. All these attempts to enclose Nature in rigorous structures prove to be in vain, either by means of the absurd regularity of the geological layers and the slices of firmament, the obsessive attempt to enclose fluid water in geometrical shapes organized in grids that always succumb to some kind of irregularity, or the final version of Luper's documentary, which gives up following a mathematical order of editing. In *Drowning by Numbers* we are back to this combination of Nature and numbers, and again, there is a great deal of counting but not enough to control all the events.

If the concept of the game permeates much of Greenaway's work, we can thus ask: How does it function within it and why was it a dominant choice for this film and many other examples in his artwork? A game can be defined as a set of rules organized towards the achievement of an aim. Affonso Ávila defends the Baroque taste for the game by arguing that instead of being a means of alienation and hedonism, as the critics of the Baroque usually considered it, the game was an answer to historical pressures, a way to promote rebellion and assume an inventive posture, the very one which the vanguards would assume much later also in order to reject alienation itself.[153] This could be observed in the many instances in which Greenaway refused to follow preconceived ideas of commercial cinema, or in the way he labored to make the spectator keep a critical distance from his films.

On the other hand, we can recapture Severo Sarduy's reading of the Baroque, in which he stresses the role of gold and of a general excess around which many linguistic and artistic games are woven. The excess mentioned by Sarduy is something irreducible

[153] Ávila, 61 – 86.

to meaning, the aim of desire never mentioned but forever searched for, and responsible for a deliberate refusal in Baroque language to assume its functionality through fixed meanings.[154] The experiments undertaken by the twins in *ZOO* do not bring them to a concrete result; they merely keep the twins occupied in a vain search that can, ultimately, only express the actual search for their lost object of desire.

With these two elements proposed by Ávila and Sarduy the definition of the game can be thus re-examined: the set of rules at play in Greenaway's work may act like the Baroque game; that is, it represents a transgression of canons, a set of new rules to break with old ones. We have also seen this at play in his treatment of narrative and the inversion of gender roles, for example. The aim of this game may not be to achieve its end, but to produce the game itself, and as a result, a residue, the supplement mentioned by Sarduy. Therefore, we find long series of artworks that develop endless enumerations throughout which the rules of the game are put into practice. These games/series do not often lead to either an exhaustion of a theme nor to a conclusion: they are but the testimony of the game itself, the exercise of producing language according to a set of rules determined by the creator of the game. Sarduy's "residue," which he identifies as the result of the game, can be found in the series of artworks, in the proliferation of alternatives that may lead to nowhere, and that in Greenaway's films usually ends with a visual luxuriance.

In opposition to the exuberance of many of Greenaway's films, his artwork may seem rather restrained. Serializations, geometrical shapes, systematic strategies are at work in drawings, paintings, collages and exhibitions. The schemes are often reduced to minimal variations, contrasting with the verbosity, ornate costumes and scenarios of

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[154] See above, *A Zed and Two Noughts*, pp. 108-109.

his films. However, this initial divergence may prove to be only apparent. Once the aim of his games is hinted at, films and artwork appear to be closely linked - even if this occurs through opposing means. Three examples of his artwork will be examined here in order to exemplify how the games work on paper, not on screen.

The first one is *The Amsterdam Map*, made in 1978, at the time of Greenaway's earlier films, where nature and landscapes were a constant theme. The second example has been discussed before from a different perspective: it is the series of drawings made during the preparation of *The Baby of Mâcon* in which the audience is represented by a group of silhouettes. The third series is *A Framed Life*, made at the time of the shooting of *TV Dante*, a television program conceived by Greenaway and the painter Tom Phillips in 1989. In this series Greenaway strays even further from a figurative reference to the filmed images, and the process of abstraction is such that the figure may disappear completely. Nevertheless, it will be seen that the relation between this series and the filmed images remains present, even if it is not clear at first sight. These examples are a point of departure to demonstrate an idea; other examples could have been chosen, and some others, as well as his films, may be briefly mentioned.

Again the basis for this reading will be found in Gilles Deleuze. This can be justified not only because of the type of questioning Deleuze proposes, but also because of the affinity between Greenaway's work and the work of some creators analyzed by Deleuze, such as the painter Francis Bacon and the writers Samuel Beckett, Herman Melville and Lewis Carroll. What Deleuze finds in their work is already present in his philosophy; naturally his choice is not arbitrary. While examining these works, he is interested mostly in finding the mechanisms for the construction of meaning and it is within this perspective that Greenaway's artwork will be examined.

Deleuze's analysis of the work of Francis Bacon stresses the fact that the painter had found a way to break with traditional representation without succumbing to abstraction, that is, he remained loyal to "the figural." As I will show later, the figural ensures the representation of the object through its recreation. Greenaway's choice and the course that will be followed here as we examine some of his artworks, are not the same since his final goal can be the total negation of the figure and the reduction of the image to a pure abstraction. However, this apparent contradiction between the figural and the total elimination of the figure by means of abstraction should not prevent us from continuing. If Deleuze does not speak about abstraction, or if he does so only to demonstrate its opposition to Bacon's painting, it does not mean that an investigation of this kind of painting cannot also be guided by his texts. We should then begin with a brief revision of Deleuze's ideas, which will guide the course towards abstraction. Furthermore, abstraction may prove to not be an absurd goal, since it was also a possibility implicit in the work of the other creators investigated by Deleuze.

In *Logique du Sens* Deleuze analyzes the work of Lewis Carroll at the same time that he reconsiders fundamental points of philosophy, such as the search for the most essential unity and the notion of representation. Deleuze begins by denying the platonic division between still things and a pure becoming. Instead of this division, he proposes the stoic conception according to which the essential division would be on one side, between the bodies with a state of being related to their mixture, and on the other side, the events that are not physical qualities, but logic and dialectic attributes. What changes in the stoic conception in relation to Plato is the fact that things can never be thought of in a state of isolation or stillness. The being is a becoming, "the events are effects," everything is in a continuous state of interaction. The notions of copy and

model are no longer useful to explain representation because they stem from the separation between things and becoming as stated by Plato. In the conception defended by Deleuze, representation is itself a becoming and it is within this perspective that he conceives the work of Lewis Carroll and Francis Bacon.

Alice often questions the meaning of words as if, on the other side of the mirror, all ambiguities had come to co-inhabit the words at the same time. Alice falls into a polysemous and oscillating universe, much like the one we have already hinted at in Greenaway's work. The nonsense, says Deleuze, is not the absurd, the lack of sense, but the excess of it. It is because meaning comes from structure, from the context where words appear, that it is excessive.[155] Nonsense is therefore excessive because it reveals this latent condition of sense. "In which sense? In which sense?" asks Alice, lost among too many possibilities. "It happens then that everything comes to the surface."[156] Meaning is no longer buried in a Platonic cave but built into every situation. It has risen to the surface and Alice's question about "which sense" cannot be answered unless this surface is considered. The meaning of an event is no longer asked for because the event itself has become the meaning, that is, meaning does not exist in a depth distant from the place of enunciation. It *becomes* every time words are employed.

Francis Bacon's material is not words but Deleuze approaches his work in much the same way as he approached the work of Lewis Carroll. He mentions the notion of "figural" in order to explain Bacon's option to avoid narrative and traditional

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[155] "The nonsense is not the absurd or the opposite to sense, but what makes it worth while circulating in the structure. Structuralism owes nothing to Albert Camus, but much to Lewis Carroll." ["Le non-sens n'est pas l'absurde ou le contraire du sens, mais ce qui le fait valoir et le produit en circulant dans la structure. Le structuralisme ne doit rien à Albert Camus, mais beaucoup à Lewis Carroll."] Gilles Deleuze, "A Quoi Reconnaît-on le Structuralisme?" ed. François Chatelet. *Histoire de la Philosophie*, Tome 8 (Paris: Hachette, 1973), 307.

[156] ["Voilà maintenant que tout remonte à la surface."] Deleuze, *Logique du Sens*, 17.

representation without falling into abstraction. The figural leads to Cézanne's refusal to copy the object, and his choice of recreating the sensation of it. The equivalent to meaning in painting must also emerge on the surface. Meaning does not exist before the painting; it is representation, which is not a copy that permits its existence. The result is the figural, the event where meaning takes place. "To the violence of the represented (the sensational, the cliché), it is opposed the violence of sensation."[157] What is recreated is the sensation of the object, and not the object itself.

We are back to the same proposition according to which one cannot search for the meaning of an event because the event itself is the meaning. The figural signals therefore that meaning is made at the moment of representation, and not before it. In a similar way, Alice's bewilderment in the face of many possibilities of meaning demonstrates that meaning can only be defined in each particular situation. In a previously mentioned collage by Greenaway there is an oscillation equivalent to the one that happens in Alice's wonderland. Greenaway made *The Falls* (fig. 2), which plays with the different meanings evoked by the same word, at the time that the film of the same name was shot. The film further develops this same strategy since it was a fake documentary about people who suffered from a disease and whose names began with the letters f-a-l-l. In the collage the word refers to the fall of an airplane, of a bird, a waterfall and a season. "In which sense? In which sense?" asks the exasperated Alice.

Finally, there is also an aspect of the work of Samuel Beckett analyzed by Deleuze that may also help in the investigation of Greenaway's drawings. Deleuze talks about exhaustion in the plays by Beckett, an exhaustion that occurs through the

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[157] ["A la violence du représenté (le sensationnel, le cliché) s'oppose la violence de la sensation."] Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: Logique de la Sensation* (Paris: Édition de la Différence,1996), 29.

experiencing of every possibility in each of the plays analyzed. In *Quad* and *Trio du Fantôme*, for instance, Beckett presents a series of limited possibilities of movement, and the plays consist in the realization of these possibilities, with few variations, until exhaustion sets in. *Quad* can be defined as a choreography rather than a play. It is a formal exercise whose content is no longer a story, but exhaustion itself. Deleuze follows Beckett's course through those plays made for television where exhaustion is developed by means of different strategies. Two of them can be found in Greenaway's artwork, as we will see, and they consist of making a thorough series of things and of dissipating the power of the image. But what interests us now is Beckett's point of arrival, his final poems where all previous strategies are then justified.

In the poem *Comment dire* a hesitant voice is heard which repeats words that are almost detached from a specific content as they become the word itself, the act of language. But what is the reason for all exhaustion, what is the aim searched for by all those rigid rituals indefinitely repeated in his plays? "To what extent is what Blanchot says of Musil true in relation to Beckett: the highest exactitude and the most extreme dissolution; the indefinite exchange of mathematical formulae and the search for the *informe* or the unformulated."[158] To what extent is what Deleuze says of Beckett true in relation to Peter Greenaway? The highest systematization of a story or of a series of drawings or paintings, and the most extreme dissolution; the indefinite variations within specified limits for each series and the search for the *informe* or the unformulated. This is the course that will be investigated here through Greenaway's artwork, something

[158] ["Ce que Blanchot dit de Museil, à quel point c'est vrai de Beckett: la plus haute exactitude et la plus extrême dissolution: l'échange indéfini des formulation mathématiques et la poursuite de l'informe ou de l'informulé."] Gilles Deleuze, "L'Épuisé," foreword to Samuel Beckett, *Quad et autres pièces pour la télévision* (Paris: Les Édition de Minuit, 1992), 62.

that we have already had a chance to examine in the game of symmetries and decomposing animals at work in *A Zed and Two Noughts*.

The Map

The map echoes in Greenaway's work either in the form of diverse or recurrent maps that may reappear in a different context, or as other forms of mapping such as the grid, encyclopedias or the game itself. All these instances are attempts to organize an otherwise chaotic mass of information. To begin with, we may address one of the reflections in this hall of mirrors: *The Amsterdam Map* (fig. 22) belongs to a series made in 1978 for the film *A Walk through H*, which tells the story of an ornithologist who follows this series of maps while on a trip. The maps were made after the death of Greenaway's father, himself an ornithologist. The ambiguities much appreciated by Greenaway begin with the title: *H* stands for heaven or hell – he warns us that one cannot be sure of the arrival – and also, since every transcendence must finish on the ground, H can stand also for Hammersmith, a neighborhood of London. Most of the other maps in this series make reference to a bird that should guide the ornithologist.

The maps never have a standardized topography: they may show trees, the sky, cities, ephemeral clouds as landmarks, the countryside or just abstract drawings in which one distinguishes only lines and stains. The voice off tells us that they were gathered in different situations: they could have been received as a gift, they could have been stolen or merely found somewhere. The haphazard character of this gathering stresses the absurdity of the fact that they may really indicate something and form a sequence that does make sense. Yet, they remain as maps and maps are a collection of

possibilities, and a collection that would certainly match Deleuze's conception of a becoming instead of essential and static beings.[159]

A map is an attempt to measure a territory in such a way that it can be recognized through a conventional system. The map here, however, has been transported to the domain of cinema and art gallery. If a work of art seeks to break with conventions that have weakened the senses, in this case we recognize neither scales nor names in our attempts to identify the places in the maps. The elements that can be found refer, instead, to a landscape, not a topography, such as windmills, the sun, animals, etc. However, the care invested in creating a map, the measuring it entails, are still present in the grid that organizes these heterogeneous elements within limits, in the same way that a conventional map organizes a heterogeneous topography within the confines of the previously established geographical terms. The tendency to mathematize referred to by Deleuze is thus found here in the ninety-two maps that attempt to exhaust the possibilities in a series. This same exhaustion of possibilities was used in the film *Vertical Features Remake*, mentioned before, in which a series of images is organized and reorganized in different sequences with a few variations that try to explore all the possible ways of dealing with a landscape.

The grid that organizes Amsterdam recalls another grid: ten years before *The Map of Amsterdam*, Greenaway made a *Gaming Board*, 1968, (fig. 23) in which we may recognize the origin of the grid in the map.

The grid of red and white squares was painted on a wooden box, but they do not necessarily coincide with the edges of its hinged sides. This is the same strategy of

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[159] In their text about the rhizome, Deleuze and Guattari make reference to the map in order to oppose it to the notion of copy, and mention also a "rhizomatic-city," not by chance, Amsterdam. See "Rhizome" in Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Mille Plateaux*. For a brief but efficient account of the exhibition of these maps see Louis E. Nesbitt, "Peter Greenaway," *Art in America* (March 1990), 159.

ignoring the arbitrary in the landscape in order to overlay a grid in the map.[160] However, this does not mean that he eliminates the arbitrary aspect of chance in his maps. The elements in the grid of the map may vary; the apparent rigidity of the *Gaming Board* is broken by the irregularity of the boxes within it, whose covers are attached by hinges. Greenaway's text explains that the gaming board could belong to a prisoner on a desert island and that the surfaces with the hinges could be folded up in order to hide it from the jailer. In this fictitious universe, reality is mobile, and must contain in itself the possibility of transformation, of being made and unmade. If the *Gaming Board* represents a potentiality, a structure, a game, it also oscillates. We remember that the word "fall" conceals different meanings. Every game hides many possibilities and this one hides the very possibility of its non-existence, as it can be folded up and hidden.

Like the unstable gaming board, the landscape can be carefully measured by means of grids, but only to reveal the impossibility of making the countryside fit into rigid schemes. The series of maps in *A Walk through H* are full of arbitrary signs. They parody the very possibility of making maps, that is, of reducing a landscape to measuring devices that could supposedly cover all its complexity.[161] The deliberate inclusion of arbitrary elements forming the trails of the map boycotts the project of imposing rules to what cannot submit to them. In a previous series, *Waterpapers* (1974), Greenaway made grids flooded by a watery paint that does not obey the grids's

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[160] As mentioned before (see note 51) Greenaway planned to literally do this, that is, to overlay a grid on a landscape by means of placing forty-eight heavy ball-bearings in the middle of the night on an inhabited landscape in order to mark the crossing points of the imaginary grid. The project that was never accomplished. Melia and Woods, 136.

[161] It is Greenway himself who comments on one of the maps made for *A Walk through H*, and explains his technique of making those maps: "In the pursuit of maps for a journey through H, throughout the summer of 1978, a map was searched in every possible surface: in the hides of piebald cows, in cat-scratchings on a kitchen-door, in the trails of book-worms and the tunnels of mining-insects in bark and floorboards and – here – in the leaf of blackberry bramble." Greenaway, *Papers*, 59.

limits.[162] He was already announcing the same scheme of the maps: a grid, and some kind of matter that does not fit into it. Or, recalling Deleuze's terms referring to Beckett, "the highest exactitude and the most extreme dissolution". The association between maps and games in Greenaway's work comes from the fact that both of them try to set rules that are impossible to be followed. In this way he undermines the very project of measuring the world, a project so obsessively stated in his films, but mostly in his artwork. Greenaway himself gives the final word about the landscape of the *Amsterdam Map*. Not surprisingly, he includes intangible things and fictitious places in the landscape of the map. And not a coincidence that the map is somehow related to a game. That is, game or map, it is always a matter of ineffective grids that can never hold their contents:

> Like all good maps, this one is also a gaming board that has many obstacles – trees, windmills, football-pitches, woods, cul-de-sacs, fire in the forest, rocks in the air, dreams on the wind. It is full of incident, which I still ponder – just like the lanes of Wardour (fact), Mordor (fiction), Glasbury (fact), Buryglaze (fiction), Compton Anstey (fact) and Compton Chamberlayne (fiction?).[163]

Serialization

The windmills that were simplified in *The Amsterdam Map* as crosses over verticals, are the theme of another series of images. The game begins: the rules state that it is necessary to maintain the cross (a sign of multiplication) and the vertical throughout the whole series. The player varies the colors of the basic structure and also the color,

[162] Ibid., 22-23.
[163] Steinmetz and Greenaway, 17.

texture, drawings, and brushstrokes on the surface behind the windmill. Greenaway was so persevering as to extend the series to one hundred variations. The multiplication of windmills in the series refers to their movement, to the wind, to the many windmills that compose the series or to the numbers written in some of the paintings. Nevertheless, what speaks stronger in the variations is not the meaning of each element, but the variations themselves.

The one hundred drawings of windmills achieve what the *Gaming Board* had announced: the possibility of a game, the game at the moment when it is being played. There is, therefore, a redundancy when Greenaway covers a football field with an infinity of painted windmills (fig. 24). It is a scene unlikely to be found in reality, but it is in perfect accordance with the reality of his work. After all, it is reality itself that he is always questioning by charging it with oscillating meanings, and associating it to a game. "Voilà que tout vient à la surface" said Deleuze. The game happens only when it is played. The windmills exist do not exist as an essence or abstract concept. They exist rather in each of their representations, where they become their own event, that is, the very event that creates them.

The windmills spread over the football field are the translation of what was made for the series *100 Windmills*. A game is being played: it may happen by means of a series of one hundred elements with few variations or by means of putting the entire group of windmills on a football field at the same time, thus revealing that a game is taking place. The poetic image of the innumerable windmills at the mercy of the wind twirling on the football field (fig. 24), recalls the turmoil of the *Red Footballers* (fig. 10): movement is still a principle at play in this Baroque game, but it has been submitted to some rules.

The Game of Difference and Similitude

The film *The Baby of Mâcon* resulted in two series of works already mentioned which can also be taken as games: the photographs of different characters belonging to the audience and the series of drawings also related to the idea of audience, but in a more general sense. The film itself and the play that is staged within it can be seen as a sort of game of illusions: the story is based on a false miracle and its tragic consequences. The presence of the audience on the set plays in a sordid manner with Shakespeare's notion of life as a stage, as it makes representation and reality oscillate in such a way as not to leave room for illusions such as miracles or faith. Religion becomes then one more game, and as often occurs in Greenaway's work and in the Baroque, an insane game.

We will return to the series of paintings made at the time of this film in order to approach it within the perspective of game and serialization, and examine whether it is possible to find any sense in Greenaway's insistence on these playful tactics in his work. The first procedure in *The Audience Series* is to eliminate particularities: different from the photographs, which are abundant in details of the character's life, the audience in the paintings has become mere silhouettes. What remains to be represented is therefore only the relation between the elements of this series.

The game begins with the *Red Twins* (fig. 25), who could be the twins from *A Zed and two Noughts* or from *The Draughtsman's Contract*, and the recurrence is not fortuitous. In *A Zed and two Noughts* the twins live an impossible correspondence with the other, since as widowers they delve into their grief until they finally become more and more alike and die. In *The Draughtsman's Contract* they are secondary characters who remind us of the mirroring process that regulates the development of the plot. In

Red Twins they appear in a similar situation, that is, their similarity refers to the game represented in the painting. But they are also a special case since the specificity of the characters has been abolished so that all that remains is the relation of similarity and difference with the others – a theme that was also stated in a less abstract way in the film *A Zed and Two Noughts*.

The performance of the silhouettes of the twins and of the public in this series is in fact the performance of the operations of mirroring and differentiation that are at the origin of the symbolic process. The constitution of an individuality stems from this same process through which the subject is separated from the world in order to reenter it as a single person. In general, Greenaway's work inhabits this moment of oscillation in which there is an attempt at separation, at establishing the differences, at the same time as one lives the temptation of melting in an ocean of identities. What is dissimulated in other aspects of the films, in complex intrigues and in the richness of the visual appeal always present, comes out in a more evident way in the paintings, where the singularities are eliminated. It is necessary to examine then how this is done plastically in these works.

In *Red Twins* one sees a game of similarities and differences. Each of the twins seems like the other in the same way that each head has the same contour as the others around it. These two figures of the painting, the twins's bodies and the heads, may also be different from each other. At the right of the twins each head has a singularity, either because of the color or the tonality of the same color. At the left and between them similarity is the rule. The two heads on the top alternate with the twins's heads, making two couples. On the left-hand side, the head behind the shoulder of one of the twins is the same color as the head below it. Finally, this head at the lower left corner finds its

equivalent in the head at the center that differentiates itself from another head that repeats the image. This head, carefully placed in the middle of the drawing, concentrates in itself the two operations that regulate the whole painting, as it has an identical and a differentiated equivalent of itself. After examining the drawing close up, if one looks from a more distant point, the first impression will also be of the same duality. One sees the identity of the twins's bodies that dominates the composition, but one also sees a head on the upper right corner that is different from all the other heads because of its darker color, almost black. Even if this color has some resonance below, this head is detached from the others as a strong particularity among the general tendency to play with repetition and similarities.

Another drawing of the series, *Pencil Heads* (fig. 26), once again contains heads aligned in a grid. Their expressions refer to the attitude of the audience that Greenaway is criticizing in the film, as already mentioned [164] Each of them is different from the other because here one can see their faces, but the organization in the grid and the frontal perspective give them some homogeneity. There is a similar treatment for all the faces: if each of them has a particular expression, all of them are blurred as if they were on the verge of losing their materiality. They are thus faces in the process of transformation, at the moment when their materiality is related to movement, to matter that is in a constant state of mutation. It seems that one finds in these drawings the universe of Deleuze's *Logique du Sens* in which he negates the platonic conception of things in a state of stillness and related to an essence. He proposes instead ~~A~~to consider them in a place of instability since they can only be defined in relation to other things. If one imagines, for instance, a static portrait with its well defined classic contours, the

[164] See pp. 130-133.

specificity of these drawings representing an audience is immediately grasped, as well as the whole tendency of movement in the Baroque present in both its formal and conceptual devices.

The faces in *Pencil Heads* recall the faces in the paintings by Francis Bacon that are also represented in that same moment of instability. One finds also the same attention given to the mouths; here they dominate the drawing, they shout, they scowl in anger, they laugh, they are reduced to a line, they open to liberate the tongue. However, if there is a formal similarity to Bacon's paintings, it is necessary to examine the drawing in the context of Greenaway's work. In another drawing of the same series the faces are again organized in a grid, but here the variation is in the form of a tongue that moves in different directions (fig. 27 – *A Cast of Tongues*). In order to accentuate the difference between the faces weakened by the grid and by the same contour of the heads, one of the mouths has two tongues. Once again, this exception, which is also a duplication, refers to the strategies at play in the drawing. This was already the case in *Red Twins*: what changes is the evident sexual connotation, which is justifiable if we remember that the series is related to the film *The Baby of Mâcon* and to the behaviour of the audience in it.

In the film, the main character is a maid who is punished for having killed the baby who was a false miracle, and her punishment is to be raped to death. Greenaway's text accompanying the drawings speaks about audience in general, an audience that could belong to various historical periods. This was the textual solution he found to erase the particularity of the people belonging to the audience and reduce them to the abstract concept of "public." In the text, Greenaway repeats what was done in the drawings, since they had been deprived of the particularity of the photographs of the

audience. But what is intriguing in the text is that among the historical events that the audience in question could have seen, he enumerates a succession of famous decapitated individuals such as Saint John the Baptist, Robespierre, Mary Stuart, Charles I, Louis XVI, Walter Raleigh and Holofernes. The text continues, and it shifts from the famous people who had been decapitated to a group of decapitated heads in London Bridge. Therefore, he makes us see the heads not as the public's heads but as a group of heads without bodies.

The last drawing in the series, already examined in a different context, does not leave any doubt: it is nothing but the already mentioned John the Baptist Game (fig. 18), a doubled head, and seven stages of a game that refers to the sexual act, having as the final point the seventh circle, decapitation. The *Red Twins*, the bodies and the heads among them, the red color that is the same as that of the thin line around Saint John's neck: everything suddenly seems to be associated. The twins, someone and his or her double, are related to the decapitated heads in a more subtle manner than the game of Saint John the Baptist, but the suggestion of the double and of decapitation was already present.

The obsessive fear that seems to weave together all these variations is that of losing the capacity to symbolize, that is, to establish the borders that define identities and differences. If psychology could help to understand what was at stake in the Baroque melancholy, the process of symbolization can also be better understood if we resort to explanations provided also by psychology. We should not be afraid of turning to it and making a large leap, as long as this remote support turns out to reveal links between elements of Greenaway's work that are yet unclear. Additionally, we are working within the logic of the rhizome, which is crossed by different vectors, or within

the logic of the book in *n-dimensions*, staying with Deleuze's terminology. Finally, the Baroque discussed by Sarduy, for example, relates science to art and concerns, basically, language and desire.

The capacity of symbolizing can be translated as the symbolic phallus that Deleuze points out in the work of Lacan as the element that founds sexuality, the roles for men and women, and also a series of images and realities.[165] This function of attributing meaning is represented by the father who stays between the mother and the child in order to allow the separation between them and institute the interdiction to the body of the mother. Without the father, life would be a complete fusion, but the differentiation guaranteed by the symbolic process avoids the dissolution of this love.

Nevertheless, the lack of the father does not lead to the desired union. Beckett reappears, then, in a different perspective through the eyes of Julia Kristeva, but again close to the work of Greenaway. According to Kristeva, the death of the father establishes an "exiled love," a banishment after the break of the symbolic bridge that allowed access to the body of the mother. "Racked between the *father* (cadaverous *body*, arousing to the point of defecation) and *Death* (empty axis, stirring to the point of transcendence), a man has a hard time finding something else to love."[166] The association with the work of Greenaway is hinted at: we have only to think of his films haunted by corpses, images of abjection and by loves that never happen. Here, in the drawings and paintings that he has produced, all these excesses have been discarded, but this does not mean that the reason that produced them is no longer present.

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[165] Deleuze, "A Quoi Reconnaît-on le Structuralisme?", 327.
[166] Julia Kristeva, "The father, love and banishment" in *Desire in Language* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 149.

In the series of drawings portraying the audience, the public was deprived of any singularity in order to become almost a single ensemble, but then differentiation begins. The heads are mingled in an homogeneous grid, but soon two tongues mark the difference of one face in relation to the others (fig. 27 – *A Cast of Tongues*); or one head has the same outline as the others but is much darker than them (fig. 25 - *Red Twins*); or a single head is detached in a rigid composition of double heads (*Red Ground*); or the movement of the heads breaks with the rigidity of the grid (*Eclipse of the Head*), etc. Behind this insistence on indefinitely representing differentiation, are the dead bodies in his films, the body that guarantees the non-assimilation, the irreversible separation. Can it be that all the corpses in the work of Greenaway affirm the unity of the living body, the body that survives the death of the father and of the other, the body that needs desperately to symbolize in order to separate itself and find an identity, but also the body that is afraid of being assimilated by the other even if it is always haunted by the temptation of doing so?

At the origin of this impossibility we find for example the absent and dead father in *The Draughtsman's Contract*. Or yet, the maps reproduced in *A Walk through H*, the film shot after the death of Greenaway's father. It may be a coincidence that the maps were made at this moment of his life; after all, Greenaway was already making films that did not differ much from *A Walk through H*. Even though we resorted to psychology to understand the process of symbolization, it must be clear we are not searching for an explanation for Greenaway's work in his biography. The father we are referring to is not necessarily the actual father, but the exercise of symbolization that has been associated with the father's role. This father is revived in the production of maps, grids, encyclopedias, collections, in different activities of measuring, of

accentuating differences, of symbolizing, of creating a language. But the never entirely assimilated dead father left open the possibility of language functioning not to signal an insurmountable separation, but rather to permit the possibility of a flaw in this separation. We have already seen how the map and the grid are deliberately represented as ineffective devices. Although it may never have the opportunity to celebrate the entire dissolution of the grids, Greenaway's work is not simply composed of solid frontiers carefully raised to organize a myriad of ensembles; it is also about the gaps and cracks in the borders that separate and categorize.

Framing the undifferentiated

The last series proposed here, *A Framed Life*, is related to the television production made by Greenaway and Tom Phillips in 1989. The television production is divided into eight episodes corresponding to the first eight Cantos of the *Inferno*, one of the three parts of Dantes's *Divine Comedy*. It tells the story of a descent into hell, in which the narrator meets different characters, mythological figures, emperors, philosophers, poets, the whole history of humanity that passes in front of him. Such a trajectory finds a correspondence in an equally ambitious language, carefully worked and arranged in a structure, again, marked by a mathematical precision. In order to adjust this universe to the ten minutes of each of the *Cantos* in the TV program, the creators used the juxtaposition of images and interviews with scholars specialized in different domains, which are intercalated with the lines of the poem. The result is a saturation of information, words, images, sounds. It is surprising then to find that the drawings corresponding to this profusion do not bear the same saturation of images; on the contrary, they are emptied of images leaving only few elements, and they are not figurative at all.

The series *A Framed Life* strives to embrace a dynamic whole through abstraction. However, in his insistence on always emphasizing difference, Greenaway stresses the rectangle and repeats it indefinitely. The rectangle is in fact a kind of frame affirming that even a representation of the undifferentiated is necessarily linked to the symbolic, to the circumstantial, to the differential. Greenaway also uses in this series fragments of texts and letters that seem to be positioned at random, but he imposes a kind of grid on them, a grid made of carefully aligned rectangles. He leaves here and there, nevertheless, hints of something that has nothing to do with the rigid and symmetrical precision of the rectangles. And it is this game of opposites, an organizing "force" and a liberating pressure, that he represents as *a framed life*.

This series consists of works of mixed media (drawing and painting) showing eight rectangles arranged in a similar way for each of them, but with variations on this general scheme. It is the repetition of a scheme already known: the accidents of the landscape have been organized in a grid (*The Amsterdam Map*) or in vertical elements (*Vertical Features Remake*); the audience has been distributed in semi-identical silhouettes whose order and colors can vary (*The Audience Series*). Here every particularity is further submitted to abstraction since the subject is everything –"life," and therefore cannot be a singular thing unless it embraces all the singularities. A *Framed Life* is nothing but language itself being made, a new exercise of differences and similarities in which we no longer need an association to a figure in reality, but where there is still the desire to grasp something as largely differentiated as "life."

In one of the drawings of the series (fig. 28) there are the eight recurrent rectangles and the letter "A" in each of them to further stress their similarity. The contours of two of the rectangles are doubled, just as the *Red Twins* repeated the two

heads beside them. In Greenaway's rigorous symmetry, each of the rectangles has two borders and each has a double in the other. When we begin to think that the drawings will embark on a monotony of rigid symmetries, variations begin to appear. The stains of paint within the rectangles have slightly differing tonalities and they escape from the borders in an arbitrary way. Thus, it is again a matter of showing, within a rigorous order, a subtle difference that threatens it. "To think is to throw the dice," says Deleuze in his search for a definition of structuralism.[167] This "poetic and theatrical" formula that corresponds to the structuralist fondness for the game, can also be applied to the drawings in question. After all, what interested Greenaway is not only to invent the game, but to find a way by which the rules of the game may be affected by chance.

In another drawing in the same series (fig.29) the eight rectangles are white and arranged over a text from which we can read only a few words and numbers. The text covered by the rectangles is there not for the sake of delivering a message, but simply as a text. It is emblematic of this series, in the sense that it does not represent a particularity but the very movement of constituting a singularity. Each of the rectangles has a different tone of white and one of them is differentiated from the others by the presence of the letter "A" that is repeated many times. We find once again the very act of writing represented without the preoccupation of producing a particular sense, since "A" appears as a repeated graphic symbol rather than as a specific letter. The white color has a corresponding role, as white can be read as the absence of color, the absence of particularity. Hence, color and letters are reduced to their most basic manifestation. Paradoxically, this is made in order to cope with a whole swarming with particularities.

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[167] Deleuze, "A Quoi Reconnaît-on le Structuralisme?", 307.

Abstraction and all the movements in painting towards an affirmation of its autonomy do not have the sole aim of conferring upon painting a different status. The autonomy of painting is nothing but the autonomy of every means of representation – including photography, which has always had its own conventions even though it may seem to be more closely attached to so-called reality. If it is no longer expected that art makes a copy of reality, it may be understood that it exists only in the terrain of the "figural," that is, in a situation in which the figure has to be reinvented each time it is represented. Within this context, abstract painting is not in opposition to Bacon's painting, for example. After all, it is still a matter of playing a game in which reality is invented instead of being copied. We return then to Deleuze's *Logique du Sens* in which he contrasted the Stoics with Plato. If things cannot be seen as fixed and isolated entities, everything becomes a universe of movement and relations, a universe without place for copies that repeat models separate from the reality of things. Besides, one cannot speak of copy and model if one does not understand that it is the copy that creates the model, since it is representation itself that authorizes an access to reality.

If on the one hand the abstraction of this series refers to the reinvention of painting itself, reduced to mere language and articulation, on the other, the negation of the figure also refers to an attraction to the *informe* that Deleuze mentions. If he found a highly mathematical precision in the work of Beckett, a similar process can be identified in the graphic work of Greenaway, and specially in this last series. It can be observed here that the image tends toward the *informe* that is suggested but, nevertheless, still remains structured as language. It is no longer a matter of representing a figure, but there is still the preoccupation with constituting a game of relations: one is thus far from the undifferentiated chaos of the *informe*.

In the final collage considered here (fig. 30), we find again words and numbers detached from phrases and acts of counting in a way similar to their appearance in *A Framed Life*. The fragments of images, of different colors and textures form an ensemble as ambitious as the "life" of the previous series. Again Greenaway wants to include a whole universe in this work, approaching an undifferentiated amalgam.[168] There remains, however, the invincible reference to a frame: two ensembles of undefined fragments are combined, two rectangles are juxtaposed. The title is revealing – *If only film could do the same ...* - if only he could achieve once more a simultaneous representation of the *informe* and its impossibility... Perhaps the film in which he came closest to it was *A Zed and Two Noughts*, but it would not be difficult to demonstrate that in the films also, Greenaway oscillates between the attraction to the *informe* and the impossibility of achieving it.

What the artwork we have been considering suggests is that with the reduction of expression to its most essential mechanisms of meaning, construction does not happen without calling into question the very notion of representation. If Greenaway's films oppose the general tendency of English cinema towards realism, his graphic work says the same thing in a different way. Greenaway responds to cinematographic realism with a deliberate artificiality; and to figuration in painting he responds with the negation of illustration and with the tendency towards abstraction and almost rigid schemes. In one case and the other, what is evident is the artificiality of every representation and its

[168] As there are always echoes in different works, you may allow yourself a hint in another hall of mirrors and find that among the reflections repeating this framed life, we may mention at least two of them: the Book of Games, belonging to Prospero, that had also a similar ambition of embracing every possible experience; and The Cartographers, among the one hundred allegories, who were represented as twins associated with a map of *A Walk through H* and with the "encyclopaedists' cartographical work" of Diderot and d'Alembert. It is not by chance that games and maps appear again together as having something in common: the ambition of systematizing a vast universe. For the Book of Games see Greenaway, *Prospero's Books*, 24; for the Cartographers see Greenaway, *100 Allegories to Represent the World*, allegory 56.

impossible status as a copy of reality. It is also evident that representation does not refer simply to a form of defining the world around us; it is rather a way of establishing a relation with this world.

If Deleuze speaks of a universe of different states and relations that are always in the course of being established and dissolved, the subject is likewise constituted out of these very relations. The subject is also vulnerable to what happens around him or her, and what we can see in the works analyzed is the oscillation implied in the process of making sense. The oscillation comes from the fact that what draws us in this process is the wish to bond with the *informe*, and at the same time, the need to do the opposite, to establish the borders that may grant us some consistency. In his artwork, Greenaway confronts us with this state of indecision that constitutes the story of our own lives, our *framed life* on the lookout for an opportunity of fugue.

A question may linger at this point, as we try to find the relation of all of this with the Baroque. We may recall, however, the four aspects presented before and see how they work in Greenaway's games with numbers, letters, maps and meanings. Movement can still be implied in a visual manner, as in the case of the windmill series, but it is manifest mostly as a conceptual principle. This same series can serve as an example, since the repetition of the same motif suggests the impossibility of having a static definition of a windmill. The map is but a guide to a route, that is, a movement through a path. A game is constituted by a sequence of movements that follow certain rules and we can observe this game either in the series of Greenaway's artwork, or in the games played by many characters in his films. Representation is clearly a fundamental theme in the games, as many of them seem to be about representation itself, its strategies of constructing meaning by way of equivalences and differences.

The exhibition *The Stairs* staged the process of representation in different points of Geneva, playing with reality and its construction by means of choosing different framings. Greenaway's artwork renounces a close link with reality in order to get closer to the abstract mechanisms of thought in the process of building representation. Therefore, we find series of letters, rectangles, colors or other elements that were reduced to a minimum of equivalence to a specific meaning so as to be relegated to the status of mere signs. In this way, Greenaway represents the very process of representation in his graphic work, a process made apparent by means of the revelation of its raw material, signs, forms that were reduced to letters or simplified shapes.

Melancholy is also associated with knowledge in the sense that it is based on a distanced approach to reality; in other words, both knowledge and melancholy require a degree of abstraction in relation to reality. There is a point AT which those Baroque elements can no longer be understood clearly if taken separately. The melancholy, distanced approach is also necessary to working with allegory, since the elements that comprise an allegory result from an understanding of their possibly different meanings, as well as of the mechanisms of representation to which they can be submitted in order to function together. Gathering fragments to compose an allegory is nothing but a game of combinations of different elements. Once gathered, these elements interact, revealing the mutability of their individual meaning. At this point we already know that in a Baroque conception, everything is touched by this instability. Greenaway's games set out a framework of rules that work in order to prove how flexible reality can be: a reality that can be so similar to a set of rules which in themselves appear so arbitrary.

Finally, as was mentioned earlier, melancholy is not only a matter of a distanced perspective of reality. It involves an understanding of a particular feature of the human

condition that in the case of the twins of *ZOO* was translated by the feeling of loss. In the examples analyzed here, the game was also said to be a more fundamental process through which a subject tries to constitute language while at the same time steering him or herself away from the temptation to succumb to non-differentiation, that is, to a unity with everything. The series entitled *A Framed Life* or the work *If only film could do the same...* are examples of this threshold between measuring, or framing, and the impossibility of carrying it out. This is the position adopted by the twins of the film *ZOO* in their experiments with measuring decay. As in Severo Sarduy's Baroque, which develops around an empty circle, melancholy stems from the vain activity of symbolizing without ever reaching an object. The result is endless games, series, maps, collections.

CHAPTER SIX

THE BODY WITHOUT BORDERS

We have seen that the strategies of building games in order to organize the world in safe categories end up revealing, instead, the precariousness of any attempt at imposing order on a chaotic mass of information. The processes at work in the abstract drawings point to a primordial mechanism of establishing similarities and differences that ultimately constitute language. In the previous section, some of Greenaway's artworks were examined in order to exemplify the craft behind his visual games, many times deprived of the figure, but never entirely devoid of matter. The example may show only rectangles and letters or numbers, but soon paint begins to leak and drip out of the borders, revealing itself to be, like so many human bodies in his work, vulnerable to gravity.

This chapter will examine this excess that is always spilling out of the frame, particularly how it occurs in his work in relation to the human body. We will examine how, though the game can be a significant concept in Greenaway's work, it corresponds to only half of the puzzle. There are still all the undeniable appeals to the senses, all the still lives, rotting flesh, voracious humans crowding the scenes of his films and all the stains, drips and torn pieces of paper crowding his artwork. As much as Greenaway is accused of producing artificial films made to illustrate concepts, one cannot deny that these concepts are insistently associated to matter, and usually matter in the process of change – an instability not unlike the one that avoided fixed meanings in his entire work.

Generally, a game establishes a set of rules that must be followed. The game's apparent aim is to organize the possibilities, but the unavoidable end in the case of

Greenaway's games is the transgression of limits. Among the books that Prospero was given in order to rebuild his kingdom, one finds the Book of Games:

> The book contains board games to be played with counters and dice, with cards and flags and miniature pyramids, small figures of the Olympic gods, the winds in coloured glass, Old Testament prophets in bone, Roman busts, the oceans of the world, exotic animals, pieces of coral, gold putti, silver coins and pieces of liver. The board games represented in the book cover as many situations as there are experiences. There are games of death, resurrection, love, peace, famine, sexual cruelty, astronomy, the cabbala, statesmancraft, the stars, destruction, the future, phenomenology, magic, retribution, semantics, evolution.[169]

At this point we easily recognize this same game in many other instances of Greenaway's work in which he is concerned with the organization of myriad cultural references mingled with conspiracy, violence, death, birth and sex. The game usually consists of a cumulative process, exactly like the progressive movement of the soundtracks of his films, be they composed by Michael Nyman or not. The music is usually based on the Baroque notion of fugue in which a basic structure is endlessly repeated with small variations, a structure also present in the frequent occurrence of series of one hundred in his exhibitions or other instances of counting found throughout his work as a whole. However, the cumulative process must be considered less as a means to impose order than a way of pointing to the impossibility of maintaining rigid frames and categories throughout the duration of the game. This can be observed in the description of the *Book of Games*, since the enumeration above gathers elements from disparate categories in the same ensemble. Greenaway's treatment of the body has to do with this overflowing of categories: physicality is thus deliberately affirmed as excessive. There was an attempt, for example, to make a vast group of volunteers fit in the role of one hundred allegories but the naked bodies of the characters that represented

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[169] Peter Greenaway, *Prospero's Books*, 24-25.

the allegories stood out as an unavoidable counterpoint to the conceptual frame that tried to give a meaning to them. This same scheme is recurrent in Greenaway's work, that is, on the one hand there is an obsessive impulse to control and categorize; on the other, there is some kind of manifestation of physicality that disturbs the rigid limits imposed to it.

We have already followed maps in *A Walk Through H* whose integrity was threatened by the arbitrary character of their gathering and their ephemeral marks. The maps attempt to impose a grid on space, but this grid can be stained, for example, by organic matter. The route showed can be a trail left by a grub eating a leaf or by bird's excrement. Eating and excreting are again associated in the opening scene of the most repulsive of Greenaway's films, *The Cook, the Thief, his Wife and her Lover*, some of the scenes of which he confessed he himself has difficulty watching.[170] Yet, it is perhaps because this film stretches so much the bearable limits of violence and nausea, that it may suggest the key to much of Greenaway's games.

This key begins by opening a compartment in which proliferation is taking place, and as a result an indefinable and formless content is produced. In the prolific writing about the Book of Games, which is exemplary of his whole work, Greenaway repeats a process similar to much of the work by Arman, the French artist who deals with accumulations of different objects in his half-sculptures, half-reliefs that can be hung on the wall. Arman collects letters, brushes, garbage, music instruments, domestic accessories, myriad objects that are gathered each kind of object in a single work. The result is an absurd ensemble half humorous, half despairing in its systematized chaos:

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[170] See Michel Ciment "Deux entretiens avec Peter Greenaway," *Positif* 345 (November 1989), 11-16.

the objects have been framed in a single category but their accumulation threatens to explode.

Arman's work appeared several times in the exhibition *L'Informe*, organized by Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind Krauss in Paris, in 1996.[171] The catalogue includes the exhibited artworks, examples of modern art that approach the *informe*, as well as texts written by the curators discussing the theme, based on Georges Bataille's writings. In addition to coincidences with Arman's work there are many other affinities between the exhibited works and those of Greenaway: we find in both cases corpses, superimpositions of surfaces, scribblings, physical appeal and concepts such as "low materialism," "entropy" and "unheimlich" (the uncanny) that could equally well be used to analyze Greenaway's work.

The best way to investigate the *informe* in his work may be to begin by observing the similarities with this exhibition.[172] Bataille himself refused to define the term *informe*, and this denial is also respected by the curators. The *informe* is thus gradually defined by the many examples of it and by categories and concepts such as those mentioned above, which keep circling the subject. The refusal to fix a meaning to the term has to do with its own concept, as the *informe* is that which does not have a form, that which eliminates the difference between matter and form, that which cannot

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[171] Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind Krauss. *L'informe: Mode d'emploi* (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1996).

[172] The *informe* has already appeared in our discussion of the film *A Zed and Two Noughts*, in chapter 3. The interest here is to see how it is also associated to game and body in Greenaway's work. Regarding the Baroque, each author keeps his own perspective about the theme, but both Deleuze and Sarduy associate the Baroque with the *informe*. Sarduy does not name the *informe* as such, however, we can say that the concept of the *informe* is implicit in his understanding of the Baroque as the production of excess, that he calls a "residue," related to the link between language and desire. See, for example, here pp. 108-109; for Deleuze, see page 104.

fit within the confines of mathematics or metaphors and yet is incorporated in so many different works.

Piranese, the Baroque artist who drew architectural landscapes, is one of the artists mentioned in an article in the *Documents* – the surrealist magazine which was the main source for the catalogue, and whose texts, by Bataille and others, were investigated by Krauss and Bois. Piranese's work interested the surrealists because of the nightmarish accumulation in his architectonic landscapes. We will find the same artist (not by chance) briefly mentioned in an interview in which Greenaway states his interest in his treatment of space, which was assimilated together with other "Baroque details" that he and the scenographer, Ben van Ost, tried to introduce in the kitchen of the film *The Cook*.[173] If Greenaway mentioned Piranese in this interview, as well as Escher, because of their labyrinthine treatment of space, it is another Baroque painter, Veronese, also mentioned by him, who can better delineate the relation to the *informe*.

The labyrinth can be said to be a Baroque space *par excellence*: it is formed by a row of possibilities whose profusion gives it a disturbing quality; it demands mobility at the same time that it suggests the postponement of an exit; it pre-supposes the state of being lost, the search for an aim and the difficulty of attaining it.[174] Veronese is not mentioned in the interview because of the presence of the labyrinth in his paintings. Instead, he is alluded to because human beings appear in his work mingled with the walls, ceiling and floor, a fusion Greenaway strove for in the *mise en scène* of the

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[173] Ibid.

[174] For a suggestion on the importance of the labyrinth in Baroque literature and film, see Denilson Lopes, *Nós os Mortos: sensibilidades melancólicas, imagens neo-barrocas*. PhD Dissertation in the Department of Sociology University of Brasilia, 1997. The reference to the labyrinth is not included in the edited version of the dissertation mentioned in note 110. For an analysis of the labyrinth in Baroque films see Cyrill Neyrat, "Errance dans les ruines circulaires," *Vertigo*, Special Issue: Projection Baroques (Paris: Jean-Michel Place et Sueurs froides-Vertigo; Marseilles: Musées de Marseille, 2000), 39-50.

kitchen in *The Cook*.[175] On an imaginary level, the labyrinth may be seen as being reduced to walls and frontiers, disconnected from the outside world. The labyrinth is the opposite of the map: no secure reference assures a happy ending. But then the maps we have already investigated may now turn out to reveal themselves closer to labyrinths than to maps, since all the trails in them are deceiving and unstable.

The casual reference to this process of fusion with space mentioned by Greenaway in order to justify the use of long shots reveals in fact a process related to the *informe* that occurs in much of his work. According to this process, people may lose their contours and mingle with walls, as it happened in Vuillard and Veroneses's paintings, or may mingle with objects, as happened in Greenaway's one hundred allegories. But this does not exhaust the possibilities. We may find a collage, for example, among the series called *Prospero's Allegories* (a preview of the later digital version of the one hundred allegories) that shows a labyrinth and is entitled "Minotaur" (fig. 31).

The image consists of half erased handwriting and lines referring to labyrinth walls, in addition to a reference to inscriptions on stone walls. Among the scribbling one may identify the words Minotaur, Pasiphae and Ariadne that refer to the myth of the labyrinth in which the Minotaur was imprisoned. However, one can also identify the words "anatomic parts" that, together with the handwriting, the torn edges of the photograph and the white paint that covers walls and letters, suggest the nature of this labyrinth that is at the same time matter and an unreliable map. This labyrinth in its turn

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[175] In a different context, Greenaway mentions Vuillard as a painter who achieved this same effect of making the figures mingle with the space around them. He wanted to reproduce this effect in the houses of some of the characters of *Drowning by Numbers*. Vuillard is a painter from the nineteenth century, and it is not by chance that Greenaway may look at works so distanced in time searching for a similar mechanism of dissolution of the figure. For the comment on Vuillard, see Peter Greenaway, *Fear of Drowning – Règles du Jeu*, 41.

encloses a creature half-human, half-animal that gives the work its title. The Minotaur also appears in the work of the Surrealists, associated with the *informe*. We have seen that the theme receives different manifestations in Greenaway's work. They all have in common the fact that the borders usually accepted to define the body are not respected: the human figure is then diluted in a labyrinth of possibilities of losing its integrity. In the case of the film *The Cook*, the labyrinth is constituted by the walls, halls, corridors, main room, parking lot, toilette, and kitchen of a restaurant. The tumbling walls of this labyrinth are the ones that isolate food from sex, or sex from death.

It is not in *Documents*, but rather in his book about eroticism that Georges Bataille may offer some clues to Greenaway's proclaimed preference for dealing with sex and death in his films. In this book Bataille prefers to use the term "continuity," which is close to what he referred to elsewhere as the *informe*. Continuity is mentioned then in opposition to the discontinuity to which we are condemned after birth and which we will strive to overcome throughout our lifetime. Although the book is called *L'Erotisme*, its subject is actually divided into erotic and religious experience, both of which are related to the same search for an essential continuity, be it with the other or with God, by means of love or violence. Furthermore, religion and eroticism also share a dependence on the notions of interdiction and transgression. Bataille mentions different cultures in which legal transgression is permitted in order to make it possible to endure life. To demonstrate this, Bataille follows the meaning and the refusal of ritualistic sacrifice, as well as the refusal of corporeality regarding Christianity. For Bataille, the sacrifice is a moment of the revelation of the sacred, which is the continuity also implicit in death. This continuity has been re-shaped in the notion of the divine or of an omnipresent God in more recent religious beliefs. The sacrifice of Christ survives,

but it has given way to a ritual that is more metaphirical than its bloody antecedents in other religions. Together with this change propagated by Christianity, eroticism and all corporeality were banished from the sacred, relegated now exclusively to the sphere of the profane, and associated with Evil.

The discontinuity to which we are condemned has already been mentioned before in other terms when Julia Kristeva refers to it as the necessary separation from the mother which allows both the constitution of the self and the articulation of language. Bataille has a different approach to this discontinuity, but although his work is imbued with the commitment to reveal the interdictions to which we have been restricted, he recognizes that without the discontinuity provided by the realm of work we would be at the mercy of natural drives that lead to destruction and death. It is this drive that was restrained by necessary interdictions, and that reappears in many examples of legalized ways of transgressing these very interdictions, such as war, eroticism and religion. Naturally, social and political interests are always at issue, and may also justify those transgressions. Bataille comments for example, that prostitution, in the profane version that we have come to know, originated in a social context of such marginalization that the usual interdictions were suspended. Similarly, he comments that erotic rituals of ancient agrarian societies might have been provoked by a real scarcity of food, but both those rituals and prostitution also obey a profound "economy" of desire essentially triggered by the deep feeling of continuity that we strive to recover.[176]

Thus the film *The Cook* could be viewed as a metaphor for Thatcherism, as some critics have seen it, in part because of the director's own encouragement of this

[176] Georges Bataille, *L'Erotisme* (Erotism : death & sensuality) (Paris: Minuit, 1995).

reading.[177] Nevertheless, Greenaway himself is cautious when he suggests this, and although the obnoxious behavior of Spica could be associated to Philistinism in England during the Thatcher period, we will pursue another perspective at this point, one that permits also the connection of this film to other instances of Greenaway's work.

Greenaway curated an exhibition, shown in the Boymans-van Beuningen Museum, in Rotterdam, in 1991-1992, which followed the structure of many of his other exhibitions, which resulted from an invitation by a museum. In this kind of exhibition he is invited to organize a selection of works of art or objects belonging to the museum's collection according to a theme of his choice. The theme chosen in this case was *The Physical Self*. The result is a gathering of objects that range from glasses and shoes, to ceramics and paintings, thus following that already familiar mixture of banal objects with traditional art. In this case, the mixture is focused on an alternately overt or subtle presence of the body. The exhibition is consistent with Greenaway's approach to the theme in other instances of his work: the body shown is therefore not an idealized one - advanced age, for example, was also one of the themes illustrated; and the physical appeal of the body must be as real as possible - human beings, for instance, were placed in glass cases. Without lingering too much on the exhibition, using it instead as a stepping stone to the film *The Cook*, a section of it may be worth mentioning since it recalls the casual mentioning of Veronese's painting and its process of symbiosis between human figures and the space around them. The section is called

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[177] See for example, the analysis of the violence in Greenaway's work by Bridget Elliot and Anthony Purdy, *Architecture and Allegory*, especially the chapter entitled "Sultan or Sadist – The theatre of power." Their main argument is that cruelty is redeemed in his work because it is placed historically and charged with devices that create a distancing of the viewer in relation to the represented scenes. Although I tend to agree with both arguments and with most of their analysis, this is not the approach sought at this point. It is the very search for a redemption that seems to be also questioned by Greenaway as his work demonstrates rather that violence can be both outrageous and inevitable.

"Touch" and gathers apparently incorruptible objects that have acquired some mark of the human body after long usage. This is a very concrete example of a mingling with the other and it appears in order to introduce other more radical forms of assimilation between the human body and the objects in Greenaway's work.

Before we continue, we may allow ourselves a little digression in order to address how this occurs not with a particular object but also in terms of space, and in a more abstract manner. The text is from a book by the artist David Woynarowicz in which he begins by narrating a long trip by car across the United States, before commenting on his experience of living with and imminent death due to AIDS. The first part of the book presents a powerful narrative that oscillates between the sublime and the abject. His experience of the world is marked by a constant merging of the external world with his internal existence, as he becomes his car, or the fragmented reflections on pieces of metal, or a landscape, or the traffic. Not coincidental is the subtitle of Woynarowicz's book, *A Memoir of Disintegration*, since he frequently cannot help but reveal his attraction to death or some other form of dissolution – a drive that seemed to guide his life to borderline experiences that would ultimately lead to his actual death. At this point, after having crossed many roads in his car while the images outside the window seemed to mingle with himself, he narrates an imaginary experience of riding a motorcycle:

> And it is in that sense of void – that marriage of body-machine and space – where one should most desire a continuance of life, that I most wish to disappear. I realized that the image of the point of marriage between body-vehicle and space was similar to the beginning of orgasm. I may be living a life that is the equivalent of a ride on an upside-down road but it is only to shake all the ropes off, even the ropes of mortality.[178]

[178] David Woynarowicz, *Close to the Knives* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 41.

Woynarowicz's text, in general, drifts between what he sees and how he reacts to it, giving thus a great importance to the imaginary level where he experiences the dissolution of himself. Translated in Greenaway's terms, we may recall that the twins in *A Zed and Two Noughts* immerse themselves in an obsessive and passionate investigation into disintegrating bodies. It is no surprise, then, to find them recording those bodies whose contours have been effaced - a mirror of what was happening to their dead wives and a metaphorical mirror of their own feelings of loss - and to find among Prospero's books, now, not the book of games, but one called *Love of Ruins*. Once more we see the gathering of diverse cultural elements, "maps and plans" of archeological sites, vestiges mostly from the classic world. Yet, how far we have come from that Greenaway who called himself "apollonian." This reminiscence of the mythological world is not made of standing limpid statues, but rather of ruins that are closer to a "memoir of disintegration." We know this scenery from two other sources: the film *The Belly of the Architect* and his *One Hundred Allegories to Represent the World*.

In *The Belly of the Architect*, the main character, Kracklite, is preparing an exhibition about a French architect in Rome, when he learns that he has stomach cancer. His physical decay is deliberately mirrored in the ancient architecture around him, so that the film makes an ironic comment on the buildings's solid survival and the frailty of the mortal body. Greenaway was also referring to this association when he talked about the fusion of human beings and space in painting; after all, the architecture and the city in general was filmed in flesh tones in order to better convey the association between the drama of the character and the space around him. There is the invincible child about to be born at the end of the film, when Kracklite commits suicide by

jumping (the eternal fall) from the window. Still, the overall atmosphere is of disintegration: the statues are not of a handsome Apollo, but of body parts of ancient statues, feet, heads, noses dispersed in the urban scenery like physical fragments of an allegory of death. This time there is no need for decaying animals before the camera.

The second reference to mythology that may be recalled from the book *Love of Ruins* comes from the characters recreated in *One Hundred Allegories to Represent the World*. In the exhibition *The Physical Self*, they reemerge here and there, as biblical and mythological characters that appear in traditional paintings. Their presence however, may be marred by a curious reference to some terrible event related to them, such as St. Agatha represented in a drawing showing the moment she was mutilated. What may pass unnoticed among so many other images in the exhibition *The Physical Self* was stressed in the *One Hundred Allegories*, which reveals the barbaric world of biblical and mythological deities. It is that world of revenge and tortured bodies that we will meet again in the restaurant of the film *The Cook, the Thief, his Wife and her Lover*.

In the exhibition *The Physical Self* we find also, mingled with other images, another recurrent theme in Greenaway's work: Leda and her progeny. The illogical nature of the image, the large eggs, the three of the two sets of twins, the fourth having been transformed into a swan that pecks Leda's breast in a free adaptation of the myth, is discussed in Greenaway's usual satirical tone. Nevertheless, there is more than humor in this association between humans and animals. It is Greenaway himself who, in another catalogue, comments on the "Ovidian fascination with metamorphosis" that actually betrays his own fascination with the theme.[179] It is however, Bataille who may

[179] See here p. 90 and also Michel Boujot "Peter Greenaway: un inspiré en sa demeure," *L'Avant Scène Cinéma* 333 (October 1984), 4-10. In this interview made at the time of the release of *The Draughtsman's Contract*, Greenaway mentions that he had a plan to write 1001 tales, and four of them were published

indicate why humor does not exhaust the theme about the presence of the animals in mythology and in Greenaway's reference to it.

For Bataille death, like violence, is a way to achieve the longed-for continuity and he develops this idea as he examines the importance of the animal in rituals of sacrifice during which death is experienced with a sacred respect. The animal is the reminder of an ancient continuity and is thus revered for its existence, which is simultaneously innocent and unrestrained. Nevertheless, the violence that is inherent both to animals and to human nature, when unbridled, leads to destruction. The effort to avoid this results in both the first manifestations of work in the history of humankind and the first interdictions related to death, with the burial assuring the safety of the corpse, and to sex, with regulations organizing the permitted violations.

Although sacrifice has been abolished, the shadow of the metamorphosis between animals and humans still haunts western culture, as Greenaway keeps reminding us in his work.[180] The animal appears, thus, as a reference to that wished continuity mentioned by Bataille, a continuity associated to unrepressed violence feared, but also aped, by humans. Hence Spica, the main character of *The Cook*, represents the unrestrained violator in a scenery that mingles love, death, food and flesh.

The film begins with a scene in which Spica and his partners torture a man and oblige him to eat excrement in front of the restaurant. There are no animal metamorphoses in the film, but there is a pack of agitated dogs in this scene and in others in the same sinister parking lot,

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here. In one of the stories, *La Poche*, a zoologist was married to a female kangaroo with which he had sexual relations for fourteen years. The story then develops a comic and absurd end.

[180] After referring to mythological cases of metamorphosis, Greenaway conjectures: "Are these universal male sexual fantasies of rape where the mother of the mongrel is always the human female, or is it truly more relevant to the desire for man to wish for the particular strengths, qualities and characteristics of the animal father?" Peter Greenaway, *Flying over Water*, 90.

which helps to situate violence within its proper context. The excrement acts like the truck full of rotting meat in which the lovers are forced to lock themselves in order to escape from the infuriated Spica: in the worst outbreaks of violence there appear the worst images of nausea, a feeling so close and so diametrically opposed to the rejoicing due to continuity. The extreme of nausea or violence will appear at the end, when Spica himself is finally put in a borderline situation. His wife wants to cook her murdered lover but the phlegmatic cook resists, and argues: "You can't believe that by eating him you can always be together." This assimilation would be of a comparable nature to the metamorphosis that aimed to acquire the strength of the animal, a possibility Greenaway had raised in order to explain the recurrence of metamorphosis in mythology. Cannibalism in primitive societies was equally charged with this respect for the victim, who was, preferably, a brave enemy whose courage was supposed to be concentrated in his dead body or in the trophy made out of his skull. However, Georgina's intentions lack any hint of reverence. She is moved instead by an urge for revenge.

What makes this film almost unbearable to watch is the fact that Spica has no limits, he is the purest embodiment of outrageousness. He keeps attacking the people around him, either physically or verbally throughout the film. He cannot be contained in the rectangles of the series *A Framed Life*; he is instead the untamed character who leaks outside the borders. This lack of containment brings fatal consequences to the others and to himself, as he ends up forcing them to respond with equal intensity to his aggressions. Spica, before being finally killed, is compelled to eat the flesh of Michael, whose murder he was responsible for. The insane violence that surpasses the limits of reason, allows the attainment of continuity, says Bataille, and although the limits are

socially imposed they are always being surmounted.[181] Dying and overcoming borders is for him the same thing, and we could add that abjection is one of the ultimate frontiers to be crossed, the very one that was at play during the worst scenes of violence, as has already been observed. The film thus culminates in the most extreme manifestation of abjection, which is the cannibalism imposed on Spica, the character who in his turn, incorporates the most extreme manifestations of violence.

The Cook may provide, however, some sort of relief. There is also a great deal of flowing water in the film, as if all dirtiness could be cleansed: the victims of Spica's violence are washed with water coming from a hose, in a deliberate repetition of the same scene. Spica himself is frequently washing his hands and the white toilet, in which everybody's clothes also become white, represents another counterpoint that underlines the red ambiance of the restaurant and of Spica's brutal domain. Curiously, it is in this film, apparently so mundane, that religiosity again reemerges. What may be considered so outrageous in *The Baby of Mâcon*, is the fact that religion is so closely associated with overt violence. It is this association that Bataille also demonstrates, as he gathers the notions of religion, eroticism, death and violence into one indistinguishable realm, relating them to the same search for what he calls "continuity." Not surprisingly, then, is the fact that among the other manifestations of purity in the film we find an angel singing a religious chant.[182]

Pup is a young blonde boy who is a member of the kitchen staff who works in the kitchen and, when he is not contained in frowning silence, his soprano voice echoes in

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[181] Bataille, 155.

[182] Ariel, in *Prospero's Books* is another version of the angel in Greenaway's work. About the presence of the angel in the Baroque and in modernity see Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *La Raison Baroque*, chap. one. For the importance of the voice in Baroque music, that relies much on the emotion conveyed by rhetoric and by the representation of the singer, see Philippe Beaussant, *Vous avez dit Baroque?* (Arles: Actes Sud, 1998) especially pages 112-113, and 175- 188.

the restaurant like a religious solo in a cathedral. Essentially, the song is a prayer for forgiveness related to Spica's abuses and his constant hand washing.

Have mercy upon me,

Have mercy upon me,

Blot out my transgressions,

Blot out my transgressions.

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean.

Wash me, wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

.....

Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation;

And uphold me with Thy free Spirit,

Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways;

And sinners shall be converted unto Thee,

Deliver me from Bloodguiltiness, O God.

My tongue shall sing aloud of Thy righteousness.[183]

The words of the psalm to which Michael Nyman wrote the accompanying music, reveals the possible redundancy of violence and love: since I have crossed the limits and sinned, says the prayer, please allow me to cross my own limits again, by sheltering me in your all-encompassing divine love. Food is cut and mixed in the kitchen while Georgina and Michael meet in its entrails: the metaphor in this case is of nurturing and it leads to the same continuity suggested in Pup's song. In this context

[183] Peter Greenaway, *The Cook, the thief, his wife and her lover* (Paris: Dis Voir, 1989), 9.

of re-stated continuity, there are, however, also the necessary forces of discontinuity that allows the articulation of the film.

The film *The Cook* does not lack the usual cultural references with which Greenaway is always working: the reproduction of a painting by Frans Hals placed in the restaurant depicts a social gathering around a table; the general model for the script follows the English Jacobean theater and its fondness for revenge and physicality; and there are still other references to the Baroque recognized or not by Greenaway himself. Yet, if culture may belong to that same domain of work that stresses order and discontinuity, it is also the place that permits the representation of the urge to surpass these very limits. The borders may be affirmed as well, but only to be subsequently corrupted. If we investigate more closely, we will find that the film was made following rigid schemes that tend to disappear in the overall atmosphere of transgression: the colors obey an established symbolic scheme and initially, the film was conceived within a precise division in parts.[184]

Symmetrically opposed to this situation, we find that in *Drowning by Numbers*, the film about games and its myriad rules, what is in question again is the transgression of those games and rules. We will find then that in this film, played mainly by women and children, death may assume a more sanitized and less violent configuration. Nonetheless, decay and matter are not avoided. There are the close-ups of insects, fruits, organic matter, and wider frames showing still lives. Yet, the worse may come from the aim of the game. The women pass the skittle from one to the other, sequentially killing their husbands by drowning them. But at least one of the games is more overt in its

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[184] See the interview mentioned before, in which Greenaway comments that his use of colors in this film was due to his search for a *universal* (emphasis added) structure as he wanted to avoid numbers and letters this time. Michel Ciment, "Deux entretiens avec Peter Greenaway," 12.

implicit savageness: Hangman's Cricket consists of an unlimited number of players who assume different pre-established personalities, each following its own specific rules. This complicated web of regulations ultimately carries a fatal destiny for the loser, as stated in the notes by Smut, the boy who collects numbers, corpses, insects and games in the film: "...at the very last light of twilight, stripped and hung from the gibbet beside the tideline, the loser's body is pecked by the gulls until the dismembered corpse falls into the sea and is eaten by the fishes."[185] Thus *The Cook* and *Drowning by Numbers* bring together the two poles that dominate Greenaway's work, attributing a counter-balancing weight to each. In the overtly violent film, we find hints of the presence of games; in the film apparently restrained to symmetrical intrigues, we encounter the hints of barbarism.

Therefore, the film *The Cook* only brings to a larger and evident scale something that was present in much of Greenaway's work. It is as if all games, collections, categories, counting were only vain attempts at framing that which cannot be confined and therefore, always manages to leak or overflow from the barriers created to restrain it. This escape is thus depicted with a mixture of terror and faintly disguised fascination. It is not merely a sadistic position of wanting to destroy the other. If Greenaway's main characters either die or commit suicide it may be due to the duel between the intensity of life so frequently proclaimed through the use of exaggerated artifices and the appeal of death as a struggle of balanced forces with a pre-established end. In spite of that, there is always time for celebrations as well, before the game's conclusion.

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[185] Greenaway, 1989a, 103.

The Baroque appears in this context as the place in which excess is praised and cultivated. Severo Sarduy's study of the Baroque addresses many elements that relate to what was discussed in this chapter, such as the importance he attributes to the game, to the production of excess in the work of art that does not match the world of work, the expression "work" itself in opposition to the realm of eroticism, and the final conclusion concerning an affinity between Baroque and eroticism, the latter identified with an excess of the body no longer constrained by everyday functions or even reproduction. His general overview on the Baroque is so close to Bataille's study on eroticism that one may wonder if he did not have this book in mind while he was writing about the Baroque.[186] Whether he did or not, it is not difficult to imagine that eroticism and all of its implications - excess, exuberance, exaggeration, exhilaration, or ecstasy which etymologically all share the same prefix "ex" which marks a move forward, beyond limits – may be comfortably at ease in the Baroque world of overcharged churches, unquiet sculptures, festivities, games and so on.

The overflowing body that inhabits this world is the body condemned to fall, although occasionally it may be allowed to float or fly. Either way, the feet are hardly on the ground, since the ground itself seems to be in constant movement: no fixed meanings, no adequate categories, no possibility of appeasement. The body falls because it cannot escape from its own physicality and matter has been culturally enclosed in the underground realm of the taboo. It is with the tools offered by this very culture that Greenaway keeps trying to enter this realm only to find out that what is supposedly locked in the underground actually permeates every cultural manifestation, as well as his own work. Hence, here and there, in references to the bible, to mythology, or in some of

[186] See Severo Sarduy, *Barroco*, and "Por uma ética do desperdício," especially pp. 77-78.

Greenaway's films, we face outbursts of violence that bring to the surface what is inherent to the cultural material Greenaway comments on.

CHAPTER SEVEN

AND THE WORD BECAME FLESH

The film *The Pillow Book* (1996) contains lists, texts, revenge, corpses, water, naked bodies, cultural elements from the past, a strong female character, fateful love affairs, some - but less than usual - decay, and various other of Greenaway's obsessions. There is, however, a new element: the ideogram. The appropriation of oriental writing is not fortuitous: it responds to many of the questions developed in Greenaway's work and serves as a means of stitching them together, while proffering a statement about what constitutes his engagement in art. In this section this film will be investigated as a summary of Greenaway's concerns, which were elaborated around the theme of *Flesh and Print*, words that comprised the film's original title. The main image used to epitomize the theme was that of the ideograms written on the bodies of lovers. What will be examined here, then, are how the ideogram operates, how it fits in Greenaway's work in general, how it is reflected in other mechanisms also explored in this film, how it is employed to convey an idea of love, and finally, how the ideogram may serve also to describe what artistic language - which includes cultural background, art in general and cinema - may stand for according to Greenaway's conception. Although his use of cultural elements from the past tends to lead to the conclusion that art could be a way of proselytising about art itself, we can anticipate that Greenaway's position may turn out to be more ambiguous than that.

There is still the question of the Baroque, which seems more distant in this film since it lacks direct references to the seventeenth century. Nevertheless, the Baroque is present in its diverse manifestations, as well as in the concept represented by the ideogram,

which is the notion of materializing ideas. We have seen this process at play in the case of the allegory, where ideas were conveyed through a collage of fragments forming an image. This film deserves special attention because it condenses some of Greenaway's major themes: art (including cinema) as well as corporeality appear as means to conveying ideas, as a kind of writing in (exuberant) puzzles. The circle can finally be closed: if the love for games revealed a choice of artificial constructions, the corporeality so often affirmed in different instances of his work mainly as bodies, is now submitted to a game that transforms it into writing. The four elements chosen to define the Baroque offer, yet again, the key to deciphering those bodies that have become writing. We will see, however, that this game is double-edged: representation, movement, melancholy and allegory are the tools through which writing, in its turn, is also submitted to a game that converts it to body.

The ideogram offered a process that was fundamental to explaining what Eisenstein thought was the main aspect to be explored in cinema, which is the montage. In this regard he analysed how the ideogram works, arguing that instead of copying easy formulas from Hollywood's cinematography, Japanese filmmakers should turn to their own past for a methodological inspiration. His main concern was that montage should not be understood as a mere linking of two elements, but as a conflict between them that produces a third element, different from the other two. He illustrated this by means of the ideogram and demonstrated that originally, in the ideographic writing, the figurative elements used to convey an idea could be identified. Once gathered, these elements resulted in a concept different from the parts that constitute it.

In his essay about the ideogram, Ernest Fenollosa completes this definition by stressing the fact that the ideogram involves a specific conception of nature, which

suggests that nothing exists in a separate or complete state, or devoid of movement; everything is susceptible to association and transformation. The ideogram would be the writing that used this conception to constitute a written language by means of combining different parts.[187] Apart from the direct observation of nature implicit in the construction of the original ideograms, we can recognize this universe of interconnections and movement in the Baroque and in Deleuze's writings discussed previously.[188] The ideogram would therefore enter the stage of Greenaway's work at this point not because it is chronologically related to the Baroque period, but rather because it is conceptually linked to it, as remote as the association may still seem to be. For now, the ideogram only hints at the Baroque's fondness for uncompleted works and instability, as it presents fragments of reality associated and re-associated in order to constitute language. Is this not the very process of the allegory so much appreciated in Baroque art? Perhaps the pieces of the puzzle are beginning to match.

We should however return to Eisenstein's essay in order to find our way back to the film. It is not only the ideogram, but also other instances of Japanese culture that share the same principle of the ideogram that for him could inspire cinematographic editing. He mentions the learning of composition in drawing and haiku, based as they are on the process of subtracting elements and editing. This association is meaningful since it demonstrates how pervasive basic thought constructions can be, as they occur in such different manifestations. We should, therefore, take one more step in this sequence

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[187] For Eisenstein's study on the ideogram see Sergei Eisenstein, "The Cinematographic principle and the ideogram," in *Film Form Film Sense* (Cleveland and New York: Meridian, 1957) Part 1: Film Form - pp. 28-44. Ernest Fenollosa's approach is not necessarily linked to cinema, since he related the ideogram to a conception of Nature. He gives more elaborate examples of montage and figuration in the ideogram, as well as offering simple but elucidative examples such as the ideogram for the verb "to see" that comprises drawings originally depicting an eye over two human legs. See Ernest Fenollosa, "Os caracteres da escrita chinesa como instrumento para a poesia" (*The Chinese written character as a medium for poetry*) in Haroldo de Campos (ed.), *Ideograma: lógica poesia linguagem* (São Paulo: Cultrix, 1986), 115-162.

[188] See above chap. 2 – Moving Baroque.

and include the book of Sei Shonagon, the lady-in-waiting who belonged to the Japanese imperial court of a thousand years ago, and whose diaries inspired Nagiko, the main character in the film, to become a writer, and also inspired Greenaway to make a film in which writing is closely associated with sensuality.

Sei Shonagon's *Pillow Book* is constituted primarily of the most diverse and extensive lists. These are sometimes made of a single word or phrases or a whole event, commenting on life in the court, or poetry, or things in general such as ponds and temples, love, friendship, observations of nature (mountains, lakes, rivers, rain, plants, flowers, birds, trees); everything edited by clever eyes that selects from reality the fragments that can translate different ideas into physical presence. The apparent arbitrariness of her lists, which may range from a list of Buddhas to a list of disgusting things, immediately recalls Borges's work, which has often been associated with Greenaway and his absurd categories.[189] Despite the fact that Sei Shonagon writes torrentially, her writing also follows the same principle of the haiku and the ideogram, as it both edits reality by picking up very specific elements distant from each other, linked in an unexpected way, and is also based on the idea of making concepts visible by means of images. A brief example may allow us to enter the mood of the book, and of the film as well. After a short list of four elements, which were classified as "things that are distant, even though they are close," there comes the following:

Things that are close, even though they are distant

Paradise.

[189] See for example De Gaetano, 55. Or also, Bridget Elliot and Anthony Purdy, *Architecture and Allegory*, 29; and Maria Esther Maciel, "Peter Greenaway, lector de Jorge Luis Borges". *Variaciones Borges – Journal of Philosophy, Semiotics and Literature*, 10 (May 2000) (Aarhus, Denmark: The J.L.Borges Center for Studies and Documentation, University of Aarhus).

The route of a boat.

The relationships between a man and a woman.[190]

It is not difficult, hence, to imagine how at ease Greenaway felt when dealing with this book: its organization in lists is a familiar way of presenting things that reappears throughout his entire work. However, The *Pillow Book* offered much more than this. Sei Shonagon's writing opened a whole sensuous domain that is always present in Greenaway's work but that assumed a delicate configuration in this film, which nevertheless does not lack his habitual necrophilia and violence. Thus, we will see reproduced in the film all of Shonagon's attention to textures, colors, perfumes, the sense of touch experienced in the different qualities of the papers used in the court's messages, the quality of the ink employed in it, a whole universe of subtleties that the film took pains to translate in different ways, and mostly, in the repetition of the tender touch of the brush held in the calligrapher's fingertips. Nonetheless, what seem to have inspired Greenaway most in the film were also two themes that he had been developing throughout his work and that were fused here in the way that Eisenstein thought every montage should aim to achieve. Body and writing were thus linked, resulting in a third element that is also body and writing, and at the same time is different from both.

We will explore several examples to see how this double way of writing becoming body and body becoming writing were pursued before, in order to arrive at this film. Letters had been striving to acquire some materiality since Greenaway's early films. In *Dear Phone* and *Vertical Features Remake*, typed texts sometimes covered

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[190] ["Choses qui sont proches, bien qu'éloignées: Le Paradis./ La route d'un bateau./ Les relations entre un homme et une femme."] Sei Shônagon, *Notes de Chevet* (The pillow book of Sei Shonagon) (Paris: Gallimard and Unesco, 1996), 187.

with scribbles filled the screen and in more recent productions, handwriting at the moment of its making appeared in *Death in the Seine* and *Prospero's Books*. In his artwork we may find occasional words, but there are mainly scattered letters or unreadable handwritten texts signing either a classification or merely depicting the process of writing, devoid of a specific meaning (see for examples fig. 18 - John the Baptist; fig. 20 - The postcard; fig. 29 - From the series A Framed Life; fig. 30 - If only film could do the same). The collage *The Fall* (fig. 2) offers a good example of how word struggled to become image: it demonstrates that different images may fit into a single word but it fails to diminish the gap between word and image. How far are we still from the comment of a calligrapher in the film, who says that the handwriting of the ideogram for rain should look like rain, and the ideogram for smoke should look like it. Apart from some contemporary examples in art (see for instance the works of Cy Twonbly, Edward Ruscha and Mira Schendel) the West will hardly grant such attention to the expressive power of the drawing of letters.[191] It is, however, perfectly understandable that this might be common to a culture in which the image plays an important role to the point that it could be used to convey abstract ideas, as the ideogram or the haiku demonstrate.

On the other hand, we could also follow the course through which the body becomes writing in Greenaway's work. This route begins where the body is associated with books in a violent manner: in a scene from the script *of The Belly of an Architect* that did not appear in the film, a character had his stomach crushed by a book on

[191] See also the work of the English artist Tom Phillips, who worked with Greenaway on the production for television *TV Dante*. Nigel Wheale has a good essay about this production, but he centers his perspective on Tom Phillips. His discussion on allegory and post-modernism could be focused on Greenaway and his less known artwork as well, as can be confirmed by what has been developed here. See Nigel Wheale, "Televising Hell: Tom Phillips and Peter Greenaway's *TV Dante*" in *The Postmodern Arts: an introductory reader*, ed. Nigel Wheale (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 163 –185.

anatomy by Vesalius and in *The Cook*, Michael, the lover, is suffocated to death with his books about the French Revolution. Books and bodies are again assimilated in the drawings related to *Prospero's Books*, in which the two elements mingle in an awkward fashion, implying physical suffering (fig. 32). When we finally get to *The Pillow Book* this link appears to assume a more tender configuration as the skin becomes paper to be written on with a smooth brush. Our relief may be short-lived: the corpse of Jerome covered with Nagiko's writing will be scalped by his editor-lover in order to become his pillow book. Greenaway brings to ultimate conclusion Eisenstein's idea of "conflict" related to the gathering of two elements in montage: in his universe this kind of association is marked by violence and might occur with the physical destruction of the elements implied in the operation.

The examples that can shed some light on the film and that best achieve the link between body and text before *The Pillow Book* can be found, however, in the series *100 Allegories to Represent the World*. Text appears in many allegories in very different ways: handwriting, typed and printed texts in different styles surround the naked bodies or are applied over it by digital means. Greenaway often comments in his interviews that his aim is to liberate cinema from text, an outcome which he never achieves although he does shake linear narrative standards.[192] In the inventory of western culture proposed by the one hundred allegories, the body is stripped bare and props and writing are placed around it to force a double reading of the body as a text, and writing as

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[192] See for example: "My original enthusiasm to become a filmmaker comes from a double interest in the manipulation of images and the manipulation of words; I hope that what I am trying to do as a filmmaker will overcome the simple sum of these two parts and that may, in this way, have a satisfactory result." ["Meu entusiasmo original para me tornar um diretor de cinema provém de um duplo interesse pela manipulação de imagens e manipulação de palavras; espero que o que estou tentando fazer como diretor supere a simples soma destas duas partes e que possa, assim, resultar em algo satifatório"] in Peter Greenaway. *100 Objetos*. Cat. (Rio de Janeiro: Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil; São Paulo: SESC, 1998), 62.

related to the physical world. We may take for example the allegory *The Ambassadors* (fig. 33), which discusses the use of props as allegorical elements in painting at the same time that it shows bodies covered with texts from three different sources.

The texts, as Greenaway himself comments, refer to a tramp's scribbled text standing representing financial gain since it was given to Greenaway in exchange for money, a Latin inscription representing the diplomatic bureaucracy, and Shakespeare's lament for Ophelia, representing "the language of madness taken to poetry." The clothes have been taken off in order to give way to the props and to the body itself, its physical presence and its contours are now regarded as a means also to convey meaning. The assured attitude of de Dinteville on the left matches his large shoulders and the flimsy silhouette of de Selve, on the right, indicates a more reserved personality already suggested by his positioning in the original painting of Hans Holbein that inspired this allegory, and by the props he holds in Greenaway's version, a book and a cross. In spite of the nakedness, the allegory is thus made to be filled with meaning, but it is not by chance that two politically powerful authorities were chosen to appear stripped of their garments. If on the one hand, the naked bodies represent Greenaway's appeal for a return to the "physical self" denied by western culture, on the other, he achieves this by means of mining the very authorities of this culture, be it classic mythology, the bible or real representatives of a patriarchal hierarchy. We can then return to *The Pillow Book*, where again we will find that writing belongs to the realm of the father, the owner and donor of the symbolic order. Nevertheless, he is deliberately desecrated both by his sexual business with his editor – that obliges him to trade his body for editorial favours - and by Nagiko's refusal to remain the passive support of her lovers' writings.

I owe much of this reading of *The Pillow Book* to the essay by Paula Willoquet-Maricondi, which stresses the undermining of the symbolic order represented in the film mostly by the presence of the father associated with writing.[193] However, I do not agree entirely with her argument. I have demonstrated that in Greenaway's artwork categories and hierarchies that also refer to this symbolic order are doomed to fail, but I cannot concur with her affirmation in that this tendency IN his work can be simplified to a single direction towards the destruction of this order. I would say instead that the choice of basing his work on cultural elements borrowed from literature or traditional art of the past fails to authorize a radical disavowal of the symbolic order on his part. As was discussed previously in the case of the allegories, the reference to a cultural background is made with irony, but with reverence as well. The choice of Sei Shonagon, a Japanese writer from a century ago, is not gratuitous. She belongs to the same group of the mythological and biblical characters presented in the allegories. All these ancient figures were carefully rescued as if they were part of a cultural treasure that needed to be saved from oblivion. Therefore, one finds in Greenaway's work the temptation to surrender to dissolution and, at the same time, a kind of worship for the symbolic order that avoids this, and that may be manifest as a cultural background.

Greenaway is aware of the ambiguities implicit in this background and presented in this project in which worked with flesh and words. He is also interested in pointing out that in this very culture he tries to rescue the vestiges of what has been so cautiously denied, that is the physical self, sexuality, violence and the destructive drive implicit in human nature. Returning to our Ambassadors, we find therefore that the symbolic world

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[193] Paula Willoquet-Maricondi, "Fleshing the Text: Greenaway's Pillow Book and the Erasure of the Body," http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/pmc/text-only/issue.199/9.2willoquet.txt

represented here by political power was forced to assume its own physicality as naked bodies. Writing is also questioned as the major guardian of tradition as a statement is made by means of images – the texts are only fragments reminiscent of their presence in culture, with little or no importance given to the words or whole sentences. It can be argued that much of the allegory's meaning is given to us by Greenaway's own comments on each of the allegories at the end of the book. Nevertheless, we can still profit from this example to demonstrate how flesh and print were placed together in an attempt to transform them into a single unity. The ideograms and the haikus had a less anthropocentric position as they celebrated the whole world as images: Greenaway shares with them the same attempt to force the image to speak. What is specific to him is that in his case it cannot be dissociated either from culture or from the body.

We will return now to the ideogram as a mechanism employed in the whole film and in a more radical manner than Eisenstein could envisage in the early history of film theory. If the ideogram, the haiku or Sei Shonagon's lists, like the example examined above, worked with an editing of elements, cinema, and particularly the kind of cinema Greenaway is interested in, is also used as a means to break with linearity.[194] This is a process well known in literature, and mostly in poetry, in which some words or ideas may be repeated in a similar position in a strophe, for example, in order to convey a similar meaning or a metaphor to it.

In another essay Eisenstein studied the difference between representation and image, the first being more related to the formal aspect and the second to an interpretation that may emerge through the very process of montage. He does not

[194] In a sense, it could be said that Sei Shonagon is even more radical than Greenaway, since her book can be opened and read from any part without the need to follow the course of a narrative.

mention the ideogram in this essay but its presence is implicit in his analysis of how cinema editing can be equivalent to poetry and to our thought processes.[195] We can broaden our perspective and look not to the assimilation of two close elements in montage, but of elements that are more distanced and that may be treated in such a way as to break with linearity at the same time as their remote link still enriches the meaning of each element, thus causing them to function more as an image than as a mere representation. We have seen for example that the word "fall" could bring in itself the idea of waterfall, of a season, of the fall of an airplane, as well as all the connotations assumed not only in this collage but also in its recurrence in Greenaway's work as a whole. We have also seen how Sei Shonagon brought together the idea of paradise, the route of a boat and a relationship between a couple by means of placing them in one single list. The film will develop this process in different ways.

The most evident way is the link among at least three different moments that are juxtaposed either sequentially or simultaneously by means of an accumulation of frames placed one over the other. Nagiko's past will therefore be juxtaposed to her present and her search for a lover who could fulfil the expectations aroused by her father writing on her body on her birthdays. She also mirrors herself in Sei Shonagon, whose writing she learned to appreciate as a child and whose words and ancient ambience permeate the whole film as well. That same process of accumulation that was the basis for the construction of the one hundred allegories is now brought to film also by means of frames that appear within the larger frame suggesting associations between different scenes (this device was explored previously in *Prospero's Books* but it is used more radically here and in *TV Dante*). In this way the past - both her personal past and a

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[195] Sergei Eisenstein, "Word and Image" in *Film Form Film Sense*, 1 - 65.

literary Japanese past - and the present are visually mingled in Nagiko's present course of life. The fragmentation of time may however acquire a more extreme representation in the case where the present itself is scattered in different scenes.

Greenaway frequently laments the lack of experimentalism in cinema, which left the medium behind the radical approaches already developed in painting and literature. His use of new technologies gives him the opportunity to cope with this gap by means of attacking narrative linearity and crowding the scene with different associations. The fact that this choice was already functioning without digital technologies, as in the case of narratives organized by means of numbers, colors or letters, can only confirm that they are used as more than technical trickery, responding instead to a need already inherent in his work. We may thus find in *The Pillow Book* some good examples of what he meant when he said he wanted to develop a post-cubist approach to cinema.[196]

By the end of the film, Jerome enters Nagiko's apartment after having taken some sleeping pills that will ultimately cause his death. His bewildered state of mind is mirrored in the editing: when in the larger frame he is, for example, beginning to take off his shirt we see in the frame within it that he is opening the wardrobe already shirtless. This fragmentation of reality is not new: it is as ancient in cinema as Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1926), where a character suffers from vertigo when he sees his father with a woman supposed to be his girlfriend. Apart from the Oedipal reverberations of both films, in the scene is scattered in many pieces resembling the vision of a fly. Both examples have in common the fact that cinema language was used

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[196] See Dora Mourão, "Um cinema com tela muito grande e a interatividade de um CD-Rom – conversa com Peter Greenaway," *Cinemais* 13 (September/October 1998), 61 – 72. For a discussion of Greenaway's use of new technologies see the article by Bridget Elliott and Anthony Purdy "Peter Greenaway and the technologies of representation – the magician, the surgeon, their art and its politics," *Art & Design* 49, Special Issue: Art & Film (1996), 16-23.

to convey mental states – something Eisenstein also stressed when he mentioned that montage in fact was nothing but a product of our own strategies of thought. The cubist approach in painting, which sought to embrace the object simultaneously from different angles, is therefore explored in the film's treatment of time, either in a long or in a short space of time in which different moments may become shuffled fragments presented simultaneously.

Another way of creating equivalencies between separated scenes was to repeat compositions of similar scenes in different moments of the film. The two most important love affairs of Nagiko, her marriage and the affair with Jerome, were thus announced by details of hands with numbers scribbled on them in order to accentuate the contractual nature of love in Greenaway's films (we recognize the theme from *The Draughtsman's Contract*).[197] The publishing house is associated with garbage trucks twice, and a book wrapped in layers of thin paper is framed in a similar way to the corpse of Jerome being unwrapped from several layers of paper, hence further stressing the association between book and body. One of the most significant equivalencies occurs however in the publishing house, when Nagiko appears sitting on the same bench in front of the editor's office from which in different moments of her life she observes both her father and Jerome leaving the room after implicitly having had sexual relations with the editor. Naturally, the association is not fortuitous: both father and lover are the men who by opposite means introduce Nagiko to the realm of writing.

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[197] Denise Lopes's analysis of *The Pillow Book*, in which she investigated the scene when Jerome and Nagiko meet at the bar, called my attention to the love contract implicit in the film and permitted the reading of the otherwise incongruous hand with numbers written on its palm that appears just before the marriage. See Denise Lopes, "Cinema, Medicina e Literatura o filme corpo, o filme livro." Manuscript presented at the meeting of the COMPÓS in Porto Alegre, Brasil, 2000.

Throughout her childhood, Nagiko participated in a ritual on her birthdays in which her father wrote on her body while the same fragment of the bible related to creation was read by her mother. When she was four years old, her aunt reads to her a list from the book of Sei Shonagon. At that moment, Nagiko slides open a door and finds out about the sexual relationship between her father and the editor. The association between sex and literature then haunts and fascinates the rest of her life. After her failed marriage, Nagiko continues her vain search for the perfect lover who must excel both in calligraphic and amorous skills. The lovers rotate but she is never satisfied until she meets Jerome, an English translator unable to write ideograms, but more adroit in love matters. They live a passionate relationship until they make the deal that Jerome would offer his body to the editor along with a sample of her writing so as to convince him of its value. The plan works too well. Nagiko becomes jealous, they argue and Jerome accidentally kills himself while trying to bring her back to him. As a last ceremony in honor of their relationship, Nagiko writes *The Book of the Lover* on his body, before his funeral. When the editor learns about it, he unearths the corpse, and skin it, using the skin to make a pillow book. Nagiko continues to send him other lovers with words and puzzles in order to have the book back until the last one brings death to the editor. She has a baby by Jerome and buries the book under a bonsai tree.

This brief summary should serve simply to locate the turning point represented by Jerome. If the father had introduced Nagiko to a textual symbolic order, he also made her the blank paper to be written on, a formula that she would reproduce by asking her lovers to write on her body. She would only become satisfied when she meets Jerome who inverts the equation by asking *her* to write on his body. We finally find Greenaway conceding that love can have a redemptive power, rather than merely

transforming it into the image of a contractual cage. Jerome's invitation proposes a successful way to translate the amorous game: "Use my body like the pages of a book, of your book." Both lovers will actually embark on this reciprocal game of writing each other's story on the other's body and of letting the other become part of the story written on his or her own body. Nagiko responds with equal elegance of terms in the funerary ritual in which she writes *The Book of the Lover* on Jerome's body. The text has an incantatory rhythm appropriate to an elegy, an elegy that here praises the link between book and body:

> I have knelt on this book until my knees bled.
>
> This book and I have become indivisible.
>
> .....
>
> May I keep this book forever.
>
> May this book and this body outlast my love.
>
> May this body and this book love me as I love its
>
> length, its breadth, its thickness, its text,
>
> its skin, its letters, its punctuation, its quiet
>
> and its noisy pages.
>
> Its tickling delights.
>
> Book, body – I love you.[198]

One cannot help noticing the religious connotations of the bleeding knees and the celebrated fusion with the other. We are back to Bataille's realm of religion and eroticism mentioned in the preceding chapter. To him, the desire for death belongs to this same territory, as it also recalls nostalgia for dissolution. Not by chance do we find

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[198] Peter Greenaway, *The Pillow Book* (Paris: Dis Voir, 1996), 107.

Ophelia among Greenaway's one hundred allegories (fig. 34), about to submerge herself in a river not only of water, but also of letters and text. She coincides therefore with this same desire for fusion, in this case, amorous fusion with something that in the fragment above is at the same time text, book and body of the lover. The film will further stress the association with religion as Jerome writes the Lord's Prayer on Nagiko's body: the choice of the prayer is not accidental as he has actually occupied the position of her father-creator by writing on her. This time we will not find the blond boy singing a psalm as in *The Cook* but a very sweet voice will again invade some scenes singing in French a lyric related to love and to angels –thus staging a Baroque touch through its chants charged with pathos.

To Guy Scarpetta, *The Pillow Book* also recalled Bataille, but in the sense that the film proposed a ritualised and overflowing erotic game.[199] This excess that permeates both the Baroque and eroticism, as Scarpetta points out, can be found in the excess of sensuous appeal in the film, from the naked bodies to the colored still lives related to Sei Shonagon's texts. There is still an attempt to transform the world of things into parts of the body, thus enforcing the process of appropriation of the objects of the world. Writing can no longer be dissociated from desire, which triggers the production of signs. If Sei Shonagon, following the tradition of Japanese poetry, translates the world around her into a succession of images and sensations, Greenaway would make his own "ideograms" forcing them to relate to the body, but his inspiration comes also from Shonagon herself. There is a moment, for example, in which she mentions a list of objects that may be related to parts of the body, like a navel and the inside of a shell or a belly and an upturned saucer. In Greenaway's terms, it is the book that becomes a body,

[199] Guy Scarpetta, "The Pillow Book – La volupté des signes," *Positif* 431 (January 1997) , 76 – 79.

but he needs the subtleties of Shonagon's writing to transform this process, which he had already tried in drawings with clumsy results, into a successful cinematographic montage.

The book becomes in this film the object of an amorous reverence that celebrates the fusion that is desired for in the erotic games. Not by chance, does the body of Jerome, the translator whose name is the same of the guardian of the Christian theology, becomes a book. The presence of the prayers in the film further emphasizes the association of religiosity and eroticism. Jerome, the beloved Jerome, provides the skin for *The Book of the Lover* by Nagiko. If concepts strived to become images in Greenaway's work, this same process received a more radical equivalence in the fact that print became flesh in *The Pillow Book*.

The ideogram belongs to the same process implied in the writing of puzzles with images, that in its turn informs Greenaway's whole work, from cinema to paintings, installations and the exhibitions he has curated. The game consists of choosing the right pieces and proposing associations between them, until the point at which a "correct" match will produce an image capable of articulating a testimony about the world. The pieces of this puzzle are borrowed mostly from traditional culture and they will unavoidably form an image containing a human figure, preferably naked. This image addresses our physical nature and may be inspired by ~~A~~myriad Baroque strategies in a similar way to Nagiko's having the invisible, but readable, presence of the ancient Sei Shonagon guiding her steps. The body that appears in the final puzzle has been submitted to different writings; it has become the book in which culture was written, no matter how ephemeral this body may be and how the image should always remind us of this by means of suggestions of decay. The final aim of the image in the puzzle is to

propose an archeology of culture, but it cannot help introducing a human figure among the debris.

Two fires occur in Nagiko's life, and in both her library becomes ashes: as much mourning as they may entail, death and destruction both belong to life and the only solace for our most ravaging drives will be a baby that emerges at the end of the film who may, nonetheless, one day renew the need for more solace. Culture and things in general may be fragmented and collected in many parts, in allegories, in objects, windmills, corpses, stairs, frames, papers, books, paintings, collages, films, blackboards, and so many series that they all may turn out to look just like micro-grains. Regardless of the walls separating the compartments of this huge collection, the image in the puzzle shows also the unavoidable leak undermining their solidity. What Greenaway searched for in the paintings of Veronese and Vuillard, a situation in which the human figure fused with the background, was finally achieved in some interior scenes of *The Pillow Book* in which bodies, furniture and walls are covered with projected ideograms that unify them in a single form of writing. Is this not a version for the principle of the ideogram itself? A form of writing that could cover everything, respecting and praising the individuality of each body, submitting it to a game of different associations. A projected writing, a luminous writing, a game of montages: cinema. Bodies that seek a way to materialize amidst an ethereal projection: body becoming writing. A cinema that wishes to convey physical sensations accumulating and juxtaposing different images: writing becoming body.

As was the case with the series of allegories, the use of the ideogram also stresses the strategies of representation. Although there is an insistence on amazing the eyes with sensuous images, we are also constantly reminded that the film is a kind of writing. In

addition to insisting on showing calligraphy, also present are all the digital effects used to create parallelisms throughout the course of the narrative. These interventions crowd the screen with juxtaposed images, preventing the suspension of disbelief. Consequently, the spectator is placed in a position similar to the one he or she faced with the allegories; in other words, the spectator is forced to decipher the strategies for constructing meaning in order to understand the image. The components of these ideograms are submitted to instability, as new combinations prevent them from being anchored in fixed meanings. Thus the ideogram also occurs in a world of constant becoming, in which poetic devices help stress the materiality of this very world. In the case of Greenaway, this materiality is associated with the body and with a melancholic aspect of the human condition: the frailty of the body, condemned to be at the mercy of a desire that cannot be appeased and ultimately, also condemned to die.

The presence of the Baroque in this film is not limited to the four concepts initially proposed to define it. Time and space are submitted to a fragmentation that breaks linearity, causing moments and different spaces to co-exist in the same image. The vertiginous effect of this fragmentation signals not a chaotic ensemble, but the return of that which is always repeated by diverse means. In his analyses of three different films (*Last Year in Marienbad, Ivan, the Terrible*, and *Shining)* that Cyrill Neyrat considers as being Baroque, he comments on this process, mentioning that Gérard Genette would speak of a Baroque idea of existence in which there is a conscious and organized vertigo.[200] Nagiko's life is fragmented in three instances that are superimposed: her past experiences, the texts by Sei Shonagon, and the present

[200] Cyrill Neyrat, " Errance dans les ruines circulaires." *Vertigo*. Special Issue: Projection Baroques (Paris: Jean-Michel Place et Sueurs froides-Vertigo; Marseilles: Musées de Marseille, 2000). 39-50.

moments. The three levels appear in such a way as to emphasize the equivalence between them. Her life is therefore established through a constant returning, as if the diversity of experiences could only lead to the same pre-set points.

The Baroque labyrinth mentioned previously returns therefore as a conceptual idea of existence: as many corridors as there might be, the character is entrapped in one single end. This may be said through an exuberamt variety of means: they will lead, however, not to an innocuous dispersion but to a coherent whole. And thus we are back to the corridors of the castle in *Last Year in Marienbad*. The characters in that film wander through different possibilities of what might have happened in their past without ever achieving a conclusion. When Nagiko is at the publishing house waiting for her lover, she is also waiting for her father, in the same place, a long time ago. Time and space have been put into a grid in which the different cells co-exist side by side, not sequentially. The notion of the Baroque also implies this conception of co-existence that makes every moment proliferate into many, destroying linearity and affirming a different kind of order.

CONCLUSION

In the year 2000, the 500th anniversary of the arrival of the first Portuguese explorers in Brazil was followed by many events, the most important being a mega-exhibition in São Paulo that tried to gather many aspects of the national identity through a panorama of the artistic production generated in the country. One of the most impressive parts of the exhibition was dedicated to the Baroque. A great variety of wooden images of saints was displayed in a huge gallery decorated with waves of paper flowers, in a grand *mise en scène* that was received with either surprise or resistance by the visitors. The statues of the saints were immersed in a forest of artificial flowers in clerical violet and bright yellow, as songs reminiscent of popular religiosity coming from invisible speakers flooded the room. The curators had opted to reaffirm the past intensity of the religious images not only by offering them up for the detached examination of the viewer, but also by recreating as well a new place in which the notion of opulence and festivity inherent to the Baroque could be revived on a contemporary stage. This idea was further underscored by the fact that the exhibition moved from these statues, to larger ones usually carried in processions, and finally led to a room in which contemporary artists displayed works related to Carnival. It is not difficult to imagine the reactions raised against this treatment of images usually seen in the reverential space of churches and museums. Yet, this part of the exhibition raised many questions that are related to what has been investigated in this dissertation.

The restaging of the Baroque encountered its fiercest opponents in those who could not accept that equivalent artistic manifestations could re-emerge in a different historical context. The argument takes for granted a linear historical model that is

contrary to the rhizomatic concept followed in this research. It is obviously true that the historical determinants have changed, but the "coincidences" between the Baroque and many features of Greenaway's work are equally undeniable. In the rhizomatic model, as we have seen, there is no fixed origin that is copied in the future; there are instead reflections through which the original reverberates, albeit undergoing some metamorphosis. If the Baroque Brazilian saints had been displayed in the neutral fashion to which museum visitors are more accustomed, this would not mean that the institutional staging for the pieces would be truly neutral. Glass cases in somber spaces are only an accepted codification of neutrality, and a closer consideration reveals the imposition of a museum code upon the pieces. Once transported to this institutional space the piece has already lost a first level of meaning due to its temporal dislocation. Furthermore, the piece inevitably loses even more of its original meaning in the transposition to a new space – in the very "neutrality" of that space so distant from the churches and the rituals to which they once belonged.

The charged scenery of the exhibition in São Paulo assumed that every dislocation is already an interpretation. We began with an exhibition of Brazilian Baroque art in France, with the huge images of saints expressing pathos either in their facial expressions or in the contorted folds of their clothes. The more recent exhibition of the same subject in Brazil brought the Baroque to a territory in which it seems to be so much at ease as to allow an official institution to assume all the Baroque potentiality for transformation and festivity in the very staging of the exhibition. This metamorphosis finds a parallel in the work of Greenaway and in the general revival of the Baroque.

Greenaway's Baroque

In the work of Greenaway historical paintings were restaged for the cinema with some freedom of adaptation: the Baroque fondness for corporeality, games and death was intensified in contemporary re-creations; allegories proved to be an adequate way of combining fragments that bore testimony to Baroque attitudes. When I asked Greenaway in a workshop in Rio de Janeiro how he saw the relation of his work to the Baroque, he answered that although he assumed this relationship in some of his films, he also worked with other contemporary references. It is not the aim of this dissertation to propose the Baroque as the exclusive key to his work, but to demonstrate how pervasive a historical and artistic period can be as to keep re-emerging in different forms. The very position of assuming the possibility of a contemporary Baroque implies a revival that is not purist, but is able to re-work other influences as well and re-appropriate that which in them also responds to a Baroque sensibility.

In Greenaway's work the past may be revived, but it is by means of a profanation of tradition. Nevertheless, there is a contradictory aspect in this celebrated profanation since Greenaway's work is nurtured by this tradition. Nagiko, the main character of *The Pillow Book*, introduced a foreign culture in the (Western) European scene in which his work develops, but her inspiration came from Sei Shonagon, a writer and lady-in-waiting of ancient imperial Japan. Her main lover, however, is a handsome young British man, though as a male character in Greenaway's scenery he cannot help having his flaws pointed out - he is defined in the script as "flamboyant, lazy, arrogant and parasitic." Greenaway's relation to tradition functions in a double sense: if on the one hand he undermines traditional culture by means of irreverence, on the other hand, he cannot help drinking again and again from this very source, preferably European but irrevocably traditional. His recourse to the Baroque would therefore also respond to this

need to rely on the past. It is not, nevertheless, any past, and it is never an untouched past. Greenaway's reference to the past always implies some transformation of his sources. In addition, he has chosen a historical moment that allow him to deal with certain themes and in a certain manner that tend to seem more radical than the often appreciated cultural standards.

The Baroque is fluid; it is not the territory of certainties and rigid truths.[201] Behind the series of one windmills systematically repeated with small variations, there lies implicit water, a constant presence in his work. After the death of the father, another constant in his work, widow and daughter in *The Draughtsman's Contract* decide to change the garden for which he cared so much in order "to soften its geometrical shapes." All of Greenaway's work could be read as an attempt "to soften geometrical shapes:" the deteriorating bodies of the animals defying the scientific experiments of the brothers in *A Zed and Two Noughts*; the exhibition based on stairs that implied movement in opposition to fixed points; the deteriorating body of the architect; the many falls negating ascension and affirming (decaying) materiality; the countless games with their implicit chance and transformation. And water, a great deal of water, functions, not by chance, as a reminder of the Baroque fluidity implicit to most of Greenaway's work : water trickling in twenty-six bathrooms in a documentary; water gushing from fountains in the exhibition *The Stairs*; water translated into light reflections in the exhibition in Venice; water causing stains and dripping in many of his artworks; water celebrated in

[201] Baroque fluidity is implicit, for example, in the denial of essence and Truth, in reality seen as mere simulations, in the reference to labyrinths as a means to shatter rigid structures in Baroque poetry, in the way eroticism is praised as a de-stabilizing experience. All of these aspects are discussed in relation to the historical Baroque in Patricia Lynn Bornhofen, "Cosmography and Chaography: Baroque to Neobaroque. A Study in Poetics and Cultural Logic" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1995).

the exhibition dedicated to the flight and fall of Icarus; water as the grave for many drowned male characters: Neville, Kracklite, Jake, Hardy, Bellamy and Madgett.

Water is often associated with a dissolution both feared and praised. We need only to recall an allegory of another drowned character re-visited by Greenaway, in order to better understand this ambiguity: death is dissolution but this same dissolution can be wished for. Ophelia submerges in a contemporary swimming pool (fig. 34) in which letters and text have fused with water. Nagiko, in her turn, wishes for a fusion with her lover who IS metaphorically and finally physically associated with a book. Writing has become the space for dissolution, but this writing may be made with letters or images borrowed from different sources.

Jerome, the English translator and lover, who ultimately drowned in ink, reappears many times in Greenaway's work, as a Saint Jerome often de-sanctified and exposed in his decrepit nudity. The translator of Christian knowledge has become a flamboyant, arrogant, charming translator living in Hong Kong, yet it is always a matter of "translators," creatures associated with books and transformation of texts. Creatures who, although linked to something as abstract as knowledge, are nevertheless condemned to reveal themselves in their bare physicality – Adam and Eve revived again and again. Their bodies may so deeply assimilate the urge to be writing as to end up having texts written on them. On the other hand, the writing of a cultural past may so profoundly assimilate an urge to physically exist as to end up assuming diverse configurations as images that plead for a body, and that combine and recombine among themselves with the freedom of mixing liquids.

The desire to make everything speak also embraces space: we have seen how Greenaway wanted to repeat the deed of some painters who succeeded in mingling

characters and space in a single unit. His exhibitions offer another version of this same procedure: light is used to transform the environment, which in turn is constituted not only by images hanging on the wall coming from diversified sources, but also by banal objects transported to a different context that imbue them with a different meaning. The process is similar to Sei Shonagon's lists as she combined different elements in the same gathering, praising both a world of material things and the possibility of playing a game of combinations. Greenaway does the same, having artistic products and ordinary objects as his raw material and making everything converge on the body and physicality in exhibitions in which space itself is charged with meaning.

The exhibitions are, however, ephemeral, and all that lasts from them are the catalogues, the actual source for this research. Not by chance do we find in them well produced books, another game of combinations in which once again new experiments are made with the association of image and text. The catalogues are books for the eyes, as his cinema is a cinema also for the eyes. Page after page, one still leafs through paper pages but they long to become matter as they sparkle with images and letters graphically combined. The result is that research about Greenaway forces one not only to watch luminous images projected on the screen, but also to handle catalogues and books that share with the cinematographic images the same opulence converted now into writing that insists on becoming image. In the Baroque world of Greenaway, everything that flies, falls; in other words, everything succumbs to a material state. Therefore, letters could not be satisfied in remaining mere letters, they have to become also images.

Finally, we may return to a detail of the statue with which we began this dissertation. The fingertips are gently touching the book, but they are not the hands of Japanese calligraphers. The image is golden but the book is fading (fig. 35). There are

no paper clips whose rust has damaged the paper creating a mark that Greenaway would comment on, for example, in one of the works in his map series. In spite of that, the hands are surrounding a stained text. The baby at the end of many of his films has been translated into the encounter of the two generations. Yet, to be Baroque, the child must stand for continuity and also transformation, as all the transformed quotes demonstrate. Religion and books are combined in this late Baroque statue. Still, in this familiar scene, the opportunity for a spectacle must persist: the sleeves and clothes are opulent and ornamented. One does not see the Our Father written on the body of a character. Despite that, there is still an implicit devotion, marred with stains that could be melancholically praised by Greenaway, who nurtured the past with a mixture of overt irreverence and half-disguised reverence. It is not one of the twenty-four books of Prospero bursting with life and living creatures. However, the book has become the center of the spectacle: a book rhizomatically linked to many other hands and books.

The Baroque as a reference

The Baroque discussed here was a result of a dialogue with many texts, not all of them necessarily related to the Baroque. The Baroque itself could be addressed within different perspectives, varying between historical, formal and epistemological. This diversity proved necessary, given the complexity of Greenaway's work. If, for example, there are references to the Counter-Reformation in the exhibition *The Stairs*, a historical Baroque such as the one discussed by Helmut Hatzfeld or Giulio Argan had to be mentioned, even though this was not the main perspective of the dissertation. If Greenaway's reference to the Baroque were limited to historical facts, or if it were based only on formal devices, it would be possible to rely on a single author or at least on a single current in art history to explain the relationship between his work and that

historical period. However, his affinity with the Baroque turned out to be deeper than, for example, a simple reference to the history of, or to a painting from, the seventeenth century. What justifies an approach that uses the Baroque as a key to Greenaway's work is precisely the breadth of his understanding of that period. Therefore the Baroque may underscore the construction of a work, even when it does not overtly refer to it. This occurs because Greenaway's Baroque results from an understanding of fundamental concepts that are at the origin of these very manifestations.

Four of these concepts were proposed here to encompass a definition of the Baroque: representation, movement, melancholy and allegory. They do not exhaust the entire period, but rather offer guidelines to following a theme that could otherwise seem to be a mere chaotic ensemble of references. Each of the above-mentioned concepts could probably be studied in relation to another historical period, but it is their combination that resulted in the Baroque. The second part of the dissertation demonstrated how these themes could be connected in such an intricate way as to be implicit in a film, for example, that apparently has nothing to do with the Baroque, such as *The Pillow Book*.

There is no reference to a Baroque painting in this film, nor to a historical fact related to the period. Yet *The Pillow Book* is perfectly consistent with the rest of Greenaway's work, and it could even be said that this film could not exist if previous works that had already dealt with the same themes had not prepared the way for it. An ideogram is not the same as allegory, but it does use some of its mechanisms, such as the combination of fragments, the understanding of meaning as something malleable, and the belief in the possibility of writing with images. In *The Pillow Book* love is once more an experience of loss that triggers a prolific production of signs: in their grief, the

twins in the film *ZOO* embark on research into the decay of the body, producing series of short films about it; Nagiko, also suffering from grief, produces books. Severo Sarduy comments that the abundance of signs in the Baroque is developed around an empty circle: the emptiness is due to a desire that never pronounces its object, but rather permeates the production of language. Naturally, desire and language are not a theme exclusive to the Baroque; this can be demonstrated, for example, by the texts by Julia Kristeva, to whom the Baroque has never been a theme. Nevertheless, this does not mean that this theme cannot be present in the Baroque, nor that Kristeva cannot offer the bases for an understanding of the processes at work in the Baroque use of a language permeated with desire. Historical facts can explain a period, but this is not the only authentic approach to the Baroque. On the contrary, the debate about the Baroque has been developed instead in different directions, resulting in a complex definition of the theme.

To dismiss the discussion of the Baroque because of this complexity would imply assuming the same simplistic attitude that once dismissed the historical Baroque because of its apparently chaotic nature. Although the Baroque has been a subject for various writers who have chosen different perspectives, there are common points among them, which permit, for example, a discussion of a Baroque cinema. The special issue of the magazine *Vertigo* dedicated to this theme and released forty years after the first issue of another famous magazine about film criticism dedicated to the same theme (*Études Cinématographiques*), demonstrate the persistence of the Baroque as a gender not tied to a historical period. The Baroque appears in the more recent number of *Vertigo* as an amalgam of concepts that, as varied as they are, do allow different writers

to arrive at a conclusion of certain elements that permit a film, or a filmmaker, to be called Baroque.

I had access to this magazine at the time of the very final adjustments to this dissertation and was surprised to find that there was agreement in the approach adopted throughout this discussion on Greenaway and the magazine's treatment of the Baroque in different articles. Foucault, Deleuze, Wölfflin, Eugenio D'Ors and Severo Sarduy were mentioned in that issue's introductory essay, which tries to define the Baroque, acknowledging the variety of definitions implicit in a discussion that has involved influences from art, literature and film criticism.[202] In another article, Cyrill Neyrat offers an analysis of three different films considered to be Baroque. He mentions the Baroque labyrinth, and *Last Year in Marienbad*, addressed here in chapter one, is among the films that he discusses.[203]

A dissertation dealing mainly with the historical Baroque found at the moment of the final adjustments of this dissertation also corroborates the need for a broad perspective about this theme, as it relies on such diverse authors as Lacan, Bataille, Wölfflin, and Ortega y Gasset, to mention only some of them.[204] Patricia Bornhofen dealt mainly with literature from the seventeenth century. However, her approach to the Baroque considered themes that were also discussed in our analysis of Greenaway's work. She comments on, for example, the emphasis in the artificiality of language and representation, instability and multiplicity of meanings, a freer attitude towards canonical tradition, the denial of the discourse of Truth and essence that the Western

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[202] Hervé Aubron, "À rebours," *Vertigo*. Special Issue: Projection Baroques. 5-16.
[203] This article was later assimilated in the dissertation, as it offers a productive discussion on both the labyrinth as a Baroque trait and the notion of time fragmentation that could be seen at play in the film *The Pillow Book*. See note 174.
[204] Patricia Lynn Bornhofen, "Cosmography and Chaography: Baroque to Neobaroque. A Study in Poetics and Cultural Logic".

canon has priviliged. eroticism and trangression as a Baroque fascination. The final chapter of Bornhofen's dissertation brought a greater surprise as the author discussed the possibility of a Neobaroque that she exemplified with the work of Lezama Lima. Severo Sarduy and Peter Greenaway. She analyzes the film *Prospero's Book* in relation to her considerations about the Baroque. in other words. Bornhofen investigates the multiplicity of voices concerned in the film. the reference to the film's own construction. the allusion to books increasing the metaphorical density of the film and the presence of Caliban as the excessive alterity bearing an erotic charge. Although the reference to Greenaway is limited to a specific film. in general. Bornhofen's dissertation further confirms the Baroque's coherence and the possibility of its revival at present.

Baroque and Postmodernism

The discussion about the Baroque cannot ignore the affinity between it and what has been understood as Postmodernism. Notions of allegory. melancholy. and representation proposed here as key terms to define the Baroque and also terms like accumulation. artificiality. appropriation. and hybridization easily identifiable in Greenway's work have been employed in the discussions about Postmodernism as well.[205] Julian Roberts. for instance. investigates the notion of melancholy and the philosophical implications at work in Modernism and Postmodernism in a discussion that is close to our considerations about the theme in relation to the Baroque.[206] These affinities raise the question whether it is useful to introduce a new term such as

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[205] See for example the anthology edited by Nigel Wheale. *Postmodern Arts*. mentioned previously (note 191).

[206] Julian Roberts. "Melancholy Meanings: Architecture. Postmodernity and Philosophy" in *The Postmodern Arts: an introductory reader*. ed. Nigel Wheale (London and New York: Routledge. 1995), 130-149.

"Baroque" in the task, already in itself suspicious, of trying to explain a whole cultural panorama by means of a label.

Part of my resistance to adopt the term Postmodernism stems from the wide variety of aspects it tends to cover. The same could be said, however, about the term Baroque. Theoretical constructs such as the terms Postmodernism and Baroque can easily lead to superficial readings of artistic products, but used with discernment, they do offer important keys to deciphering works and recurrences that would otherwise remain opaque to a critical reading. A superficial employment of labels to explain a whole cultural period can be found in enumerations of a row of disconnected characteristics identified as belonging to Postmodernism or to the Baroque. This can be avoided, however, by investigating the philosophical assumptions that lead to different manifestations, what was pursued in this dissertation with the help of Deleuze's texts. Julian Roberts, mentioned above, does this when he identifies the different philosophical positions of Modernist and Postmodernist thinking. Briefly, they can be resumed as the idea of an abstract knowledge underlying the modern period and its cultural production (more specifically, Le Corbusier's architecture) in opposition to a Postmodern conception of knowledge as being unstable and determined by reality; thus instead of the modern choice for a distant and universal ideal, Postmodernism takes into consideration, for example, historical variants. The Postmodern attitude can be exemplified according to Roberts, in an emphasis on the surface and on historical quotations that he illustrates with architectural instances. We can easily recall Deleuze's statement regarding the denial of a distant essence: "Voilá que tout vient à la surface." And it is not by chance that Deleuze himself is mentioned as being part of this Postmodern thinking.

If we compare what has been discussed here as Baroque to the assumptions about Postmodernism it will seem that both refer to a similar context. However, there are differences between the two. One of the main aspects of Postmodernism is its concern with commodity and mass culture, which has not been a theme within the Baroque. We have seen that as diverse as Greenaway's references might be, they are taken mainly from what has been accepted as "high art". The Postmodern questioning and boycotting of such differentiations as low and high art is therefore not a theme in the Baroque case. Secondly, as much as Eugenio D'Ors may slightly suggest the Baroque as a feminine perspective, it cannot be said that feminism has achieved a weight in the discussions about the Baroque equivalent to that which it represents to Postmodernism. Finally, architecture has been the main theme leading the discussions about Postmodernism, while it may only infrequently be mentioned in the case of the Baroque, and when it happens it is usually in order to refer to historical and not contemporary manifestations of it. Therefore, the term 'Baroque' does not cover many aspects of the contemporary context that have been a subject of the discussions about Postmodernism. Inversely, it can also be said that Postmodernism in its turn, does not explain for example why historical references in the case of the Baroque are mostly centered in a specific historical period. I believe that if it were the case of extending the comparison between the two terms here, Greenway could be one of the best examples of why, despite the similarities, the two terms do not mean the same.

The fact that the Baroque has been adopted by writers like Alejo Carpentier as a means to affirm a Latin American cultural and historical specificity can suggest a solution to the confusion between the Baroque and Postmodernism. In spite of his usual tone of mockery, Greenaway does use and value references that are not the same, for

example, as the references used in Pop Art or more contemporarily, the references to which Cindy Sherman, Barbara Kruger or Jeff Koons would resort. Greenaway occasionally refers to the present but it cannot be said that he values or that he is concerned with mass culture. As was seen in the discussion about the *100 Allegories to Represent the World*, he does work within a European frame and he is not afraid of affirming this.

If we return to the writers who have discussed the Baroque, it can easily be seen that they are mainly Europeans, either French, German, Spanish or Italian. The Baroque has also been a theme for Latin American writers who found in it a model to cope with cultural and geographic specificities that are not European, but seemed to be left apart by discussions on Postmodernism and its implications to the north-American context. This is however a dangerous statement, since we know that effects of mass culture are far from being restricted to the United States. Nevertheless, history, in its turn, has been a cultural item valued mainly in Europe. Both in Europe, as in a less extent in Latin America, history has appeared often as a means of resisting the culture of commodity and its voracious need for novelty.

It can be argued that Postmodernism is the result of a cultural construct that considers the implications of mass culture and treats it critically, albeit absorbing it in its own aesthetics. A Baroque position, on the contrary, makes an effort to justify its choices, many of them coinciding with the Postmodernists's, by means of founding it on a historical period. In this way, history is reaffirmed as a value in itself, deserving to be nurtured. Moreover, the fact that the Baroque, and no other period such as the Renaissance or the Middle Ages was chosen is not arbitrary, as the Baroque does offer the tools that are capable of deciphering a contemporary context that has also been a

subject in discussions about Postmodernism. I do not mean by this that Postmodernism and Baroque are equal concepts that can be used according to the geographic location of those who use the term. Instead, they do serve different needs either for critics or artists that ultimately are related to different assumptions about what art may represent.

The film *The Pillow Book* offers a good example at this point, because, although it proposes some themes that could be regarded as Postmodern, such as multiculturalism, non-linear narrative, or hybridization (cinema, calligraphy, literature), its commitment to the Baroque is evident. This is seen in the need to affirm a historical past that is not chronologically based on the Baroque period but that agrees with our argument about the importance given to history in a Baroque context. Ancient Japan is therefore affirmed as a valuable source not merely of a formal style, as in the case of Postmodern architectural quotations, but as a cultural background capable of providing for Nagiko, the main character, the very tools with which she becomes an active participant in the present.

Greenaway's frequent references to the past, and predominantly to the Baroque period, can be seen as the result of his indirect and constant assertion of the need to save a cultural background from oblivion. The Baroque choice means therefore a compromise with a historical past that is deeper than what happens within the definition of Postmodernism. In short, it could be said that in the case of the latter the present is given the main importance while in the case of the Baroque there is a shift of importance directed to the past and to values that are placed beyond history itself, such as humanism and artistic and cultural production in general.[207]

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[207] See for example the film *The Belly of the Architect* in which the frailty of the human body is opposed to the endurance of architectural heritage. Or we may also consider Greenaway's recurrent affirmation of the "human" continuity by means of a newborn child.

Finally, it can be added that the reference to exhibitions of Brazilian Baroque art in the beginning and in the conclusion of this dissertation was a way of dealing with the mutual implications between Postmodernism and Baroque. A Postmodernist positioning suggests that the subject must announce his or her standpoint, since the subject cannot depart from modern assumptions of universality. I mentioned two Baroque exhibitions related to Brazil that I came across when I was in the process of beginning and finishing the writing of this dissertation. The exhibitions were about the historical Baroque, but as was said earlier,[208] the re-discovery of that period would not be possible if there were not for its presence in the present time. It was possible to admit my own affinity with the Baroque after having made a long exposition of arguments demonstrating the relationship between Greenaway's work and the Baroque. Thus before imposing my own references on the subject investigated, it was demonstrated that the Baroque is implicit in the work of Greenaway . The choice of the subject of the dissertation, nevertheless, was not gratuitous and this is what the two exhibitions indicated.

Deleuze and the Baroque

Throughout this dissertation, Deleuze was often an inspiration to what could be called a Baroque theoretical position. The temptation to see the Baroque as a synonym of chaos can be a simplification to which one may also succumb when thinking of it in terms of theory. It would certainly be safer to rely on a single definition of the Baroque, and to build a rigid argument around it, but this would imply betraying Baroque thought; in addition, such an approach would never be able to respond to the richness of Greenaway's work. Deleuze is the author who seemed to best exemplify how the Baroque can offer a line of argument capable of coping with the particularity of the

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[208] See page 39.

subject. This happens because of his quest for attributing importance to a neglected philosophical tradition and also because of his writings on other themes. Deleuze not only refers to the Baroque itself when he studies the work of Leibniz, but also applies what he learned from the Stoics in his own writings, proposing, for instance, the notion of the rhizome. To think rhizomatically is what was sought in this discussion about the Baroque.

The rhizome does not have a single origin; it is made of a web of connections. It does not have a single face, either; it is multifaceted and communicates with many other rhizomes. It corresponds therefore to an approach to the Baroque that is not based on a single conception of it, but rather admits the complexity of the theme, which can only be rendered by revealing the inter-relation of different rhizomes - considering that different writers, or perspectives, or definitions of the Baroque could replace the term rhizome in this case.

The rhizome is also at the basis of an understanding of the Baroque as a possible contemporary phenomenon, at least in Greenaway's case. It was not within the scope of this dissertation to affirm the presence of the Baroque as a more general choice in contemporary culture, even though there are writers who sustain this position, as has been seen. Nevertheless, to refuse the possibility of relating Greenaway's work to the Baroque would signify not thinking rhizomatically, that is, it would mean accepting only a Baroque that is rooted in the seventeenth century. Greenaway's work is not exclusively Baroque. The Baroque, however, can be found in his work both as references to its historical period, as well as in terms of the use of contemporary Baroque strategies in order to make his films or artworks. To resort to a specific historical period meant therefore not only to refer to its artistic production or to

historical facts, but also to choose a cultural context that has been understood in its fundamental strategies for structuring meaning and making art.

If Deleuze found in the Stoics the basic principles to explain the work of Lewis Carroll, for example, Greenaway also found in the Baroque artistic production (meaning the historical and the contemporary Baroque) the bases to build a work that does not refer necessarily to that period. This is the reason why there can be a connection between a film whose story is situated in the seventeenth century (*The Baby of Mâcon*) and a series of drawings (*The Audience Series*) that refer to a group of anonymous silhouettes not placed in a specific time frame. The two works can only be related because Greenaway's work was not based only on the surface of historical facts. His approach to the Baroque is also connected with the kind of cinema and art that has been gathered under the title of Baroque, and that, as encompassing as its definition might be, remains coherent.

Cinema and Artwork

The relationship between Greenaway's films and artwork, which include graphic work as well as curatorship, was also clarified by the presence of the Baroque. The artwork proved to be not an appendix to his films, but rather a means through which he developed, in other media, ideas that could already be present in the films and that eventually would find a better translation in an exhibition or in a series of paintings. Although commercial restrictions may force a film to follow a narrative, it was seen that Greenaway used many ways to break the linearity of the film's story. If his main concern were indeed to tell a story, his artwork would not be so diverse; it could be limited to figurative painting, for example. His use of a variety of media demonstrates that he is concerned with a translation of ideas into a film, a painting, or an exhibition.

Representation, movement, melancholy and allegory turned out to be a constant presence both in the films and in the artwork. The four concepts may prove to be insufficient to define either the Baroque or Greenaway's work: they do not cover, for example, the Baroque need to build spectacles and to amaze the eyes; nor do they address corporeality, which is also one of Greenaway's major themes. Nevertheless, both corporeality and fondness for the spectacular have been mentioned at various times. The choice of the four concepts to define the Baroque was not arbitrary: in the second part of the dissertation it was seen how they could be so entangled with each other as to make us arrive at a point in which representation, for instance, can no longer be thought of without considering the mobility of meanings present in Greenaway's games, or further still, corporeality could not be thought of without a reference to melancholy and to its allegorical use as a kind of writing.

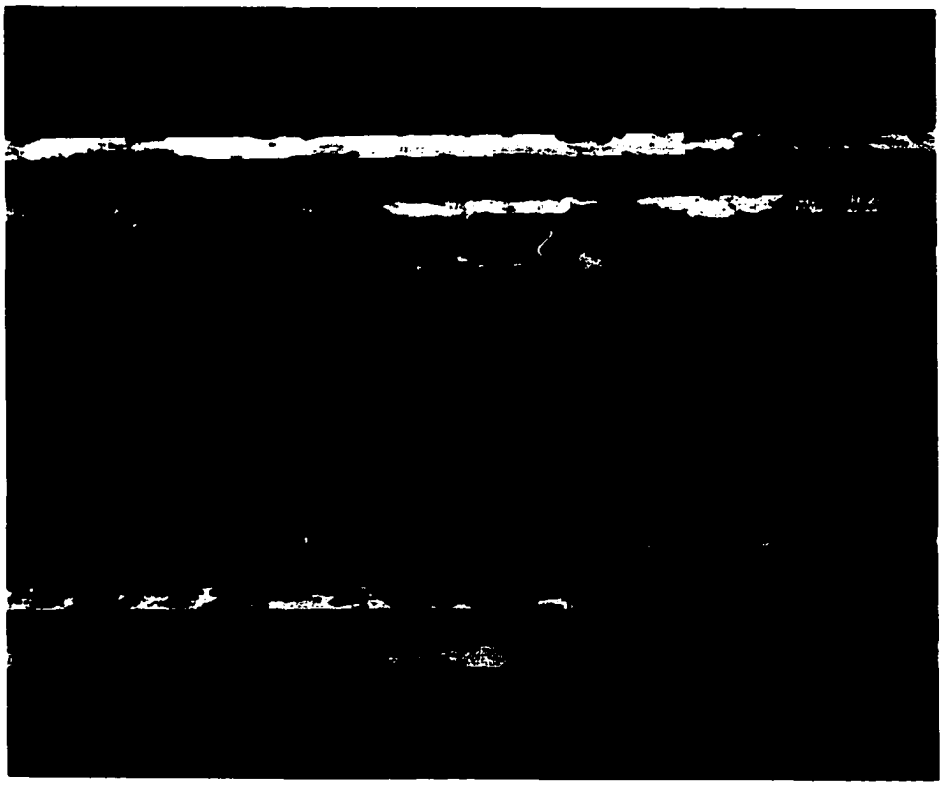
The Baroque offered a link between elements that would otherwise remain disconnected, elements of Greenaway's films, or of his artwork. It also helped to explain the interaction between these two domains of Greenaway's production, revealing themes and strategies that were present in both. The choice of the Baroque as a key to Greenaway's work responds to his preoccupation of maintaining a dialogue with the artistic production from the past. The fact that he chose the Baroque as the historical period that would inspire his work was not fortuitous. It turned out that the Baroque seemed to best translate many of the themes developed in his work, offering the appropriate solutions for the task he engaged in his art. Although Greenaway also cites other references, usually more contemporary to his own work, the Baroque offered the most persistent influence.

Finally, writing about Greenaway's work and trying to decipher the puzzle he proposed by means of associating it to the Baroque instead of exploring a biographical, a formal or a structural perspective, was also a way to share his own belief in a possible dialogue with a cultural background. If the initial and the final parts of this dissertation begin with an exhibition of Brazilian Baroque art, it is perhaps because our investigations into the past, either artistic or theoretical, cannot help but be influenced by the experiences of the present. We have seen that every quotation of a work from the past was always marked by some kind of metamorphosis that did not allow a neutral reference to the original source. The quote that cannot avoid contaminating its reference shows that the Baroque work tends to betray a degree of wonder at its subject and tries to leave a trace of it in its writing. In the case of Greenaway, this writing was made through images and took advantage of their power to astound the eyes.

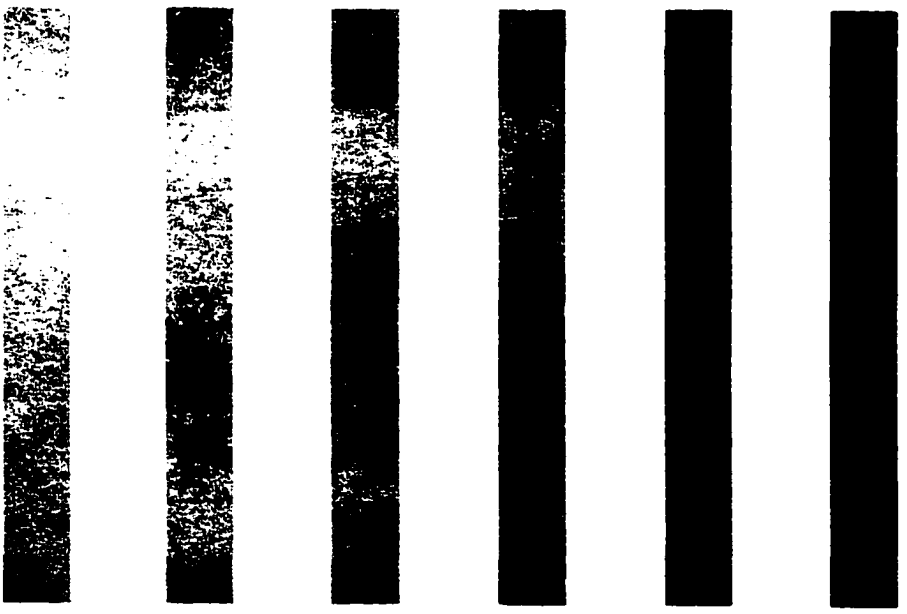
1 - *Sant'Anna*, by Francisco Antônio Lisboa, known as Aleijadinho (1738-1814). Golden and polychrome wood. 95 x 60 x 40 cm. Originally from the Chapel of Nossa Senhora do Pilar, Sabará, MG. Brazil.

2 - Collage *The Falls*, n.d.

3 – Scene of the film *Last year in Marienbad*, by Alain Resnais.



4 - *Landscape Section: Geological Diagram*, 1968. Oil on hardboard. 40.5 x 53.5 cm.

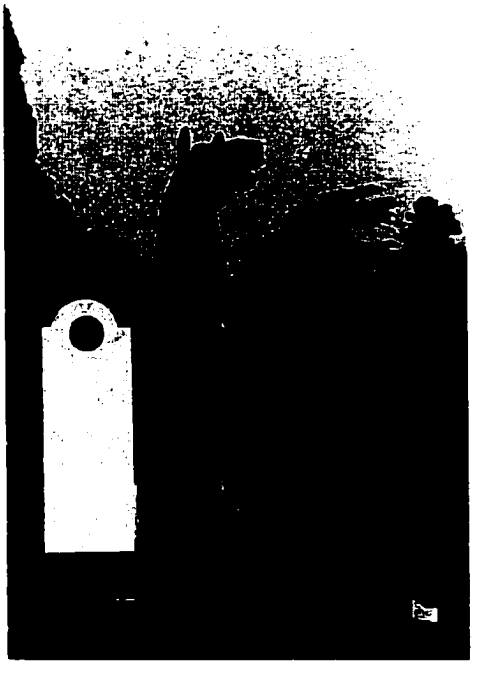


5 - *Stellarscape: Verticals*, 1968. Oil on hardboard. Six panels, each 213.5 x 23 cm.

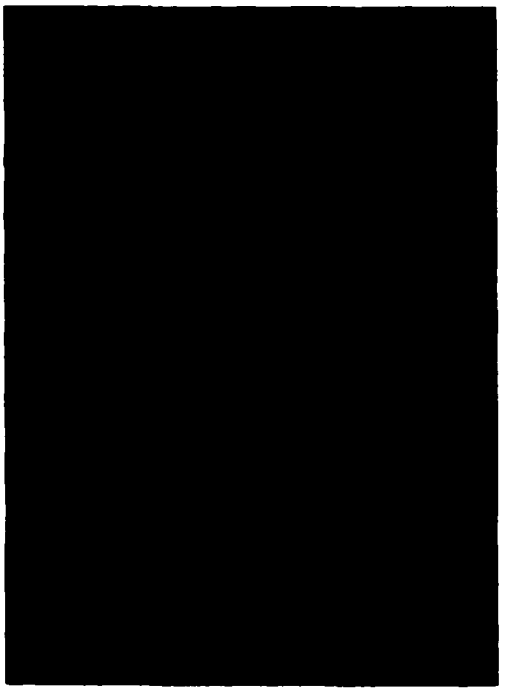
6 - *Pointilist Relief 1 and 2,* 1977. Oil on hardboard. *Pointillist Relief 1*: 85 x 29 x 3.5 cm. *Pointillist Relief 2*: 34.5 x 34 x 13 cm.

7 - *The Frame Series: Byzantium*, 1994. Mixed media on card. 85 x 116 cm.

8 - Detail of a reformer's coat. Exhibition *The Stairs*. Geneva, 1994.

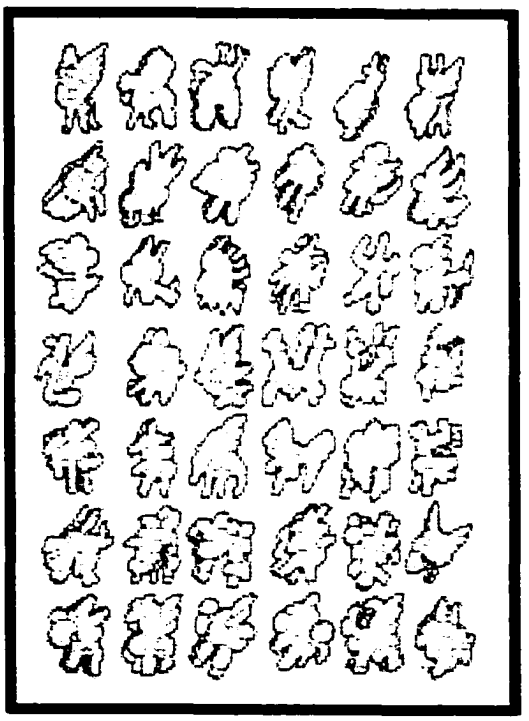


9 - Frame 88 : The lakeside sculpture of a boy and his horse. Exhibition *The Stairs*. Geneva, 1994.



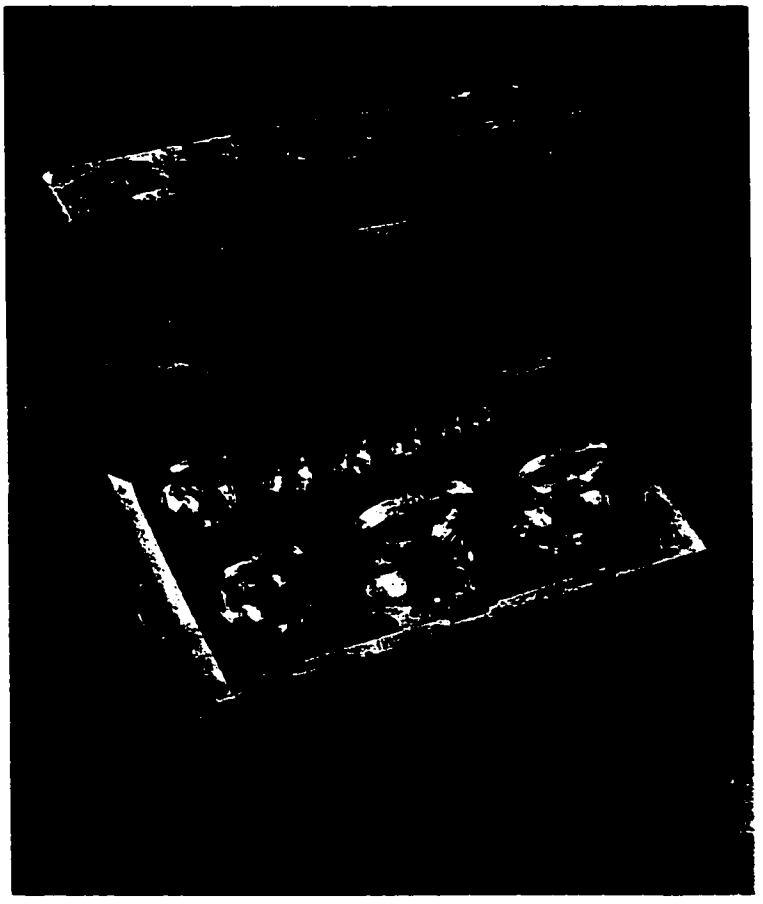
10. *Red Footballers*, 1972.
Oil and collage on harboard.
35 x 25 cm

11. *Routes*, 1986.
Ink on paper.
15 x 24 cm.

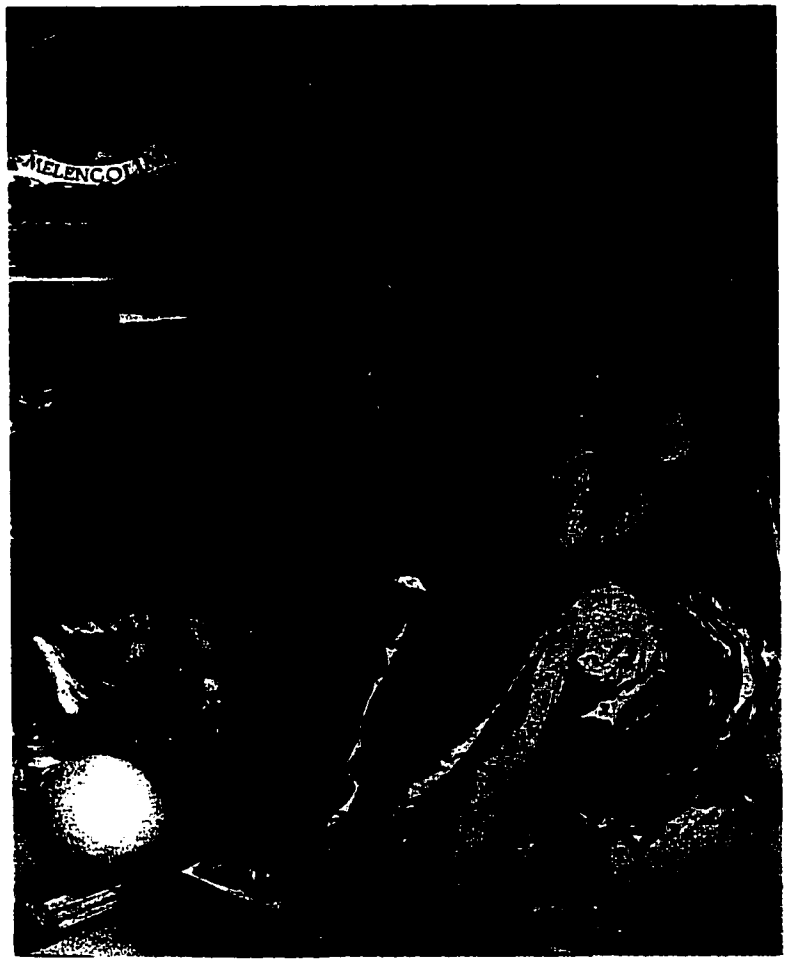


12 - Micro Grains IV, 1967.

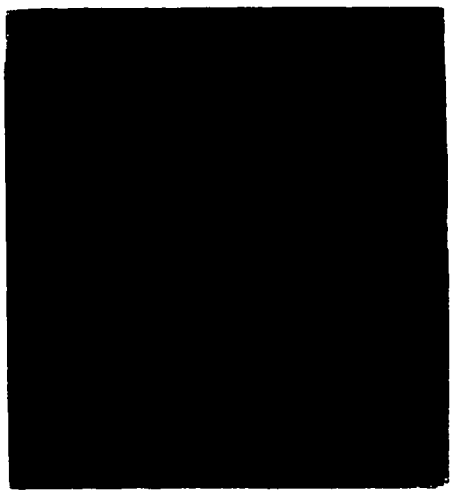
13 - Adam & Eve in the exhibition *A hundred objects to represent the world*. Vienna, Austria, 1992.



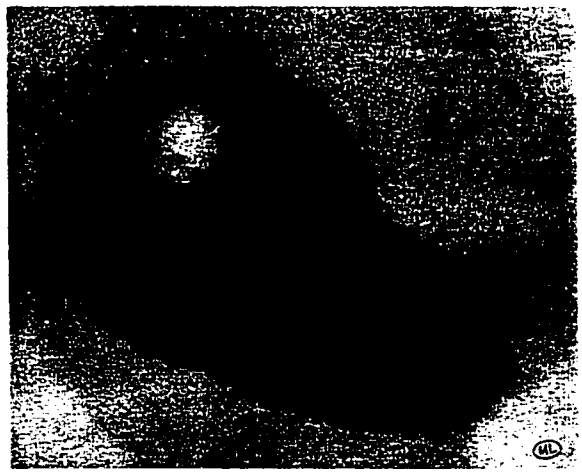
14 - The nine brass weights. Exhibition *Some Organising Principles*. Swansea, UK, 1993.



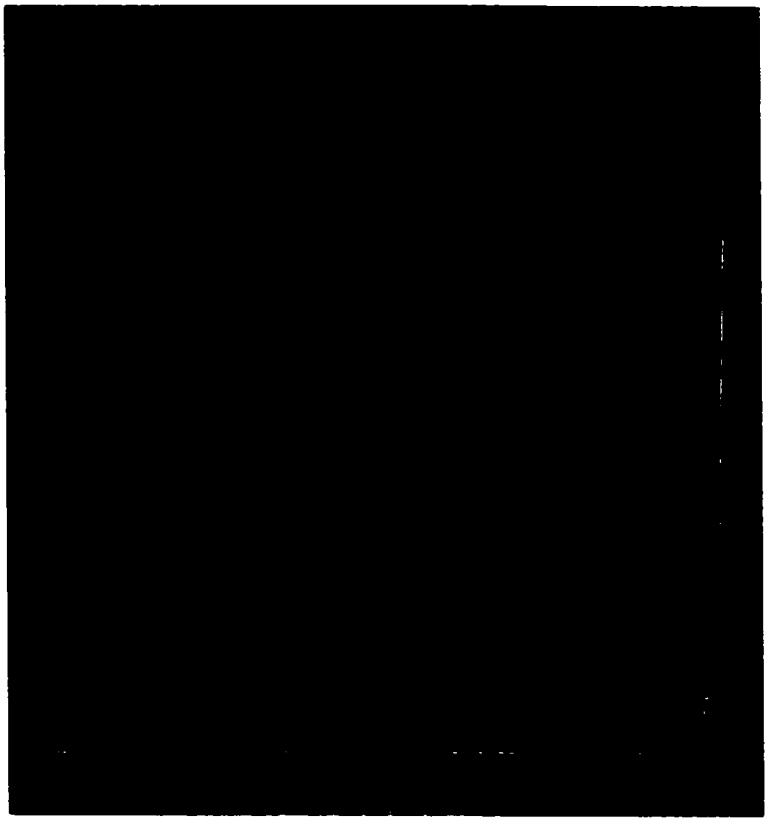
15 - *Melancholia*. Albrecht Dürer. 1514. Engraving. 23.9 x 16.8 cm.



16 - *The Prisoner*. Odilon Redon. 1878.

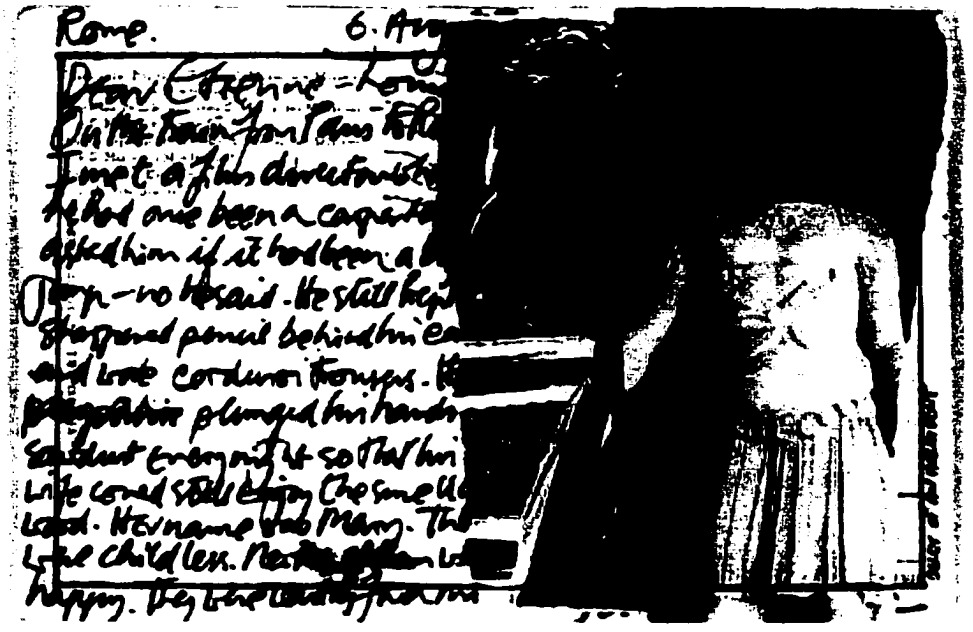


17 - *The Ball*. Odilon Redon. c.1878.

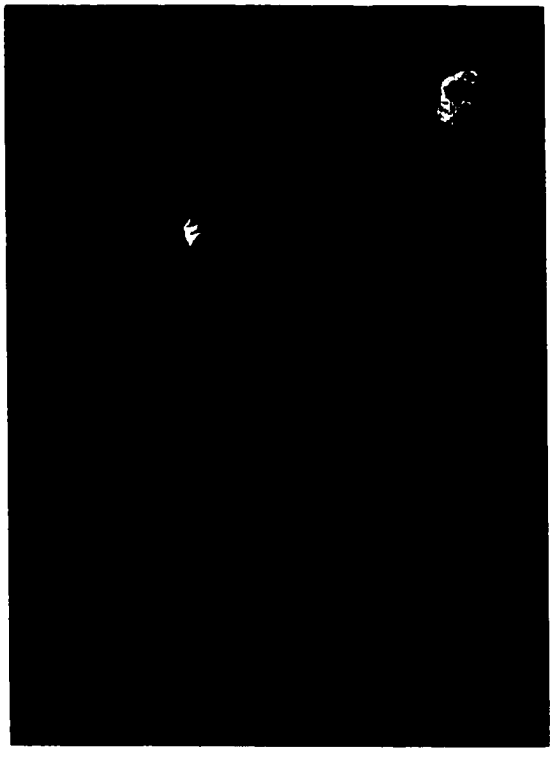


18 -*John the Baptist Game*, n.d. Acrylic on card.

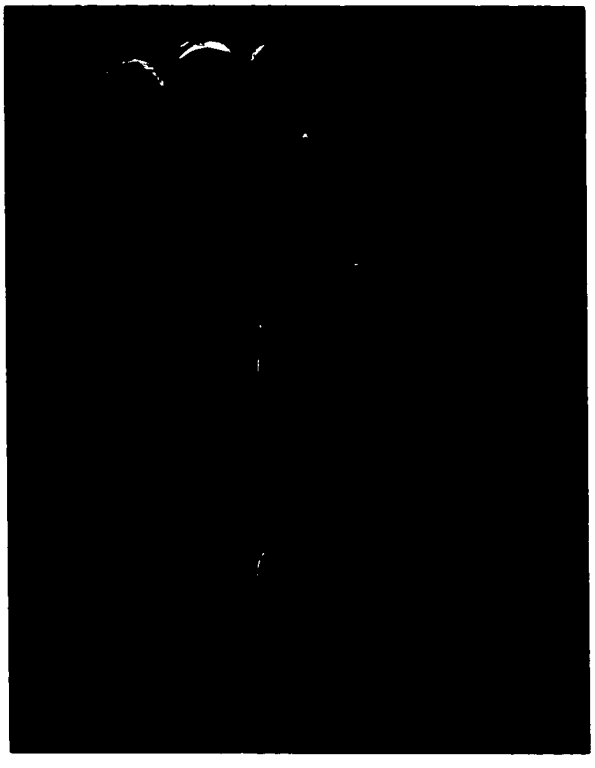
19 - *The Draughtsman's Contract*, 1982. Pencil on paper. 77 x 52 cm.



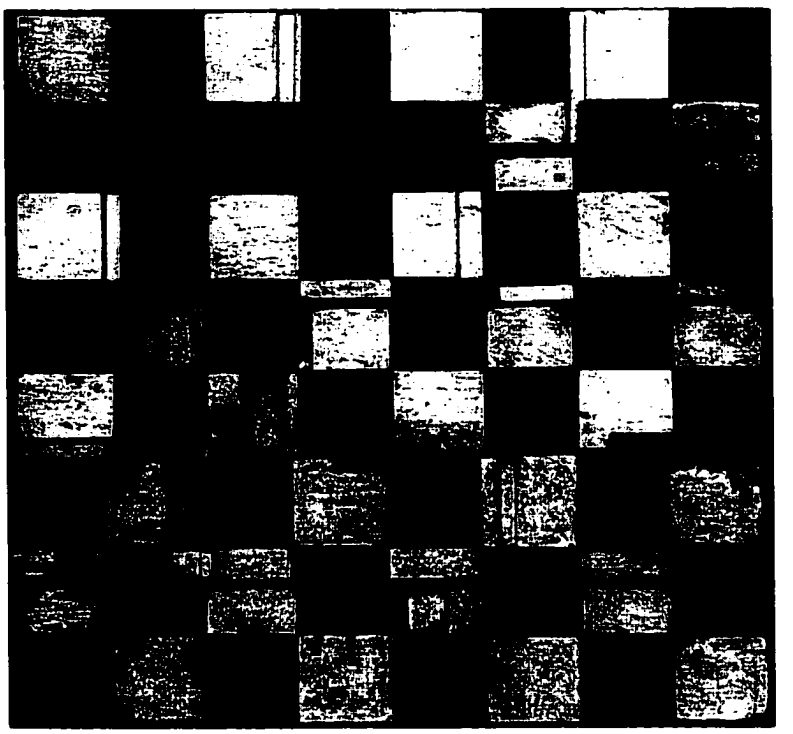
20 – Detail from *8 Roman Postcards: Dear Boulée Three*, 1986. Collage on paper.



21 - *100 Allegories to Represent the World: Number 38 - Orpheus*, 1996. Litho four-color process print of paper. 15.5 x 10.5 cm.

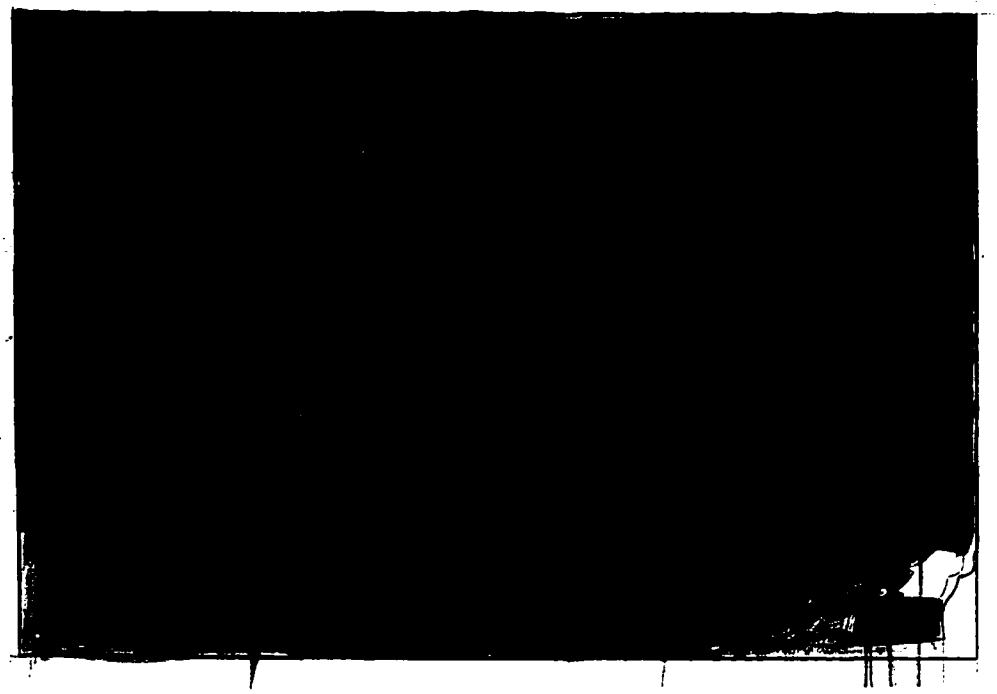


22 - *The Amsterdam Map*, 1978. Mixed Media on paper. 30 x 40 cm.

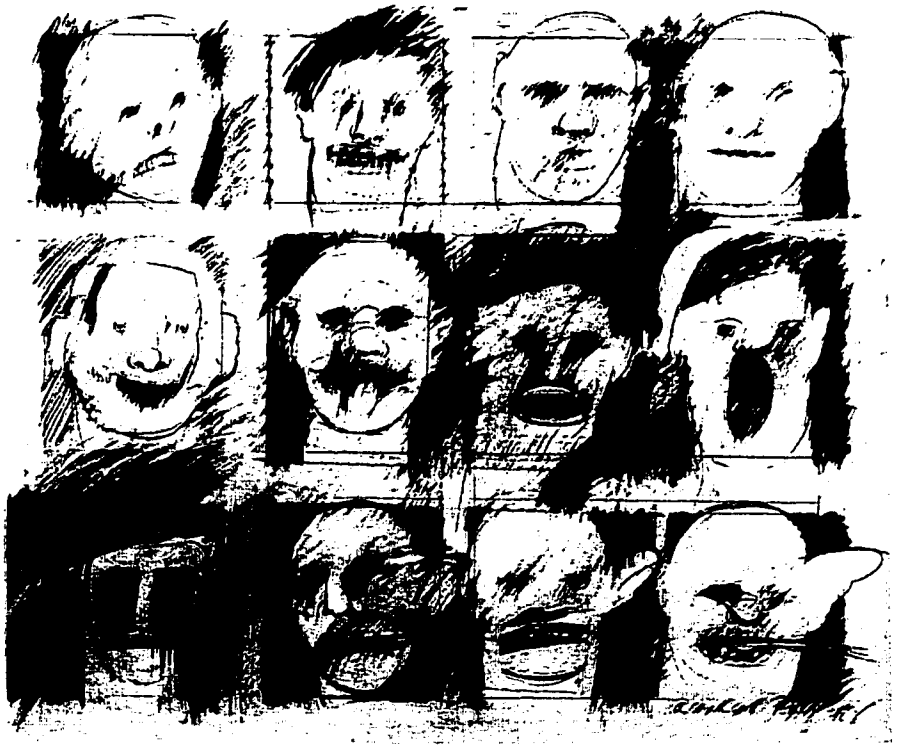


23 - *Gaming Board*, 1968 . Oil and hinges on wood. Approx. 60 x 60 cm.

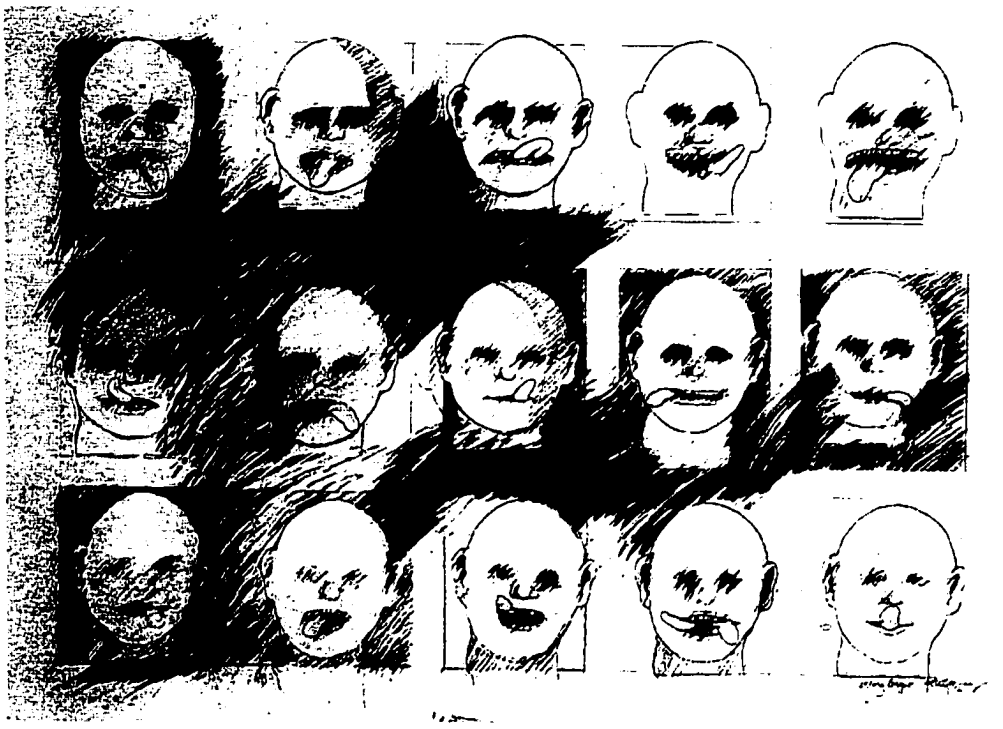
24 - *The football field*, 1978. Mixed media on paper.



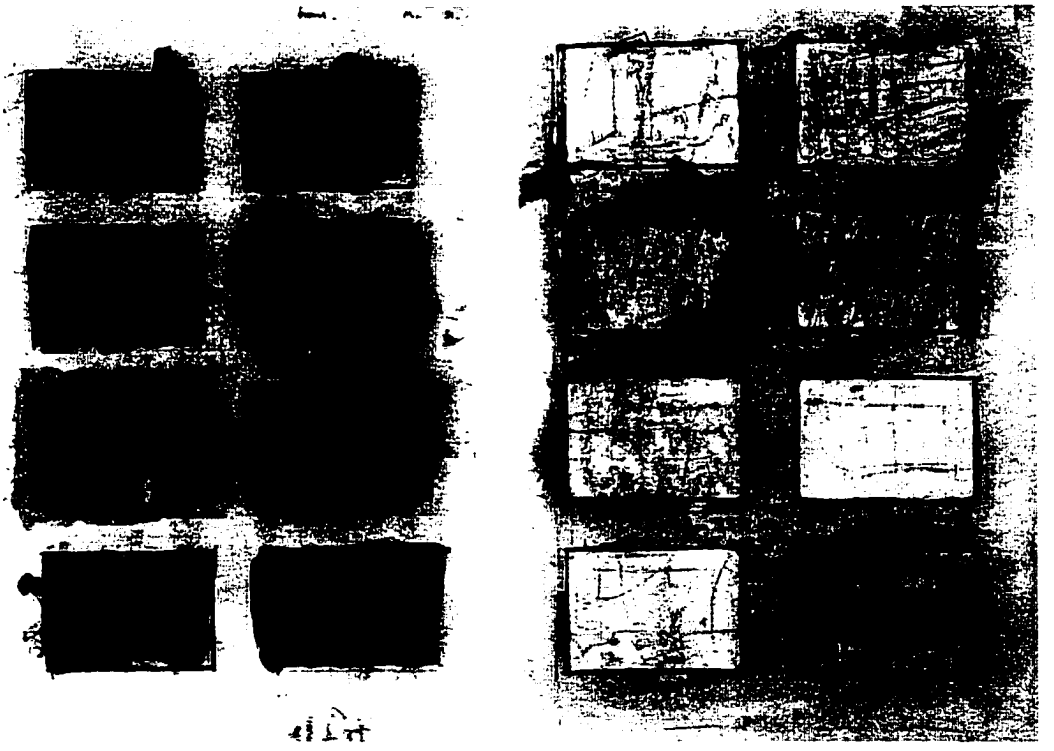
25 - *The Audience Series: Red Twins*, 1993. Mixed media on card. 81 x 112 cm.



26 - *The Audience Series: Pencil Heads*, 1993.

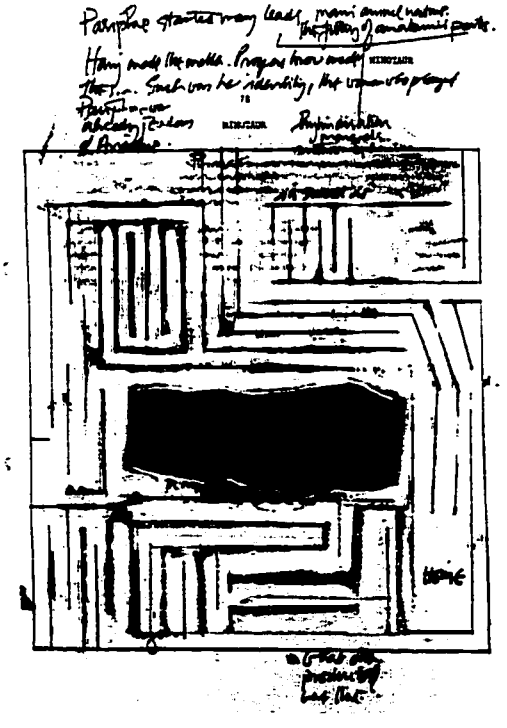


27 – *The Audience Series: A Cast of Tongues* , 1993.

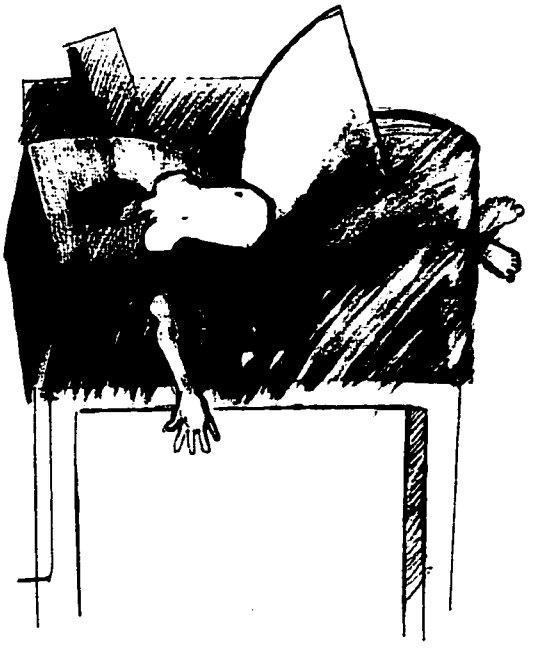


28 and 29 - From the series *A Framed Life,* 1989. Mixed media on paper.

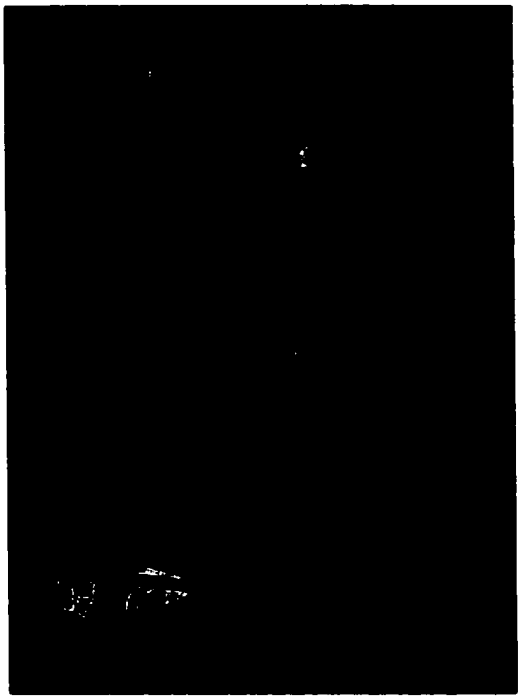
30 - *If only film could do the same ...* 1972. Oil and collage on hardboard. 25 x 35 cm.



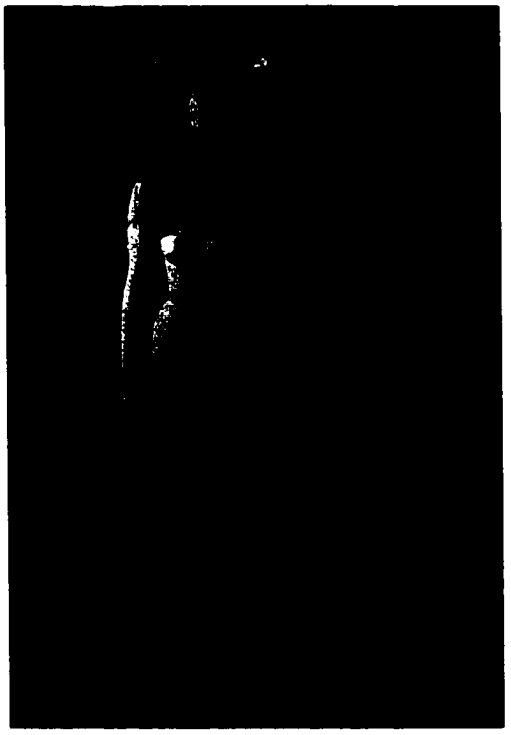
31 – *Prospero's Allegories: Minotaur*
1991. Mixed media on paper
29.5 x 21 cm.



32 - *Prospero's Books: Crucifiction*, 1988.
Pencil on paper. 52 x 71 cm.



33 – *100 Allegories to Represent the World: Number 57 - The Ambassadors*, 1996. Litho four-color process print on paper. 15.5 x 10.5 cm.



34 - *100 Allegories to Represent the World: Number 92 – Ophelia*, 1996. Litho four-color process print on paper. 15.5 x 10.5 cm.

35 - Detail of *Sant'Anna* (fig.1), by Aleijadinho .

FILMOGRAPHY

1962 – *Death of Sentiment* (8 mm)

1966 – *Train* (16 mm, 5 mins)

Tree (16 mm, 16 mins)

1967 – *Revolution* (16 mm, 8 mins)

Five Postcards from Capital Cities (16 mm, 35 mins)

1969 – *Intervals* (16 mm, 7 mins)

1971 – *Erosion* (16 mm, 27 mins)

1973 – *H is for House* (16mm, 10 mins)

1975 – *Windows* (16 mm, 4 mins)

Water ((16mm, 5 mins)

Water Wrackets (16 mm, 12 mins)

1976 – *Goole by Numbers* (16 mm, 40 mins)

1977 – *Dear Phone* (16mm, 17 mins)

1978 – *1-100* (16mm, 4 mins)

A Walk through H (16 mm, 41 mins)

Vertical Features Remake (16mm, 45 mins)

1979 – *Insight. Zandra Rhodes* (16 mm, 15 mins)

1980 – *The Falls* (16mm, 185 mins)

1981 – *Act of God* (16 mm, 28 mins)

1982 – *The Draughtsman's Contract* (35mm, 108 mins)

1983 – *The Sea in their Blood* (16mm, 30 mins)

1983 – Four American Composers (Robert Ashley, John Cage, Philip Glass, Meredith Monk) (16mm, 220 mins)

1984 – *Making a Splash* (16 mm, 25 mins

1984 – *A TV Dante. The Inferno. Canto V* . (video, 10 mins – pilot)

1985 – *26 Bathrooms*. (16mm, 28 mins)

1986 – *A Zed and Two Noughts* (35mm, 115 mins)

1987 – *The Belly of the Architect* (35mm, 105 mins)

1988 – *Drowning by Numbers* (35mm, 119 mins)

1989 – *Death in the Seine* (video, 44 mins)

A TV Dante. The Inferno. Cantos I-VIII. (video, 88 mins)

Huber Bals Handshake (16mm, 4 mins)

1989 – *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* (35mm, 124 mins)

1991 – *Prospero's Books* (35mm, 130 mins)

M is for Man, Music, Mozart (video, 29 mins)

1992 – *Rosa* (35mm, 15 mins)

Darwin (video, 52 mins)

1993 – *The Baby of Mâcon* (35 mm, 122 mins)

1994 – *The Stairs – Geneva* (Betacam SP transferred to 35 mm, 100 mins)

1996 – *The Pillow Book* (35 mm, 118 mins)

1999 – *8 and a Half Women* (35 mm, 120 mins)

Death of a Composer (video)

OPERA

1989 *Rosa*, Amsterdam.

1997 *100 Objects To Represent The World*, Salzburg, Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo, and Paris.

1998 *Christoph Kolumbus*, Berlin.

1999 *Writing to Vermeer*, Amsterdam; 2000: New York and Australia

EXHIBITIONS

1. As a curator:

1991 – *The Physical Self* – Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Netherlands.

1992 – *100 Objects to Represent the World* – Academy of Fine Arts, Hofburg Palace & Semper Deport, Vienna, Austria.

Le Bruit des Nuages – Flying Out of this World. The Louvre, Paris, France.

1993 –*Watching Water* – Palazzo Fortuny, Venice, Italy.

Some Organising Principles. Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, Swansea, UK.

The Audience of Mâcon. Ffoto Gallery, Cardiff, UK.

1994 – *The Stairs, Geneva, The Location*. Geneva, Switzerland.

1995 – *The Stairs, Munich: Projection*. Munich, Germany.

1996 – *In the Dark*. Hayward Gallery, London, UK.

Cosmology at the Piazza del Popolo, a history of the Piazza from Nero to Fellini using light and sound. Rome, Italy.

1997 – *Flying over Water*. Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona, Spain.

2. Solo Shows:

1988 – Broad Street Gallery, Canterbury, UK.

1989 – Arcade, Carcassone, France.

Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France.

1990 – Nicole Klagsbrun Gallery, New York, USA.

Australia Centre of Contemporary Art, Melbourne, Australia.

Ivan Dougherty Gallery, College of Fine Arts, Australia.

The University of New South Wales, Paddington, Australia.

Cirque Divers, Liège, Belgium.

Shingawa Space T33, Tokyo, Japan.

Altium, Fukoa, Japan.

Dany Keller Galerie, Munich, Germany.

Video Galleriet, Copenhagen, Denmark.

Kunsthallen Brandts Klaedefabrik, Odense, Denmark.

Galerie Xavier Hufkens, Brussels, Belgium.

1991 – Watermans Gallery, Brentford, England.

City Art Center, Dublin, Ireland.

1992 – Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst, Bremen, Germany.

Nicole Klagsbrun Gallery, New York, USA.

1994 – Arizona State University Art Museum, Tempe, Arizona, USA.

Gesellschaft für Max Reinhardt Forschung, Ssalzburg, Austria.

1995 – Centre PasquART, Biel-Bienne, Switzerland.

Nicole Klagsbrun Gallery, New York, USA.

Dany Keller Galeria, Munich, Germany.

1996 – Le Case d'Arte, Milan, Italy.

Glaerie Fortlaan 17, Ghent, Belgium.

1998- Sesc Vila Mariana, São Paulo, Brazil.

Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Cornerhouse, Manchester.

Talbot Rice Centre in Edinburgh

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_____ . "Le grand théâtre du monde" *Magazine Littéraire* 300 (June 1992): 56 – 75.

_____ . "L'oeil Baroque de la caméra" in *Raoul Ruiz*, Christine Buci- Glucksmann and Fabrice Revault D'Allones. Paris: Dis Voir, 1987.

_____ . *La Raison Baroque: de Baudelaire à Benjamin* (Baroque Reason: the aesthetics of modernity). Paris: Editions Galilée, 1984.

Calabrese, Omar. *Caos e Bellezza: Immagini del neobarocco.*. Milano: Domus Academy, 1991.

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Carpentier, Alejo. "L'éternel retour du baroquisme." *Magazine Littéraire* 300 (Special Issue: L'Âge du Baroque) (June 1992): 27 – 31.

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Lopes, Denilson. *Nós os Mortos: melancolia e neo-barroco*. Rio de Janeiro, Sette Letras, 1999.

Moser, Walter. "Versões do Barroco: Moderno e Pós-moderno" *Sociedade e Estado*. Vol VIII. n. 1/2 (December/January 1993): 39-56.

Neyrat, Cyrill. "Errance dans les ruines circulaires." *Vertigo* (Special Issue: Projection Baroques): 39-50. Paris: Jean-Michel Place et Sueurs froides-Vertigo; Marseille: Musées de Marseille, 2000.

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_____. *Escrito sobre um corpo* (Written on a body). São Paulo: Perspectiva, 1979.

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