aesthetic gigantism, evocations of disorder and chaos, knots, labyrinths, doubles, and a tendency endlessly to reproduce versions and subversions of other works.

Given this span across forms, genres and periods, the point of view suggested by Moret in the epigraph Severo Sarduy uses for "The Baroque and Neobaroque" seems both wittily evasive and a necessary caution:

> It is legitimate to transpose the artistic notion of the baroque to literary terrain. These two fields offer remarkable parallelism from various points of view; they are equally undefinable.[3]

The interdisciplinary neobaroque notwithstanding, the suggestion of an analogy between the baroque and what is conventionally called the postmodern is most established in experimental Latin American literature of the twentieth century because, Sarduy argues, the attention to resemblance in the form of artificiality, parody, pastiche and intertextuality present in the twentieth-century fiction of Sarduy himself, Alejo Carpentier, Carlos Fuentes, Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Jorge Luis Borges, is the negotiation of a stream which has run through Latin American art since Gongora and Cervantes in the 1600s. As Linda Hutcheon points out in the introduction to *Narcissistic Narrative,* this tradition offers a pertinent cultural critique of the Anglocentricity of literary criticism, problematising both the "post-" and the "modernism" in postmodern fiction, as well as bringing in the wider history of colonial resistance and subversion John Beverley documents in *Against Literature*.[4]

Nevertheless, it's still worth bringing this emptied-out tag to mind—perhaps only as a telling paradox—because the term "postmodern" seems, at present, to give the quickest sense of twentieth-century versions of the conceits Foucault finds in the seventeenth century, where, he writes, formal games "grow out of the new kinship between resemblance and illusion."[5] In this kind of construction, resemblance is both exciting and disconcerting: "the chimeras of similitude loom up on all sides, but they

are recognised as chimeras; it is the privileged age of *trompe-l'oeil* painting, of the

Threading together the seventeenth and twentieth centuries seems reckless, sophist even; it implies a disregard for the four hundred or so years in between, a glossing

and nowhere.[10] There is a built-in bathos to assertions about the baroque because in both seventeenth- and twentieth-century guises it is a form that stands poised to deconstruct itself. The kind of de-centring, de-naturalising reading practised by the post-structuralists is suggested in the seventeenth century by a form that announces itself as already gloriously artificial. Perhaps this is why Borges, in a quotation almost as well repeated as Foucault's, defines the baroque as not only "that style that deliberately exhausts (or tries to exhaust) its own possibilities, and that borders on self-caricature," but, after Bernard Shaw, as a deliberate play on the fact that "all intellectual labour is inherently humorous."[11]

This excited feeling of play and the anxious worry about error permeate the secondary texts as well as the primary ones. Part of the agitation surrounding "resemblance" comes from the fact that we are working not with items but with a kind of contagious relationship, a tradition that ritually repeats in each new version the same canonical critical texts (Foucault, Borges, Sarduy, *Las Meninas,* the uncertain etymology of the word "baroque"), and a tradition that finds novelty only in the return—in Menard's *Quixote*. The other part of the concern is that we are dealing with a tradition that tells us about its own tradition of telling us about itself, which we, as critics, must repeat again in order to contextualise our own versions. As Lambert and Harbison imply, it is impossible to ascertain if the resemblance is borne out of our search for it—implicit in Henri Focillon's summary of baroque style in *The Life of Forms* is the suggestion that writing about the historical baroque is itself a formally baroque thing to do:

> Baroque forms … live with a passionate intensity a life that is entirely their own, they proliferate like some vegetable monstrosity. They break apart even as they grow; they tend to invade space in every direction, to perforate it, to become as one with all its possibilities. … They are obsessed with the object of representation; they are urged toward it by a kind of maniacal "similism." … An interest in the past is awakened, and baroque art seeks models and

> examples and confirmations from the most remote regions of antiquity. But what the baroque wants from history is the past life of baroque itself.[12]

The critical knot here is not just that Maravall's list of the tropes of the seventeenth century seems to reflect the plots of many twentieth-century metafictions, but that the way of seeing engendered by the self-

spent so liberally that it leaves a kind of telling distortion. (The Portuguese *barocco* is a large, irregularly shaped pearl, the result of natural forces flowing in unusual directions, and, as Lambert demonstrates, the logical term “baroco” is the acronym for one of the figures of syllogism.) Baroque style unites extreme formalism and intense desire, it gives a sense of energies in suspension, of process and structure. Indeed, in Heinrich Wölfflin’s influential opposition between baroque and renaissance form, the problem with the baroque *is* this quality of agitation. Each renaissance form, he writes, “has been born easily, free and complete,” “everything breathes satisfaction” and a “heavenly calm,” but the baroque, he maintains, “never offers us perfection and fulfilment, or the static calm of ‘being,’ only the unrest of change and the tension of transience.”[15]

This contrast between renaissance “being” and baroque “becoming” acts as a receptacle for the accusation of decadence clinging to the baroque, as well as, much later, for the twentieth-century valorisation by theorists like Calabrese, Eco, Deleuze and Buci-Glucksmann. For Wölfflin the baroque is both an art of desire and an art that provokes desire:

> It wants to carry us away with the force of its impact, immediate and overwhelming. It gives us not a generally enhanced vitality, but excitement, ecstasy, intoxication. sti6(d ,)-6(sacd ,)g

perhaps even a mode of collusion.[32] As Maravall writes of the seventeenth century, the fluid boundaries between actor and spectator, reality and irreality, serve "not to make the disillusioned individual abandon the world, but rather to teach him or her how to adapt to it."[33] In some ways, this might be taken as a description of how critical readers can remain fascinated with a work after the initial rapture, or conversely, engage with a text that they have never been convinced by. In narrative forms, or those plastic forms (like the Cornaro Chapel) that use such a large space they force us to consume them over time, minute by minute, one may move between the pull of the diegesis and a connoisseurship or criticism of production—and repeated readings of the same text might encourage this shift. Self-conscious fiction, I would suggest, encourages it even more.

It's perhaps then not coincidental that science fiction, spectacle cinema, and baroque art enter into both cultic and camp histories, and that self-conscious fiction has been so popular in the university. The dual mode of fascination that I have been arguing for encourages this re-visiting and re-valuing; indeed, Nabokov suggests that "curiously enough, one cannot read a book: one can only reread it. A good reader, a major reader, an active and creative reader is a rereader. […] The very process of learning in terms of space and time what the book is about, this stands between us and artistic appreciation."[34] Because broadly realist forms still constitute the aesthetic norm, there is a sense here that aesthetic virtuosity might constitute a form of self-reflexivity, even when the author or spectator isn't obviously doubled; characteristically, Nabokov turns the usual patterns on their head to suggest that the diegetic illusion is the distraction. vaaac /P <</Mca3.52 0 guingy douac illusi6(s)7

but on a rhetorically more equal footing than in the Classical "top-down"

looked at as a unified surface the barely-contained desire in the form and content of Bernini's *Teresa* would ebb out to eroticise its whole environment.)

Ndalianis makes much of the constraints broken by a cinema which attempts, like Bernini's sculpture, to meld together the space between fictional and real worlds,

Catholic authority. Documents show that the design and the main sculpture is by Bernini's hand, as is the bust of the Cornaro who was still alive to pay for the sculpture, but the other figures were studio pieces. Still, the signature of design suggests we read it as a Bernini, just as its presence in a church, in Rome, suggests we read it as Catholic.

How much of this so-called "excess" is bound up with market-place conditions is a moot point. Part of the opulence of the baroque, like that of the Hollywood spectacle cinema, comes from this mass urban market; in a small feudal community one would know authority without such obvious markers. Paz proposes that the new emphasis on individual style rather than content in the seventeenth century was partly as a consequence of patronage: "as soon as collectors and cognoscenti appreciated the artist's personality more than the subject of his works, *manner* predominated."[45] The number of generic conventions and subjects for the visual arts must have exacerbated mannerism—as with the current marketing of most blockbuster movies as *auteur* pieces, a strongly signed style allows a consumer to sort between resemblances. Given the institutional remit to dazzle, in both Hollywood and Counter-Reformation contexts, manner seems to be as much a function of the market-place as it is of individuality. What a return to the baroque brings with it here is a way of avoiding the simplistic Romantic paradigm of the author as garretted genius. As products of groups and institutions, this god-like singularity never ranges true for film or architecture anyway, nor is it terribly helpful for reading literature by the likes of Borges or Eco, who stress how language has a dual existence both as an individual, internalised cypher and a socially and historically determined construct.

Perversely, there is also a sense that the excesses of baroque might go beyond an easily anchored authorship; this extreme attention to the materiality of construction

means that its products are easily dandified by a reader with mischievous intent, taken out of context and prized for the fragment, the disembodied surface, and the beautiful fetish piece. In narrative forms this kind of Barthesian bliss is far more difficult to maintain, unless one makes a constant effort to give up the pleasures of linguistic sense for a more abstract, atomised pleasure—the sentence tends to win against the word. In the case of Bernini's *Teresa*, Bauer tells us that "to its countless admirers, the sculpture was a brilliant and proper realisation of the transport of Divine Love;" however, the richness and durability of its material existence also makes plausible Harbison's more wry, worldly reading of the sculpture as a glorification of earthly riches, lusciously gaudy, a "vulgar and distracting luxury."[46] The beauty of the "buttery cream" marble seems a stronger suggestion, historically, than the magnificence of the Catholic Church, and it seems that the commissioning Popes understood this, because many of the marbles for Counter-Reformation pieces were removed from Classical, pagan sites.[47] The fact that the virtuosity of the historical baroque is in a grand religious mode, largely alien to a twentieth-century spectator, further increases the space for subversive readings. It is this fall from the heights of devotion that allows for the camp emphasis on excess that Calloway's Art Nouveau and Derek Jarman's *Caravaggio* read in the baroque, but also for the wider re-appropriation of baroque tropes by magic realist fiction, where the text repeatedly rehearses this balance on the edge of fictional belief.

Still, when narrative is allowed to do its work, there is a degree to which those novels that come out of the self-conscious tradition of *Don Quixote*, Fielding and Sterne might be said to act out an "argument by design" for the author-god. In something like Nabokov's *Pale Fire,* or John Fowles' *Magus*, the existence of a controlling author-god is "proved" with each coherent pattern within their glittering

surfaces, whilst the enigmas of the text send the reader repeatedly back into their substance to find other parts of the design, and other affirmations of an over-arching virtuosity. The thematisation of magicians

What a baroque aesthetics of "second sight" argues is that neither centred nor centre-less model is innocent, and, as in the rhetorical model the seventeenth century prized so highly, no authorship comes without the associated problem of power. Even a narrative and visual model that opens itself up to create the spectator as centre does not destroy authority; the devil is preserved in the detail, and even when the illusion of a second universe has disappeared, we still linger to see how it was done. The openness of a work to multiple readings only makes the enigma more durable. Fiction

[27] Quoted by Ndalianis, 165.

[28] Sjöström quoted by Ndalianis, 165.

[29] Ndalianis, 209.

[30] Octavio Paz, *Sor Juana, or, the Traps of Faith*, trans. Margaret Sayers Peden (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1988), 50.

[31] Robert Alter, *Partial Magic: The Novel as a Self Conscious Genre*