2023

THE BAROQUE PHOTOGRAPH: PALERMO, STREET PHOTOGRAPHY, AND THE FOLD.

Cole, Martin

UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH

THE BAROQUE PHOTOGRAPH: PALERMO, STREET PHOTOGRAPHY, AND THE FOLD

by

MARTIN COLE

A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth in partial fulfilment for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

School of Art, Design and Architecture.

March 2023

Author's Declaration

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Doctoral College Quality Sub-Committee.

Work submitted for this research degree at the University of Plymouth has not formed part of any other degree either at the University of Plymouth or at another establishment.

This thesis has been proofread by a third party; no factual changes or additions or amendments to the argument were made as a result of this process. A copy of the thesis prior to proofreading will be made available to the examiners upon request.

Word count of main body of thesis....47855

Signed.....

Date.....30/05/23

Table of contents

List of Illustrations

The Baroque Photograph: Palermo, Street Photography, and the Fold. By Martin Cole.

Abstract

This practice-led research project comprises a body of photographs taken in the historic centre of Palermo, the capital city of the island of Sicily, together with a contextual essay. Taken over five years using handheld cameras, the images comprise an extended picture essay, the main output of which is a book.

That book's visual narrative is driven by what is identified as the baroque nature of the Palermo environment. As cultural artefact and living city, Palermo incorporates the three tropes of baroque culture identified by the cultural critic Walter Benjamin (1892–1940) and philosopher Christine Buci-Glucksmann, namely the Labyrinth, the Ruin, and the Archive. This research project investigates the idea that, in this location, the Baroque is not merely a quality pertaining to the history of art or architecture but also an operative force, both within memory and within the present-day workings of the city and its population.

Palermo, as a baroque space, is approached as non-linear, multi-faceted, and folded. These qualities are interrogated through photography, informed by local and regional histories, for instance, the short stories, novels, and essays of the Sicilian writer Vincenzo Consolo (1933–2012), street photography, the paintings of Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1571–1610), and contemporary reflections on the Baroque, particularly in the work of philosopher Giles Deleuze (1925–1995), art historian Mieke Bal (1946–), and cultural theorist Iain Chambers (1949–). This constellation of influences combines in a *meshwork*[1] of ideas that, as manifested in the photographs, re-conceptualise street photography as a contemporary baroque practice.

[1] Tim Ingold, *Lines* (London: Routledge Classics, 2016).

Introduction

The two principal research questions consider, first, a definition of baroque space, and how such a space is manifested in the environment of central Palermo. Second, I consider the extent to which the activity of street photography may be considered a contemporary baroque activity/practice.

Although street photography was the chosen vehicle for the practice, the history of street photography, which is mentioned and referenced at certain points, is not the main focus of the research. Rather, I wanted to use street photography as a method to investigate the baroque characteristics of the place, and following on from and connected to that, to look at how street photography itself has inherently baroque characteristics, particularly in relation to the art of Caravaggio, whose works relate strongly; both to the street (in this case the actual streets I have photographed), to photography, and more broadly to lens-based media as I demonstrate in Chapter Three: Imaging the Baroque.

This research project arose from a series of visits to Palermo between 2013 and 2019. It is led by a photographic practice that seeks to do more than to record that city's significant qualities. Through an understanding of the relevant contexts—historical, cultural, political—the project also adopts an approach and method through which the act of photography may become specific to the city itself.

To start with, this rapidly developed into an enquiry into the ideas and principles of the Baroque. This aesthetic movement dominated Europe immediately following the Renaissance, and profoundly shaped the historic heart of Palermo. From this consideration of the Baroque, I was naturally led to the paintings of Caravaggio, whose celebrated association with the city infused it with a particular visual spirit.

My first visit to Palermo took place in the summer of 1995. I did not travel with the intention of taking photographs: at that time, my practice involved photographing images from television and representing them as cultural artefacts. Instead, I had gone to visit family friends. I was staying with a photographer who had been part of *Laborotoria d'if*, an anti-Mafia collective that, during the Mafia wars of the 1980s, was led by renowned social activist Letizia Battaglia (1935–), who was also a photographer. The Mafia wars devastated Sicilian society. They culminated in the 'Maxi' trials of 1992, in which the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the Italian state attempted finally to curb the power of the Sicilian Mafia. The success of these trials—underpinned by 100,000 troops from mainland Italy—was soon soured by the assassination of the two lead prosecutors.

During my first visit to Palermo three years after these events, a *de facto* night-time curfew remained in place in the city. I was staying in the modern suburbs, home to most of Palermo's citizens, where tower blocks stretch for miles along the coastal plain to the foothills of the mountains named after the city. At night, my hosts would drive us through these urban canyons into the old town: a dilapidated labyrinth of partially ruined palaces,

churches, and market *piazzas*, barely lit and largely deserted after dark. In this context, haunted as it was by the Mafia wars, Palermo proved to be an assault on the senses, even an assault on reason. It was certainly an assault on my northern European sensibilities. I found myself both confused and beguiled. I recognised the city as European, but it was also unquestionably 'other'. It was hard to define where exactly this 'other' place was. Its quality was not simply non-European, or second-world, or third-world. It was a baffling multiculturalism, hardly utopian, but nevertheless an outgrowth of networks of potent connections. Against a historical backdrop of Phoenician, Greek, and Roman architecture and artefacts, various nationalities inhabited the modern city—African, Tamil, Filipino, and Chinese. Each of these groups had their own connections to the island of Sicily, largely outside the dominant colonial networks of Northern Europe. Palermo struck me as a singularity within the concept of Europe. It was a place in which assumptions about modernity and modern social constructs began to unravel. In its everyday scenes, I glimpsed instead a parallel, alternative form of modernity that revealed itself to me visually, but also through Sicily's historical and contemporary literature and other cultural products. It was from this acute perception of the city that I determined to begin a photographic enquiry.

Consequently, I shifted my practice. In place of an approach based on appropriation, I adopted a more traditional one based on documentary, initiating a record of Palermo commissioned by the arts organisation *Photoworks*. Initially, I chose to photograph the essentially topographical landscapes of the city and its environs. The images were modelled loosely on those of topographical photographers such as Stephen Shore (1947–) or Andreas Gursky (1955–). They also referenced the work of lithographer Abbe Jean Houël (1735–1813), who travelled to Sicily as part of the eighteenth-century Grand Tour phenomenon. Houël's work simultaneously expressed a modern mapping reflex alongside an inward-

Martin Cole. *Wine Dark Sea* (2003), Palermo.

facing romantic tendency. These images successfully captured my desire to 'map' Palermo, but also revealed the superficiality of my understanding of the place.

In 2002, my photo essay was published as a book entitled *Wine Dark Sea*. The book also included archival images from The Sicilian Ethnographic Museum Giuseppe Pitrè and contextualising essays. Following its publication, I continued to make regular visits to Palermo, recognising that there was more to do. It was at this point that I came across a passage in the French scholar Michel de Certeau's (1925–1986) book, *The Practice of Everyday Life*. In it, de Certeau looks down on Manhattan from atop the World Trade Centre and speaks of the viewer's experience:

> His elevation transfigures him into a voyeur. It puts him at a distance. It transforms the bewitching world by which one was 'possessed' into a text that lies before one's eyes. It allows you to read it, to be a solar Eye, looking down like a god. The exaltation of a scopic and a gnostic drive: the fiction of knowledge is related to this lust to be a viewpoint and nothing more.[2]

This passage resonated with my experience of photographing Palermo from the surrounding mountains. Through it, I recognised that, to better understand the place, I needed to become immersed in that 'dark space where crowds move back and forth'.[3]

Since my earliest involvement in photography, I have studied and admired the street photography of modernist photographers such as Henri Cartier-Bresson (1908–2004), Robert Frank (1924–2019), Garry Winogrand (1928–1984), Diane Arbus (1923–1971), and Lee Friedlander (1934–). In recent decades, this approach has remained outside the mainstream of contemporary photographic art practice. That trend is illustrated by Martha Rostler's seminal essay 'Post Documentary, Post Photography',[4] which raises a pointed criticism of the street photographer as untethered and socially irresponsible. Nevertheless, having determined that I needed to be immersed in the space, I was intrigued by the prospect of deploying such a method in Palermo. It seemed to me that I could revisit and repurpose the genre of street photography to fit this particular space and set of concerns. My decision to adopt the street photography method was inspired and influenced by the work of Iain Chambers (1949–), one of the founders of the Cultural Studies movement in the 1970s. Following the likes of Franco Cassano (1943–1921) and Edward Said (1923–2003), Chambers writes about the entire Mediterranean region from a post-colonial point of view. The aspect of Chambers' work that directly influenced me, and that perhaps differentiates him from others in this field, is his lengthy chapter on his adoptive city of Naples, entitled 'Naples: A Porous Modernity'.

Naples and Palermo have much in common, both in their present incarnations and in their history. As well as the prevalence of organised crime and its resulting social malaises, both cities have large, historic, mostly baroque centres. They owe this architecture to the rule of the Spanish during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when Naples and Palermo were referred to as *The Kingdom of the Two Sicilies*. I immediately recognised Palermo in

---

[2] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven F. Rendall (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), 92.
[3] de Certeau, *Practice*, 92.
[4] Martha Rostler, *Decoys and Disruptions: Selected Writings, 1975–2001* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004).

Chambers' description of Naples, both in a general sense and, more importantly, as a baroque space. His definition of 'Baroque' moves beyond the architectural or artistic to also include social usage and interactions: it is an aesthetic that could condition a populace, especially in its relationship to modernity. At one point, he describes his experience of walking down *Via Tribunali* and entering the church of *Pio Monte Della Misericordia*. Having exchanged the world of the dark, crowded street for the vast interior of the church—in itself a strange and theatrical experience—Chambers comes face to face with Michelangelo Merisi di Caravaggio's *The Seven Works of Mercy*. He describes the painting as a 'slice of contemporary street life' from seventeenth-century Naples, complete with plague victims and angels, whose wings resemble those of urban pigeons. This verisimilitude, unusual for its time, was only part of the painting's reality. Chambers goes on to describe, in line with commentators such as Louis Marin, how Caravaggio disrupts the classical conventions of painting: he destroys the boundary between subject and object, imbuing the image with a fundamental instability and contingency. Perspectives are skewed, figures fall out of the frame. In *The Seven Works of Mercy*, Chambers sees Caravaggio as prefiguring the mass culture and modern metropolis that would emerge four centuries later. Considering a reproduction of the painting alongside Chambers' commentary, it struck me that Caravaggio's work prefigures photographic practice. In particular, it foreshadows the hand-held photography that arose with the arrival of cameras so small and easy to use that they operate as extensions of the human body and the human eye. Key aspects of Caravaggio's work listed by Chambers—the decentring, the cut-offs at the picture's edge, the lack of a classical perspective, the viewer's uncomfortable proximity to the subject—brought to my mind the street photography of Robert Frank or Garry Winogrand.

This research project was formed from the idea of viewing Palermo through important confluences between the Baroque, street photography, and the work of Caravaggio. Drawing on the work of writers such as Mieke Bal and Christine Buci-Glucksmann, I began to comprehend a concept of a contemporary Baroque, which shares concerns and relevancies in art and art practice across that historic period and the contemporary world.

Since my earliest visits to Palermo in the mid-1990s, I had been powerfully struck by the paradoxical nature of the city. It embodied a quality of ancient and modern I had not previously come across in a modern European city. It seemed to run according to a different, non-linear time. It felt simultaneously like a centre and a periphery. This place, which was, on the surface, overwhelmingly 'historical', as one of the earliest wellsprings of Western culture, felt urgently relevant, possessing a strong quality of 'nowness'. After I had spent more time there, and informed by a broad range of contextual reading, I began to discern Palermo's baroque identity: it was the concrete and metaphorical focus for the quality that allows David Williams to call it 'a haunted city of densely sedimented temporalities'.[5]

There seemed to exist a fundamental circularity of thought capable of creating this remarkable co-existence of now and then. It was this quality of paradox, of two contradictory states existing together in the same place, which seemed to me to fit into the narratives of the contemporary Baroque. These narratives were first put forward by Deleuze

[5] David Williams, 'Performing Palermo: Protests Against Forgetting', in *Performing Cities* ed. Nicholas Whybrow (New York, NY: Palgrave McMillan, 2014), 24.

in the *fold*, and then expanded on by writers such as Chambers, Buci-Glucksmann, Hills, and Bal.

As I developed my own street photographic practice, I was conscious of wanting to allow it to be shaped by Palermo. In so doing, I began to ask myself how this practice itself might integrate with baroque thought. Through reading research, itself a process of referral from one author to another, and a type of visual proprioception encountered in the editing of photographs, I drew connections between baroque thought and street photography as an embodied practice.

Photography apes Renaissance and Baroque painting almost accidentally by the occurrence of figurative elements: the gestures and movements of bodies in space became realistic or recognisable for the first time during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. But, beyond this, there was a more existential layer of connections existing between street photography as an activity or practice and baroque thought. These qualities of relativism and the blurring of boundaries between subject and object are discussed in Chapter Three, *Imaging the Baroque*. That discussion draws, in particular, on the work of Bal and Brazilian philosopher Vilem Flusser (1920–1991). These heretofore undiscovered connections between street photography and the Baroque—both contemporary and historical—constitute this project's main contribution to knowledge.

Chapter One outlines the methodology for the research project, including key approaches to photographic practice, street photography, psychogeography, and 'walking' as practice.

Chapter Two begins with a brief overview of the Baroque from its origins in the sixteenth century through various critical interpretations, including Benjamin and Deleuze, moving to a present day understanding of the Baroque as a 'conceptual technology'[6] that can be widely applied to social theories, art theories, and practice. This chapter also introduces Palermo and its history, and shows how the city is both architecturally and psychologically baroque.

Chapter Three discusses the photographic and critical contexts for the work. In particular, it emphasises photographic practices that rely on the 'real': documentary and post-documentary. Here, references include art historian James Lingwood's (1959–) essay 'Different Times' (Hayward Gallery, 1994), which accompanied the seminal exhibition *The Epic and The Everyday* (Southbank Centre, 1994), and the work of historian Fernand Braudel (1902–1985), *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Phillip II* (1966). Of equal importance to this chapter are the connections drawn between photographic practice and the Baroque, using Bal's definitions of contemporary baroque practices in art and the work of Vilém Flusser.

Chapter Four introduces the contextual field of Mediterranean studies and links it to visual and written practices. It does this by drawing on the work of various artists and writers specific to Palermo whose work has influenced the research, including Caravaggio, the campaigner and photographer Letizia Battaglia, and Sicilian writer Vincenzo Consolo (1933–2012).

[6] Helen Hills, *Re-thinking the Baroque* (New York, NY: Ashgate Publishing, 2011), 8.

The conclusion emphasises key findings from the research process. While reflecting on the images from the research, the editing process is examined as unfolding and open-ended, in which the work and the subject cross over into each other. In addition to my own images, I have included images from other artists and practitioners whose work can be said to intersect with my own with respect to place, theme, approach, or method.

Chapter One: Methodology and Techniques

In this chapter, I outline the methods and techniques employed in this practice-led research project. From the outset, these included historical, contextual, and geographical research, as well as fine art and documentary photography. As the research progressed, I drew upon other disciplines, including art history and cultural theory.

Throughout the project, creative practice remained the fundamental research method, as well as the key finding. From the outset, I envisioned that the photographic image itself would provide the main insight. As Bal reminds us, 'art thinks': art production embodies knowledge just as much as philosophy and theory, despite being historically relegated to an inferior position within the hierarchy of knowledge.

The precise approach of my photographic practice evolved in response to Palermo's particular demands. I embraced a hand-held method that may be referred to in general as 'street photography'. The practice is embodied, in that it is contingent on the movement of the body through space—or the movement of bodies relative to each other. Considering street photography as an embodied practice consequently evolved as a central theme in this project. Alongside it was the insight that the practice itself displays distinctly baroque characteristics that match the definitions of Buci-Glucksmann, Bal, and Deleuze.

The city of Palermo is the primary subject of this project. As I came to know the city—physically, somatically, through its inhabitants and through its literature, its archives of texts and images—I recognised the centrality of the Baroque, not only to its history and architecture, but also to its present. Readings of contemporary aesthetic theories around the Baroque reinforced this recognition.

Photographic Contexts: Psychogeography and Street Photography

I selected the genre of street photography as the key approach to the practical research. Although, as I shall discuss later, it is now seen as backwards, passé, and out of fashion, street photography continues to thrive, both as a grassroots popular art form and in high art. In the latter form, with certain modifications and twists, it is embodied in the work of practitioners such as Paul Graham (1956), Phillip Lorca di Cordia (1951), and Melanie Manchot (1966). Despite variations in aims, the basics remain the same: photographing people, objects, and buildings from city streets.

Two specific qualities of street photography made it relevant for this project: its relationship with the practice of psychogeography as a method of navigating, understanding, and subjectively mapping an urban space, and this embodied practice's demonstrable relationship with the Baroque modalities of thought described by Deleuze, Buci-Glucksmann, and Chambers. Street photography might even be termed a contemporary baroque practice, and its practitioners 'Caravaggistas'.[7] This is discussed in detail in Chapter Three: Imaging the Baroque.

> Psychogeography: a beginner's guide. Unfold a street map of London, place a glass, rim down, anywhere on the map, and draw around its edge. Pick up the map, go out into the city, and walk the circle, keeping as close as you can to the curve. Record the experience as you go, in whatever medium you favor: film, photograph, manuscript, tape. Catch the textual run off of the streets; the graffiti, the branded litter, the snatches of conversation. Cut for sign. Log the data stream. Be alert to the happenstance of metaphors, watch for visual rhymes, coincidences, analogies, family resemblances, the changing mood of the street. Complete the circle, and the record ends. Walking makes for content; footage for footage.[8]

Psychogeography originates, the author Merlin Coverley tells us in his book of the same name in the seventeenth-century writings of Daniel Defoe (c. 1660–1731), who described his nocturnal wanderings in London. Writing a short time later, the French poet Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867) is often cited as another originator of this practice. In his 1863 essay *The Painter of Modern Life*, Baudelaire introduces us to a figure who comes to represent psychogeography: the *Flâneur*, '[d]escribed as everything from a primeval slacker to a silent poet'.[9] Through Benjamin's work on Baudelaire, and subsequently in Buci-Glucksmann's seminal work on the Baroque,[10] the Flâneur has become a figure connected to the Baroque, as Benjamin sees Baudelaire's work as a form of 'Modern Baroque'.[11] The term 'psychogeography' was coined by Guy Debord and the Parisian situationists at the

[7] Mieke Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio: Contemporary Art, Preposterous History* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1999).
[8] Robert Macfarlane, 'A Road of One's Own', *Times Literary Supplement*, October 7th, 2005.
[9] Rebecca Solnitt, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* (New York, NY: Penguin, 2001), 75.
[10] Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *Baroque Reason: The Aesthetics of Modernity*, trans. Patrick Camiller (SAGE Publications Limited, 1984).
[11] The third opposition culture to modernity occurs with the *Avant Garde* of the early twentieth century. The fourth could be said to be post-modernism.

beginning of the twentieth century. Debord was looking for new ways to interact with and represent the modern city.

In the practice of psychogeography and street photography alike, walking plays an essential role. Their combination was the framework for investigating the entity that is Palermo. The fluid nature of these integrated activities allowed for the emergence of themes and connections between the past and the present, between art history and contemporary art practice, the Baroque of art history and, as given to us by Deleuze and others, the Baroque of now.

Contextual Research: Mediterranean Studies

A wider and deeper understanding of the history, culture, and geopolitics of the Mediterranean region, reaching beyond the accepted tropes,[12] was a prerequisite for commencing the visual research. It is impossible to accurately quantify the effect this approach has had on the images produced. The relationship between reading and photography is complex and hard to define in terms of cause and effect. As Chambers acknowledges:

> To represent a city is not only to describe its physical form and material details; it is also to enter the more immaterial passages proposed by memory, myth, and legend […] If we attempt to exhaust the meaning of the city, to render it transparent, it turns out, as Poe reminds us in *A Man in the Crowd*, to be a text whose secret cannot be told. The city proposes a narrative that is inexorable, relentless; it is a tale that exceeds the sequential logic of writing and the conclusive evidence of a document. The voices, bodies, and lives that compose the urban script move in diverse directions and render every narrative provisional, every history susceptible to a further telling. The transitory image that gels in a photo and lacks any pretence of explanation is perhaps a more fitting modality of representation than that proposed by writing. For the immediacy of the instantaneous 'now' caught in a photograph is saturated with time and simultaneously the testimony of its passage. In such images, the past invades and exceeds the present. In turn, this both encourages and interrogates our desire for interpretation and brings us back to writing.[13]

The field of Mediterranean studies includes literature (voices such as Vincenzo Consolo and Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa), post-colonial studies (for instance, ideas of the South and the Global South), and history, in particular the work of Fernand Braudel. It was Braudel's ground-breaking *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Phillip II* that changed how history, as a discipline, was conceived. In the works of such writers as Iain Chambers, Mediterranean studies encompass an interdisciplinary interpretation in which history combines with art criticism, art history, baroque studies, contemporary theory, cultural studies, and even with food writing and popular music.

For my research and practice, Mediterranean studies provide not only a background context but also, at times, a more direct connection through writings, as in the quoted passage by Chambers above, or through visual practice such as the works of Caravaggio and Battaglia—both of whom I discuss later.

[12] Some such tropes paint the region as a corrupt, culturally backward draw for mass tourism, or a site for the projections of Romanticism.

[13] Iain Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings: The Politics of an Interrupted Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 90.

Historical Research: The Baroque

The Baroque was established at the beginning of the research as a defining characteristic of Palermo. Over time, it developed into a key approach to image-making.

This research is not primarily interested in the art historical Baroque, one 'settled' or archived in its meanings. The focus is, rather, on a Deleuzian interpretation of the Baroque as a conceptual tool. Deleuze's seminal work on the baroque philosopher Gottfried Leibniz (1646–1716) spawned other works on the Baroque by writers including Buci-Glucksmann, Bal, and Martin Jay (1944). They all share a vision inherited from Deleuze, in which the Baroque is opposed to the rational, scientific consensus of Western civilisation. This Baroque offers an alternative lens through which to conceptualise modernity. It does so, in part, because it represents the inception of modernity, but at a time when the outcome might have been different. Like postmodernism, the Baroque period came at a time of instability and great change. The Baroque was the foundation of our modernity and contained within it modernity's hidden opposite: unreason, or 'reason's other'.[14] For a time, the old ways of thought co-existed with the new. The primary characteristic of the Baroque is that it can hold opposites in the same space. It is paradoxical.

Within this contemporary interpretation of the Baroque, I discovered connections between the work of Caravaggio, contemporary commentaries on it, and the practice of street photography. Contemporary theories describe a mode of baroque thought, conceptualising society, art, and art history that foregrounds uncertainty with respect to knowledge, recognising the limits of empiricism.

My research into the Baroque and its evolving meaning allowed me to better understand my subject, Palermo, and to draw connections across time and diverse disciplines. Baroque thought is non-teleological, fluid, and does not depend on scientific rationalism for its legitimacy. My research into the Baroque encompassed an art-history overview, which also allowed me to use the Baroque as the connective tissue throughout and around my work. I recognised the Baroque and baroque thought as the *genius loci* of Palermo.

[14] Buci-Glucksmann, *Baroque Reason.*

Contextual Research: Palermo

My research into Palermo had been underway for some years during and prior to this work. It included time spent staying—not always photographing—in Palermo with Sicilian friends, talking to Palermitani, reading histories and literature, and researching other artists and photographers who have worked in this city.

While photographic practice is the key outcome of the research, Palermo remains the work's fundamental subject. All the other approaches are inseparable from it.

In this regard, I have used anthropologist Tim Ingold's (1948) idea of the *meshwork*[15] as an analogy to my research. A meshwork, unlike a network, does not consist of specific number of clearly defined linear relationships between separate entities, it does not rest on a modality of cause and effect, and it is not flat and tabular like a map. Rather, it is composed of lines that twine around each other, and move over and around each other in three dimensions, not unlike the lived experience of a city. In the meshwork, cause and effect are difficult to identify, and relationships are nuanced and multifaceted. Bal identifies a central quality of baroque production and thought as an entanglement of complex structures, where the whole ceases to be divisible into constituent parts. The same could also be said of the entity that is Palermo.

[15] Ingold, *Lines*.

Creative Practice: Approaches and Methods

As previously stated, creative practice—supported and augmented by a variety of related practices and processes—was the primary process and outcome of the project.

Walking, as in 'walking the city',[16] is an important part of my practice, and therefore occupies a central position in the methodology. As an activity in an urban space, walking has its own history. It permits a fundamental, first-hand, physical knowledge of a place. Although Palermo's city centre was designed for pedestrians and horses, it has been colonised by cars and motorbikes, rendering the pedestrian's journey more difficult and dangerous.

Walking, according to de Certeau, creates the space of the city. The walking of pedestrians maps out the real space of the city, in contrast to the flat grid of the map.

> The ordinary practitioners of the city live 'down below', below the thresholds at which visibility begins. They walk—an elementary form of the experience of the city: they are walkers, *Wandersmanner,* whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban 'text' they write without being able to read it. These practitioners make use of spaces that cannot be seen: their knowledge of them is as blind as that of lovers in each other's arms. The paths that correspond in this intertwining, unrecognised poems in which each body is an element signed by many others, elude legibility.[17]

My own walking methodology took a distinct form. In the morning, after coffee, between nine and ten o'clock, I would set off. Over a period of two to four hours, my journey would describe a circular arc through the historic centre, usually covering a between four and eight kilometres, finishing back where I began—wherever I happened to be staying at the time. Over the course of this project, I have completed somewhere in the region of eighty such walks and have amassed a personal archive or data bank consisting of thousands of images. From among these, I have extracted about forty from a time frame of several years to represent a meta-walk, condensed and re-assembled in book form. The circularity of the walks arose from the practical constraint of having to return to the place where I was staying—sometimes a friend's house, sometimes an Airbnb, or, on a couple of occasions, a hotel. As a pedestrian, I could not drive somewhere and walk. The circle or loop, with its concomitant sense of return, became a part of the process. The walks were not always random. At times they contained a fixed point, building, or district that interested me. Over the years, I built up my own version of the city, guided by my interests, but also open to chance and change. The archived photographs grew to number in the thousands, the archive containing within it the potential for multiple projects. Ultimately, about forty images were selected as the 'essay' that would fit my narrative. Selecting individual images from the stream often felt fragmentary, particularly given their relation to a city famously multifaceted and heterogeneous. Walking was my own blind sensory experience of the city, paradoxically recorded as visual images, stroboscopic and unreliable moments of vision.

[16] de Certeau, *Practice*, 91.
[17] de Certeau, *Practice*, 93.

> To write is to carve a new path through the terrain of the imagination, or to point out new features on a familiar route. To read is to travel through that terrain with the author as guide […] I have often wished that my sentences could be written out as a single line running into the distance that it would be clear that a sentence is likewise a road and reading is travelling.[18]

My photographs-as-research, selectively pared down into book form, are intended as the record of an open-ended process, reflective of the process of walking the city with a consciousness of the histories and literatures it contains.

Most of these walks took place in July. I chose to work and walk in Palermo at this time of year because I wanted to subject myself to the extreme heat and humidity—well over 30 degrees centigrade at that time of year. The intense heat and light are defining parts of the city's environment. As an outsider, a foreigner, I felt that it was important to sweat my way through the streets and markets, to suffer from the heat and share in that defining aspect of Palermitan life. In the summer months, the heat seems to be an almost solid element, just as the cold is to the Arctic Circle. Regularly, the Sirocco blows from the Sahara, and the city empties. People retire indoors and police patrols warn stray tourists to get out of the dangerously hot wind. Under the Sirocco's cover, the Mafia set fires in the surrounding countryside to threaten enemies and advance development plans. Chambers describes this weather as defining of the city and its denizens:

> There exists an ill-understood relationship between the geography and the sensibility of a city. Every city develops an unconscious trauma with its location: London on the Thames, Los Angeles in the Desert, Moscow on the Steppes. The site of a city is invariably a source of both attraction and repulsion for visitors and inhabitants alike. Wherever it is located, the geographical location of a city is also the subsequent source of a sedimented, emotional map.[19]

In his seminal historical novel about Sicily at the time of the Risorgimento, the Palermitan writer Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa wrote of a landscape that knows 'no bounds between sensuous sag and hellish drought; which is never petty, never ordinary, never relaxed as a country made for rational beings to live in should be'.[20]

In subjecting myself to the summer heat, I felt that I was sharing in the experience of what it is to be Palermitano. I enjoyed no air-conditioned car rides, just walking and sweating. Trudging back home too late through the streets deserted by the siesta, in dread of the punishing sun from which I hid in the deep shadows of buildings, I even occasionally succumbed to the mania that accompanies heatstroke.

Through repeated and prolonged walking, I became more familiar with the city's somatic patterns: what time people get up and start work, when they have the first coffee of the day, and how, from July onwards, midday is the signal for everyone to flee home. The daily rhythm is typified by a mass evacuation of public space, mainly in cars and on mopeds, from

[18] Solnitt, *Wanderlust*, 72.
[19] Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings*, 86.
[20] Giuseppe Thomasi di Lampedusa, *The Leopard*, trans. Archibald Colquihoun (London: Vintage, 1958), 185.

the hottest part of the day—the *mezzogiorno*, literally, midday—back to lunch and siestas. This is the South.

Anthropologists call sharing in the conditions of the people one is studying 'participant observation'. It prompts the recognition that, like a scientist, the observer is part of the experiment, influencing and being changed by their observation. Described by Tim Ingold in his book *Making*, this speaks to the distinction—central to my work—between the documentary and the transformational. Ingold argues that, while nothing can be documented or described without recourse to theory, no speculative or artistic 'transformation' is possible without careful observation.

As a photographer working in a documentary idiom, I too cannot be ignorant, or free, of theory, even if the document is quite personal. However, the work seeks to be 'transformational' rather than a literal description of what is there, and also something that cannot be completely broken down into constituent parts. It seeks, in other words, to have an internal logic of its own. Through the staging of a visual rhetoric from modernist photography and painting, it is its own unique articulation of knowledge, both speculative and transformational.

Equipment

I used hand-held digital cameras, chosen for their ability to render detail in shadowy areas. I wanted to foreground the theatrical effect of the naturally occurring *chiaroscuro*, the product of a collision of nature and culture that defines the location. The combination of strong sunlight and the monumental architecture creates the striking, theatrical environment of light and dark.

I chose to use hand-held cameras because I wanted to walk, and because I wanted the camera to act as an extension of my body. I used several camera models, which gave rise to a variety of image formats, ranging from 35 mm to a medium format. The effect of this was two slightly different idioms: whereas the 35 mm rectangle lends itself to a more narrative interpretation, with the movement within the frame usually read from left to right, the squarer, shorter rectangle of a medium format has a more contemporary feel. This slight difference between the images reflects the process of probing, exploring, and perceiving the city and my own relationship to it.

Methodology

Although I set various parameters for the research before starting, such as limiting it to the space of the historic centre of Palermo, using handheld cameras, and walking, much of my granular methodology was shaped by the reality on the ground of central Palermo. There is a wariness towards cameras in the market areas that stems from a culture deeply and historically tied to the Mafia and involved in organised crime. Each section of the markets and each city block has its minders watching and monitoring commercial activity and the coming and goings of people, some of whom might be a threat; controlling the territory. Film crews in particular are unwelcome unless they pay substantial fees to local bosses for

filming. As a photographer, one comes under particular scrutiny as potential law enforcement, undercover police, or representative of some form or other of state authority. Tourists (a relatively new phenomenon) are generally not seen as a threat.

There is a culture of watching in Sicily: watching as surveillance, as control over territory in both micro and macro senses. People want and need to know what you are doing there. Early on I discovered that waiting too long in one place while photographing attracted negative attention. Stallholders would shout and gesticulate: 'Who are you, why are you photographing, what are you photographing?'. I was warned by Palermitan friends and in particular by my friend Fabio Sgroi, an anti-Mafia photographer, that I must be particularly cautious photographing in the markets and that I was risking having my camera smashed and being beaten up, if my activities came under suspicion from the wrong people. I experienced these types of situations occasionally over the years and escaped unscathed; though I noticed that explanations for my presence photographing there were greeted sceptically. I would apologise and move on. Often, I would have to show people on the digital screen the pictures I had been taking, to satisfy them that they were not in the photographs. To minimise these events, I began to experiment with photographing without looking through the viewfinder. There are plenty of precedents for this in the history of photography. As far back as 1938, Walker Evans (1903–1975) in his 'Subway Portraits' used a concealed miniature camera whose lens poked through a coat button in order to photograph New Yorkers riding the subway, unaware of being photographed. Paul Graham (1964–) in his project 'Beyond Caring' in 1986 photographed people waiting for their benefit money with a concealed camera. The photographer Garry Winogrand (1928–1984) often photographed without looking through the viewfinder in order to take city photographs in dynamically unfolding situations where he didn't want to draw attention to himself. The American photographer William Egglestone (1939–) would also sometimes use that technique more for aesthetic purposes and the seeking out of unconventional, decentred viewpoints.

Photographing without looking through the viewfinder became a methodological tool for me, not to be employed all the time, but often while moving through busy crowded spaces where I felt that looking through the viewfinder would isolate and draw attention to me, and where stopping would hold up the flow of people. Photographing while moving with the camera at waist level allowed me to move safely through restricted dynamic spaces. Born from a practical intent, this method also has an aesthetic and conceptual component. When you look through a viewfinder you are in full control, brain and eye are privileged as you compose the picture. You think before you feel. Photographing without looking through a viewfinder, you are forced to cede that kind of fine level of control. Although you can get quite good at judging where the edges of the frame fall, it is highly inexact. In a sense you are photographing more with the body than with the eye/mind. Accident and chance are magnified. When you see the image later on the computer screen or the digital contact sheet as it were, you are seeing the image for the first time. For me, there is often a power and originality to images taken this way that cannot be replicated. Caravaggio's paintings, in particular *The Conversion of St Paul* often have an uncannily similar feel: decentred, framed by abrupt angles with converging verticals, the complete opposite of Renaissance perspective that privileges the viewer within a set of strictly codified rules about distance and perspective. I alternated this technique with more conventional framing to create an

interplay between control and surrender, between the scopic eye that arranges and codifies, and the body that apprehends through feeling, these elements moving in and out of each other in the final images.

Of equal importance in terms of methodology was the editing and sequencing of the images within the bookwork. I wanted the book to contain some of the qualities of the space within which I had been photographing. More so than just a sequence of single images, I wanted to make the book immersive and for the images to become more than a sum of their parts. After several attempts at different edits and layouts, I began to work with images in pairs, effectively diptychs. Sometimes the two images would run in to each other and look like a single panoramic image with very similar lighting, even if they were taken in different locations and years apart. In other pairs, the images were sequential taken seconds, or fractions of a second after each other. These little temporal sequences that reference Paul Graham's recent work *The Present,* as well as Chris Marker's (1921–2012) film *La Jetée*, would run sometimes backwards, sometimes forward. By using these techniques, I felt I could recreate a sense of enfolded space simultaneously expansive and claustrophobic, as well as reference the mixing up of past and present which in Palermo lends itself to temporal disjunctions.

Reflective Writing and Editing

Reflective writing allowed me to consider how different parts of the research were connected. It also became implicated in the process of editing photographs. By reading research, I would often be led to identify elements that might have gone unnoticed—first, within the city and, later, within the photograph. Editing photographs begins soon after the pictures are taken, but it continues for years afterwards. Images are selected, and the passage of time separates the original intention from certain aspects that, despite being accidental or unintended at the time the image was taken, become evident long after that event.

In this research, the activity of photographing is often undertaken reflexively or subconsciously. I do not think consciously when I photograph. Instead, taking a photograph is done in a flow state: parameters are intentionally set for the activity to take place, but, during the act itself, deliberation is avoided. This flow state is itself bound up in the physical act of walking and fluidly manoeuvring through an urban space. Body, mind, eye, and the camera-as-prosthesis operate together and coalesce around an event. Typically, that event occurs well below the threshold of conscious thought, at one 250th of a second.

A much slower version of time enters the work through the process of editing, which sometimes takes months or years. This returns a deliberative element to the work. The idea and intention that I carry when I take a picture are too closely identified with me or with what I want the picture to be. In editing, time separates me from the photographic act. Any emotional investment I might have made into the image disappears, allowing me to judge the images impartially, as if they have been taken by someone else. Notably, for instance, the photographer Craigie Horsefeld (1949–) did not exhibit or publish his work from Poland and East London, taken in the 1970s, until the 1990s.

The writer and critic Meir Wigoder (1954), in the essay 'Some Thoughts about Photography and the Everyday', talks about photographer Garry Winogrand's practice of taking pictures without printing or publishing the results, instead storing the rolls of undeveloped film.

> The very act of storing away images seems to suggest that the dormant photographs had to partake in the creative act of waiting and ruminating in order to produce the effect of disappearance and reappearance that is typical of the everyday.[21]

The 'everyday' was an important consideration for my visual research. Many of the images exhibit a tension between, on one hand, the depiction of people going about mundane, everyday activities like shopping, walking, looking at phones, or waiting, and, on the other, the demotic quality of this repeated activity set against an environment designed as a stage set and dramatised by intense light.[22]

[21] Meir Wigoder, 'Some Thoughts about Street Photography and the Everyday', *History of Photography* 25 no. 4 (2001): 25.

[22] There is a consensus that baroque architecture was consciously designed to both entertain and overawe the populace, magnifying the grandeur of the Church and of absolute monarchs through its size and theatricality.

Chapter Two: The Baroque and Palermo

In this chapter, I present a brief overview of the Baroque, its origins in the sixteenth century, and what it has come to mean for successive generations of critics up to the present. For my purposes, I approach the Baroque as Deleuze's 'operative function', or Helen Hill's 'conceptual technology'. That is to say, I treat it as a set of ideas that can be applied to art practice and to our understanding of art, society, and culture. The second part of this chapter provides an overview of the city of Palermo as a baroque space.

The Baroque: A Brief Historical Perspective

> For baroque reason, with its theatricalization of existence and its logic of ambivalence, is not merely another reason within modernity. Above all it is the *Reason of the Other*, of its overbrimming excess.[23]

As previously stated, this research is not about the history of the Baroque, but about a conception of the Baroque as an entity still alive and operational across disciplines. My understanding of a contemporary Baroque draws on writers and philosophers such as Benjamin, Deleuze, Bal, Hills, and Buci-Glucksmann, all of whom used the Baroque as a method of interrogating modern society, art practice, cultural formations, and the condition of modernity. I have attempted to channel the Baroque through a consciousness of the ideas of these philosophical proponents of a modern Baroque. In this section, I trace the evolution of the Baroque and its interpreted meanings from its nameless inception in the sixteenth century. This historico-cultural overview, indebted to Hills' *Rethinking the Baroque* (2011), establishes the context for much of the following argument, research, and creative output.

The term 'Baroque' refers to a style or a movement in art and architecture that took place in Europe between the mid-to-late sixteenth century and the seventeenth century. In large part, it was tied to the Counter-Reformation. Through it, the Catholic Church attempted to counter the narrative of Protestantism through architecture and art designed to overwhelm the spectator with grandeur and splendour—an advertisement for Catholicism. At the time, there was no contemporaneous theory of the Baroque, nor was the movement, like the Renaissance that preceded it, even named as such. Sometimes, what was seen as an over-exuberance of style employed by architects of the period was referred to by the term 'gotica'. Other contemporaneous terms used to describe what we now know as baroque architecture and art included 'unreasoned', 'licentious', and 'bizarre'. However, at the time, there was no uniform condemnation or recognition of a homogenous baroque style. The word 'Baroque' may have originated from the Portuguese word '*barroca*'. Referring to an irregularly shaped pearl that was greatly prized during the sixteenth century, it signified a

[23] Buci-Glucksmann, *Baroque Reason,* 39.

precious anomaly.

The term was first linked to art in 1757, through the work of French writer Antoine-Joseph Pernety (1716–1796) in his *Dictionnaire Portatif de Peinture, Sculpture, et Gravure.* He was the first critic to identify the Baroque as a style, using the term to describe a particular painting by Tintoretto:

> That which is not in accord with the rules of proportions, but follows caprice. It is said of taste and design [that] the figures of this picture are baroque; the composition is in a baroque taste, to mean that it is not in good taste.[24]

Pernety was the first writer to identify something subversive that—in his view, to its discredit—undermined the established rules of proportion in art. He identifies this tendency as capricious and lacking seriousness. In this identification and condemnation of the Baroque, Pernety was followed by Quatremère de Quincy (1755–1849), an architectural theorist and influential French writer. In his 1788 *Encyclopedie Methodique: Architecture*, de Quincy described the Baroque as the exact antithesis of the appropriate style or type of architecture in a newly emerging public sphere. He thought of the style as an abuse or an excess that took eccentricity to the extreme. In fact, de Quincy distinguished the Baroque as an excess of the bizarre, which gave rise to *bizarrerie*, a taste that upended received architectural notions and principles. *Bizarrerie* also connoted a strong moral dimension, equating this perceived excess with vice. Unlike caprice, which de Quincy considered simply a lightness of touch that can be corrected, he took *bizarrerie* to imply something inherently defective and beyond redemption. In particularly moral terms, he called it '[a] quest affected by extraordinary forms, and of which the sole merit consists in the very novelty that constitutes its vice'.[25]

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) in his *Italian Journey* (1788), harmonises perfectly with de Quincy in his description of, and reaction to, a famous example of late-Sicilian Baroque, Villa Palagonia, just outside Palermo:

[24] Antoine-Joseph Pernety, *Dictionaire Portative de Peinture, Sculpture et Gravure,* in Hills, *Re-thinking*, 24.
[25] de Quincy, Quartremère *Encyclopedie Methodique*, in Hills, *Re-thinking*, 210.

> But the bad taste and folly of an eccentric mind reaches its climax in the cornices of the low buildings which slant this way and that, so that our sense of hydrostatic balance and the perpendicular, which is what primarily makes us human beings and is the fundamental principle of all eurhythmics, is upset and tortured. Even these roofs are decorated with hydras and small busts, an orchestra of monkeys and similar absurdities; dragons alternate with gods, and an Atlas caries a wine cask instead of a globe.[26]

Fig. 1. Martin Cole. *Villa Palagonia*.

The origin of the problem, or fault, de Quincy proposes, is in failing to imitate the ancients as Leonardo and Michelangelo had done: 'weariness with the best things, an unbridled taste for novelty, and a search for the unwonted'.[27] In opposition to this 'perversion of art', de Quincy proposes a model of architecture based on the faithful imitation of both nature and the ancients. He took baroque architecture to be dangerously false: because it had no model to imitate, it was forced to copy itself. The building or piece of art and what it referred to had become one and the same. In so doing, it was calling into question the entire basis of mimesis, as postmodernism would do four centuries later. The Baroque was undermining the project of representation within what de Quincy called 'accomplished architecture'. Architecture, de Quincy argued, should mechanically reproduce its own origins. Analogously to the relationship between sculpture and the human body,

[26] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Italian Journey*, trans. W. H. Auden and Elizabeth Mayer (London: Folio Society, 2010), 240.
[27] Quatremère de Quincy, *Encyclopedie Methodique*, in Hills, *Re-thinking*, 14.

architecture should study strict laws of proportion and organisation, which it would then reproduce in its edifices, making them renderings of a harmonious system of cosmic laws. Other writers followed this lead. In particular, Francesco Milizia (1725–1798), in the *Dictionario delle Belle Arti* (1797), decried the departure from classical norms and the perversion of an existing order. Milizia describes the façade of Martino Longhi's Santi Vicenzo e Anastasio in Rome as being 'against every rule of architecture, and apparently ruled by the strongest caprice'.[28]

By the nineteenth century, the word 'Baroque', had come to mean both a style or 'movement' and a strange or decadent way of doing things. Art historian and founding father of modern archaeology Johan Winckelmann (1717–1768), in his *Geschichte der Kunst* (1764), refers to a 'spoiled taste'[29] in painting, architecture, sculpture, and poetry associated with artists of the period we now think of as Baroque. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, baroque architecture and art were only considered in relation to their Renaissance counterparts, and judged, based on that comparison, to be a symptom of decline in standards and moral character.

It was the Italian idealist philosopher, historian, and politician Benedetto Croce (1866–1952) who crystallised this approach to the Baroque and most firmly bound it to the notion of decadence. Croce's influence was so pervasive that, to an extent, his judgements on the Baroque persist to this day: the adjective is, itself, considered synonymous with kitsch, overblown, too colourful, lacking in taste, and so on. Croce thought of the Baroque as concerned exclusively with aesthetics and almost devoid of content. He spoke of the *anima baroque*—the baroque spirit—which, he thought, led to a representation that relied on bravura, rather than content, consequently leaving the viewer with a feeling of emptiness. This type of artistic expression, he argued, could accomplish art's most important goal of liberating us from ourselves. For Croce, art must be transcendent, setting us free of the material world: 'by bringing them [our impressions] as objects before our minds, we detach them from ourselves and raise ourselves above them'.[30] When this does not happen, he maintains, it is due to an insufficient mastery of content and too great an emphasis on aesthetic qualities.

Going further, Croce imbues his criticism with a moral judgement. He locates the cause of the tendencies expressed by the Baroque deep within a sinful human nature, produced, in an irony that might have been lost on him, by the Catholic Church's folding of religion into politics, and the consequent production of this 'rhetorical' style of art and architecture designed for impact. In literature, Croce decried the fashion for what he calls 'rhetoric': a shallow, facile form compared with the more severe and pure form of 'dialectic' available to

[28] Francesco Milizia, *Le Vie de Piu Celebri Architetti d'ogni Nazione e d'ogni tempo precedute da un saggio sopra l'Architettura,* in Hills, *Re-thinking*, 14.
[29] Hills, *Re-thinking*, 17.
[30] Benedetto Croce, *Storia della eta Barocca in Italia,* in Hills, *Re-thinking*, 19.

writers. He argues that during the latter part of the sixteenth century, a trend had sprung up in art and literature that favoured feeling and impression—rhetoric and wit in literature—over reason. The late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were a time of great societal and technological change, associated with the emergence of modernity. It was a time of struggle between knowledge systems: new Cartesian reason pitted against more intuitive ways of understanding the world. There was also much cultural anxiety around change, analogous to our own time's postmodernism. The break and disjunction between periods that occurred in the sixteenth century led to a society-wide anxiety, exemplified by concerns about how to adhere to Christianity, whilst simultaneously being enthralled to the principles of a classical, pagan world. Christine Buci-Glucksmann, a contemporary champion of 'baroque thought', in her analysis of Baudelaire, Benjamin, and the aesthetic core of modernity, sees the roots of aesthetic modernity as archaeologically hidden in seventeenth-century absolutism. She identifies interesting parallels between postmodern themes and baroque 'reason', as both perspectives are constructed through similar viewpoints: the use of montage and allegory, a fascination with the idea of artifice and expressions of melancholy based around contingency and mortality.[31] Buci-Glucksmann probably would not disagree with most of Croce's observations, except for issuing the opposite normative judgments: what Croce considers faults, she takes to be merits.

Although Croce's ideas cast a long shadow, by the early years of the twentieth century, a resistance to this perception and a re-evaluation of the Baroque began to appear. One of the first challengers to the prevailing orthodoxy was Geoffrey Scott (1884– 1929). Scott was a scholar and poet who became known as a historian of architecture. In *The Architecture of Humanism: A Study in the History of Taste*, he referred to his (limited) defence of the Baroque as a 'mitigation of abuse'[32] rather than a positive endorsement.

Scott sought to separate the Baroque style from the Counter-Reformation that had spawned and employed it. While the Counter-Reformation's preferred architectural style had the straightforward goal of entertaining and overwhelming, Scott argued that the resulting style became a thing of its own. That is, it came to possess an autonomy distinct from the end it was designed to achieve: 'The style has an orbit, and impetus, of its own'. Mixing picturesque and classical motifs in its architecture, it 'intellectualised the picturesque'.[33]

Like Scott, the critic Jacob Burckhardt (1818–1897) also defended the Baroque as a subject worthy of study in its own right, an independent entity that was more than a simple degradation of the Renaissance. Swiss art historian Heinrich Wölfflin (1864–1945) drew on Burckhardt in writing *Renaissance und Barock* in 1888. There, Wölfflin argued that, whereas the Renaissance represented a period of liberty and freedom, the Baroque was one of

[31] Buci-Glucksmann, *Baroque Reason*.
[32] Geoffrey Scott, *The Architecture of Humanism, A study in the History of Taste*, in Hills, *Re-thinking*, 19.
[33] Hills, *Re-thinking*, 20.

subjugation. This subjugation was not necessarily a negative quality, associated as it was with subjugation under religious ecstasy. He contrasted the classical façade, in which capitals, columns, and other elements retain their aesthetic autonomy, to the baroque façade, where each element is swallowed up by the larger whole of which it is a part. He saw style as an expression of the emotional life of an era, expressed through art. Not a wholesale supporter of the Baroque style, he nevertheless undertook a comprehensive formal study of the elements and systems that comprised it. On his account, a quality not merely dictated by style emerged in baroque architecture:

> Style is therefore not something that those who deploy it have to recognise. Baroque architecture strove after effects which really belong to a different art form, such as freedom of line or interplay of light and shade, which belong to the pictorial. Consequently, Wölfflin's approach is informed by a sense of architectural fiction and suggestion.[34]

So, all these writers and art historians, including Wölfflin, Burckhardt, Scott, and a number of other German critics who conflated the Gothic elements present in baroque architecture with a nascent German nationalism, were principally concerned with separating the Baroque from that which preceded it. They all shared a common distaste or mistrust of the 'style' and, in the main, they explained it by reference to what they took to be its use or value to the society that created it.

The major change in the historical or philosophical interpretation of the Baroque would come a little later into the twentieth century, with the work of three writers in particular: Henri Focillon (1881–1943), Walter Benjamin, and Giles Deleuze. The three scholars highlighted different aspects of the Baroque. But there was one crucial aspect central to all their projects: in the Baroque, they all saw an opportunity to 'break the model of periodisation'. Within baroque architecture, Focillon saw different elements of styles from diverse periods, from Classical to Gothic, crossing over and influencing each other, in some ways anticipating Benjamin's later conception of 'messianic time'.[35] Deleuze and Benjamin both found something in the Baroque that represented the possibility of an alternative to the teleological model of an empty history of linear events: it promised a novel way to approach both history and time, countering the dominant model and empowering resistance to the history of the victor.

In his *Vie des Forms* (1934), Focillon argues against a periodisation of art. Every age and every movement contain elements from others, spanning backwards and forwards through

[34] Hills, *Re-thinking*, 21.

[35] For Benjamin, messianic time is an experience of immediacy. It contrasts with the endless empty continuum of capitalist time, defined by the clock and dedicated to production. Benjamin believes that messianic time, being non-linear, can connect different time periods: for instance, present revolutions are connected in spirit to past and future resistances, and activists in the 'now' are the Messiahs waited-for in the past. Messianic time is distributed throughout historical time like the stars of a constellation or fragments.

time. Formal periods in art history, despite being time-specific, can also move across time so that elements of one period appear in another—an observation central to my own interpretation of Palermo. He invokes the example of the Romanesque and Gothic periods. These two very distinct and contrasting styles 'crisscross and sometimes fold vastly different sensibilities into each other'.[36] Focillon is not interested in defining the Baroque by reference to individual artists or architects such as Borromini or Bernini. Instead, he sees it as a *modus operandi* that 'reveals identical traits existing as constants within the most diverse environments and periods of time' (41). Into the mix of baroque critical thought, Focillon introduces a contrast or tension between the art distinct to a period and forms of it that subsequently appear.

The Baroque was central to Benjamin's conception of history. Benjamin was not particularly interested in art, as he thought that its reliance on beauty tended always towards myth and consequently became problematic for truth. In his 1925 *The Origins of German Tragic Drama,* Benjamin sets out his position on the Baroque: it is not as a manifestation of the Early Modern, as some had suggested, but modernity's obscured counter-face, the path not taken. In *The Origins,* Benjamin examines the early stages of capitalism, prefiguring his later work on that subject. He traces how the Reformation became capitalism—a secular religion without dogma—that, in the form of consumerism, permanently celebrates itself. This cult, Benjamin suggests, instead of absolving its followers of guilt, in fact bestowed it upon them. The seventeenth-century Protestant dramatists that Benjamin examines focus heavily on death, catastrophe, and mourning, notions that—along with vanity and the uncertain outcomes of human endeavours—were common tropes of the period. For Benjamin, the Baroque becomes a way of conceptualising history and time, allowing him to critique the notion of a smoothly progressing, teleological, historical time. It is a vehicle through which he retrospectively examines modernity, the relationship of the past to the present, and capitalism.

Crucial to Benjamin's conception of the Baroque is allegory, defined as that which destroys or opposes myth. Allegory is unstable signification, an entity that resists both representation and logic, and gets closest to the truth.

> In the ruin, history has physically merged into the setting. And in this guise history does not assume the form of the process of eternal life so much as that of irresistible decay. Allegory thereby declares itself to be beyond beauty. Allegories are in the realm of thoughts, what ruins are in the realm of things. This explains the Baroque cult of the ruin.[37]

Benjamin argues that allegory—mainly focused on melancholy, death and fate—is at the

[36] Henri Focillon, *The Life of Forms of Art*, trans. George Kubler (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 15.
[37] Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London: Verso, 1998), 77–78.

centre of modernity's aesthetic project. This centre comes directly from modernity's forgotten other, the Baroque: the defeated realm of feeling and non-reason that lost the battle with Cartesian rationality and was negated by it. Benjamin assembles the seventeenth-century Baroque, Baudelaire's nineteenth century and the literary avant-garde of the twentieth century as moments in Western history when allegory embodies resistance. Benjamin's opposing of allegory to symbol is central in understanding his approach to the Baroque. Symbol is the thing and the name together and indivisible, whereas allegory is the disjunction between the thing and the name. In allegory, there is the possibility of truth (even if not absolute truth), of seeing things as they are, and, hence, of redemption. A ruin is the sole thing that is always truly itself, the more it disintegrates the more it becomes like itself. It possesses a particular relationship to truth by representing itself. As Hills evocatively puts it:

> While the symbol tries to efface the gulf between thing and over-naming, for Benjamin allegory brings the viewer face to face with the *facies hippocratia* of history as a 'petrified primordial landscape'.[38]

Benjamin develops the idea of a 'now-time' or *Jetztzeit,* which becomes visible at moments of crisis and challenges the empty, linear time of history as a succession of events. Thus, history can become redemptive. It can be reclaimed for those dispossessed by the official version of history, which is always the history of the victors who tidy up, suppress, bury, or destroy the history of others. Referring to this conception of time, Benjamin notes that:

> A historian who takes this as a point of departure stops telling the sequence of events like the beads on a rosary. Instead, he grasps the constellation which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one. Thus, he establishes a conception of the present as 'now-time' which is shot through with chips of messianic time.[39]

Philosopher and academic Howard Caygill, in his *The significance of Allegory in the Ursprung des Deutchen Trauerspeils*, describes the ambiguity and multiplicity represented by allegory in Benjamin's sense. Although its function is supposed to be a representation of history as stable and fixed, it betrays this function. Instead, we get a representation of the gulf between that which is expressed and its signification. In the recognition of this gap, it becomes possible to attain truth. 'Through the subversion of its own project', Caygill writes, 'allegory gives the true name—that of folly—to the attempt of subjectivity to signify objects according to its own will'.[40]

Willem van Reijen's (1938–2012) essay 'Labyrinth and Ruin: The Return of the Baroque in

---

[38] Hills, *Re-thinking*, 24.
[39] Walter Benjamin, *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, in Hills, *Re-thinking*, 25.
[40] Howard Caygill, 'The Significance of Allegory in the Ursprung des Deutschen Trauerspiels', in *1642: Literature and Power in the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Francis Baker, Jay Bernstein, John Coombes et al. (Colchester: University of Essex, 1981), 217.

Postmodernity' reiterates this point while connecting the Baroque to postmodernism. At the centre of the Baroque is the *topos* or transitoriness, but also *vanitas*: it is clear that human life is short and uncertain, and achievements are unstable. While the labyrinth becomes the expression of our earthly wanderings, their inevitable futility, in turn, prompts melancholic reflections that find their expression (metaphorically) in the ruin. But this melancholic state should not be conflated with pessimism. Indeed, for Benjamin, the state becomes redemptive because it represents things as they really are, rather than as we might hope them to be. The melancholic experience is best represented in the allegory. Reijen sets out to 'show that fundamental doubts regarding the reliability of human knowledge and the success of actions are articulated in postmodern art and philosophy which are quite comparable to the Baroque'.[41] He points out that the allegory is a preferred representational device of postmodernism. Benjamin's analysis of the nineteenth century forges the diachronic link. The nineteenth century defines itself against the dual backdrop of antiquity and the destructive forces unleashed in the seventeenth century. Those forces might be understood as the manifestation of the anxiety felt by a society where monotheistic Christianity of the Reformation confronted the Renaissance's rediscovery of the pagan ancients. According to Benjamin, this confrontation comes to a point in the nineteenth century, where the result of these antagonisms becomes the mythical blinding of humanity by commodity culture. 'The actual antagonisms', he argues, 'and the corresponding conceptual antithesis find their appropriate forms of expression in the allegory (as among others, Baudelaire develops it in a paradigmatic form in *Les Fleurs de Mal*)'.[42]

In summary then, Benjamin sees in the Baroque a *modus operandi* that he can connect to a resistance to the dominant method of conceptualising history or time, which is concomitant with injustice and based on a flawed idea of truth and representation. It bears noting, however, that Benjamin's conception of allegory was not necessarily shared by the thought behind the allegorical paintings and sculptures of the Baroque period.

Deleuze's seminal *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (1988) is perhaps the most important modern commentary on the Baroque. His notion of 'the fold', gleaned from his reading of the Baroque, has become a major part of modern theoretical discourse, particularly within architecture, but also connected to new digital technologies, non-Cartesian geometries, and morphing forms. More broadly, 'the fold' has become a way of approaching creativity, technique, and the boundaries of discipline. Deleuze's idea of the Baroque, albeit distinct from Benjamin's, compliments it. Like Focillon, he refers to it as an 'operative function' that moves through different cultures and periods. Deleuze points out the danger of losing sight of what he terms 'the notion' of the Baroque in the arbitrary flights and extensions to which this conception can fall prey. In other words, everything can be attributed to the Baroque,

[41] Benjamin, *Theses*, 19.
[42] Benjamin, *Theses*, 14.

to the point where the idea becomes itself incredible. Indeed, certain commentators had even begun to doubt its existence. In response, Deleuze maintains that it exists, just as 'irregular pearls exist, but the Baroque has no reason for existing without a concept that forms this very reason'.[43]

For Deleuze, the heart of the Baroque was avoiding the trap of becoming prey to illusion while realising something important about the nature of illusion itself. He wanted to connect the illusion present in the Baroque to a 'spiritual presence that endows its spaces and fragments with a collective unity'.[44] Deleuze identifies the Baroque with the figure of 'the fold', to the point of using the two terms—Baroque and fold—interchangeably. They serve as the lens through which he views the history of culture and society. For Deleuze, 'the fold' represents 'the relationship without centre or subordinate form'.[45] It is the multiple, rather than the one, and the non-hierarchic or non-linear rather than the hierarchic or linear.

Central to Deleuze's project is the German Enlightenment philosopher and mathematician Gottfried Leibniz—a contemporary of Isaac Newton and the inventor of calculus.[46] It was specifically Leibniz's work with curves and the calculus of curved surfaces that led Deleuze to see him as the philosopher-mathematician of 'the fold'. In fact, 'the fold' is itself largely a reworking of Leibniz's philosophical positions. Deleuze also borrowed and developed many of the ideas gleaned by Wölfflin from his study of baroque church architecture. Deleuze's previous works extensively reference Wölfflin, particularly his work on perception, movement and affect, which were inspired by his study of baroque form. In a central passage from Deleuze's *Le Pli*, he cites Wölfflin:

> Wölfflin noted that the Baroque is marked by a certain number of material traits: horizontal widening of the lower floor, flattening of the pediment, low and curved stairs that push into space; matter handled in masses or aggregates, with the rounding of angles and avoidance of perpendiculars; the circular acanthus replacing the jagged acanthus, use of limestone to produce spongy, cavernous shapes, or to constitute a vertical form always put in motion by renewed turbulence, which tends to spill over in space, to be reconciled with fluidity at the same time fluids themselves are divided into masses.

The curved surfaces and swirling repeated motifs of baroque art and architecture, Deleuze argues, are far from mere decoration, or pointless ornamentation. They set out a method of thought, which he identifies with the Baroque: it 'refers not to an essence but rather to an

[43] Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, trans. Tom Conley (London: The Athlone Press, 2006), 124.
[44] Deleuze, *The Fold*, 33.
[45] Hills, *Re-thinking*, 26.
[46] Leibniz and Newton are both described as having invented calculus. Both men accused the other of stealing their ideas, but it seems they may have arrived independently at the same conclusions.

operative function, to a trait. It endlessly produces folds'.[47]

Of course, Deleuze points out, all stylistic periods have folds, curved lines. But, in the Baroque, he argues, 'the fold' as a motif has come free of its supports to become the main event. The Baroque articulates a philosophy of curved spaces and non-linear thinking that can be linked to Leibniz. Leibniz invented an entity he terms the 'monad': a self-sufficient unit, indivisible, containing past and future, cause and effect. For Leibniz, the Monad is a representation of the soul: it features an autonomous interior, an inside with no outside, which, flipped over, becomes an outside with no inside. It is a furtherance of Locke's notion of the brain as a *camera obscura* in his meditations on perception and cognition. Deleuze develops an image or 'allegory' of a baroque building to simplify this difficult idea.

Drawing on Wölfflin's architectural sketches and photographs, Deleuze draws a building. His drawing is simultaneously a plan, section, and elevation. In making the sketch, Deleuze uses Wölfflin's observations on baroque architecture to give a structure to his ideas, also extending Leibniz's idea of the soul or monad. In architectural historian Anthony Vidler's (1941–) description of this process, Leibniz's monad or 'windowless soul', a development of Locke's *camera obscura*-brain—a metaphor for the process of perception and cognition—is further extended downwards by Deleuze's addition of a 'ground floor'.[48] This lower, bodily level provides tangible grounds for Deleuze's theory. More generally, Vidler writes at the start of his essay under the subheading 'house of folds':

> 'The fold' is at once abstract, disseminated as a trait of all matter and specific, embodied in objects and spaces; immaterial, and elusive in its capacities to join and divide at the same time, and physical and formal in its ability to produce shapes, and especially curved and involuted shapes.[49]

In Wölfflin's observations of a baroque church's physical, formal, and agitated façade giving way to a calm and dark interior, Deleuze finds a manifestation of Leibniz's monad, its strange autonomy of the interior that has no relation to the exterior.

[47] Deleuze, *The Fold*, 3. These are, in fact, the first two sentences of the book.
[48] Anthony Vidler, 'Skin and Bones: Folded forms from Leibniz to Lynn', in *Warped Space: Art Architecture and Anxiety in Modern Culture*, ed. Anthony Vidler (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 219–34.
[49] Vidler, 'Skin and Bones,' 219.

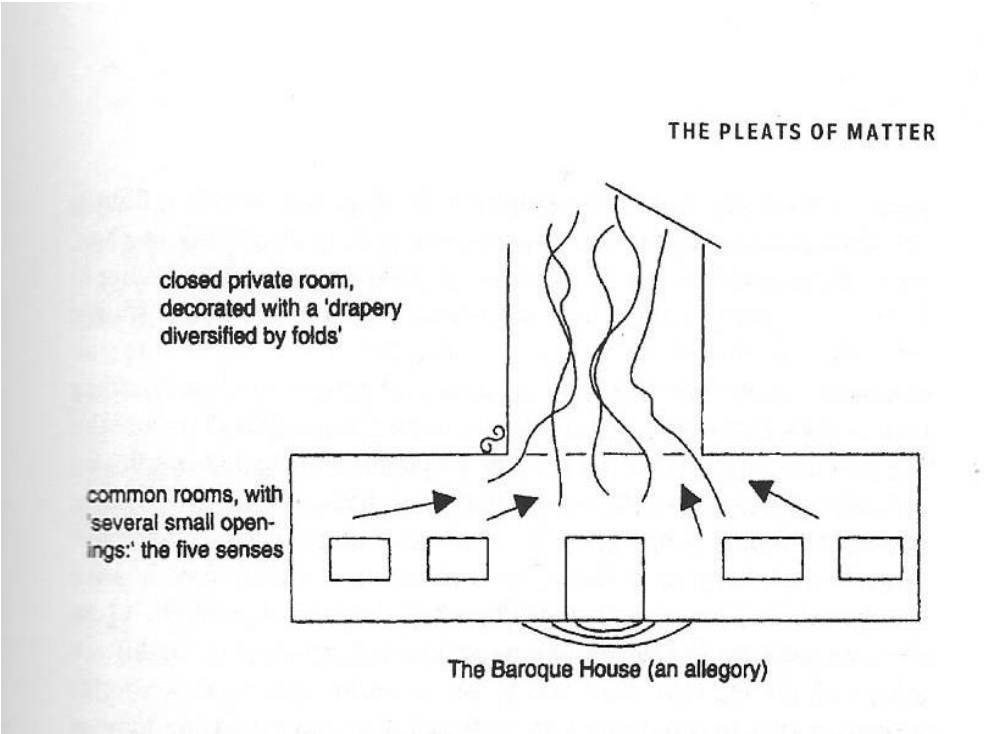

Fig. 2. Deleuze's drawing uses a Baroque building with the ground floor as the body and the upper floor as the soul.

Deleuze finds two uses for this idea of Baroque folds endlessly repeating themselves to infinity, and within an imagined, two-storey building: 'by moving along two infinities, as if

Fig. 3. Martin Cole. *S. Caterina Palermo.*

infinity were composed of two stages or floors; the pleats of matter and the folds of the soul'.[50]

These ideas are metaphysically extremely complex: sometimes, they cannot be regimented logically beyond a set of images or poetics; at other times, they rely on calculus. Nevertheless, they can find a physical expression in architectural form. Indeed, this is what Deleuze, as a materialist philosopher, intended. Note this passage from Hills:

> Consider the façade and interior of S. Caterina in Palermo in light of Deleuze's suggestion that 'Baroque architecture can be defined by this severing of the façade from the inside, of the interior from the exterior, and the autonomy of the interior from the independence of the exterior, but in such conditions that each of the two terms thrusts the other foreword'.[51]

Wölfflin, as Hills points out, claims something similar: 'the contrast between the agitated idiom of the façade and the relaxed peace of the interior is one of the most compelling effects in the baroque repertory'.[52] Deleuze argues that a new kind of link must be imagined, between 'inside' and 'outside', between spontaneity and determination:

> The essence of the baroque entails neither falling in to nor emerging from illusion, but rather realising something in illusion itself, or of tying it to a spiritual *presence* that endows its spaces and fragments with a collective unity.[53]

[50] Deleuze, *The Fold*, 3.
[51] Hills, *Re-thinking*, 26–28.
[52] Heinrich Wölfflin, *Renaissance and Baroque*, 60, in Hills, *Re-thinking*, 28.
[53] Deleuze, *The Fold*, 124.

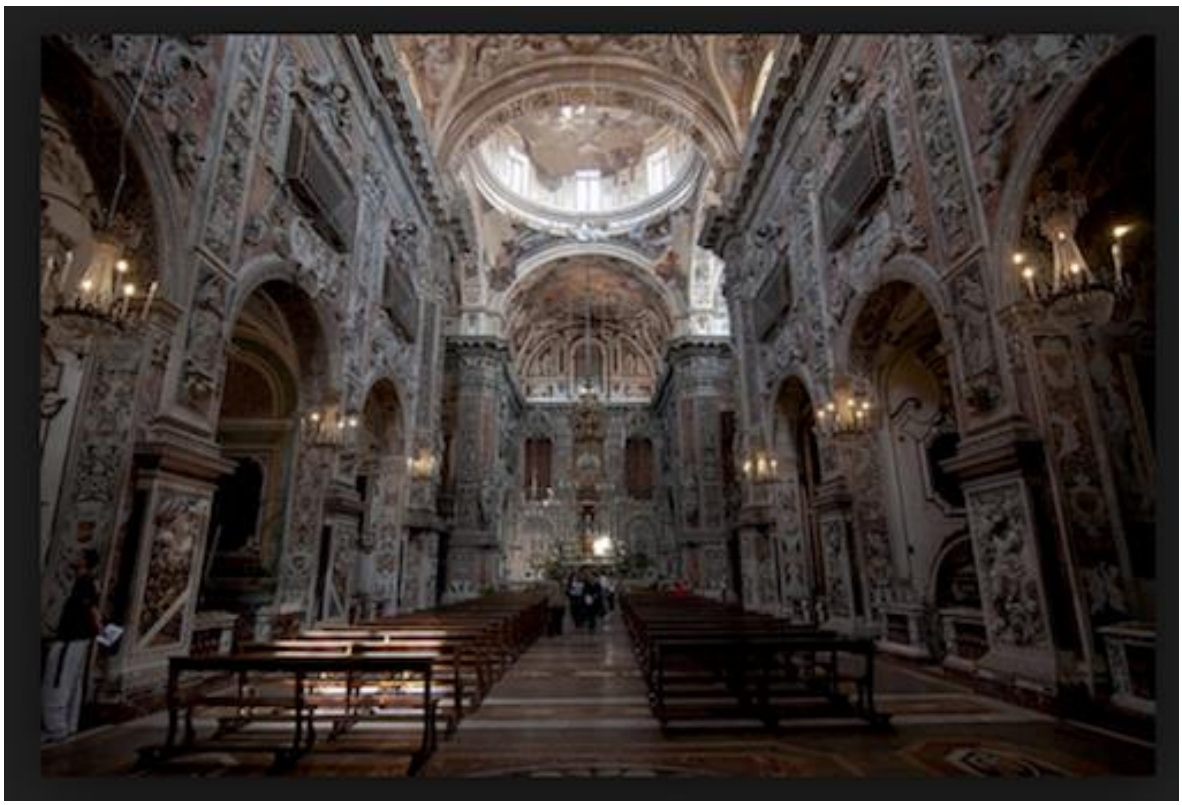

Fig. 4. Martin Cole. Interior of *S. Caterina Palermo*.

Citing the work of Anthony Vidler, Hills suggests folding a Deleuzian fold back onto an artwork from the Baroque period, as in Giuseppe Sanmartino's *Veiled Christ* of 1753.

Hills argues that this exercise, rather than simply periodising an artwork, allows us to see through its complex surfaces, 'whose formal complexity and religious intensity conventionally earn the epithet Baroque'.[54]

Looking at this art in this way, Hills argues, helps us to understand Deleuze's theory. Deleuze was a philosophical materialist: he believed that matter and its interactions create conscious and mental processes. In this light, one can see how we may consider a town, a city such as Palermo, as a baroque space: the physical city itself affects the behaviour and attitudes of its populace, creating certain conditions and ways of thinking about the world. All architectural environments influence the framing of thoughts of its inhabitants. A baroque environment, then, would encourage its inhabitants to think in a somewhat circular manner—to approach time and perhaps history as a series of returns, rather than a manifest destiny. An acceptance of mortality would also be inscribed into that worldview. Hence, to understand Deleuze's theory of the 'fold', attention must be paid to the material world. In fact, the theory cannot be understood without this phenomenological component. Hills continues:

> Rather than presuppose that the essence of Baroque is necessarily located,

[54] Hills, *Re-thinking*, 28.

> semantically or conceptually, either in the 17th or 18th centuries or the 19th or 20th centuries, might this entirely modern Baroque folding help us to attend to the complex surfaces of these art works without presupposing that the unique conditions for their understanding lie in an autonomous, but supposedly static and recuperable past.[55]

Here, Hills suggests that to understand Deleuze's fold, it is useful or even necessary to adopt a phenomenological approach, as well as a metaphysical one. You must use the apprehension of your own senses—a bodily apprehension. Deleuze concentrates on the folds of clothing in baroque sculptures, in particular Bernini's sculpture *The Ecstasy of St Teresa*, which is often interpreted as a physical representation of what happens to the soul after death. The sculpture's marble, Deleuze claims, bears:

> To infinity folds that cannot be explained by the body, but by a spiritual adventure that can set the body ablaze. [Bernini's] is not an art of structures but of textures.
>
> […]
>
> Folds of clothing acquire an autonomy and a fullness that are not simply decorative effects, they convey the intensity of a spiritual force exerted on the body […] in every event to turn it inside out and to mould its inner surfaces.[56]

The same phenomenon occurs in baroque architecture: the surface becomes the matter. It is as if, in striving to represent the spiritual in architecture or in painting, boundaries are crossed. 'In the Baroque', Hills describes, 'masses spill over, overflow, matter is uncontainable'.[57] This was the unintended effect of the zeal of the Counter-Reformation.

As Wölfflin points out, the Gothic style emphasised framing, containment, and constructed elements. The Baroque, in contrast, foregrounds matter itself, and the frame disappears. Elements of painting appear in architecture. Motifs are repeated across boundaries. Standing in a baroque church, space is amorphous: the striations of multi-coloured marble blend into paintings and architraves, the limits of the space are difficult to discern, the scene lit by invisible windows seems to propose an autonomous interior undefined by an exterior structure. Here is how Hills describes the Chapel of Saints Hugh and Anthelm in Naples:

> Each art is prolonged even into the next art, which exceeds the one before. Here sculpture and architecture are stretched into each other. Beautifully cut grey marble is framed like a mysterious shadowy painting, and the floor sings like a tapestry carpet.

[55] Hills, *Re-thinking*, 28.
[56] Deleuze, *The Fold*, 139–40.
[57] Hills, *Re-thinking*, 29.

Hills continues:

> Sculpture goes beyond painting itself by being achieved in architecture and in turn, architecture discovers a frame in the façade. But the frame itself becomes detached from the inside and establishes relations with the surroundings so as to realise architecture in city planning, as in the curve of San Carlino's façade.[58]

Deleuze describes the uniquely baroque transgression of limits between artworks as follows:

> If the Baroque establishes a total art or a unity in the arts, it does so first of all in extension, each art tending to be prolonged and even to be prolonged into the next art, which exceeds the one before […] the painting exceeds its frame and is realised in polychrome marble sculpture; sculpture goes beyond itself by being achieved in architecture; and in turn architecture discovers a frame in the façade. But the frame itself becomes detached from the inside, and establishes relations with the surroundings so as to realise architecture in city planning. From one end of the chain to the other, the painter has become the urban designer.[59]

Let us summarise what has been explored in this section. The projects of Benjamin and Deleuze, despite being sometimes contradictory, also have much in common. Both emphasise a Baroque in which relationships between past and present do not rely on continuity, or a straightforward rolling-out of time. Benjamin's Baroque permits a redemptive approach to history, where one period does not judge or condemn another, and where the voices of the dispossessed might be heard. Deleuze offers us the possibility of engaging with and giving credence to the material world and the built environment, even though that engagement does not become a mere 'instantiation of idea', a representation of an abstraction by a concrete example. In the next section, I shall specifically relate the work of Benjamin and Deleuze to Palermo.

[58] Hills, *Re-thinking*, 30.
[59] Deleuze, *The Fold*, 141.

Palermo: 'Most Beautiful and Defeated'

This ancient city of Palermo, the origins of which date back to the beginning of European civilisation, and which is now situated at the edge of Europe, was for most of its history a crossroads between North and South, East and West. It has always existed in a delicate flux between Orient and Occident.

For a frequent visitor to Palermo, who has wondered about that place's seemingly limitless capacity for paradox, encountering Benjamin and Deleuze's work on the Baroque is revealing. It opens a new door onto the baroque matrix that is Palermo. First, a Deleuzian reading of the city, considered merely as a huge collection of baroque architecture, is inevitable. Deleuze's theory of 'the fold' is grounded in the observation of the reality of buildings, sculptures and paintings, of built environments, and of artefacts. The environment creates and conditions modes of thought.

Second, Palermo may be considered from Benjamin's perspective of the historicised Baroque. Few cities in Western Europe have been so consistently ravaged by history, right up to the present day. The evidence of this treatment is obvious to see, as so many monuments to *Vanitas*. Dubbed 'most beautiful and defeated'[60] by the Sicilian writer Vincenzo Consolo, Palermo lays claim to the title of the most conquered city in the world. Benjamin's baroque modelling of history, with its insistence on the ruin as the real truth and alternative to the victor's tidy version of history, is not hard to see in Palermo. The Baroque is the obscured counter-face of modernity, the path not taken. Moreover, importantly, we may find in Palermo ample material for thinking about Benjamin's notions of time and its commodification in capitalism. The latter reduces time to even, empty units, in place of an older type of time based not on the clock, but on festivals, celebrations and other events that link us organically to the past: for instance, festivals connected to the harvesting of certain produce, or holidays associated with saints, measure time by a clock connected to life's natural rhythm. Palermo has numerous saints' days, and throughout Sicily there are *sagres*, seasonal harvest festivals. Today, the slow food movement serves as a modern instance of Benjamin's repudiation of capitalist time.

Founded by the Phoenicians in the eighth century BC, Palermo had a long history of conquest. The city was captured, successively, by the Greeks, the Carthaginians, the Romans, the Byzantine Empire, the Arabs, the Normans, French Angevin knights, the Spanish Aragonese, the Bourbons, Garibaldi's armies during the Risorgimento, the Germans in the Second World War, and, finally, the Allies. Today, the invaders are the home-grown terrorism of the Mafia and globalization. As the world's most conquered city, it has, sponge-like, absorbed and outlasted all its conquerors. This history of conquest was paralleled by equally devastating plagues, fires, earthquakes, catastrophic floods, endemic poverty, and

[60] Vincenzo Consolo, *Reading and Writing the Mediterranean*, trans. and ed. Norma Bouchard and Massimo Lollini (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 237.

famine, successive waves of emigration, and, particularly over the past century, pervasive and endemic civic corruption on a scale unrivalled in Western Europe.

At the end of the Second World War, large areas of central Palermo lay in ruins from the heavy American aerial bombardment. Instead of being allowed to participate in the post-war rise in living standards and the other benefits of peace, the American government handed Sicily over to Mafia interests as a reward for their wartime cooperation. For example, Mafia figure Lucky Luciano was released from a Chicago jail and flown into occupied Sicily to help coordinate the American invasion. The Mafia, which had hitherto been a mainly rural Sicilian phenomenon, dealing in grain, olive oil, and foodstuffs, was now 'given' hundreds of high administrative positions within the civic administration, assuming virtual control of the island and large parts of southern Italy.

These decisions profoundly affected Palermo. First came the 'Sack of Palermo', a process that lasted from the 1950s through to the 1970s. Mafia families and corrupt officials made billions by displacing hundreds of thousands of mainly working-class Palermitanos from the *Centro Storico* to poorly built, concrete high-rise buildings. These were built over the top of the C*onca d'Oro*—the ancient *golden shell* of orchards, orange groves, and parks created by the Arab rulers centuries earlier, and since widely considered to be one of the most beautiful sights of the Mediterranean. The new housing was substandard. It lacked civic amenities, in some cases even running water and electricity. In a grim irony, it created ghettoes and no-go areas that were so economically deprived that violent crime became the only viable means of livelihood. During this process, the *Centro Storico* was further damaged by acts of criminal vandalism: many buildings were destroyed overnight to persuade reluctant householders to leave.

Hard on the heels of the criminal building boom came the Mafia war of 1978–1992. Rival clans fought over the rights to distribute heroin throughout the Northern Hemisphere, a business that has been estimated to have been worth, at that time, about six hundred million dollars annually. During the 1980s, an estimated ten thousand Palermitani were killed.

The war eventually came to an end with the Maxi trials, supported by the CIA, which led to the incarceration of many Mafia bosses. This partial victory had a heavy price: it prompted the vengeful assassination of important state officials, including the two trial judges and the president of the regional assembly, along with scores of law enforcement personnel.

These experiences have, not surprisingly, left Palermitani with little trust for the state and its ability to protect them or uphold the law, as well as a deeply ingrained fatalism. According to David Williams, today's Palermo:

> [...] seems to hover at some indeterminate mid-point between demolition and renovation. It seems traumatised, dismembered, weighed down by unresolved

> grieving, its shadow baroque life fuelled by the conspiratorial suspicion of *dietroglia,* a melancholic obsession with 'what lies behind' (*dietro*): behind surface appearances, received 'truths', language, silence, history; behind cover-ups and 'walls' of all kinds. Today this city of around 800,000 inhabitants, bustling and brooding in its '*Conca d'Oro*' (golden shell) covered with a shroud of cement, 'the garden of blood-stained oranges' as the great Sicilian writer Vicenzo Consolo puts it (2006: 90), remains a haunted city of densely sedimented temporalities, of disappearances, silencings, and uncanny returns, of proliferative memorialising and selective amnesia.[61]

There is, however, another side to the story. In the spirit of Benjamin's Baroque allegory—that entity that can contain opposite or antagonistic elements like Paganism and Christianity without combining them—there is another narrative thread to Palermo's history. A different perspective brings an obscured 'other' into focus. The city named 'Ziz', or 'flower'*,* by the Phoenicians has been a locus of remarkable and singular creativity and tolerance, of 'syncretic coexistence, dynamic exchange and resistance to barbarism'.[62] Vincenzo Consolo writes:

> In the island many luminous rays of history have converged and, having burnt extraordinarily bright, were extinguished. And it is certain that in Palermo, in some secret dark dungeon of the palace of the Normans, of the *Ziza* of the *Steri*, in the wine cellars of some sumptuous baroque palace could be hidden the prodigious Aleph: the place that contains all places, the story that contains all stories.[63]

In his writings, Consolo often returns to the period of Arab domination from the tenth to the twelfth centuries, and to the century following the Norman period. During this time, Palermo became the first great cosmopolitan city of the High Middle Ages. The Arabs gave a tremendous impetus to agriculture, commerce, science, art, and learning. Civic society, almost a civilisation in miniature, continued under the Normans. It was multicultural and multi-lingual: its official languages were Arabic, Greek, Hebrew, and Latin. In 1149, the funeral instructions for Anna, the wife of the Norman Drogo of Sicily, were written in Arabic, Greek, and Latin, with the Arabic text repeated in Hebrew characters.

Consolo's historical reconstruction of this golden age of religious and cultural pluralism, which was finally extinguished after the Norman rule by repressive Catholicism, proposes an implied critique of the present. It reveals the perils of religious intolerance, injustice, and historical forgetfulness, not just in Sicily but across the Mediterranean, particularly in Israel and Gaza. This civilisation of some three centuries suggests a possible alternative. Although most of its monuments are now buried, it survives in isolated buildings of Arab Norman origin. Fabulous and improbable, this distinctive style of architecture exists only in Sicily. It

[61] Williams, 'Performing Palermo,' 21.
[62] Williams, 'Performing Palermo,' 24.
[63] Consolo, *Reading and Writing the Mediterranean*, 238.

includes churches, cathedrals, and palaces combining architectural elements of Arabic, Romanesque and Byzantine styles. The Arab legacy lives on in the markets of central Palermo—in particular, the Capo, which lays claim to being the oldest continually operating street market in the world—in the Sicilian dialect, and in much of the insistently sweet and sour cuisine.

Consolo brings to light the possibility of 'otherwise', joining this historical perspective with the flickering renaissance of the 'Palermo Spring'. The Palermo Spring was a movement based around public outrage and mass demonstrations against the Mafia since 1992. It was a response to the murder of the two judges, Falcone and Borsellino, the high-water mark of the Mafia's war of terror against the state. These spontaneous protests, which drew hundreds of thousands of Palermitani to the streets, resonated with the political optimism of a new and more engaged administration under mayor Leolucca Orlando. The emerging movement had an appetite for change, and for a reclaiming of the city for a population sick of living under the Mafia's tyranny. Although the Mafia has not ceased to exist, neither has this resistance. It is not just the state pushing back but is a citizen movement. The administration, in turn, is trying to re-imagine Palermo in tune with Consolo's reclamation of Sicilian history. Consider this excerpt from Pestellini Laparelli's introduction to the Manifesta held in Palermo in 2018:

> There is no fixed way to approach Palermo. The city cannot be reduced to a single statement or to a precise definition. It is rather a complex mosaic of fragments and identities emerging out of centuries of encounters and exchanges between civilisations. Palermo is historically cosmopolitan. Its material archaeology, cultural legacy, somatic traits and ecosystems are the tangible evidences of a long-lasting syncretism.[64]

To summarise this chapter, I turn to the writings of Iain Chambers, Professor of Mediterranean Studies at the University of the Orient in Naples. In his writings about his adoptive city of Naples, Chambers shows us how a city, an urban space, can be a baroque space. It is so not merely in a historical sense, but also psychologically and emblematically. Naples and Palermo are historical twins. Ruled by the Spanish as 'The Kingdom of the Two Sicilies', they share a similar genetic blueprint. Both are modern conurbations with large and semi-ruined historical city centres. With local variations, both are largely ruled by organised crime. Much of Chambers' writing about Naples applies also to Palermo.

Chambers describes Naples as an 'overwhelmingly historicised' place, where the 'material evidence of the passage of time' is everywhere.[65] That evidence includes crumbling buildings, bomb sites left over from the war, vast tracts of baroque architecture rotting in the unrelenting sun. Antiquated street plans jostle and compete with the modern city. But

[64] Ippolito Pestellini Laparelli, *Palermo Atlas*, by OMA for Manifesta 2018, 12.
[65] Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings*, 71.

all this supplies only a superficial explanation of the sort to be found in a history or a guidebook. Crucially, Chambers quotes the post-war writer and filmmaker Curzio Malaparte's book *La Pelle*: Naples after World War Two is seen as a survivor from 'an antique, pre-Christian world, that has remained intact on the surfaces of modernity'.[66]

Naples, like Palermo, is a diverse and multifaceted city on the edge of what has become a fortress Europe. Once a favoured site of Romanticist figures like Goethe, with its preponderance of ruins and classical credentials, it next became Benjamin's proving ground for the failure of capitalism, as it has today become, Chambers asserts, a lab for social anthropologists interested in the limits of European civil society. It is a place where what we take for granted about a European civil polity disintegrates into a 'living museum of archaic fragments, customs, and practices'.[67]

However, it is a misunderstanding to see these cities as mere examples of modernism gone awry, or somehow third-world places. In Naples, modernism is alive and well, in high-rise buildings, a banking sector, an underground rail system, and all the appurtenances one expects in a modern city. It is the violent clash between the two cultures of globalised capitalism and antiquated 'street rites' that turn Naples, like Palermo, into a riddle, 'reflecting back what we hope, and fear, to see', and that disclose, 'an unstable hubris dissected by different cultures and historical rhythms'.[68]

In a similar vein, but from the perspective of someone involved through cultural activity, with creating conditions for civic policy, Ippolito Pestellini Laparelli writes:

> Today Palermo can be considered an archipelago of the global. Not a globalised city per se, but rather an incubator of different global conditions, that here reveals unique problematic characters and potentials, making the City an ideal blueprint for the Mediterranean and the EU as a whole. At the same time, Palermo is probably no longer a City as we know it. It acts as a node for an extended geography of networks and systems that reach far beyond the EU-Mediterranean area—from sub-Saharan Africa to Scandinavia, from South east Asia to Gibraltar—rapidly reshaping its identity and role within the geopolitical scenario.[69]

Therefore, borrowing from Chambers' analysis of Naples, to understand Palermo, we must recognise how fundamentally the city disrupts the modern myth of the reasoned organisation of an urban built environment. The apparatus of modern capitalist labour, production, and profit are continuously undermined by an endless proliferation of acts of resistance: black market activity, institutional corruption, favour systems, family loyalties,

[66] Curzio Malaparte La Pelle in Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings*, 76.
[67] Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings*, 83.
[68] Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings*, 85.
[69] Laparelli, *Palermo Atlas*, 12.

and ancient allegiances. For Chambers, this represents:

> The tangled undergrowth of another city and of a cultural formation that loses its strands in the labyrinth of kinship, street culture, local identity, popular memory, and urban folklore.

Chambers refers to Naples as:

> A potential paradigm of the city after modernity; of what, in the wake of that dream, survives and lives on. Connected in its uneven rhythms and volatile habits to other non-Occidental cities.[70]

In similar terms, David Williams writes of Palermo as 'a city at the contested southern border of "fortress Europe"', which:

> [...] continues to perform its contradictions (and some of the Eurozone's) with crystalline concentration. Perhaps, as Leonardo Sciascia suggested over thirty years ago, it also operates more broadly as a metaphor for shared predicaments and possibilities in these uncertain times.[71]

More concretely, Palermo's history undermines the assumed, optimistic belief in the narrative—originating from Northern Europe—of smooth, never-ending progress. In an urban situation with a high population density, where modernity in the form of cars and modern infrastructure must squeeze into an archaic, labyrinthine street plan, where much of the structure is fundamentally unstable, something else emerges. This is not an easy assumption of 'third world-ism'. Rather, we are faced with a situation that reveals modernity and its limits.

Let us now return to the idea of a baroque space as a built environment. While staying in Capri, Benjamin wrote his *Origins of the German Trauerspiel* (or, *Mourning Play*). He was greatly influenced by his visits to Naples. Undoubtedly, these had a huge influence on his choice of the ruin as a central figure in his theory of the Baroque. That theory also haunts central Palermo: the circular mode of seventeenth-century thought, with its insistence on *Vanitas* and mortality, is present in the many ruined and semi-ruined structures that comprise large areas of the Old Town. Here, buildings that would be swiftly restored, commodified, and tidied up anywhere else in Europe, remain in a perpetual state of decomposition. This is not merely the result of economic impoverishment, or defeat. I would argue that it also expresses a fundamentally baroque contemplation of our mortality, and the limits of our endeavours. Similar ideas are also integral to postmodernism, another age at a crossroads and experiencing cultural anxiety, keenly aware of the limits and

[70] Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings*, 90.
[71] Williams, 'Performing Palermo,' 26.

contingencies of human activities and constructions.

In the ancient city of Palermo, with layer upon layer of sedimented historical time, most of the architecture standing in the *Centro Storico* today is baroque. There are some three hundred churches, and at least as many palazzos—not all of them documented. The overwhelmingly baroque environment was built primarily by the Spanish during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Everywhere, the round windows and curved pediments built of yellow volcanic tufa. The porous rock further exacerbates the sense of indeterminate boundaries, of masses pushing outwards. The busy, somewhat illogical facades, referring—in post-modern fashion—to all the previous periods of architecture, present themselves as all façade: windows, columns, and pediments, existing for no other reason than to be a façade. An autonomous façade gives way to an interior without boundaries, or reference to the outside: an autonomous interior. This is architecture as a curve, not a straight line. It continually folds and unfolds from inside to outside. The impression is greatly enhanced by the proximity of one monumentally sized structure to another, which creates an enfolding darkness punctuated at intervals by slanting beams of sunlight. The city, despite facing the sea, reaches in on itself: the sea is never visible, and the sky is reduced to a thin blue line high above, between the buildings. Palermo seems to create of itself an interior, an unfathomable inward space, and a labyrinth. Its only reference to its location is the occasional view of a mountainside, or a sliver of sky.

It seems reasonable to hypothesise that a built environment on this scale would, over centuries, have a marked effect on its populace. Palermitanos' deep-seated fatalism, their world-weary cynicism, could be as much a product of a baroque state of mind or way of being—where a circular motif of life and inevitable death casts doubt on the modern religion of inevitable progress—as the result of a history of invasions, mishaps, and historical victimhood. It is probably the combination of these factors: the Benjaminian historical narrative of the place combined and the Deleuzian material, architectural, or somatic environment have, together, produced a baroque 'perfect storm'.

Sicily has its own, unique relationship to the Baroque. During the sixteenth century in particular, following a series of massive natural disasters—including the destruction of the city of Catania by an eruption of Mount Etna and earthquakes that destroyed many towns in the western part of the island—an enormous amount of new building was undertaken by the Spanish rulers. Whole cities and towns, like Noto and Ragusa, were built anew in the baroque style. Out of this came a uniquely Sicilian baroque architectural style. It was widely regarded as more extreme—meaning, at the time, more tasteless and outrageous—than anywhere else.

In Sicily, Lampedusa tells us, the great crime is simply trying to do something. The other side of this baroque mentality, that prevents it from being a mere downtrodden fatalism, is creativity and resistance. Both qualities may be found in abundance in Palermo and Sicily.

There, we find resistance to dominant narratives, to conquerors, to fascism, to the Mafia—which, ironically, itself probably originated from a resistance to rapacious overlords—and to global capitalism. Despite its dark side and because of its contradictions, Palermo represents the multiple, rather than the singular. It represents a continually evolving challenge to modernity. It seems to point to or suggest other alternatives, drawn from its own vast archive of recorded and forgotten histories.

Chapter Three: Imaging the Baroque

> The baroque of artifice, metamorphosis, and anamorphosis continues its lineage into the present day. Because from the vanities to the paintings of Caravaggio or the architectural structures of Bernini and Borromini, a culture of time-of ephemeral time, which is often melancholic—creates being, affects, and effects.
>
> The baroque dreamed of an eye that would view itself to infinity: the virtual accomplished just that.[72]

In the first part of this chapter, I examine critical discourses around photography, especially documentary or post-documentary practice, within which my own work is situated. Most notably, I reference James Lingwood's 1994 essay, *Different Times.* The essay accompanied the seminal 1994 exhibition *The Epic and the Everyday* at the Hayward Gallery. In it, Lingwood examines the various strategies that practitioners have developed for relating photography to the 'real' and to time. He identifies three distinct, but occasionally overlapping, strategies: the 'snapshot', the 'archive', and the 'picture' as thought-form taken from easel painting. He draws heavily on the work of French historian Fernand Braudel to define notions of time such as the *longue durée* and the instant—fundamental to the medium of photography. He also looks to the Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin, whose ideas of intertextuality define photography's complicated relationship to the real and the vernacular.

The second part of this chapter is devoted to baroque aesthetics and their connections to street—or 'embodied'—photography. To demonstrate these connections, I invoke the work of critic Mieke Bal, especially her book *Quoting Caravaggio: Contemporary Art, Preposterous History.* Bal considers contemporary artists across diverse media and finds in them central aspects of baroque aesthetics—included intentionally or otherwise. She identifies characteristics of baroque art that resurface in contemporary practice. In so doing, she questions our ideas about intentionality, or about what comes first, which are integral to the linear chronology of art history. I have applied aspects of Bal's baroque methodology in my own research—at times, intentionally, and at other times, inadvertently.

In my research, I try to understand my subject through taking photographs, reading, writing and, of course, direct lived experience. Through this process, I have found myself in a non-linear framework, or 'meshwork',[73] of discourses, texts, images, aesthetic philosophies, and real-life situations. These coalesce around a place—Palermo—but also around photography and the Baroque. Some of these discourses are socio-geographic, philosophical, and historical. But, for me, the central one that ties everything together is aesthetic. These discourses around vision and seeing emerge from the Baroque, and stretch backwards and forwards across time, linking the past and the present.

---

[72] Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *The Madness of Vision: On Baroque Aesthetics*, trans. Dorothy Z. Baker (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2015), 32.
[73] Ingold, *Lines*.

In my photographic research, fragments of the vernacular world become entangled in the aesthetic of the Baroque. That aesthetic is, by no means, purely art historical: it is connected in multiple ways to photography and contemporary art. This 'entanglement'[74] comes about partly because I make photographs that reference a real baroque space created by baroque architecture, and partly through decisions about how to photograph that space.

Specifically, my approach explores the tension between a scientific or 'scopic' vision—what writer Martin Jay calls the 'dominant visual order of Scientific Vision'—and a more embodied, less rational, and arguably more baroque perspective. Christine Buci-Glucksmann, an authority on baroque aesthetics, argues for the continuing relevance of the Baroque to today's world in *Baroque Reason* (1994) and *The Madness of Vision* (2013). In *The Madness of Vision*—a study of the phenomenological aesthetics of the Baroque—she argues for the materiality of the body within aesthetic theory. All vision, Buci-Glucksmann writes, is embodied: the body and the emotions are continuously at play in the visual field. Vision—theorised since the Renaissance as a clear, uniform, totalising way of understanding reality—in fact dazzles us and distorts our perceptions of reality.

When I began this research, I was motivated primarily by place. I wanted to know why Palermo was the way it was—multifaceted and paradoxical—*of* Europe and yet *other* to it. Early on, I determined that Palermo's operative baroque nature that created or amplified—not an abstract cause, but as physical and embodied within its architecture—its polygamous nature. The enquiry into the city led me into an enquiry of the Baroque as a manifestation both of historical time and 'now' time. The mechanism that took me through this enquiry was my photographic practice, which itself had numerous connections to the Baroque that I discovered during the process. Ultimately, Palermo and the Baroque became manifestations of each other.

I set about photographing the space, the people, and things within the space, in the genre of street photography. The genre that may itself be 'implicated' in numerous ways in the visual and aesthetic stagings of the place. I was moved primarily by the place, and a desire to understand it. I did not set out with the aim of examining the Baroque. Rather, I was led into it through my enquiry into the place. As the project progressed, I began to think more about street photography beyond its formal history. Specifically, I began to ask myself: Does this activity that I am engaged in have, in and of itself, a baroque quality? Within this question was another: How has the place affected me, my practice and my process? What was the relationship between me—the subject—and the city—the object—and how has that relationship evolved? How has my practice been influenced by the place? In documenting the place, could the place influence the outcome?

I began to garner an awareness, particularly in the editing process, of a sort of visual proprioception; when photographing baroque elements in a scene, I entered a singular feedback loop. By 'Baroque', I mean both the literal quality of the architecture and architectural space, and the metaphorical quality of the work itself. I noticed unplanned motifs emerge, sometimes revealed to me after the fact through my reading. I remarked on the ubiquity of the colour white, on the hallucinatory presence of the veil or drapery as metaphor for separation between the present and past and on the notion—ever-present in

[74] Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio*.

this type of photography—of two mobile positions. Pictures I had chosen in the edit simply because I thought that they looked good had their own, internal logic as photographs, often containing these baroque motifs. In many ways, my discoveries and realisations go to the heart of the distinction between 'documenting' and expressing, between objective and subjective positions.

Through my reading, I discovered additional links between the practices of street photography and baroque practices and modes of thought. The Baroque constitutes the archaeology of modernism, and, as Buci-Glucksmann points out, it is simultaneously modernism's origin and its 'other', its shadow. The Baroque emerged during a period of change and instability, and privileged vision above the other senses. This period, according to Benjamin, also witnessed the creation of the first images that were not directly connected to religious symbolism:

> The history that actually enters the stage, these accumulated fragments without a clear view of a goal, this basis of secularisation without hope, these will give birth to a veritable aesthetic of allegory as an optical device of the construction of the body, without eschatology, and without symbolism.[75]

Many of the debates and conditions that surrounded vision and aesthetics during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries persist: we live within them to this day. Consider the parallel case of literature. Even though we may not immediately think of him as such, Shakespeare was a baroque writer, as was Francisco de Quevedo, or the German dramatists featured in Benjamin's *Trauerspiel*. Consider how often Shakespeare's writings are referenced, how new productions of his plays are praised for deftly speaking to our modern experience of political power, love, revenge, or the illusion of art. Perhaps we do not think of painting in the same way because it has become so codified and deadened by the classifications of art history: paintings have been commodified in a way that written texts have not.

Through my research, I have become aware of connections between street photography, with its psychogeographic approach of the *flâneur* (itself a term connected through Benjamin to Baudelaire's modern Baroque), and baroque thought and aesthetics. One such connection, which I shall examine later in this chapter, comes from the notion of two mobile positions: when both subject and object are in motion, the boundary between them becomes uncertain. The idea of an embodied photography, and the camera as a bodily extension or prosthetic—makes 'hand-held' a key factor. The activity of moving while photographing, constantly shifting and searching for the right perspective to be revealed, has much in common with the anamorphosis: in this concave mirror popular in the sixteenth century, reflections are distorted until you find the right position. Holbien's *The Ambassadors* contains an anamorphosis: the skull in the corner of the painting is recognisable only from a certain angle. Buci-Glucksmann describes the baroque vision thus:

> Distinct from seventeenth-century pre-Baroque mannerisms, which were still influenced by the Idea as *Disegno interno* (internal design), the Baroque developed in the seventeenth century and the first part of the eighteenth century in a world in

[75] Buci-Glucksmann, *The Madness of Vision*, 7.

> which an understanding of seeing, and the play of appearances, arose from the science of perspective and optics within the discipline of the natural sciences. This science puts forward its theory of what is real, subjects it to its mathesis, establishes the uncertainty of its sensory experience, and constructs it in those forms that are visually possible. **The baroque eye**, with its attention to multiplicity and discontinuity, is distinguished precisely by its infinite production of images and appearances, and it emerges at the moment when the Counter-Reformation and modern science strangely intersect—as opposed to the **fifteenth-century eye**, when optics and perspective were still tied to moral and religious interpretation.[76]

The debates and uncertainties surrounding representation and vision persist: the scientific versus the poetic, reason versus unreason, single versus multiple. Even scientists looking at subatomic particles through electron microscopes question the reality of what they see, become uncertain of the boundary between subject and object, and are affected by what they perceive, incorporating that effect into their experiment.

The genre of mobile hand-held photography, employed for this research, belongs to a long artistic tradition. That tradition began with the invention of the Leica camera in the 1930s, reached its apogee in the work of Robert Frank and Cartier Brésson in the 1960s, and continues to the present in the work of artists such as Paul Graham. It is associated with notions of time: time is a major preoccupation, from the 'decisive moment' described by Brésson, the strange emptiness of moment found in Frank's pictures, and the multiple moments in Graham's recent work. In contrast to photography done from a tripod, in much larger formats, with a remotely operated shutter, hand-held photography expresses a different existential viewpoint. Tripod-based photography has much in common with the tools-of-the-land surveyor and the cartographer. It relies on the model provided by Classical painting, in which a perspective is presented as an ordered and regulated system. In that system, the viewer is privileged, set apart from the scene, and in control of it. Even if this is not the photographer's primary intention, the scene is ordered: such is the effect of the apparatus, which is made apparent when looking through the viewfinder of large format cameras replete with grids and lines laid over the scene. A baroque vision, by contrast, concerns the human body, and, as such, presents no unified, tidy system, but rather an entanglement of contingent relationships.[77] Vision is neither trustworthy nor transparent, but the product of multiple possible points of view. In hand-held photography, the body has primacy—the photographer's body is reciprocally registered in space, the camera is effectively a part of the body. Verticals converge. Perspective is flawed.

Early in my research, I came across Iain Chambers' account of his experience of standing before Caravaggio's *The Seven Works of Mercy*. In the painting, Chambers sees a description of the emergence of the modern global city—Naples in the seventeenth century. He also sees a portrait of space that disrupts the viewer's traditional relationship to the image, a space radically de-centred. As he and other commentators point out, this painting

[76] Buci-Glucksmann, *The Madness of Vision*, 5. Original emphasis.

[77] I have borrowed this term from art historian Mieke Bal, who uses it to describe a particular characteristic of baroque practice.

prefigures mass culture by four centuries. For me, his description of Caravaggio's work immediately recalls the photographs of Robert Frank, Winogrand, or William Klein.

In photographing the Baroque, and responding to the city and its people, the approach—the act of photography—becomes a method of apprehension. For me, Palermo becomes a laboratory where I may examine some of the complexities of seeing. The narrative I have developed is of myself as a practitioner attempting to articulate knowledge through engagement in a practice. My practice and research around these ideas and interdisciplinary areas has prompted new discoveries about the relationship between contemporary baroque aesthetics and the genre of street photography as an art form. My practice has conjoined discourses around photography, documentary, and conceptualisations of the Baroque as a conceptual technology, linking the past to the present in a way that is not merely historical or chronological.

James Lingwood's *Different Times*

Different Times is the title of James Lingwood's essay accompanying the 1994 exhibition *The Epic and the Everyday* at the Haywood Gallery in London. The exhibition brought together photographic artists who, through a variety of techniques and approaches, all alike made use of photography's inherent capacity to describe and represent visual 'evidence' from the real world. For all the artists involved, Lingwood says, '[d]ocumentation and construction of meaning are the twin, constant concerns'.[78]

Lingwood's essay begins with a description of Jeff Wall's photograph *A Sudden Gust of Wind (after Hokasai)*.[79] Although the picture is rich in details and semiotic meanings, its narrative is opaque: we do not know what has happened or will happen next. It is precisely this ambiguity, this withholding of narrative development, Lingwood suggests, that forces the viewer to dig deeper: because of it, we are drawn to reflect on the strata of time, or lived experience, that lie beneath the image's surface, and the underpinning social structures (like the agriculture and industry described in the picture) that condition our lives. The photograph portrays a number of different times: the moment expressed and experienced by individuals; the slower time of society, industry, and the city; and also, the very slow time of the land, nature, and geological time. The author wonders how these different times and experiences, testifying to the complex relationship between past and present, can be 'given material form in the work of Art'.[80]

Lingwood describes a problem with our understanding of history. In a postmodern coup, the political scientist Francis Fukuyama declared history dead in his *The End of History* and *The Last Man*. There, Fukuyama argued that the all-conquering late-stage capitalism and liberal democracy had become the final form of human government. A growing cultural consensus sees contemporary existence as floating free of historical constraints: the individual is set adrift in an endless semiotic sea, where everything is of equal weight. Subsequent events have called these theories into question—reports of history's demise seem to have been exaggerated. The rise of nationalism and fundamentalism, and the concomitant revealing of the fragility of liberal democracy, have caused unexpected recalibrations of history.

Given these opposite interpretations of our relationship to history, how should we proceed? To answer this question, Lingwood turns to the French historian Fernand Braudel. In Braudel's 'Dialectic of Duration', Lingwood hopes to find an adequate response to what might be called the 'experience' of history—how history manifests and intersects with the present and with individual lives. Recall Braudel's division of historical time into three 'movements': the *longue durée*—the time of geology, environment, rising sea levels, moving glaciers, of population movements as a result of climate change—the time of empires and civilisations, and, finally, the life span of an individual. According to Braudel, only the last was the 'language binding history to the present, creating one indivisible whole'.[81] Braudel asserts that real history must be aware that all three tempos are not different times, but all

[78] Martin Cagier-Smith, 'Forward', in *The Epic and the Everyday*, (X: X, 1994), 7.
[79] See Fig. 1. At end of this chapter.
[80] James Lingwood, *The Epic and the Everyday: Contemporary Photographic Art*, ed. Martin Caiger-Smith (The South Bank Centre at the Hayward Gallery, 1994), 11.
[81] Fernand Braudel, *On History*, trans. Sarah Matthews (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 4.

belong to a shared time. According to Lingwood, this approach to history takes in the grand, panoramic sweep while also attending to the microscopic. It is not linear, but different: shared times slide over and through each other, creating a nuanced understanding. Linear history focuses on events, diplomacy, and famous actors. Braudel's history is more concerned with geography, commerce, and social trends.

The dialectic of duration brings to the fore forgotten elements of environmental time and the everyday life of countless individuals. Quotidian lives are of profound interest, being the tip of an iceberg of accreted memories and experiences of generations, the 'unconscious of historical experience which exists below the signs and surfaces of the present'.[82]

Braudel's work is largely a reaction against the 'Quintessential Hero',[83] as de Certeau elaborates:

> The anonymous hero is very ancient. He is the murmuring voice of societies. In all ages, he comes before texts. He does not expect representations. He squats now at the centre of our scientific stages. The floodlights have moved away from the actors who possess proper names and social blazons.[84]

So, for Lingwood, Braudel's vision of history offers the impetus for developing his idea of 'the epic and the everyday', which is to be illustrated through photographic practices. Lingwood defines the 'epic' as this mass of undocumented experience of individuals and nations, telling 'the stories of people living within a dramatised historical landscape'.[85] To link this idea of the epic to the present, Lingwood turns to Russian philosopher and semiotician Mikhail Bakhtin (1895–1975) and his work *Epic and Novel*. There, Bakhtin shows how, in the beginning of the nineteenth century, the arrival of the novel bridged a previously insurmountable gap between the time of the epic and that of the present. Traditionally, the epic story kept the time of the story hermetically sealed from the time of the present, a product of the need to keep the past 'heroic' and different from the 'now' of lived experience. For Bakhtin, the epic needs a national or an absolute past—an 'absolute epic distance'.[86] In ancient literature, stemming from oral traditions, it is memory rather than knowledge that comes first—it is the origin of creative power. In the modern novel, memory is exchanged for epistemology, for knowledge and experience. For Bakhtin, the advent of the novel meant that:

> To portray an event on the same time-and-value plane as oneself and one's contemporaries (an event that is therefore based on one's personal experience and thought), is to undertake a radical revolution, and to step out of the world of Epic into the world of the novel.[87]

---

[82] Lingwood, *The Epic*, 10.
[83] Fernand Braudel, in Lingwood, 10.
[84] De Certeau, 'Epigraph'.
[85] Lingwood, *The Epic*, 10.
[86] Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981), 31.
[87] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 14.

Novelist L. P. Hartley (1895–1972) evokes this attitude in the opening line of his novel *The Go-Between*: 'The past is a foreign country, they do things differently there'.[88] Bakhtin advances his argument further, describing how '[i]n the process of becoming the dominant genre, the novel sparks the renovation of all other genres, it infects them with its spirit of process and inconclusiveness'.[89] Accordingly, the artistic image may also be restructured as a result of this 'revolution in the hierarchy of times'. The novel creates a new temporal hierarchy: it is no longer teleologically governed by the sequence of origin-past-present, no longer whole or finished, but inconclusive. In it, 'time and the world become historical'.[90]

It is into this new temporal order, or perhaps from it, Lingwood argues, that the medium of photography is born. It comes hard on the heels of the novel, and with an even more intimate relation to the present. From its beginning, Lingwood tells us, photography's problem was its instantaneity: its intimate relationship with time was both a blessing and a curse. How could photography engage with multiple times? How could it, like the novel or the film, create narratives that unfold in real time? The elusive element was an experience of duration. The photographer had to develop different strategies, both to overcome photography's instantaneity, and to prevent photographs from becoming a mere *memento mori*. If the past invades the photographic image too completely, it leaves no room for the 'open-ended' present.

Lingwood demonstrates three distinct strategies for the photographic representation of time that emerged. First, the 'snapshot' aesthetic: the 'dextrous marshalling of available elements'[91] which he identifies with the work of practitioners such as Brésson or Winogrand, and, in this specific curatorial instance, the Robert Smithson (1938–1973). The snapshot method celebrates the spontaneous, the moment. It was seen as integrally 'photographic', as it produced images that could not be conveyed in any other medium. At the other end of the scale was the picture as thought form, a pictorial approach which took its cue from easel painting. Photography had to repeatedly 'recuse itself' from this latter art form, according to Lingwood: it was often deployed to distance itself from itself to escape the inherent conditions of the medium. The final strategy is the 'archive', the 'standard imposition of a preconceived format onto a predetermined object'.[92] This form takes on the rhetorical language of natural science, classifying types of people, plants, buildings, or just about anything that can be grouped. It is a 'dialectic principle of melancholic commemoration and enterprising surveillance'.[93] By way of summary, Lingwood writes:

> Imposition and composition, the serial and the singular, the 'uniform' of the archive, the thought form of the picture and between them, the *informe* of the snapshot: these modes co-exist in photography to the present day.[94]

These generalities, Lingwood reminds us, are just that: generalities that photographic artists work through and transcend in the specificities of individual practice. However, Lingwood

[88] L.P. Hartley, *The Go-Between* (New York, NY: Penguin Modern Classics, 2004), Prologue.
[89] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 7.
[90] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 30.
[91] Lingwood, *The Epic*, 12.
[92] Lingwood, *The Epic*, 12.
[93] Benjamin Buchloh, *Thomas Struth Photographs*, in Lingwood, *The Epic*, 13.
[94] Lingwood, *The Epic*, 13.

attributes one element to all the artists contained in the selection being studied—Jeff Wall (1946), Thomas Struth (1954), Gabrielle Orozco (1962), Annelies Strba (1947), Bernd and Hilla Becher (1931–2007, 1934–2015), Craigie Horsfield (1949), Robert Smithson, and Jean-Marc Bustamante (1952). In their work, the photograph, like the novel, 'derives from the prose of the world'.[95] The photograph tells its story through its 'zone of contact with the vernacular, which is surface and substance of the present'.[96] The worn and creased surfaces—the 'reservoir of processes and marks'[97]—of bodies, cities, and landscapes differentiate this type of photography from the seamless surface of commercial and advertising imagery. Whether in snapshots, or in a highly composed aesthetic, Lingwood argues, these artists embed the vernacular at the centre of their work. The effect is a resistance to homogeneity and abstraction. In a manner not dissimilar to the prose of Consolo discussed in the previous chapter, concerned with dialect and forgotten language, these works resist easy commodification through their close adherence to a vernacular social reality.

Quoting Bakhtin, Lingwood describes the intertextuality of this type of work. In it, the work and the world are:

> [...] indissolubly tied up with each other, and find themselves in continual mutual interaction: uninterrupted exchange goes on between them. The work and the world represented in it enter the real world and enrich it, and the real world enters the work.[98]

Again echoing Consolo's literary reconstructions of neglected histories through the vernacular of dialect, Lingwood points out how photographs reconstruct reality by framing and serialising it. He illustrates the process using Braudel's thoughts on his own practice as a historian: 'The researcher occupied with the present can make out the fine lines of a structure only by himself engaging in reconstruction […] not getting embroiled in reality as it appears, but truncating it, transcending it'.[99]

Bakhtin writes that the 'absence of internal conclusiveness […] creates a sharp increase in demands for an external and formal completeness'.[100] Concurring with this thought, Lingwood considers the practice of restructuring to be essential. The restructuring occurs in various ways to create a narrative: as the building-up of pictorial form in Craigie Horsfield's work or as Wall's computerised montage, or through to the serialisation of Smithson's snapshots of the Hotel Palenque:

> The reconstruction of the vernacular creates a double status for the completed work; it is at one and the same time a part of the world, and apart from it. Made from a

[95] Lingwood, *The Epic*, 13.
[96] Lingwood, *The Epic*, 13.
[97] Lingwood, *The Epic*, 14.
[98] Bakhtin in Lingwood, *The Epic*, 14.
[99] Fernand Braudel, *History and the Social Sciences*, in Lingwood, *The Epic*, 14.
[100] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 31.

> particular time and place, it is reconstituted in a different place and time: the place of the exhibition and the time of the viewer.[101]

At the centre of my own photographic research lies a question that Lingwood believes to be vital: how 'the times of history and the contingencies of the present are materialised in the work of art'.[102] To answer it, I now turn to the work of art historian Mieke Bal.

[101] Lingwood, *The Epic*, 14.
[102] Lingwood, *The Epic*, 15.

Mieke Bal's 'Preposterous History'

In *Quoting Caravaggio: Contemporary art, Preposterous History,* Mieke Bal argues for the continuing relevance of baroque ideas in art and in culture. Through the lens of these ideas, she maintains, we may re-envision our approach to history and chronology itself. Using Caravaggio as the most emblematic of baroque artists, she considers contemporary practitioners who have—knowingly or unknowingly—'quoted him'.

Bal begins with a quote from T.S. Eliot (1888–1965): 'Whoever has approved this idea of order […] will not find it preposterous that the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is altered by the past'.

When art from the past is 'quoted' in the present, it is itself forever changed by that relationship. In literature, for instance, Zadie Smith's novel *On Beauty,* lifts the entire plot of E.M Forster's (1879–1970) *Howards End*, relocating it to Boston and Kilburn, London, and changing the race and gender of the main protagonists. *Howards End* cannot be the same again after reading *On Beauty*. But that change is no diminution. If anything, the subsequent reading of the 'original' becomes a richer and more multifaceted experience.

> Quoting Caravaggio changes his work forever. Like any form of representation, art is inevitably engaged with what came before it, and that engagement is an active reworking. It specifies what and how our gaze sees. Hence the work performed by later images obliterates the older images [...] and creates new versions of old images instead.[103]

This process, Bal claims, reveals crucial insights about how contemporary culture deals with the past, and how—in the present—we frame an understanding of history and culture. Bal's aim is to position and read artworks as forms of 'cultural philosophy', to facilitate learning from art of the Baroque period and of today, all in a manner that helps us to clarify the relationship between past and present. Specifically, Bal refers to the exhibition *Going for Baroque*, at The Contemporary in Baltimore 1995–96 and curated by Lisa Corrin,[104] as helping her to focus the question at the root of her study between past and present. 'Who illuminates—helps us to understand—whom?'[105] This question was already an integral part of baroque art. Bal cites the art historian Irving Lavin, for whom the preponderance of drapery in baroque art functions as a device to construct 'the almost hallucinatory relationship between past and present that is a hallmark of the period'.[106]

This hallucinatory quality, according to Bal, is of something that inserts itself between perception and its object, disrupting our teleological reading of history as linear narrative and also our assumptions about origin and source. Bal wonders whether, to understand the work of David Reed[107]—exhibited in the 1996 exhibition *Going for Baroque*—we must also understand the paintings of Domenico Fetti (1589–1623), next to which Reed's painting was

[103] Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio*, 1.
[104] *Going for Baroque* included: David Reed, Cindy Sherman, Amalia Mesa-Bains, and Ken Appetar among others, in a wide variety of mediums.
[105] Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio*, 3.
[106] Irving Lavin, *Art Bulletin* 56, in Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio*, 3.
[107] Fig. 5.

placed. Must we always look to art of the past to understand the art of the present? On that view, we will always see what we already know. Perhaps we may, instead, look at Reed's paintings as an invitation to reappraise the baroque art which he literally and figuratively 'illuminates'. Paradoxically, when we recognise that Reed's paintings cannot be understood a-historically, their place and intention within history become difficult to fix.

Curator Lisa Corrin writes that Reed's work, which she placed opposite a painting by Fetti, demonstrates:

> [...] how the features of baroque art that resonate for him are translated into a series of distinct, fully developed ideas about colour, light, time, space, and systems of illusion […] There is a scepticism inherent in an unnostalgic art that embraces ambiguity, artifice and a technological aesthetic.[108]

Bal puts it this way:

> Looking at Reed's postmodern pictorial illusionism […] brings certain features of Caravaggio's radical painting back to us, as much as the other way round […] something to do with surface and reality, with present and past times.[109]

Through artworks, Ball argues, one can deal with the past without thereby collapsing everything into a poorly defined 'presentism' or relying on an objectifying, positivist historicism by which the past is made an object, separate from the present. This 'preposterous' way of looking at history—putting what was chronologically first as the afterthought—carries with it 'productive uncertainties and illuminating highlights'.[110] Baroque art is particularly well-suited for such an endeavour.

Bal suggests that the modern-contemporary interest in the Baroque itself acts out a 'baroque vision'. One of the most important ideas at the heart of this vision is a shifting movement between the subject and object of vision, changing their traditional hierarchy. This aspect of baroque art creates a 'coevalness' between the Baroque and the art of today. Bal illustrates this phenomenon borrowing an idea from anthropology: the notion of 'shared time'. The anthropologist Johannes Fabian coined the phrase 'shared time' to articulate what he saw as the necessity of establishing a less hierarchical relationship between anthropologists and the people being studied. He insisted on the importance of this shared time and coeval existence to abandon the discourse of the 'other', whereby the people being studied were seen to exist in timeframes distinct from the 'West', an objectifying and colonialist scheme.[111]

Deploying this mode of thought, Bal situates Caravaggio's paintings—the historical subject—through the lens of a shared time, sharing ideas that were present then and now. The effect of this approach is a:

---

[108] Lisa G. Corrin, *Contemporary Artists Go for Baroque,* in Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio*, 4.
[109] Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio*, 4.
[110] Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio*, 7.
[111] Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2014).

> [...] vision that integrates an epistemological view, a concept of representation, and an aesthetic, all three of which are anchored in the inseparability of mind and body, form and matter, line and colour, image and discourse. No baroque oeuvre makes a clearer case for the role of both precursor (as inventor) and product (or result) of this oscillation than that of Caravaggio.

Iain Chambers reaches a similar conclusion. In an extended passage, baroquely theoretical and visceral, he begins by recounting a journey on foot through his adoptive city of Naples. Entering the church of *Pio Monte della Misericordia,* he witnesses an experience built into baroque architecture: the uncanny sensation of moving abruptly from the entropic chaos of the street to the still calm of the darkened interior. Moving from one dimension to another, Chambers being sucked into the 'dramatic milieu of the city',[112] and a moment later he is 'thrust into startling proximity' with Caravaggio's *Seven Works of Mercy* or *Sette Opere di Misericordia,*[113] one of the greatest works of the European Baroque period. Chambers notes the painting's monumental scale, and its representation of a slice of the street life of the time. In it, '[b]odies are creased by shafts of light and enveloped in folds of darkness'.[114] However, he chiefly observes how the painting has no easily discernible centre. Rather, it constitutes 'an agitated constellation of attention'.[115] Instead of drawing in the eye to a fixed point, in line with classical traditions, the viewer's gaze is directed across the canvas' surface in a series of trajectories. There is no unifying point. Instead of the privileged eye being directed towards a hypothetical vanishing point deep within the picture, the eye is itself invaded by the details of the scene, upsetting the traditional understanding of subject and object.

Chambers describes Caravaggio's art as imbued with a persistent sense of the precarity of certainty and stability. The paintings, he maintains, grant us an opening on to the matrix of Naples, an indecipherable baroque city. Following French semiotician and art historian Louis Marin (1931–1992), Chambers remarks how Caravaggio's paintings effectively 'destroyed' the nobility of the gaze. Painting directly from life, which was very unusual at that time, he offered up something originating in lived experience, rather than composed and condoned by reason.

> The deadly beauty of theory; the conclusive, crypt-like configuration of discourse; and the rationalism of representation that render the world legible and ready for possession are destroyed by Caravaggio's turning the gaze inward on itself and the mortal framing it announces.[116]

In Caravaggio's paintings, we do not discover the truth of the object represented. The truth that we do discover concerns representation: when distance is effectively eliminated, without clear markers of perspective and scale, the eye becomes trapped on the surface of the work. The boundary between subject and object becomes frayed and unreliable.

[112] Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings*, 94.
[113] Fig. 2.
[114] Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings*, 94.
[115] Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings*, 94.
[116] Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings*, 96.

Fig. 6. Garry Winogrand. *Hang Em High*, New York 1968.

Fig. 5. Caravaggio. *The Seven Works of Mercy* Naples, 1607.

> There is a certain insistence, here and there in the texts of art historians, on what one might call the surface of things, an insistence that is used to characterise Caravaggio's art and to explain his extraordinary success. The surface is neither the outside nor the inside of things, but the plane where the outside and inside coincide in a blurred and indecipherable boundary. It is here that the outside and the inside are at their most intense and attain their greatest power, a power so overwhelming it cannot be resisted.[117]

It is easy to draw parallels between this discourse of surfaces with contemporary photography, particularly with postmodern discourse, but less normal to see it deployed to analyse sixteenth-century paintings. This would seem to be another instance of Bal's and Fabian's 'shared time'. Andre Félibien (1619–1695), an art critic of Caravaggio's own time, was hostile to Caravaggio's work—instead a supporter of Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665), the painter who declared Caravaggio to have come into the world 'to destroy painting'—wrote that 'whereas Poussin sought to foreground the nobility of the subject, Caravaggio allowed himself to be carried away by the truth of nature as it appeared to him'.[118] Here, Félibien is referring to Caravaggio's extremely unusual (for the time) habit of painting directly from life,[119] and including in his paintings things such as rotten fruit, dirty soles of feet, and other vernacular imperfections. Félibien and Poussin felt that Caravaggio made his paintings too

[117] Louis Marin, *To Destroy Painting* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 15.
[118] Andre Félibien, *Entretien V1*, in Marin, 3.
[119] We know from Peter Robb's biography *M,* that Caravaggio had no preparatory sketches under his paintings (X-ray has confirmed this). He seems to not have known how to draw. Thus, he didn't use sketches as the theoretical schema for his paintings.

realistic, in effect creating a simulacrum which had the undesirable effect of painfully pointing to the discrepancy between painting and reality.

This critical engagement again relates to contemporary art photography ideas and postmodern discourse. The latter seek to elevate surface and vernacular, to move the viewer away from heroic representations, myths, and the necessity to reproduce the techniques of the past according to a strict set of codifications—Duchamp being the paradigmatic example. According to Marin, the 'self-reflexive moment within Caravaggio's paintings reveals painting to be a representation without basis, without foundations […] the glance is a gesture of pointing, a wordless "this" that does away with supplementary discourses and description, striking here and now'.[120]

Chambers concurs, adding his own twist. He links Caravaggio's work not only to modern discourses about art production, but also to the idea of the modern city:

> In its violent affirmation, this temperament announces the precarious space of the emergence of the modern urban world and anticipates what in later centuries will be referred to as mass culture.[121]

Bal's project is to establish theoretical issues that can be perceived in the art of the past, through the mirror of the present. Through this process, she identifies specific baroque features: the figure of the 'Fold'; the switch from macroscopic to microscopic; overlapping boundaries between visual and written discourses; the 'spatial thickness' of two- and three-dimensional surfaces; the random detail that can change the meaning of the larger work; 'mirroring'; and 'sensuality'. Each of these discourses can be equated with an issue or problem that applies equally to 'knowing' the baroque style and baroque thought, as well as contemporary readings of the cultural disciplines. In particular, Bal tells us, the Baroque is about the process of 'articulating engagement as a way of knowing'[122] through being enfolded within the subject matter, weighing the value of elements liable to oscillate in their relative importance, and embodying knowledge as a method of apprehension, as well as engaging with the dialectic of the self and the other that threatens the boundary between subject and object.

The central theoretical locus for Bal's enquiry is the concept of 'quotation', and the visual cornerstone is Caravaggio's painting. She transcends the normal understanding of the idea of quotation,[123] looking instead at what occurs at the intersection between intertextuality and iconography. As coined by Bakhtin, and briefly discussed in the previous section, intertextuality refers to the ready-made lexicon of linguistic or visual signs that the artist or writer finds embedded in the culture and ready to be recycled. In this instance, iconography is the interrogation and re-use of such signs. Bal identifies three defining characteristics of such iconographic intertextuality: the notion of source, origin, and precedent. They are all

---

[120] Marin, *To Destroy Painting*, 164.
[121] Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings*, 97.
[122] Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio*, 8.
[123] Thomas McEvilley, *The Exile's Return: Towards a Redefinition of Painting in the Postmodern Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). McEvilly coined the phrase quotationalism and pointed out that it is not a unified practice and has multiple goals. Bal bases her discussion of quotation as part of an artistic practice on McEvilley's work and goes further in her exploration of the subject.

captured by the idea that what came first conditions everything that follows. Any later artist owes a debt to those who came before and is influenced by them. But art historian Michael Baxandall (1933–2008) has convincingly reversed this direction of thinking, and repudiated the apparently passive response of the later artist. Instead, Baxandall argues that the work of the later artist can be seen as an 'intervention' and problematises the idea of origin itself.

A related problem is that of meaning. If a motif is borrowed from an earlier text or image, does the meaning go along with the motif? For instance, if director Michael Scorsese—who spent time looking at Caravaggio's works in Rome before he began filming *Mean Street*—makes use of the motif of *chiaroscuro*, does it have the same meaning as in Caravaggio's work? Iconographic analysis often shies away from interpreting the meanings of motifs in new contexts. Intertextuality, on the other hand, insists that the 'sign' comes with a meaning attached. 'Not that the later artist necessarily endorses that meaning', Bal argues, 'but he or she will have to deal with it: to reject or reverse it, make it ironic, or simply, often unawares, insert it in to the new text'.[124]

Transference of meaning contributing to interpretation is commonplace in art history. But Bal's proposal is not about interpretation, at least not in the sense of creating a unified whole. She understands the unreliability and unpredictability of the visual to be 'paradigmatic of the production of meaning in general'.[125] Bal cites Sigmund Freud's (1856–1939) idea of *Nachträglichkeit* (literally: 'afterwards-ness'), understanding things after the event, as when memories change through later experience. This line of thought allows one to understand 'meaning production' running in both temporal directions in an open-ended process. Rather than attempting to precisely 'map' that process, or to look for exact correlations, Bal encourages us to see visual images as active participants in a dialogue of ideas. This, she says, is how art 'thinks'.

The third intersection (and difference) between iconography and intertextuality, which also differentiates theory from practice, is found in the textual nature of 'intertextual allusion'. In the practice of iconography, visual motifs often themselves refer to a written text. In painting, most of these texts are classical and or mythological. Bal seeks to describe a visual textuality, separate from written source texts. In this type of practice, an artist uses or recycles elements of previous works, borrowing from the original and simultaneously creating a new meaning. Bal describes the recycled elements as having 'broken away' from the original text or image so that they may be reformed into something new. The new image as text is infected by its precedent, made fragile and ready to fall apart again. In this process, the tendency for mythologising and objectifying is foregrounded and subverted by a 'first person' subjectivity. Drawing on the work of French semiotician Émile Benveniste (1902–1976),[126] Bal claims that by this subjective 'taint', 'historical narrative is changed into subjective discourse'.[127]

---

[124] Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio*, 9.

[125] Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio*, 9.

[126] Emile Beneviste, *Problems in General Linguistics* (Miami: University of Miami Press, 1971). 'Subjectivity in Language' suggests that the human subject is constituted from language, and this makes any objective study of language as 'separate' from us very difficult.

[127] Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio*, 9.

I contend that this approach to art production finds common ground with Consolo's 'poetics of memory' and Lingwood's insistence on the importance of the vernacular in the photographic practices he examines. All these discourses centre on the subjective and particular, while resisting the commodification and homogenisation of culture, as well as the mythologising that can accompany historicising. This meeting point of iconography and intertextuality becomes part of what Bal calls 'interdiscursivity'.[128] It is an iconography that textualises visual motifs or principles of form—such as surface, folds, *chiaroscuro*, perspective—and allows them 'discursive positions'.[129] This is the case for figurative, abstract, and other types of art production.

Bal describes something situated at the intersection of art history and literary analysis as 'quotation'. They belong to one of several categories, each of which are productive in illuminating specific aspects of the art of the past and the present. First, there is literal quotation: words from the mouths of characters, bits of real speech reproduced within narratives. This form of quotation strengthens *mimesis*, and we are more accustomed to it in text. Although, in visual art, artists are referred to as quoting others, there is no firm consensus on what this implies. In the second form of quotation, 'fragments of reality are the product of a manipulation',[130] in a knowing, realist fiction.[131]According to Bal, this essentially illusionistic practice allows multiple realities to exist in the work. She links Caravaggio's *Head of Medusa* with a contemporary work by Ann Veronica Janssens: *Le corps noir.* In Bakhtinian dialogism—the third of Bal's categories—quotations are signposts that point us back in the general direction from which the words have originated. This has the effect of fragmenting language, turning an exact quotation into a generalised 'borrowing of discursive habits'.[132] Its effect is turning intertextuality into interdiscursivity, producing multiple meanings, ambiguities and, by default, undermining the notion that the work can be reduced to the artist's intention. As an example, Bal references the photographs of Carrie Mae Weems (1953), who does 'quote' Caravaggio directly, but in a manner that could be read in many ways.

Finally, Bal proposes deconstructionism, where the 'quoting subject' foregrounds the impossibility of getting to the object of quotation. Within this position, the primary factor is what the subject 'does' to the quoted object. As examples, she cites the approaches of Bakhtin and Derrida. Whereas Bakhtin said that the word never forgets where it has been, for Derrida, on the other hand, the word never returns to the present without the burden of its quotational journey. The first two types of quotation involve the relationship between the image and the reality beyond the image to which it points. The second two modes of quotation as described by Bal concern meanings that originate outside and enter the image. In a situation in which all these modes are mobilised, there is 'a questioning of the very limit

[128] Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio*, 9.
[129] Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio*, 10.
[130] Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio*, 12.
[131] Barthes describes a reality effect, '*Effet de Reel*', a textual device commonly used to establish literary texts as 'real'. He talks of 'untheorized descriptive residues' that create a problem for historical analysis that might rely on assumed truths.
[132] Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio*, 10.

that separates outside from inside. This question in turn challenges the notion of intention that is so pervasively predominant in the cultural disciplines, especially in art history'.[133]

This argument around intentionality is important for Bal as it is a vital part of the question about what the art of the past can mean to us today, and one that traditional art scholarship pays little attention to. The notion of an artist's intention is a central plank of the study of art history. The critic David Carrier (1944–) associates this approach with a broadly humanistic attitude, according to which the narrative is considered as an accurate and truthful record of an artist's intention. Carrier wanted to show biographical criticism—for example, using what we know about Caravaggio's life to explain his art—to be a projection. Carrier considers this reconstruction of meaning a tempting trap, where the projected intention becomes unconscious fantasy. A different approach, by which we may counter this kind of projected intentionalism, is to stick to historical evidence, and consider patrons and commissions—in Caravaggio's case, the Church and nobility. This approach leads to discussions of 'genius' and superior craftsmanship. Approaching the Baroque in this way would require considering the circumstances of the Counter-Reformation and what people of that period desired from their art.

While acknowledging the usefulness of this approach, Bal finds it unsatisfactory: it does not address what she refers to as the 'second personhood' of Caravaggio's paintings and their 'enduring appeal'. Bal turns to Derrida, who acknowledges the constructed nature of context—consisting of patrons, societal movements, institutions and so on—but denies the intentional construction of context by 'an original, autonomous, authentic, speaking subject'.[134] Swapping 'intentionality' for 'agency', Bal argues that a subject's agency is, then, not an invention but an intervention. She maintains that, in contemporary art, the practice or idea of quotation provides us a new method or sense of understanding. That method does not deny historical sources and contexts, which it may agree with but does not privilege and avoids projecting present-day concerns: it 'makes the historical art more important because it keeps it alive and does not isolate it in a remote past, buried under concerns we do not share'.[135]

According to Bal, in any quotation, the vantage point of the quoting text is in the present, and each of the meanings of a quotation comes with an epistemological viewpoint, an idea about the nature of representation and a specific aesthetic. Bal wants to demonstrate the skein of connections that join these different approaches together. She claims that 'their inseparability is perhaps the most important contribution of the Baroque and the reason for the latter's lasting relevance'.[136]

Bal's work was also spurred by the *Baroque Re-Visions* conference, held in Vienna, and its juxtaposition of two ideas. The first idea was integration. Something intrinsic to the study and its object—the Baroque—strongly indicated the need for an interdisciplinary approach, being the 'study of a moment that precedes both current binary opposition and current disciplinary turf-policing'.[137] In other words, to study the Baroque, you might, for best

[133] Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio*, 11.
[134] Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena,* in Bal, 13.
[135] Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio*, 14.
[136] Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio*, 14.
[137] Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio*, 17.

results, rely on a multi-disciplinary baroque framework of thought. The second idea was of a desire to return to the past, which could carry nostalgic or utopian overtones, at a time that clearly recognises the problems and dangers of this approach, but, despite which, leaves the feeling that something 'is lost in abandoning the Baroque as an integrated field of study'.[138] Bal surmises that:

> This juxtaposition seemed to me more than just a coincidence. It seemed as though the very interdisciplinary of the approach underlying this event was also what constituted the object of nostalgic longing, at least its theoretical object.[139]

One of the conference's challenges—according to Bal—was the question of whether or not the Baroque had actually existed. The event's organizers proposed 'to conduct a critical reappraisal of the Baroque, mainly as an historical, but also a trans-historical phenomenon'.[140] To Bal, the noun 'phenomenon' demonstrates the essential ambiguity of historical endeavours. A phenomenon is a perception event, rather than a fact: it is related to what one can see and feel. Also, the term 'trans-historical' points to the impossibility of an historical 'endeavour' that is itself uprooted from the context of historically specific present. These reflections lead to what might be called 'Panthrocentism', a situation where the present is seen as a given, a norm with no need for explanation that renders the past—the historical object—other, and, therefore, even more distant.

To avoid this pitfall, Bal invokes artist David Reed, who reveals another possibility for a meta-historical relationship between past and present. 'We too (like Caravaggio)', Reed claims, 'are looking for something that is real but find it difficult because we know now that reality is very complex and is literally virtual'.[141] Bal adds that Caravaggio's enduring popularity 'can be read, as an explorer of the complexities of reality, as something not fixed or permanent, but changing and elusive […] that frames our turn to the Baroque as historically specific: the late 20th century looks back to the 16th'.[142]

Bal's stated aim is to study this past-present connection to the Baroque to examine how art 'thinks'. Traditional disciplinary boundaries assign ideas to the realm of philosophy. In terms of the ideas they express, visual arts, sculpture, painting, photographs, or installations are seen as subordinate to the texts of philosophical canon. The visual arts are a reflective addendum to philosophy, objects that might serve to illustrate or reflect ideas. Eclecticism, Bal argues, is incompatible with philosophy: philosophy, bound to reason and logic, cannot help us to understand the cultural persistence of ideas whose context or framing have become 'obsolete'. Bal is suggesting another way of seeing the notion of tradition. Where such ideas re-emerge, they should not be seen simply as freewheeling fragments of reality that become ascribed to an overarching postmodern sensibility. Instead, we should take them as active interventions into an idea of tradition that has been 'wrongly' constituted. In his study of Occidental poetics, the Czech literary theorist Lubomír Doležel (1922–2017) wrote:

---

[138] *Burgard Conference Rationale* 1996, in Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio*, 17.
[139] Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio*, 17.
[140] Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio*, 18.
[141] David Reed, quoted from a taped conversation with Lisa G. Corrin, in Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio*, 19.
[142] Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio*, 20.

> A new theoretical paradigm is necessitated by the accumulation of knowledge achieved by 'ordinary science'. No such labour precedes the loudly heralded 'revolutions' in literary thought: they are not replacements of theoretical paradigms but proclamations of power shifts in the cultural establishment.[143]

We must recognise both the benefits of the continuity that comes with tradition, and, at once, be aware of the logical and philosophical limits of 'revolutions' that claim to sweep tradition aside. Bal seeks another way. Disenchanted with the defensive and exclusive positions that tend to dominate discourses about traditions and their overthrowing, she sets her attention on:

> [...] contemporary 'Caravaggio' as a kind of recycling that implies a break. Derived from a set of visually embodied ideas, it involves response, dialogue, appropriating gestures, and reframing so as to generate ramifications of the past—without continuity—in the present. Therefore, instead of committing such ideas to the frame of philosophy and the test of universal validity, I would like to argue that some long-forgotten ideas surface, along with forms and colours, motifs and hues, surfaces and substances, in the thought of contemporary visual artefacts.[144]

Supporting her theory that 'art thinks', Bal uses ideas from baroque philosophy—in particular, Leibniz. Although not contemporaneous with Caravaggio, and coming from a different cultural context, Leibniz was perhaps the most emblematic baroque thinker. As previously discussed, Deleuze's 'The fold' is essentially a study of Leibniz. In the 1980s, Leibniz's theory of 'possible worlds' was deployed in literary theory, semantics and logic during as a way of looking at the problem of fictionality and its analysis. In brief, Leibniz maintained the existence of infinite possible worlds. However, the actualisation of one possible world renders the others impossible. Therefore, only one world can be actualised. Leibniz asks himself: Why does *this* world exist? Why do all the other possible worlds not exist?

For Bal, the concept of possible worlds serves as a prime example of how historical ideas are often dealt with. The redeployment, reconsideration, or relocation of 'fragments' of a historical heritage demands making those fragments consistent. A discourse developed around 'Source, origin, and loss', inimical to what Bal terms a 'metaphoric transfer' to answer the concern that a concept cannot be used now because it meant something different previously unless there exists an unbroken bridge of logic back to the original. Bal argues that the concept of possible worlds can be given a completely different life. 'Indeed', she claims 'it doesn't take much imagination to realise that this theory has emerged in the late twentieth century for a good reason: it is a time of virtual reality, hypertext, and artificial intelligence'.[145]

[143] Lubomír Doležel, *Occidental Poetics: Tradition and Progress*, in Bal, 22.
[144] Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio*, 23.
[145] Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio*, 24.

For Lubomír Doležel, possible worlds suggest viable solutions to a true interdisciplinary practice, which he identifies as being overly dominated by the model of literary writing:[146]

> Interdisciplinarity is now primarily the positing and testing of higher order theoretical and conceptual systems that illuminate problems cutting across traditional disciplines. One of the irradiating centres is the conceptual system of possible worlds […]. The universe of discourse is not restricted to the actual world, but spreads over uncountable possible, non-actualised worlds.[147]

So, while the notion of possible worlds has been used to expound the concept of functionality, it has not been deployed to help us to understand the incompatible worlds that arise from baroque artworks. The possible worlds theory has not been liberated from its own logical frame. It has not been allowed to synchronise with the more 'idiosyncratic' Leibnizian ideas repressed by its own framework, adhered to by scientists and metaphysicians, who leave it buried beneath traditions that are no longer useful. Bal lists three Leibnizian concepts: the 'Monad', a fundamental unit which mirrors the universe; the 'Labyrinth', a metaphor or image for the microscopic and macroscopic continuum of space; and, most importantly, the 'Fold', the most visual and most baroque of Leibniz's ideas. For Bal, all these ideas deserve closer scrutiny, being integral to baroque thought. Approached imaginatively, rather than logically, they can be highly rewarding, because 'these are precisely the concepts absorbed in visual artefacts that create a plurality of "possible worlds" on the basis of the questions these concepts tenaciously continue to pose'.[148]

Bal distinguishes possible worlds from fictional worlds. Possible worlds, like the real world, have consequences. The literary critic Ruth Ronen puts it like this:

> Possible worlds are based on a logic of ramification determining the range of possibilities that emerge from an actual state of affairs; fictional worlds are based on a logic of parallelism that guarantees their autonomy in relation to the actual world.[149]

This logic of ramification interests Bal in relationship to the artists she considers. The works of these diverse artists utilise fragments of baroque aesthetic and thought within Bal's 'fourfold' practice of quotation. Although they are nominally 'fictional', she argues that they are not really parallel to, or autonomous of, the real world. Rather, by quoting, they share some of the enfolded or entrapped relationship to 'reality' that was a feature of much baroque art. Looking at her selection of artists and their works, Bal collects *and* attempts to summarise various elements of 'baroque vision' which can be seen as a contemporary '[p]hilosophy of knowledge in which it is no longer physics that is the paradigm of how to pursue knowledge, but a form of knowledge of **other people**'.[150]

---

[146] Doležel points out that interdisciplinarity is mostly deployed by humanistic literary theory, which tends to simply couch each discipline in its own (literary) model.
[147] Lubomír Doležel, *Possible Worlds of Fiction and History* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 785–786.
[148] Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio*, 24.
[149] Ruth Ronen, *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory*, in Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio*, 24.
[150] Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio*, 25. Original emphasis.

This reference to the 'knowledge of other people' invokes the work of the feminist philosopher Lorraine Code. In *What Can She Know* (1991), Code addresses a fundamental question for both philosophy and feminism: Is the sex of the knower epistemologically significant? She thinks that it is. In her attempt to demonstrate this, Code develops an alternative model of knowledge. On her account, the knower is defined through an idea of subjectivity based on a personal, relational model. Code's model, Bal suggests, is no broad, universalising humanism. Rather, it involves 'engagement', changeability, and mutuality. It does not depend on a single viewpoint. This positioning of the subject accords with Deleuze's description of a baroque point of view. It is neither relative nor universal—the term Bal coins here is 'entanglement'. The idea of viewpoint is central. It was during the Baroque period that an awareness of point of view prompted thought of self-reflection, that is to say, to an acute awareness of the human individual. This, in turn, resulted in a further defining characteristic of a baroque point of view: the effect of the object on the subject. To clarify this position, Bal quotes Deleuze's explanation of Leibniz:

> Leibniz's idea about point of view is the secret of things, as focus, cryptology, or even as the determination of the indeterminate by means of ambiguous signs: **wha**t I am telling to you**, what** you are thinking about, do you agree to tell **him** about **it**, provided that we know what to expect of **it**, about **her** and that we also agree about who **he** is and who **she** is? As in a baroque anamorphosis,[151] only point of view provides us with the answers and cases.[152]

In her analysis of this passage, Bal draws our attention to its rhythm: it directs our attention rhythmically back and forth between subject and object to emphasise the mobility between these two positions. In fact, she suggests that the rhythm of the words is as important to our understanding of this sentence as the syntactical propositions it states:

> Objects, seen as thus enfolded with the subject in a shared entanglement, are considered events rather than things—events of becoming rather than being. What is specifically baroque about this view is the point of view of two mobile positions […] the pertinent term is **entanglement**.[153]

So, we have returned to a theme from Chambers' description of Caravaggio's *Seven Works of Mercy*: the 'agitated constellation of attention', the unstable relationship between the viewer and the viewed.

The idea of mobile positions between subject and object, encapsulated by Bal's 'entanglement' is, I would argue, inherent to photography. It is particularly foregrounded in hand-held photography.

In recent years, an argument has developed, alleging that street photography, in addition to picturing the other, is always a type of self-portraiture. Not only might the choice of subject—old men, prams, family groups, ice creams, hats, dogs, people with one leg, cats, or whatever—reveal a quasi-autobiographical index of an artist's intentions; more importantly,

---

[151] An anamorphosis is a distorting mirror, common in baroque times. An undistorted reflection would appear only from certain viewpoints, to be revealed as one moved around relative to the mirror.
[152] Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio*, 29.
[153] Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio*, 30.

each photograph can be seen as a record of the photographer's presence in the space, whose position is recorded through reciprocity. In this way, every photograph records at least two relative positions.

In 'The Gesture of Photography', philosopher Vilém Flusser examines the complicated set of dynamic relationships that go into the 'taking' of a photograph. Clearly echoing Bal's notion of 'thinking art', Flusser also considers the making of a photograph as a philosophical proposition. He invites the reader to imagine a situation: a man in a room with an 'apparatus' (a camera) photographs another man, sitting and smoking a pipe. Immediately, we encounter a difficulty in ascertaining the subject. Should our attention be drawn to the man with the pipe, or to the photographer moving around the room? The photographer becomes the point of the scene, and the man with the pipe the reason for the photographer's movements. Thus, the situation is not determined by the relationship between its constitutive elements, but, rather, by the observer's intentions. Flusser continues:

> The centre of this situation is the man with the apparatus. He is moving. Still it is awkward to say of a centre that it is moving in relation to its own periphery. When a centre moves, it does so with respect to the observer, and the whole situation moves as well. We must therefore concede that what we are seeing when we watch the man with the apparatus is a movement of the whole situation, including the man sitting on his chair.[154]

Nothing in this scene is truly static. Going further, Flusser associates the entire Copernican revolution in thought with a simple change in viewpoint. The Copernican worldview is not an absolute truth: it is no more inherently true than the Ptolemaic system that preceded it.

> In other words, the man with the apparatus does not move to find the best standpoint from which to photograph a fixed situation (although he might think that is what he is doing). In reality, he is looking for a position that best corresponds to his intention to fix a changing situation.[155]

This recalls Deleuze's idea of the baroque anamorphosis, a distorting mirror in which a 'true seeming' image is only available from certain angles as you move in relation to it. Flusser asserts that the gesture of photography is a philosophical gesture. It is, he suggests, a gesture of seeing and, consequently, linked to the ancient notion of '*theora*'—producing an image that is also an idea. Flusser breaks the act of taking a photograph into three specific parts: searching for the right position, manipulating the situation to adapt it to the chosen standpoint, and attempting to find a critical distance from which to judge the success or failure of the endeavour.

In the first step, he points out, the photographer is seeking an opportune 'point within the time-space continuum'.[156] As he moves around a space to find the right point of view, the photographer's gestures attest to the fact that such a position may not exist—and, even if it

[154] Vilém Flusser, *Gestures*, trans. Nancy Ann Roth (Minneapolis, MN: The University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 74–75.
[155] Flusser, *Gestures*, 75.
[156] Flusser, *Gestures*, 78.

did, that there is no clear evidence that it would show that position to be any better than other possible positions. So, every situation allows for a multitude of possible positions whose 'quality depends as much on the situation itself as on the intention of the observer'.[157]

In the case of the man with the pipe, Flusser shows how the photographer always starts with a goal before they look for the viewpoint. Is that goal to show the column of smoke, or, perhaps, the look of enjoyment on the man's face? Each goal requires a slightly different angle. Thus, gestures become theoretical: in looking for the viewpoint, the goal may be revised at any time, in reaction to some other aspect of the scene. A double dialectic emerges, between the goal and the situation and between the multiple available perspectives on that situation.

> In other words, the gesture of photographing is a movement in search of a position that reveals both an internal and an external tension driving the search forward: this gesture is the movement of doubt. To observe the photographer's gesture with this in mind is to watch the unfolding of methodological doubt. And this is the philosophical gesture *par excellence*.[158]

Flusser's examination of the photographic 'gesture' touches on characteristically baroque ideas. Specifically, it brings to mind how vacillation between object and subject, reflection and self-reflexivity, and embodiment all jointly contribute to a conceptual entanglement, enfolded or entrapped within reality. Embodiment becomes relevant to Flusser's discussion of the physical relationship between a photographer and her camera:

> In the photographic gesture, the human body is so enmeshed with the apparatus as to make it pointless to assign either one a specific function. If one designates the instrument as a body whose movements depend on those of a human body […] it becomes almost pointless to define the apparatus as the photographer's tool. It would be no better to maintain that in the search for a position, the body of the photographer becomes the tool of the photo apparatus. By observing the gesture of photographing, it is possible to actually see the reversibility of this relationship in a specific para-industrial context.[159]

Here, Flusser speaks of subject and object, subjectivity and objectivity. This dialectic defines and problematises photography and is bound up with the idea of manipulation, specifically the manipulation of the object by the subject (the photographer). Where the object is a person sharing the situation with the subject, the relationship becomes even more complicated.

Flusser concludes that a photographer's manipulation of a situation does not deprive the photograph of its objectivity, nor would the photograph have somehow been more objective if the photographer had manipulated the situation less. Instead, one must acknowledge the entanglement between observation and manipulation.

---

[157] Flusser, *Gestures*, 79.
[158] Flusser, *Gestures*, 79.
[159] Flusser, *Gestures*, 82.

> To observe a situation is to manipulate it, or to put it another way, observation changes the observed phenomenon. To observe a situation is, to the same extent, to be changed by it. Observation changes the observer. Those who observe the gesture of photographing need neither Heisenberg's Uncertainty Theory nor psychoanalytic theory. They can actually see it. The photographer cannot help manipulating the situation […] He is changed simply by being there.[160]

All images and ideas, according to Flusser, gain their 'objectivity' through manipulation. All ideas are false in the sense that they manipulate that which they consider. By extension, all ideas are fiction or art. The truth of ideas is not inherent in them, but, rather, derives from a consciousness of the factors that are being considered. For Flusser, as for Nietzsche, art is better than truth. The final aspect of the photographic gesture that Flusser invites us to consider is self-criticism or reflection. The camera is a machine that contains a mirror. When the photographer looks into that mirror, it functions in many ways. Looking at the meaning of the word 'reflect', Flusser sees a mirror we (the photographer) look into as we make actions and decisions: '[u]sing this mirror, (whether material or immaterial), he sees himself photographing, in this way he draws himself into the situation'.[161]

Here, I consider Flusser's thoughts about photography and its gesture to cast a new light on Bal's ideas about baroque thought. They also corroborate Chambers' assertion that Caravaggio predicted the mass culture four centuries into his future, as contemporary mass culture is inextricably bound up with photography and film. Together, they forge links from baroque thought and art to photography, of which my own work is fully conscious and on which it plays. The relationship between Caravaggio's painting and hand-held photography—with its democratisation of subject-matter, relationship between subject and object established through converging verticals, the flatness of the picture plane, insistence on surface, all enfolded within the perspective of the human body—reinforced my confidence in such connections and in my own approach.

Flusser also shows us how cultural ideas are built into our technology, which goes to the heart of Bal's discussion of intentionality. The purpose of my writing here is to explain my methodology and decision-making process (how and why I have made and selected images). Therefore, it seems appropriate, taking a lesson from Bal, to recognise that my work has ramifications transcending individual intentions that are equally important, and to consider the images as cultural artefacts as much as 'authored' works.

As a photographic artist whose practice is oriented towards a close attention to vernacular social and historical reality, the city of Palermo—truly Quevedo's 'multibody of the past and present'[162]—is a subject that cannot be tackled 'scientifically'. In a theatricalised space, the realities of the present co-exist with, and are occasionally overcome by, the claims of the past, in a baroque dance. As Martin Jay, writing on Buci-Glucksmann's *Baroque Reason* proposes:

> For Buci-Glucksmann, herself espousing many of the anti-ocularcentric discourses conclusions, it is precisely the baroque's subversion of the dominant visual order of

[160] Flusser, *Gestures*, 83.
[161] Flusser, *Gestures*, 85.
[162] Buci-Glucksmann, 39.

scientific reason that makes it so attractive to our postmodern age. Anti-Platonic in its disparagement of lucid clarity and essential form, baroque vision celebrated instead the confusing interplay of form and chaos, surface and depth, transparency and obscurity. Sensitive to the interpretation of the discursive and the figural—for example, in richly decorated emblem books—it registered an awareness of the impurities of both that was greatly in advance of its time.[163]

[163] Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth Century French Thought* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 47.

Chapter Four: Mediterranean Studies

In this chapter, I consider the wider research context of Mediterranean Studies. I pay particular attention to artists and writers within that field whose work has informed my practice.

While there is often no direct causal link between reading-as-research and photography, the photographs nevertheless become bound up in my own aesthetic and intellectual frameworks about Palermo and the wider Mediterranean. These have been established, to a large degree, by reading.

The work of the historian Fernand Braudel (1902–1985) provides ways of thinking about time, history, and geography that can be related to photography. I have discussed Braudel's influence on my research in Chapter Three. His book *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Phillip II* spans multiple disciplines, including art production. His novel conception of time, geology, and human histories is powerfully imaginative. Its concepts may be illustrated by and incorporated into art practice. In particular, Braudel's analysis of the interactions between people and natural environments, and his descriptive sweep of time—from geological movement to the countless momentary, human fragments that pass unnoticed but together add up to something monumental.

> The horizontal plane of representation that apparently spins endlessly around itself in a closed circuit of infinite semiotitude remains perpetually vulnerable to a vertical axis where we are pulled into the sedimented depths of time where bodies bleed, birth and death occur, lives are lived. This is not to suggest that the representations of life are somehow more distant from 'reality' than its phenomenology: both are real. It is rather to point out that in the field of vision, many things are shown, but not everything is seen.[164]

For Chambers, this seems to create a 'baroque-like folding of the semiotic field into the mortal insistence of the historical archive'.[165]

I shall now consider the work of two artists, whose lives and work in Palermo will provide a link between Mediterranean Studies and art practice. The first is Caravaggio, a painter who lived at the end of the sixteenth century; the other is a photographer whose work was made mainly during the 1980s and 1990s. My own research has been influenced by both, and their respective bodies of work are bound by more than a mere connection of place. The intention of this section is not to add to the considerable extant scholarship on these artists. Rather, it is to articulate how their works have influenced my own photographic study of Palermo.

[164] Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings*, 11.
[165] Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings*, 154.

Caravaggio

Michelangelo Merisi di Caravaggio was born in 1571 in the northern Italian city of Caravaggio. Although famous in his own lifetime, his art was largely forgotten during the centuries following his death. Unfavourably compared to Renaissance and Neoclassical works, Caravaggio's paintings were perceived as vulgar, overblown, and morally dubious. In 1951, the Italian art critic Roberto Longhi curated an exhibition of Caravaggio's work at Milan's *Palazzo Reale* entitled *Mostra di Caravaggio e dei Caravaggeschi*. This exhibition re-established Caravaggio as one of the most important Old Masters.

Until this point, Caravaggio had been largely dismissed as a painter of the *Mezzogiorno*, and his images associated with Southern Italy's historic poverty and repression by outsiders. His practice of painting directly from life, without preliminary drawings—unusual in his day—reinforced the association. As John Berger describes:

> The complicity I feel with Caravaggio began, I think, during that time in Livorno. He was the first painter of life as experienced by the *popolaccio*, the people of the back streets, *les sans-culottes*, the lumpen proletariat, the lower orders, those of the lower depths, the underworld.[166]

Berger goes on to say that, although painters who succeeded him—Goya, Hogarth, Guttuso—all presented worldly scenes, Caravaggio shared and lived in the vision he presented. In the second half of the twentieth century, Caravaggio has had a significant influence on lens-based practitioners, especially photographers and filmmakers. Art historian Andrew Graham Dixon (1960) calls Caravaggio '[o]ne of the few painters to have had a profound impact on disciplines other than painting itself, he may fairly be considered as a pioneer of modern cinematography'.[167]

Two filmmakers most clearly and directly inspired by Caravaggio are Derek Jarman (1942–1994), most notably in his film *Caravaggio*, and Martin Scorsese (1942–). Prior to beginning work on his film *Mean Streets,* Scorsese travelled to Rome expressly to study Caravaggio's paintings. In his own words:

> I was instantly taken by the power of the pictures, the power of the compositions, the action in the frames, the way he designed the composition and the subject matter […]. There was no doubt it could be taken into cinema because of the use of light and shadow, the *chiaroscuro* effect […]. Initially I related to the paintings because of the moment that he chose to illuminate in the story. The conversion of Paul, Judith beheading Holofernes […]. You sort of come upon the scene midway and you're immersed in it. It was very different from the composition of the paintings that preceded it, the Renaissance paintings. It was like modern staging in film.[168]

This ability of Caravaggio's paintings to leap across time periods and artistic disciplines is a key characteristic of the Baroque as we now understand it. The Baroque movement was not related, in a distinctive, teleological manner, to preceding or succeeding periods in art

[166] John Berger, 'Caravaggio: A Contemporary View', *Studio International* vol. 196 number 998 (1983).
[167] Andrew Graham-Dixon, *Caravaggio: A Life Sacred and Profane* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2010), 439.
[168] Martin Scorsese, *The Culture Show*, BBC Television, in Graham-Dixon, 439.

history. As Deleuze has observed, the Baroque style in architecture appears to contain and reference all the periods that preceded it, as well as some that followed. The trans-historical Baroque prompts us to re-examine the notion of progress at the heart of modernism. Indeed, as discussed in the previous chapter, Chambers is right to claim that Caravaggio prefigures modern mass culture. In *Quoting Caravaggio*, Bal exposes links, both intentional and unintentional, between Caravaggio's work and a wide variety of contemporary *Caravaggisti*—artists from across a range of media, like Andreas Serrano (1950–) and Rachael Whiteread (1963–).

The key to Caravaggio's modernity (and his postmodernity) lies in his methodology. Modern audiences are drawn to the social realism that 'bleeds' through his works—the tired virgins, the angels with their dusty urban pigeon wings, plague victims, labourers, maids, card sharks, and an insistence on the urban built space. There are no idealised landscapes that recede beyond the scene at hand. Of equal importance to his modern appeal is the highly realistic nature of his paintings, the obsessive, almost photographic insistence on the surface of the image. In terms of social realism, the explanation for this aesthetic lies in the fact that Caravaggio used real people as models for religious scenes. This was an unusual practice at a time when painters worked from idealised figures based on those drawn by past masters and sourced from a sanctioned archive. Caravaggio would paint directly from life using staged models. Often, they were people he knew personally: lovers, friends, or acquaintances. For instance, the model for *Judith Beheading Holofernes* was Fillide Melandroni, a well-known Roman sex worker who had been in trouble for knifing a colleague. At the time, she was among Caravaggio's circle of friends.

The reasons for Caravaggio's choice to paint directly from staged scenes remain open to debate and surmise: he left no letters or other documentation about his methodology. The intense interiority of his images, that produced his renowned *chiaroscuro* effects, might well have stemmed from a simple reluctance to depict landscape and perspective. Biographer Peter Robb (1946) describes the new-found X-ray evidence indicating that Caravaggio's paintings were not sketched out beforehand, as was the custom: in an absolutely unheard of practice at the time, the paint is applied directly onto canvas. Robb posits that Caravaggio could not draw and overcompensated by putting all his energy into a painted surface more lifelike than anything that had been seen up to that point. It seems unlikely that he saw himself as an iconoclast or thought of his work explicitly in those terms. As far as we know, his chief concerns were to secure patronage and to make a living. Later in his short life, he became a fugitive from the law and from powerful enemies. These latter may have been responsible for his murder on a journey from Naples to Rome.

In *M: The Caravaggio Enigma*, Robb writes of *Judith Beheading Holofernes*:

> The dark bedroom setting, the sheets and pillows and blankets and the knotted-up, heavy, blood-red canopy overhanging the act, enhanced the stifling, muted intimacy of the killing and the identity of sex with violence. The drapes that muffled the moans of sex would soak up the dead man's cry. This was very different from *The Fortune Teller*'s benign look at relations between the sexes. This was sex as war, Old Testament religion as modern domestic violence. It was sex as spasm, less violent movement than a series of linked tensions—in the gripping hands, Judith's on the sword and head, Holofernes clutching the bedsheet and the old woman's gripping the

> cloth—in the contracted muscles of Holofernes' body arched in death as in orgasm, in Judith's powerful forearms and the clenched muscles of the old woman's face—a face much like those in Leonardo's drawings of old men. Nothing took the image beyond that reality—no history, no structure, no transcendence, no symbolism, just violent death.[169]

The final sentence is salient. It speaks to Caravaggio's work as the embodiment of baroque thought. As Benjamin and others have discussed, he lived during a time which witnessed a shift away from the transcendent and redemptive qualities of religion towards state secularism. Symbolism and myth, hitherto the mainstay of religious representation, were being replaced with a new insistence on the human body and the individual as the focus of attention. In his paintings, Caravaggio manifests a *zeitgeist* not fully understood at the time.

> The baroque knows no eschatology: and for that very reason it possesses no mechanism by which all earthly things are gathered in together and exalted before being consigned to their end.[170]

Caravaggio's paintings were highly realistic. Even today's viewer can appreciate their extraordinary lifelikeness. At the time, this unprecedented fidelity to life was much commented on. Despite his popularity among his patrons, that quality made many uneasy. Paintings were, after all, supposed to refer to life in a proscribed manner by depicting preordained religious scenes constructed according to a fixed methodology. Rather than replicate life, they were supposed to explain it and to provide a moral framework for that explanation. The viewer had to know they were looking at a painting. Caravaggio's paintings introduced, for the first time in Western art, the problem of the simulacrum. That problem would turn up again, centuries later, as a postmodern dilemma: how do we understand the relationship between a thing and its representation?

This shock of lifelikeness was anathema to many at the time, seen as disruptive of established norms and conventions of painting designed to create a codified relationship between viewer and viewed, subject and object. Caravaggio, by imitating life so directly, omitted the moral dimension:

> He made himself a slave to nature and not an imitator of beautiful things. He represented only what appeared before his eyes and did so with so little judgement that he neither sought out what was beautiful nor fled from what was ugly. Instead he painted both one and the other.[171]

To his contemporaries—Felibien, Bellori, Poussin—Caravaggio's paintings were so upsetting because, as Louis Marin tells us, they replicate the truth of the world of objects, things and people so accurately that the 'truth becomes an effect of the painting and not its origin'. In modern terms, Caravaggio had foregrounded the problem of truth in visual representation. Marin describes the response of the critic Baglione, who supported Poussin's claim that Caravaggio had come into the world 'to destroy painting':

---

[169] Peter Robb, *M: The Caravaggio Enigma* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011).
[170] Benjamin, *Theses*, 66.
[171] André Felibien, *Entretien* V1, in Marin, *To Destroy Painting*, 5.

> In his attempt to explain why certain individuals insist that Caravaggio destroyed the art of painting, Baglione presupposes that the art of painting is basically a constraining cultural institution or power. He further assumes that Caravaggio's imitators, by following his example, called into question the codes, norms, and rules that are the very basis of the art of painting and of the disciplinary knowledge constituted by the didactic and pedagogical system of the arts. The destruction stems from a fissure that is minuscule, but that expands to the point of becoming catastrophic: The attempt to paint a face after a living model.[172]

Later, Marin talks of the 'code of gestures' in Caravaggio's paintings. That code was necessary because his works do not have a message or even a story. Rather, they are more about contact through emotional effect. Their focus is on contact, between the painting and the viewer, and the figures in the paintings.

> In Caravaggio's work, the glance is a gesture of pointing, a wordless 'this' that does away with supplementary discourses and descriptions, striking here and now. It is really true then, that this man came into the world in order to destroy painting.[173]

Because I found Caravaggio crucial to my understanding of the Baroque, and thereby of Palermo itself, I wanted to respond to his paintings in my visual research. The environment in Palermo's centre has likely remained largely unchanged since his day—as have the markets where he would have found the models for his Nativity scene.[174] Rather re-staging specific works, I worked instead within the photographic tradition of street photography to produce images that responded to Caravaggio's paintings with what I would term 'fragmentary echoes': small details of the real world that might bring to mind those great works.

Chiaroscuro, the intensely theatrical lighting that Caravaggio has effectively hardwired into the Western visual canon, was a direct way to frame a response to his work, and to engage with baroque aesthetics. I was also aware that, in Palermo, *chiaroscuro* was a creation of both nature and culture, especially architecture: the buildings that at once blocked and directed sunlight create a theatrical environment akin to a stage set.

---

[172] Marin, *To Destroy Painting*, 107.

[173] Marin, *To Destroy Painting*, 164.

[174] *Nativita con I Santi Lorenzo e Francesco* 1609. This painting, featuring a young, blond Joseph perhaps descended from the Normans who left their genetic heritage in the unusual number of blond and red-haired Sicilians, was cut from its canvas and stolen by the Mafia in 1975 in one of the biggest unsolved art thefts of all time. It was never recovered. It is rumored to have been eaten by pigs at a Mafia chieftain's farm (Robb 200: 98).

Nativita con I santi Lorenzo e Francesco Palermo 1609.

Portable digital cameras with a very wide dynamic range offered me the opportunity to explore what would have been impossible with analogue cameras: the tension between what is revealed and what remains hidden, shadows and darkness within the image, and dynamic ranges between light and shadow. As Buci-Glucksmann writes about *Judith and Holofernes*:

> Yet this light that bathes the bodies almost sensually, emerges from the black background. Blacks that are just as dark as they are light, found in a mathematics of colour described by Wittgenstein in which the truth lies in the metaphor of the black mirror. 'We speak of a black mirror, but when it mirrors, it darkens of course, but it doesn't look black'.[175]

The mirror appears in the Lacanian sense, as a shimmer, an irradiated dark clarity. Caravaggio's blacks disturb colours and radiate their dark luminosity, making his paintings 'black mirrors'.

Chambers, writing about Naples, and Caravaggio in particular, adds a socio-historical perspective:

> As suggestively caught in the Italian translation of Giles Deleuze's book on the Baroque, between a *spiegare* (to explain, expound, unfold) and a *piegare* (to fold, wrap, crease), there emerges the *spiegamento* (the explication, the spreading out, the unfolding). Contrary to the fixed point of Cartesian rationalism, there is the mutable point of view revealed by the body, where to explain is to disclose a complexity to be subsequently traced in the folds, creases and envelopments of the world. In this sense, the centrality of rhetoric to the baroque world—and hence to Naples—is not an idle or 'ornamental' matter. The art of seeing and comprehending has to be sensually assembled; it is diverse from abstract knowledge or mere information. In the violent instability of the Counter-Reformation and the uncertain world of a new social, political, geographic, and scientific order, knowledge demands conviction; a mute consensus is insufficient. Sometimes the construction, whether in architecture,

[175] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on Colour*, in Buci-Glucksmann, *The Madness of Vision*, 45.

> theatre or thought, leans more towards the light; sometimes more towards the shadows. Invariably, it recognises its hybrid provenance in both.[176]

Caravaggio traps the viewer's eye in the surface. In so doing, he blurs the traditional boundary between subject and object, destroying the nobility of the gaze (*Theoria*). This concentration on surface is a common trope of contemporary painting and photography. German artist Gerhard Richter has spent much of his career making paintings that resemble photographs, or interrogate photography, through a foregrounding of their surface.

> The plane where the outside and inside coincide in a blurred and undecidable boundary, it is here that the inside and outside attain their greatest power—a power so overwhelming that it cannot be resisted.[177]

As my research progressed, Caravaggio's paintings became a significant influence on my practice. This was due partly to his physical connection to the city, and partly to the fact that his art exemplifies many aspects of the Baroque as discussed by Deleuze and Benjamin. As an embodiment of baroque ideas, Caravaggio connects to contemporary discourses about art production, especially those moving beyond the narrow teleological confines of readings from art history. However, perhaps most importantly, it is Caravaggio's relationship to lens-based media that, together his intersection with place, make him the exemplary baroque artist.

[176] Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings*, 96.
[177] Marin, *To Destroy Painting*, 102–3.

Letizia Battaglia

Letizia Battaglia is a photographer born in Palermo in 1935. She did not take up photography until she was thirty-five, after living in Milan and mothering three children. Trained in classical black and white photojournalism in the style of Cartier-Bresson, she began working for the left leaning Palermitan daily newspaper *L'Ora*. Her job consisted, in part, of documenting the victims of violent crime. Mafia infighting increasingly consumed daily life in Palermo during the Mafia wars that spanned from the 1970s through to the murder of chief prosecutor Giovani Falcone in 1994.

At this time, her partner was the Magnum photographer Franco Zecchin (1953–). Together with other local photographers, they formed a photographic co-operative to vocally oppose the Sicilian Mafia's hold on society. The Mafia wars began with the 'Sack of Palermo', an appropriately medieval term for the forcible relocation of many inhabitants of Palermo's historic centre to outlying housing developments of high-rise flats. After this illegal development spree, organised criminals took up the industrial scale refining and distribution of heroin in the 1980s. Fleets of tankers and a network of refineries masquerading as small farms around Palermo facilitated an operation that, by the end of the decade, saw somewhere in the region of six hundred billion dollars moved through Palermo banks every year. The money and the corruption spread to Rome and the banking systems in Milan. A group of Palermo families had complete control over the production and distribution of heroin across North America and Europe—a market they not only controlled but had in large part created. The subsequent effect on Palermitans and Sicilian society was catastrophic, prompting the destruction of any semblance of civic society. Once the infighting between the families started, the dead started to pile up in their thousands.

Commentary on Battaglia's work tended to focus almost exclusively on the social situation she was documenting. Only passing reference was made to the 'drama' of her photographs, or how they are made. However, one or two critics commented sparingly on her 'baroqueness', and but one connected her to Caravaggio. Battaglia herself does not cite Caravaggio as an influence. But, in various interviews, acknowledges Weegee (Arthur Felig 1899–1968) and Dianne Arbus (1923–1971) as examples of artists she admires. Rachel Spence is one critic who recognises Battaglia's baroque credentials:

> Among the many Italian masters who might claim her as their heir, it is Caravaggio who makes the strongest case. Like Battaglia, the 17th century painter was a magician of light and shade. He too sought out the dead and impoverished as model.[178]

[178]Rachael Spence, *Financial Times*, 26 February 2014.

Fig. 7. Letizia Battaglia. *Omicidio di note Palermo*, 1982.

Battaglia's photographs are a partial record of the environment turned to good effect. Because Battaglia, like Weegee, was often called out for photographing assignments at night, she had to use a flashbulb, creating a strong *chiaroscuro*. She comes closest to Caravaggio's work in her images of violent death: the bodies in *rigor mortis*, usually in the centre of the image, often covered by white sheets, in a pool of light surrounded by darkness, the blood rendered black. Although these images were taken as records for a newspaper, they appear as staged allegories, theatrically lit, with violent death as the centrepiece. They recall Caravaggio's *David and Goliath*, or *Judith Beheading Holofernes*, both in their fascination for and eroticisation of death. They are also uniquely Sicilian.

All Sicilian expression, even the most violent, is really wish fulfilment: our sensuality is a hankering for oblivion, our shooting and knifing a hankering for death; our laziness, our spiced sherbets, a hankering for voluptuous immobility, that is for death again; our meditative air is that of a void waiting to scrutinise the enigmas of nirvana.[179]

[179] Lampedusa, *The Leopard*, 278.

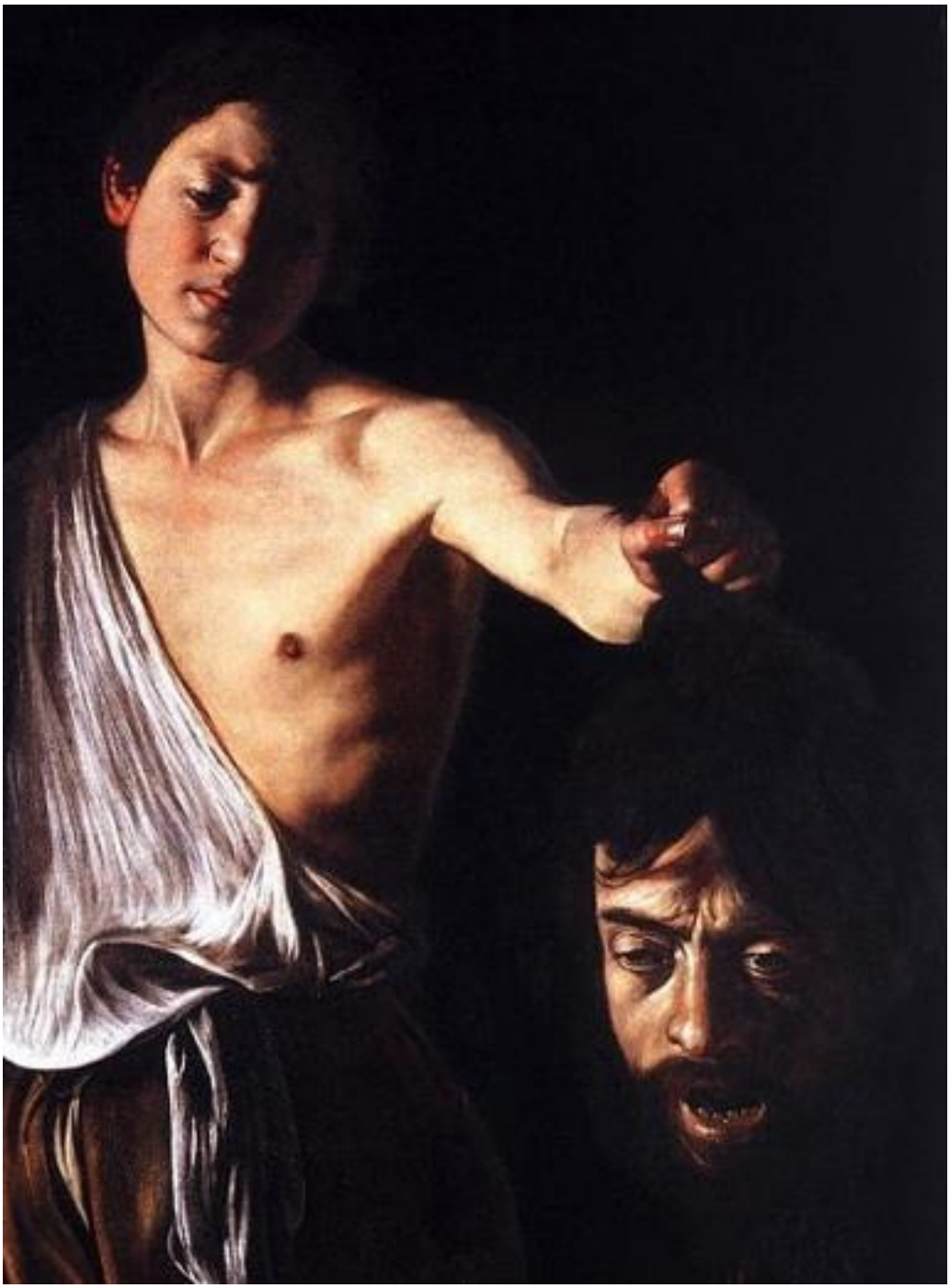

Fig. 8. Caravaggio. *David with the head of Goliath*, 1609 (detail).

Battaglia must be seen as more than a photographer. She is an emblematic figure who belongs to the city, who is now a part of its history and structure. As well as her photography, which was in itself a form of activism against the tyranny of evil men, she has been a green MP in the regional parliament involved in projects to create green spaces in Palermo's notoriously urban paces. In July 2018, I travelled with my son to experience the festival of St Rosalia: the patron saint of the city. That year Battaglia had been the creative director of the festival. Hundreds of thousands of people crowded into the centre of town with the epicentre of the event at the *quattro canti*, a massive baroque stage setting. The float, normally a platform with a statue of the saint, was a boat that year. St Rosalia was the

figurehead and the occupants of the vessel, as it made its stately progress through the massed crowds and the almost-solid heat of the July night, were migrant children. Santa Rosalia was a nobleman's daughter born in the twelfth century to a Norman family descended from Charlemagne. She ran away from home as a young teenager to live as a hermit in the Mont Pellegrino overlooking the city. In 1624, she appeared to some residents of the city and was later credited with saving the city from the plague after a hunter had located her bones (from a dream) and they were paraded through the city. She was invoked repeatedly during 2020 against Covid 19.

Battaglia belongs to a select number of people such as the social reformer Danilo Dolci (1924–1997), and the prosecuting judges in the maxi trials Giovanni Falcone (1939–1992) and Paolo Borsellino (1940–1992) both murdered by the Mafia. This group of latter-day patron saints made themselves conspicuous by publicly denouncing the rule of the Mafia and striving for social justice. They risked and, in some cases, lost their lives for doing so. Battaglia's political and cultural activities have had a real impact on the society.

'The Mediterranean is not merely geography. Its boundaries are drawn in neither space nor time'.[180]

Mediterranean Studies first emerged, or rather was invented, along with the concept of the Mediterranean as a unified entity, around the beginning of the nineteenth century. As an object of study, it was the product of a series of classifications—geographical, historical, and political. At first, these classifications focused almost exclusively on the civilisations of Greece and Rome: in that single-minded, monotheistic reading of history, all roads led to Rome, and, from it, to imperial capitals like London or Paris. But during the twentieth century, this attitude shifted, especially in response to the work of Fernand Braudel. His *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Phillip II* not only changed the academic approach to the Mediterranean: it precipitated major changes in the study of history itself. After Braudel, the field of Mediterranean studies widens considerably. No longer confined to history in a conventional sense, the multidisciplinary field encompasses history, geography, anthropology, archaeology, post-colonial studies, economics, cultural theory, the visual arts, art theory, and literature.

In my research, Braudel was the first of three writers who have influenced my work, and whose writings on the region have informed me or inspired me. He is best known for his creative conception of historical time and his attempt to bring together radically different temporal strata into a historical study. This approach has been used to look at certain types of photographic practices, and their treatment of history, narrative, and time.[181] This will be the subject of the next chapter.

Vincenzo Consolo (1933–2012) has written extensively on his native Sicily and the Mediterranean. His work has been described as a literary archaeology, for imaginatively

[180] Pedrag Matvejevic, *Mediterranean: A Cultural Landscape*, trans. Michael Henry Helm (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 7–9.
[181] I am referencing the essay *Different Times* accompanying the exhibition *The Epic and the Everyday* by James Lingwood.

reconstructing often-neglected historical periods and resurrecting aspects of the Italian language and dialect that have disappeared from the lexicon. He has developed what has become referred to as a 'poetics of memory', oppositional and resistant to the language of hegemonic power. Like Braudel and Chambers, Consolo extends his ideas about the region to address questions of global modernity.

Iain Chambers is an English academic and writer, and Professor of Cultural and Post-Colonial History at the University of the Orient in Naples. Chambers challenges prevailing assumptions about the Mediterranean. In his writings, he offers interdisciplinary and intercultural interpretations of the region. Chambers' work reveals the Mediterranean's fundamental nature to be fluid and profoundly hybrid: it is a region whose true identity has been, and continues to be, obscured by European governments' dominant discourse on migration.

Braudel, Consolo, and Chambers overlap in important areas. All share a mission to reclaim the past in a way that sheds a different light on the present. Consolo and Chambers, coming after Braudel, reclaim buried and suppressed histories. In rethinking the past and the present, they allow us to imagine a future beyond the limits of Western humanistic thought. The former two also use their own thoughts about the Mediterranean to theorise more broadly about a wider global modernity, moving from the micro to the macro. The issue of language and representation is at the heart of the thinking of both. Consolo argues for a subjective poetics of language, which he refers to as 'writing as opposed to narration',[182] in order to resist the forces of the marketplace, mass media, and the homogenising language of the state. Chambers uses the language of subjectivity to discuss the space of visual representation, a space uniquely vulnerable to critique, and simultaneously a site of resistance to the narratives established by power. Chambers' writing, albeit 'academic', is allusive, poetic, and sometimes irreducible.

Vincenzo Consolo's Poetics of Memory

> This most beautiful and defeated city has always been a crucible of civilisations and cultures, races and languages, reason and religion, structures and ornaments, harmony and madness. Palermo is the synthesis of the island of which it has been and is the capital. And the island, Sicily, is the most visible contrast of nature and culture, of chaos and cosmos. Yes, without Sicily, Italy cannot be understood, nor can this ancient, changed, and changing place called the Mediterranean.[183]

The writer Vincenzo Consolo was born in 1933 in the town of Sant'Agata di Militello on the northern coast of Sicily. One of eight children, his childhood was spent in the Val Demone, an area steeped in Sicily's Arabic, Spanish, and Greek cultures. In his late teenage years, Consolo grew to know Nino Pino Ballotta, a veterinary professor and anarchist poet who had been imprisoned by the fascists. After the war, he became a leading agitator for social justice and was eventually elected as a deputy. It was to Ballotta that Consolo owed his lifelong vocation to cultural and political opposition. In 1952, he moved to Milan to study

[182] Consolo, *Reading and Writing the Mediterranean*, 97.
[183] Consolo, *Reading and Writing the Mediterranean*, 238.

law, where he interacted with many writers and intellectuals, and began to write. Upon his return to Sicily, he worked as a teacher of civic education and humanities in the Nebrodi Mountains. Although between 1958–1963 Italy was undergoing unprecedented economic development, the benefits were concentrated almost wholly in the North. In Sicily and the rest of the South, little changed except for another wave of emigration: in addition to the Americas and Northern Europe, a large number moved to the North of Italy to fuel the 'economic miracle' with cheap labour.

It was in this context that, in 1963, Consolo wrote his first novel, *La ferita dell'aprile,* a coming-of-age story set in Sicily. Partly autobiographical, the novel's fictional frame filters real events, such as the massacre of the peasants at Porta Ginestra in 1947. In it, defenceless peasants who occupied land to protest poor conditions were gunned down by bandits paid by the ruling Christian Democrat party. The novel set the scene for Consolo's later work, departing from the canon of social realism and developing an episodic, non-linear structure. The voice of the narrator is the only point of narrative continuity.

Consolo's next novel, *Il sorriso dell'ignoto marinaio* (*The Smile of the Unknown Mariner*) published in 1975, was a historical novel concerned with the unification of Italy in 1860. It tells of how the various social classes responded to events of the time. The central character is the Baron di Mandralisca, a detached observer of the unfolding uprising. Mandralisca spends his time reading and collecting artworks. One of these, the *Ritratto di Ignoto* by Antonello da Messina, gives the book its title, while also allowing Consolo to create a skein of intricate relationships between the painting and the characters. As a result of Garibaldi's landing, parts of the Sicilian peasantry rose up and avenged themselves of ancient wrongdoings by their masters. One such uprising occurred at Alcara li Fusi in the Nebrodi Mountains. The uprising, and the subsequent imprisonment of the rioters in an underground dungeon of the Galvano Maniforti castle, prompted Mandralisca to abandon his neutrality, and he visits the prisoners. The entire ninth chapter of the book is a letter from Mandralisca to a friend, in which he transcribes the writings left on the prison walls by the rioters after their massacre. These messages offer the reader a direct look into the perspective of the revolutionaries.

Il sorriso dell'ignoto marinaio was published at a time when the historical novel had gained a new impetus. Previously in decline due to modernist taste for introverted and psychological narrative and post-war neo-realism, the historical novel became an object of mass consumption following the publication of Lampedusa's *Gattopardo* (*The Leopard*). Consolo's novel, on the other hand, proposed something quite different. As such, it came to hold a unique literary position. Leonardo Sciascia and Salvatore Guglielmino declared it to be 'among the very few works […] that broke the climate of restoration, of an easy and reassuring fruition that characterises narrative of those years'.[184] According to Norma Bouchard and Massimo Lollini, *Il sorriso* was a:

> [...] historical novel that, hinging upon a poetics of language and memory, seeks to restore to the present the ruins and the detritus of history in a style whose radical

[184] Sciascia and Guglielmino, *Narratori di Sicilia.* In the introduction to Bouchard and Lollini, *Reading and Writing,* 385.

> expressionism resists co-optation by the hegemonic culture of the society of consumption.[185]

In this, they point out, Consolo was following in the footsteps of writers such as his fellow Sicilian Leonardo Sciascia, and German writers belonging to the Gruppe 47, such as Alfred Schmidt and Uwe Johnson. Consolo, too, took on this type of socially committed writing and remade it into something whose function is:

> [...] that of bringing to the present what has been erased from collective memory, to recover the wounds and lacerations of a history that can no longer be forgotten, but that haunts the folds of the narrative, producing feelings of displacement and dislocation before the wreckages of the Risorgimento […] Consolo's historical fiction can fruitfully be described as an archaeological practice that brings to the textural surface the many ruins buried in the recesses of time. His archaeological recovery, often carried out by way of a metaphoric process whereby the past becomes a critical, disruptive figure of the present.[186]

Consolo's use of language makes the critical difference in his writing or 'narrative practice'. He can be seen as aligned, to a degree, with Italian *avant-garde* writing of the twentieth century, like Pasolini or the *Gruppo '63*. But, unlike these artists, Consolo's radical expressionism and hybrid methods do not tear down tradition as much as they intend to recover lost language. Throughout his work, Consolo's project becomes opposing the homogenising influence of editorial markets and increasing efforts by state and media to promote standardising Italian, seeking to at least partially recover voices and cultures that had disappeared or would soon disappear. He saw the recovery of fragments of regional dialects to be vitally important.

> They are not […] invented words, but words that are recovered and rediscovered. I find them in my own memories, in my linguistic patrimony, but they are also the fruit of my research, of my historical and lexical excavation.[187]

Consolo's writing is characterised by this 'poetics of memory' as well as by an anti-orientalist slant. He foregrounds the essentialist and racist characterisations of the peoples of Southern Italy and Sicily by the homogenising forces of the *Risorgimento*. In his writings, his home and birthplace Sicily becomes a central metaphor for the Global South. The North, by contrast, represents the ever-diminishing, increasingly powerful, and dominating section of the world's population. Their utopian dreams are, according to Consolo, built on the harsh realities and disenfranchisements of the South. Consolo calls on the South to abandon its inherited complexes of subalternity. Through his writing, he tries to achieve this goal in three ways: the revival of parts of the Sicilian dialect, opposition to the co-opting of the novel into a hegemonic media culture dominated by Hollywood, and the practice of *ekphrasis* in narrating aspects of the island's past and culture. This practice of vivid, sometimes rhetorical description intended to amplify the meaning of that which is being

[185] Sciascia and Guglielmino, *Narratori di Sicilia*, 8.
[186] Sciascia and Guglielmino, *Narratori di Sicilia*, 8.
[187] Vincenzo Consolo, *Fuga Dall'Etna* [*Escape from Etna*] (Rome: Donzelli, 1993), 9.

described, leads him to a multiplicity of viewpoints and to the decentring of the narrative voice. As the academic Joseph Francese (1955) writes:

> For Consolo the function of literature is that of restoring to our present the 'detritus' of the past in anticipation of what Benjamin calls the 'messianic moment', instances where allegorical vision recalls dialectical images, reconfiguring them so as to catalyse their liberating potential. Consolo restores these 'ruins' or 'living images' of the past to the time of the now, opening them up to review, interpretation, and discussion. In this way, subjective perspective is absorbed into the objectifying perspective of debate. This process of re-inserting into the present lost elements of the past is for Consolo a form of political activism.[188]

Consolo spent considerable time addressing the concept, the history, and the geopolitics of the Mediterranean, and to developing a vision of what the Mediterranean was or could be. His view of the region was built around a contradictory dialectic—in accord with Braudel's 'space movement' or the 'connectivity' of Horden and Purcell, also described by Chambers. It is, to him, a fluid, multi-ethnic, sometimes paradoxical region, given to paroxysms of change and dynamic in nature. Writer and scholar Predrag Matvejevic (1932–2017) writes of that complex, paradoxical nature in *The Mediterranean: A Cultural Landscape*. He describes a 'Cultural breviary' containing:

> Endless folds of clarity and form, geometry and logic, law and justice, knowledge and poetics, but everything opposed to them as well: holy books of love and reconciliation along with crusades and jihads, the ecumenical spirit and fanatical ostracism, universality and autarchy, agora and labyrinth, Alethea and enigma, Dionysian joy and the labour of Sisyphus, Athens and Sparta, Rome and the Barbarians, orient and Occident, North coast and South coast, Europe and Africa, Christianity and Islam, Catholicism and Orthodoxy, the teaching of the Nazarene and the persecution of the Jews.[189]

Many commentaries on the Mediterranean develop a dialectic of destruction and creation that defines the origin and development of civilisations. The ancient Greek philosopher Plato called the Mediterranean—at least that part of it known to the Greeks at that time—the infinite sea of difference: a hostile element to be crossed over for purposes of war or escape from famine. For Plato, the sea itself was a source of moral and social corruption, a boundless element that led to catastrophe and dissimilarity.[190]

In general, the history of the Mediterranean is one of war, conquest, invasions and migration. But region is also a vast archive of human knowledge and culture. Paul Hazard, the French philosopher and historian (1878–1944), argued in *The Crisis in the European Mind* that Europe is 'a spirit forever seeking'.[191] It cannot be satisfied, it cannot rest in any accepted idea of truth or happiness. As soon as one thing is established, the next thing must be proved. Hazard identifies the origin of this state of mind with the Greeks, the Achaeans—

---

[188] Joseph Francese, *Vincenzo Consolo's Poetics of Memory*, Italica Vol 82, No.1 Spring, 2005: 44.
[189] Matvejevic, 12.
[190] Nicholas Purcell, 'The Boundless Sea of Unlikeness? On Defining the Mediterranean', *Mediterranean Historical Review* 18, no 2 (2003): 9.
[191] Paul Hazard, *The Crisis of the European Mind 1680–1715* (New York, NY: NYRB Classics, 2013), 440.

the people of the sea, whose maritime and commercial activities had given them an unslakable thirst for adventure and a desire for the unknown. It was this culture, Hazard tells us, transmitted around the Mediterranean, that lay dormant for many centuries in the cities where the Renaissance was born.

Fig. 9. Anselm Kiefer. *Occupations*, 1969.

In relation to the Mediterranean, this dialectical viewpoint is most apparent in the dialectic of land and sea. That contrast framed the work of Carl Schmitt (1888–1985), the Nazi jurist. Schmitt claimed that humans are terrestrial beings, who are grounded by the land. From the perspective of continental Germany, Schmitt asserts, echoing Plato, that the land represents stability: it limits man's activities and allows for a measure of control. We might consider here the iconic self-portrait by the German artist Anselm Kiefer (1945), dressed in a Nazi uniform, offering a Nazi salute to the Mediterranean Sea in a rebuke that comments on essentialist German philosophies such as Schmitt's.[192]

In his book *Land and Sea,* Schmitt contrasts the order of the land with the chaos of the sea. For him, the sea represents political and religious disorder, total war, and a technology out of control. It could only be inhabited and survived by a complete reliance on technology, Schmitt argues, and, therefore, cannot be trusted. The discovery of the New World, and the accompanying spatial revolution in map-making in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, according to Schmitt, established the ocean as the primary geo-political canvas, leading, ultimately, to the domination of the world by an empire based on an island. The Industrial Revolution, he argues, also follows on from these circumstances. The sea requires man to rely wholly on technology for his survival upon it, which leads to a technology out of control and a world out of balance. In the end, Schmitt hopes, 'that humanity, after the difficult night of the Atomic bombs and similar horrors, will wake up and thankfully recognise itself as the child of a firmly grounded earth'.[193]

Sociologist and politician Franco Cassano also foregrounds the dialectical nature of the Mediterranean in his exploration of the relationship between land and sea. Unlike Schmitt,

[192] *Occupations,* A photo essay by Anselm Kiefer, 1975.

[193] Carl Schmitt, *Land and Sea*, 1942. Cited in Franco Cassano, *Southern Thought and Other Essays on the Mediterranean* (2011), 26.

Cassano argues that to favour one element and denigrate the other is a fundamental mistake: both elemental spaces must be seen together. Furthermore, to privilege one is to negate the intellectual enquiry at the centre of both Greek and European culture. Such a one-sided approach, he claims, can only lead to fundamentalist ideas about identity and nationality. The sea, according to Cassano, is:

> The utopian line of the horizon: This is where a richer and more dramatic relationship with the land is born. We are no longer hostages of a landscape […] it makes every human being a foreigner and every foreigner a human being, turns separation into companionship, allows more than one soul to inhabit us.[194]

For the ancient Greeks, Cassano points out, the Mediterranean was a connective tissue. Across it, no journey was very long: the Aegean in particular was dotted with islands as stepping stones. This is quite different from the boundless reach of the Atlantic. The Mediterranean Sea is but a sea that separates lands. Greek culture, Cassano claims, has a 'structural homology' with the sea. The Mediterranean was a thoroughfare, as it was far easier to make a relatively short sea journey than cross the mountain ranges that made up the interior landmasses. Deleuze and Guttari point out that 'Greece seems to have a fractal structure insofar as each point of the peninsula is close to the sea and its sides have great length'.[195]

One of the three Greek words for sea is *pontos*—literally meaning 'bridge'. Many have argued that the democratic political system that came to being in Greece owed its existence to the place of the sea in Greek life. Greek democracy contrasts starkly with the despotisms of landlocked Persia. Cassano quotes Alberto Salvinio, who finds a similar contrast in referring to Germany:

> The city we live in is suffocated by the land. Look at a map. We are in the heart of Europe. Land on every side. Land. And the land suffocates man, numbs him, leads him into despair.[196]

The Mediterranean, as all other seas, has always afforded constant contact with difference, with unpredictable effect, complicating the notion of borders and undermining land's fixity. For the Greeks, Cassano points out, this creates a situation where:

> Inside a polis, each citizen carries the foreigner within, and unity is immediately more difficult, more complex, it requires a longer journey. Polytheism, tragedy, and philosophy do not disagree on this point: all three know the legitimacy of multiple points of view, the difficulty of their coexistence. They all presuppose an archipelago, the extraordinary extension of the coast and the pervasiveness of the sea.[197]

As much as Greek philosophy is sea-borne, its other side attempts to negate the sea, that associates the coast and the constant back and forth with duplicity and untrustworthiness.

---

[194] Cassano, *Southern Thought*, 11.
[195] Gilles Deleuze and Franco Guattari, *Geophilosophy: What is Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York, NY: University of Columbia Press, 1991), 87.
[196] Savinio Alcesti di Samuele 47–48 in Cassano, *Southern Thought*, 27.
[197] Cassano, *Southern Thought*, 18.

By the sea, philosophy is prevented from 'closing the circle'. So, while the *polis* cannot exist without the sea on which it relies for its power, for philosophy, knowledge can never be wrapped up and finalised. As Cassano claims, 'Greek philosophy meets its reason but also its limit: it discovers itself as part of something that comes before and explains it'.[198]

Palermo was named *Panormous*—meaning 'all port'—by the Greeks. It bears within itself this primordial dialectic of the land and sea, and the other oppositions that flow from it. It is a place that has derived its very existence from the sea, lying on the largest island in the Mediterranean, at the centre of that sea, and separating its Eastern and Western basins. It is a cultural hybrid, both multi-cultural and polymorphic. However, paradoxically, as one turns from the seafront, the *Lungomare*, the *Foro Italica*, and walks into the Old City, the sea, along with the sky, disappears from sight as the inwardly spiralling labyrinth of the baroque city enfolds you. After two minutes' walk, the sea is obliterated, neither seen, nor even smelled.

Consolo shares Cassano's point of view. He sees, at once, a Mediterranean where technology has come untethered from its anthropological functions: it has created sites of conflict and devastation, monsters that wreak havoc and produce the region's modern 'panic cities', riven by sectarian violence, technological despoliation and racial division. Simultaneously, Consolo bears witness to the region's heritage, contributing beyond measure to the humanistic and natural sciences, and to every branch of human knowledge and learning:

> [...] in Consolo's works the Mediterranean also emerges as a geo-cultural space capable of providing many examples of the coexistence of different cultures and ethnicities and of anthropological acts of resistance to conflict, strife, and barbaric regressions. As such, Consolo's perspective on this cultural region provides a valuable means to reassess many of the ideals that are fuelling modernity.[199]

Anthropologist Michael Herzfeld's (1947) essay *Practical Mediterraneanism* interrogates the fitness of the idea of the 'Mediterranean' as a unified entity. For him, the dangers of Mediterraneanism are of a kind with those of Edward Said's Orientalism. To avoid such over-simplification, Herzfeld frames a debate of regionalisms, how they fit into the value systems of a global hierarchy.

> The idea of a Mediterranean culture area, recast as a heuristic device in which its inherent limitations are turned to advantage, gives way to a sophisticated rethinking of globalisation from the perspective of the regionalisms invoked by those who see various levels of cultural unity as the only available source of resistance to domination by few powers and cultures.[200]

From Homer's *Odyssey*, Consolo draws one of the central metaphors through which he refracts his writing. His approach to this first work of the Western canon—both poetic and metaphoric—reveals insights about the poem itself, but also about our own time. Consolo's

---

[198] Cassano, *Southern Thought*, 19.
[199] Norma Bouchard, and Massimo Lollini, *Reading & Writing the Mediterranean: Essays by Consolo, Vincenzo 2006,* 18.
[200] Michael Herzfeld, *Practical Mediterraneanism*, cited in V. Harris, *Rethinking the Mediterranean*, (2006), 58.

reading of *The Odyssey* resembles in tone and effect the work of philosopher Simone Weil (1909–1943). Her book *War and the Iliad*, written in 1939, was a response not only to Homer's *Iliad,* but also to the events of the Second World War: she called it her 'method of facing the war'.[201] The work begins with these lines:

> The true hero, the true subject, the centre of *The Iliad* is force. Force employed by man, force that enslaves man, force before which man's flesh shrinks away. In this work, at all times, the human spirit is shown as modified by its relations with force, as swept away, blinded, by the very force it imagined it could handle, as deformed by the weight of the force it submits to. For those dreamers who consider that force, thanks to progress, would soon be a thing of the past, *The Iliad* could appear as a historical document; for others, whose powers of recognition are more acute and who perceive force, today, as yesterday, at the very centre of human history, *The Iliad* is the purest and loveliest of mirrors.[202]

The 'true hero' of the poem, then, is brute force. In the end, neither side of the decade-long Trojan War can claim a genuine victory. Similarly, in Consolo's analysis of *The Odyssey*, war and technology are at the centre of the narrative.

In 'A Conversation Between Vincenzo Consolo and Mario Nicolao', Consolo lays out his understanding of war as the 'horizon of meaning' of both *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. *The Iliad* tells of a long and bitter war, whereas *The Odyssey* is the story of the warrior Odysseus' laborious and delayed journey back to Ithaca. This *nostos*, or 'journey home by sea', is not just about returning home: it is a tale of the cathartic expiation of Odysseus' guilt. Odysseus invented the Trojan Horse, an early example of technology—a technological monster—decisively ending a conflict at a terrible cost. From this myth, Consolo develops his own metaphor for modernity in which a civilisation has 'lost sight of the anthropomorphic function of technology',[203] prompting a state of philosophical and existential displacement. In *The Odyssey*, the singer also becomes the song, in that Odysseus is both narrator and subject of the story. Consolo uses the same device in his own fiction. He sharply distinguishes between the *nostos* of *The Odyssey* and the *nostos* of now. In modernity, he asserts, our guilt is real, objective, shared, and, ultimately, vast beyond expiation.

> In modernity, guilt is no longer subjective, but objective, it belongs to history. Monsters no longer emerge from the sea, from the depths of the subconscious, but they are concrete, real monsters, that all of us have contributed to create (all of us have stirred up the wars, created concentration camps and ethnic cleansing, let die of hunger the great majority of humanity). No penitential and liberating journey is now possible […]. And this leads us to my Ithaca, to my Sicily. As you have said, during the time spent in exile by those who left, that island has been destroyed by political and Mafia power; a power that was the object of Leonardo Sciacca's meditation and suffering. In the *Odyssey*, in the myth of Scylla and Charybdis, I feel as if I have understood the 'immortal ruin' wrought by these two supreme monsters, crouching at

[201] Simone Weil and Rachel Bespaloff, *War and the Iliad*, trans. Mary McCarthy (New York, NY: NYRB, 2005), 17.
[202] Weil and Bespaloff, *War and the Iliad*, 3.
[203] Bouchard and Lollini, *Reading & Writing*, 20.

> the door of the island. To me, the two monsters are the zoomorphic representation of the wooden horse, its contrapasso.[204]

In his short story 'Olive and Wild Olive', Consolo draws upon a passage in *The Odyssey* in which Odysseus, driven ashore by a storm, finds an olive and a wild olive growing from the same stump. From this hybrid tree, he fashions a shelter to protect him from the storm and experiences a deep and restorative rest—almost a rebirth. The metaphor combines the wild and the cultured: a balance between barbaric regression and civilisation. In the modern world, Odysseus cannot return to Ithaca, as it has been destroyed. The balance between nature and culture has been ruptured. A separation has occurred, only the wild olive remains, smothering everything else. The modern Odysseus is condemned to wander forever, through depopulated, despoiled wastelands, and the various 'panic' cities of the Mediterranean. He cannot find the home that no longer exists.

In 'The Ruin of Syracuse', Consolo narrates the story of a modern-day Odysseus, himself, as he journeys from the depopulated Aeolian Islands to Cefalu on the north coast of Sicily. From here, the narrator travels across the island, portrayed as a modern version of the kingdom of the Laestrygonians, a country populated by a race of monsters. The 'monsters' of this odyssey are the landscapes of industrial despoliation surrounding the cities of Syracuse and Augusta:

> He sets off on the road to Syracuse, along the white and porous limestone coast, at the foot of the Iblean Plateau; he goes beyond Tauro, Brucoli, Villasmundo, inside the immense inferno of steel and flames, vapours and fumes, inside the factories of cement and potash, acids and dioxins, thermoelectric plants and refineries, inside the cylinders and pyramids of Melilli and Priolo, the tanks of naphtha, oils, petrol, inside the sinister realm of the powerful Laestrygonians.[205]

Here, among the industrial wastelands and ancient ruins of Sicily's south coast, Consolo finds his defining metaphor for the ravages of modernity: technology devoid of a human face, cut loose from any human measure:

> Consolo's artistic prose depicts with powerful images what philosophers and town planners now call the 'omnipolis', the megalopolis transformed into limitless ghost towns by technology and human violence.[206]

Consolo's literary odyssey—he, the modern Odysseus, being condemned to roam forever—takes him out of Sicily and to other Mediterranean 'Panic Cities'.[207] In Algiers, he describes the populace's post-colonial schizophrenia, as they attempt to connect with their roots through violent fundamentalism while also engaging with other cultures through media and television. In the essay 'But Is This Sarajevo or Assisi?', Consolo recounts a journey after the Yugoslav War, made by a group of Italian writers, filmmakers, and photographers, led by the

[204] Conversation between Vincenzo Consolo and Mario Nicolao in *Reading and Writing the Mediterranean*, 61.
[205] Consolo, *Reading and Writing the Mediterranean*, 83.
[206] Bouchard and Lollini, *Reading & Writing*, 21.
[207] The reference here is to Paul Virilios' book *City of Panic*, in which he writes about Paris, but broadens his discussion of the modern metropolis to include all modern cities that have effectively become 'concentration camps'.

Croatian writer Pedrag Matvejevic. They survey the ruins of Sarajevo and other towns, contemplating the irreparable loss of a syncretic, multi-ethnic society. While there, they hear news of the earthquake in Umbria and La Marche that has partly destroyed Assisi:

> We were shocked. Here, in the midst of the ruins of this noble city, of this tall symbol of civilisation, the news of the ruins in the most noble and celebrated heart of our country reaches us. Here man's blind ruthlessness was responsible, at home it was nature's. Upon further thought, even in Sarajevo it was man's ruthlessness that caused the loss of reason, the regress to the state of nature.[208]

'The International Parliament of Writers' is an essay that details a journey to Israel and Palestine, a land torn in two by conflict. Here, Consolo is deluged by the suffering and devastation, and by the conflicting media versions of events.

In all these places, Consolo transcends the details of socio-religious conflicts and their origins. Very specifically, echoing Michael Herzfeld's 'practical Mediterraneans', he focuses on small but telling details of everyday life that acquire a larger significance as forms of anthropological resistance. In Sarajevo, it is an old woman drying figs on a balcony. 'The International Parliament of Writers' begins and ends with a description of a woman in Ramallah collecting calamint, a herb that generations of women before her have collected at a certain time of year from the hillsides for medicinal purposes:

> In front of her is a basket full of little bunches of calamint, the mint that grows naturally in the wild. With a fast movement of her rough hand she hides under her skirt a tiny sickle. She used it, at who knows what time before dawn, to go up into the desert and rocky hills around Ramallah to pick that aromatic herb, whose infusion refreshes the bowels, keeps away different illnesses, soothes the nerves […] that imposing peasant woman, with her face hardened by heat and cold has to be a mother who supports her children by selling calamint, chicory, thistles, and wild artichokes.[209]

At the end of the essay, he tries to recount the journey—overwhelmed by the flood 'of explosions, of suicides, and massacres everywhere. News of anguish'.[210] His memory becomes confused, leaving only fragments:

> Fragments are the great lobby of the hotel of Tel Aviv, the vision of loving young girls and boys dressed as soldiers of Sharon […] I remember Aharon and David, and the mother of Ramallah, the one crouched on the ground, her scythe and the bundles of catmint close by.[211]

Consolo wants the reader to consider this anthropological stance towards human culture, to consider, or to recall, a culture that accepts finitude, and, through this acceptance, to be better able to bear the suffering caused by technological and political violence.

---

[208] Consolo, *Reading and Writing the Mediterranean*, 101.
[209] Consolo, *Reading and Writing the Mediterranean*, 104.
[210] Consolo, *Reading and Writing the Mediterranean*, 107.
[211] Consolo, *Reading and Writing the Mediterranean*, 108.

In his shocking, prophetic short story 'Report of Basilio Archita', Consolo takes his modern-day Odysseus—a young merchant seaman from Sicily—into the underworld, a clear allusion to Odysseus' subterranean descent to meet the dead heroes and their families. The story is focused firmly on the deep suffering caused by unjust and violent death. Basilio, a crewman on a Greek ship, witnesses a terrible event. A group of African stowaways are discovered in the ship's hold. Young and old are provided with life vests by the crew and thrown into the sea. A traumatised Basilio watches as they are devoured by sharks. At the end of the story, he presents a report to the Greek authorities but does not know the outcome. In Homer's *Odyssey*, the first ghost Odysseus meets is Elpenor, one of his young crew, who died a violent death on their journey. Left unburied, Elpenor asks Odysseus to return and bury him with an oar on his grave. Like Odysseus, who returns to Circe's Island to bury his companion, Consolo, through his prose, attempts to provide a memorial—a literary grave or burial—for the innocent people fleeing famine, violence, and poverty.

Norma Bouchard and Massimo Lollini call Consolo's attitude in these pieces an expression of *pietas*—translating roughly as 'empathy' or 'devotion'. In effect, he gives witness and memorial to the people and situations described—people victimised by the injustice and violence flowing from politics and technology. In a piece entitled 'Diary of Two Journeys to America', Consolo extends the *pietas* and the concomitant denunciation of the excesses of late capitalism to other groups of dispossessed peoples in America: immigrants, Native Americans, the illiterate and poverty stricken, who hide behind the 'dizzying and hyperbolic' symbols of American wealth such as the World Trade Centre and Wall Street.[212] In his second trip to America, Consolo visits the former site of the World Trade Centre after the attacks of September 11, 2001. He describes the site:

> I go up to the wooden ramp that leads to the baluster from which it is possible to look into the abyss. But it is not possible to see all the way down to the bottom. It is, I think, an infinite abyss; the abyss of New York, and of our western world. The terrorists, in their fanaticism, in their folly, wanted to use the twin towers to decapitate not only the haughty verticality of the Americans, but to heave it into a chasm, a Dantesque circle of hell. Certainly, that fateful day in which two airplanes crashed into the skyscrapers […] erased the history of the world. On to that void other atrocious pages are now being written, of wars, bombings, massacres, rubble. And since that day, language, logic, imagination, the ability to narrate, are shattered. Burned are the pages of Dos Passos, Paul Auster, Simenon, and all other writers whose characters lived in Manhattan.[213]

As a writer and an artist of the Mediterranean, Consolo takes us away from an ontology of pain based in a Western, religious, Christian language, which promises a complete release from suffering and death, supported by science and technology. Instead, he adopts, or returns to, a Greek sense of finitude and tragedy, defined by the finitude of the human body, and of human societies vulnerable to violence, destruction, and death. Through his use of metaphor and its poetic expression, his work points us towards the limits of language. Consolo's view of the Mediterranean is contained by a wider, global socio-political context. In a time when the Mediterranean, as the rest of the world, has become a site of

[212] Consolo, *Reading and Writing the Mediterranean*, 122.
[213] Consolo, *Reading and Writing the Mediterranean*, 124.

the omnipolis—the world civilisation—globalisation and fundamentalisms of various kinds, Consolo's work questions the blind pursuit of progress that often accompanies power.

> Consolo's literary endeavour is one of the best examples of an art that resists the commodification of life and the drift of reason—his work confirms the enduring power of poetic metaphors […] shedding light on the many aspects of our world, in making us aware, once again, of the dangers that lurk when ideologies fuse progress with war at the expense of Humanity.[214]

Consolo's writing is also committed to preserving the memory of traditions and languages that were widespread before the arrival of global capitalism, and even before the *Risorgimento*. He champions pluralism, the *polis* that pre-existed the *omnipolis.*

This supplanting of the local by the global is fundamentally connected to the dismantling of the cultural—and, in some sense, imaginary—boundary that had traditionally separated the Mediterranean from the Atlantic. Greek and Arab cultures both recognised the boundary. The Greeks called it the Pillars of Hercules—one mountain split in two by the great hero to mark the point beyond which no one should travel. For the Arabs, the Atlantic was called *Al-bahr al-zulumat*—The Sea of Darkness. Later, the poet Dante recognises, in accordance with these ancient myths, the danger implicit in crossing boundaries. Dante describes Ulysses' journey through the straights as a *'folle volo*'—a crazy flight, which, while having some practical benefits, such as new discoveries and knowledge, simultaneously causes Ulysses to cast aside his *pietas* towards his wife and son, and ultimately dooms him and his crew. In Odysseus, Dante presents a remarkable representation of Western Culture losing sight of moral and ethical dimensions in the pursuit of knowledge, in the will to power, and the limitless logic of technological progress. Consolo's writing revisits Dante, recalling the ancient boundaries of the Mediterranean, albeit deprived of Dante's eschatological viewpoint. Consider Friedrich Nietzsche's (1844–1900) song 124 in 'The Horizon of the Infinite' from *The Gay Science:*

> We have left the land and have embarked! We have burned our bridges behind us, indeed we have gone further and destroyed the land behind us. Now little ship look out! Beside you is the ocean: to be sure it does not always roar, and sometimes it spreads out like silk and gold and reveries of graciousness. But hours will come when you will realise that it is infinite, and there is nothing more awesome than infinity. Oh, the poor bird that felt free, and now strikes against the walls of this cage! Woe, when you feel home sick for the land, as if it had offered more freedom, and there is no longer any land.[215]

Today, when Western society considers colonies on Mars, waging war in space, and an unclear future dominated by concerns such as artificial intelligence and climate change, Consolo's cautionary approach to modernity and globalisation seem particularly relevant. Through his reading and writing of the Mediterranean, Consolo questions the untrammelled pursuit of technological progress and of homogenising power driven by global corporatism. He appeals for measure and limits as a means of returning a moral dimension to our

[214] Bouchard and Lollini, *Reading & Writing*, 37.
[215] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (New York, NY: Random House, 1974), 180.

collective public life. Bouchard and Lollini describe Consolo as a prophet of our time, through the words of communist politician and philosopher Pietro Barcellona (1936–2013):

> The prophet lives the despair of a world that cannot find the relationship between the world and the thing, and bears witness to the suffering and hope of an epoch. To be a prophet is to carry the burden of suffering but is also to denounce this suffering against a world and a power that does not want to listen […] By suffering the prophet announces the metamorphosis of the real, discovers the possibility of hope […] Utopia is metahistorical while prophecy is the daughter of history.[216]

Consolo's novels, short stories and essays provided me with a Mediterranean context for my photographic research in Palermo. In particular, they helped me to look attentively, and to better understand what I was looking at, because he demonstrates the connections between Palermo, the Mediterranean, and the world beyond. As with much exceptional writing, Consolo's prose makes discernible and brings into focus that which is perceived appears inchoate. Most importantly, his work alerted me to that which cannot be seen, which lies hidden in shadow, or beneath the surface. He raises the problem of subjectivity and objectivity in art, of the difference between mimesis and expression. These questions are crucially relevant to photographic practice, especially when that practice grapples with a g*enius loci* originating in complex social, historical, and anthropologic realities.

[216] Bouchard and Lollini, *Reading & Writing*, 37.

Chapter Five: Reflecting on the Images

In this chapter, I discuss certain images within the final edit of the Palermo book that embody my research processes. In particular, I shall discuss recurring motifs and visual strategies across the images that connect to baroque practice, what these motifs and strategies signify, and how I came to use and recognise them. The motifs include the colour white (and to a lesser extent the colour red), drapery and 'the fold', Leibniz's monad and its physical manifestation in baroque architecture, interior and exterior *chiaroscuro*, and light.

As a deliberate part of my methodology, I set certain physical parameters. I limited my photographic enquiry to the historic city centre of Palermo. I covered the area exclusively on foot. I used only hand-held cameras. My process, however, was fluid, allowing me to be open to being in that place, in the moment.

Experimenting with different approaches, reflecting on the resulting images, and informing myself throughout with contextual reading allowed me to refine visual strategies that could embody important aspects of the Baroque and implicate me in a nexus comprising the social, historical, and geographical features of place, my own subjectivity, and the Baroque—as channelled through photographic practice. This approach led me toward something akin to what Bal terms 'entanglement': a situation characteristic of baroque thought and practice, where cause and effect are non-linear, but instead cross over multiple times, becoming intertwined and inseparable.[217]

Certain strategies reflect early intentions: the use of *chiaroscuro* and the Baroque as visual rhetoric, and the decision to photograph the interiors of churches as well as the street. Other aspects became evident later, through the process of editing. That process, combined with what I had learned through reading, allowed me to recognise emerging traits in the work, thus furthering the symbolism and narrative in the sequence.

[217] Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio*.

Plate 1. Martin Cole, *Man in White Car*, Palermo, 2016.

The colour white emerged as a motif as part of an unfolding process. Once I had begun to select what I considered the more successful images, I noticed that a significant number featured white. Sometimes, it was a dominant part of the picture, such as in *Man in White Car* in Plate 1. At other times, it played a smaller but nevertheless crucial role, as in the case of a lace ruff in Plate 2.

Plate 2. Martin Cole*, Festa di Santa Rita*, Palermo, 2019.

After and during the making of these images, I began to research Mieke Bal and her work on the contemporary Baroque. Bal exposes the shortcomings of historical chronology.

The initial subject of the picture in Plate 1 was the young man in the car struggling with a plastic bag outlined in light. His gesture was frozen, neurotic, somewhat reminiscent of a figure in a baroque painting. After reading Bal, it occurred to me that the car and its particular whiteness were also a subject: a modern, ubiquitous surface mirroring light. White, Bal tells us, can be seen as a figure. It can be seen as a 'Theoretical object, mediating between concept and metaphor to become a conceptual metaphor'.[218] She also sees white as an embodiment of a baroque viewpoint, evoking Leibniz's definition of white as 'foam', or the rough edges of marble that become 'innumerable tiny convex mirrors' reflecting light.[219] Bal points to white as the site of a point of view that disrupts the relationship between subject and object, flipping the scale between microscopic and macroscopic: 'The kind of baroque perception—that bounces the eye back, as in mirroring, and flips from large to minuscule and back again—is hallucinatory. But in baroque vision this hallucinatory quality is in fact pervasive'.[220]

Deleuze's assertion that '[e]very perception is hallucinatory because perception has no object',[221] Bal argues, means, in effect, that perception itself—and a baroque point of view—cannot be part of empirical or positivist knowledge. The latter position is challenged by Bal's concept of 'how art thinks', which makes a case for embodied knowledge acquired through art production insubordinate to empirical knowledge derived from philosophy and the sciences. Furthermore, the knowledge gained through art production 'offers insights into the very endeavour of knowledge production which cannot be offered by a positivism that has its confidence in perception's capacity to yield up knowledge of the object'.[222]

White is not just a colour: it is *all* colours. White surfaces reflect the entire visible spectrum of light, at the same time it is pure surface and all-encompassing, with the ability to, as Bal puts it, spin the '"I—sender—and the "you"—addressee—around colouristically'.[223]

Therefore, she suggests that white assists in the baroque conflation of subject and object, such as we find in Caravaggio's paintings. That conflation is also a characteristic feature of street photography. So, white signifies the visual site where micro and macro, subject and object, are inextricably folded together. It also has, as Bal asserts, an intimate relationship with death—being the colour of the shroud—and, hence, with the body. Bal draws on Deleuze's idea of a baroque 'texturology', which points towards a 'generalised organism' within baroque thought and representation, often expressed through drapery or folded textures of clothing as they delineate the human figure—the body representing a kind of 'envelope' for matter.

> The texture enveloping the abstract structure is the texture of the representation of the body as it is lured and put at risk in the late twentieth century, specifically in our

[218] Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio*, 46.
[219] Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio*, 46.
[220] Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio*, 45, 46.
[221] Deleuze, *The Fold*, 93.
[222] Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio*, 46.
[223] Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio*, 48.

> time or, again, as it was already in the historical Baroque. It is a texture of 'white' as innumerable tiny mirrors, as sculpted folds, and paradoxically, also as the colour of the inside of the tomb that Louis Marin designated as Caravaggio's site.[224]

Fig. 10. Caravaggio. *David with the Head of Goliath* (Detail). Phaidon, 1998.

Continuing the theme of the tomb, Bal considers the monad—the windowless unit imagined by Leibniz as the fundamental unit of matter, a space that allows for the creation of sculptural depth and relies on the colour white because of its highly focused and spare light.[225] The tomb, a site for baroque art and imagery, is also an archive of memory and historical site. In *Quoting Caravaggio*, Bal's thesis is that we must seek new ways of connecting to parts of the historical past that still speak to us.

> My interest here in cultural memory as a function of the subject is motivated by a need to find a basis, on the side of the subject, for the connection between the subject and the object of historical knowledge […] In the form of history, memory is filled with nostalgic longing as much as with horror. Underlying the generalised cultural preoccupation with history is a desire to escape the past, which the ideology of progress keeps instilling in us—a desire to keep it at arm's length. Cultural memory must bridge this gap.[226]

To bridge the gap with cultural memory, Bal relies on the work of contemporary artists, who intentionally or unintentionally, reproduce or reprocess baroque motifs in their work. For me, a key property of Palermo was the collision of the past and present: there, the past erupts into the present and co-exists with it to an unusual degree. Sometimes it is as simple

[224] Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio*, 52.
[225] Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio*, 52.
[226] Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio*, 53.

as the ubiquitous presence of ruins around which modernity flows. At other times, it is a less tangible sense of the layering of the past, which exists all around without being walled off. At still other times, it is a cultural sense that that the countless ghosts have been invited into now. The catacombs, open today as a macabre tourist attraction, where the dead were preserved and mummified so people could visit with them during the seventeenth up to the early nineteenth centuries, perfectly illustrate this desire to live with the dead. This became something I needed to incorporate into my work. It prompted my intentional use of baroque motifs, in particular *chiaroscuro*, and a conflation of interior and exterior spaces, making the street an interior in which the light source (in this case, the sky) was not often visible. I now realise that I was, in effect, turning Palermo into a monad—or perhaps recognising it as such—windowless, lit by hidden light sources.

It is useful here to consider two photographs by other artists which, although taken in very different locations with very different intentions, can both be gathered within a baroque fold of cultural memory. The first is a photograph (Fig. 11) of a performance by the Cuban American artist Ana Mendieta (1948–1985): *Cloth and animal blood,* 1974, from the *Silueta*, or silhouette, series. The second is a photograph (Fig. 7) by Palermitan photojournalist and anti-Mafia photographer Letizia Battaglia: *His name was Francesco Martino,* 1986.

Both artists had stated intentions for their work. Mendieta's photograph addressed questions of identity, gender, and land. The baroque motifs are evident in it. In contrast, Battaglia, as a newspaper photographer, chose to confront crimes from which others looked away: she was harassed and firebombed for recording the casualties of the Mafia war of the 1980s. In her work, baroque motifs are probably unplanned, yet unavoidable in much of her output. They may represent cultural memory—all the more so perhaps for being unintentional.

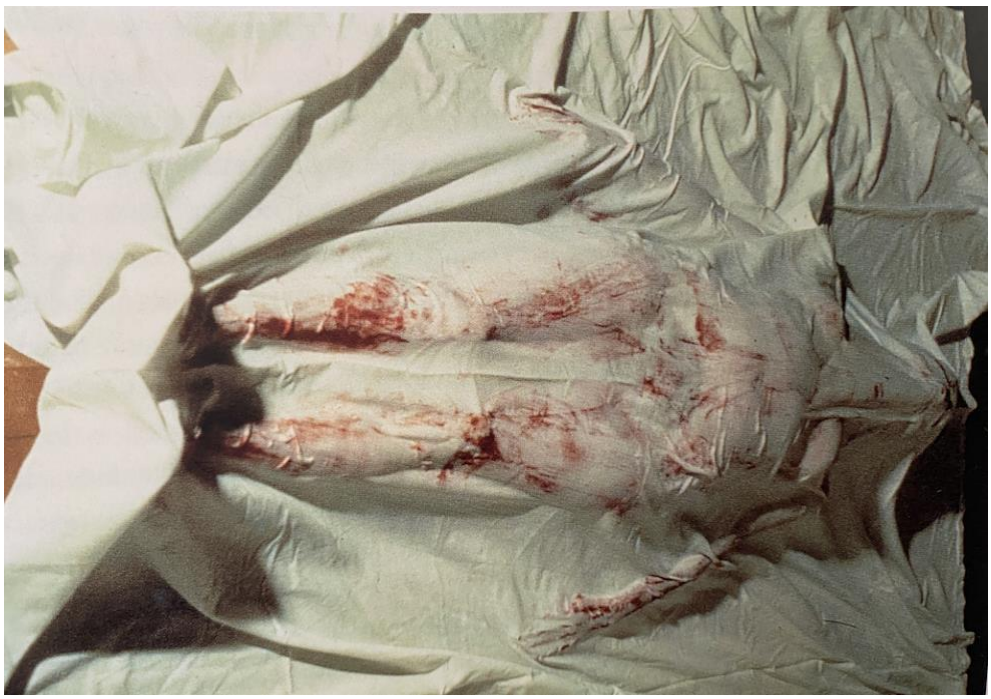

Fig. 11. Ana Mendieta. *Cloth and Animal blood,* from the *Silueta Series*, 1974.

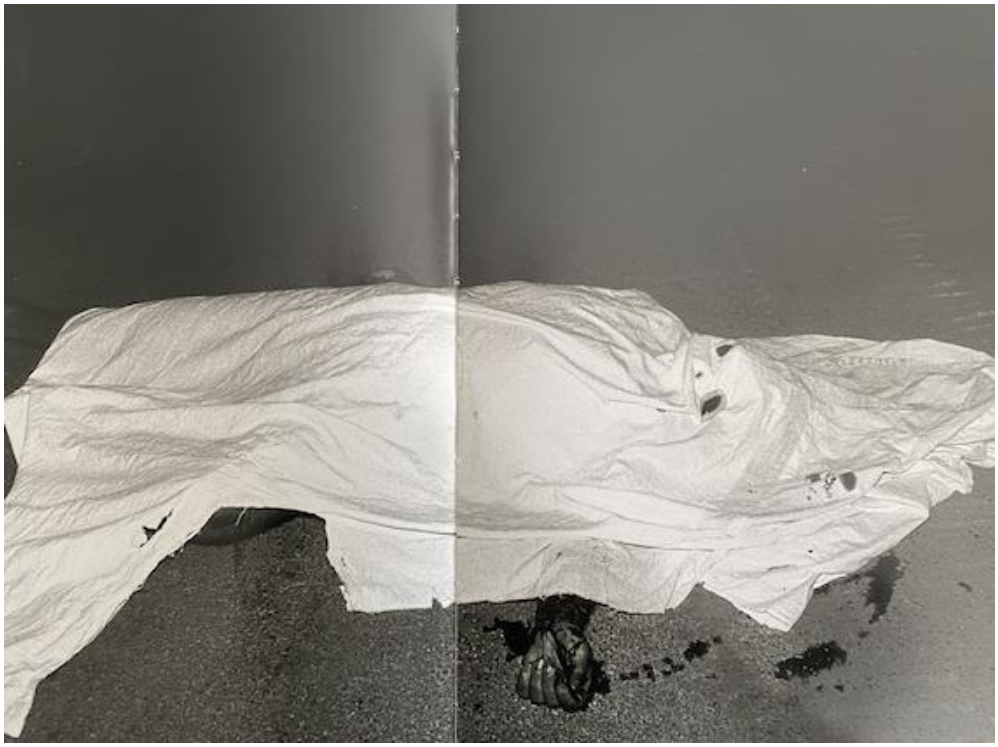

Fig. 12. Letizia Battaglia. *His name was Francesco Martino*, 1986.

Plate 3. Martin Cole. *Woman and Awning*, Palermo, 2014.

The colour red is another 'figure' that runs through this body of work. Red suggests violence, variously referencing the body, death, and eros.

> The critical potential of 'the fold' as theoretical figure, as dispositive, is more precisely filled out with thought in the way it connects violence, the body, and death to eroticism and pleasure, but without merging these in a sadistic opportunity.[227]

In the work of Mendieta and Battaglia, the same confluence is explicit. Even if Battaglia's work is black and white, the dark blood is unmistakably red. *His name was Francesco Martino* is as clear an expression of this kind of meaning, or fold, as could be constructed.

Red is prevalent, even emblematic, in Palermo: from the swagged drapery of the market awnings to the red hair inherited genetically from the Normans. The colour provides another metaphorical bridge from baroque thought to Mediterranean studies. Consider the opening paragraph of Consolo's essay *Palermo, Most Beautiful and Defeated*:

> Cities have a name, but they also have a colour, a gender, and an age. Palermo is red. Palermo is a child. Red as were Tyre and Sidon, as was Carthage: red as the purple of the Phoenicians who colonised it. Land of rich red soil from which the palm tree rises, tall and slender royal symbol, echo, and nostalgia for the desert: land in which orange trees, legacy of the mythical garden of the Hesperides, stand thickly with their dark green sheen and piercing red. A child, because it has always been dominated throughout history, especially by her mother, the terrible Mediterranean who locks her offspring in a monstrous infancy of Gorgonian fascination, of instinct and cruelty (ah child city, ah cruel vanity, ah blind ferment, pit of serpents, lair of plague and pox, explosion of rage and rebellion! Ferocious slaughterhouse, ah den of wolves, pen of jackals […] *Ignorancia*, *altaneria*, *Iocura*, *tunba de verdad*, *curia de matanza*).[228]

Plate 3 is one of the first of my images that I considered successful. I judged it to be so because it concerned literal 'folds': the woman's handbag, the white plastic bag that reflects the light, the recessive dark space, and the red glow of the awning folds. The image is also about movement—the movement of subject (photographer) and object (woman), which are co-relative and reciprocal. The viewpoint does not seem fixed, but elliptical and off-centre. It interested me because it seemed to me to contain fragmentary echoes of Caravaggio's *Judith Beheading Holofernes*.

I came across the photograph by American photographer and artist Andres Serrano (1950) (Fig. 17). Although I was aware of Serrano's work, I had not seen this image, nor had I considered him as a possible reference for my work. I found it intriguing that I had arrived at a very similar set of motifs—and perhaps meanings—by way of a very different methodology (Plate 4).

[227] Buci-Glucksmann, 51.

[228] From the Spanish: 'Ignorance, pride, and insanity, tomb of truth, wedge for killing'. Consolo, *Reading and Writing the Mediterranean*, 236.

Fig. 13. Caravaggio. *Judith Beheading Holofernes*, 1602.

Serrano's picture was meticulously set up, lit, and pre-arranged. Mine was taken on the move, in an instant. Although I remember recognising something interesting in the situation, it happened too quickly for me to have an accurate idea of what was momentarily before my eyes. I believe this, like many of my pictures, was taken without looking through the viewfinder. It was only later, while scrutinising hundreds of images of stills from digital contact sheets, did I 'see' it, the picture being partially 'made' in the edit. For me, this process—in which such coincidences are brought forward and permitted—exemplifies 'the fold' in action. It is also connected to British anthropologist Tim Ingold's (1948–) idea of the 'meshwork'. Recall Ingold's definition of the meshwork as contrasting against that of the

Plate 4. Martin Cole. *Untitled*, Palermo, 2014.

network. Whereas a network is constructed around the relationship between connecting nodes, the meshwork is formed by knots where lines cross over and around each other. Lines in a network have no duration, but the lines in a meshwork are defined by the opportunity for growth and movement.[229] This idea closely resembles Bal's notion of entanglement as a key baroque characteristic.

No discussion of the Baroque beyond the history of art may be complete without reference to Deleuze. His *The Fold* is considered one of the most important philosophical works of the twentieth century. In it, Deleuze uses the Baroque as a conceptual tool with which to re-theorise art, society, and culture at the end of the twentieth century and beyond.

Deleuze built on the work of thinkers including the French art historian Henri Focillon (1881–1943), who was among the first to associate singular qualities in the architecture, art, and thought of the Baroque period. Deleuze focused on the work of the baroque philosopher and mathematician Gottfried Leibniz, whom he channels and reincarnates. *The Fold* is a sensuous, personal piece of writing that brings Leibniz back to life through a general understanding of the baroque as an entity that moves through all periods, histories, cultures, and knowledge systems.

At the heart of book is the 'monad'—an entity developed by Leibniz as a figure to contain his mathematical and philosophical theories. The monad has no windows or openings, that presents us with the autonomy of the interior. Often thought of as a representation of an atom, soul, or individual, Leibniz's differential calculations explored the ideas of curvature in time and space. Deleuze's interpretation of Leibniz's theory of the monad as being folds of space, movement, and time, is embodied and observable, both in nature and in architecture. But the monad is most evident in architecture—in particular the baroque church.

> In this sense it would be pointless to imagine overly modern situations unless they can help us understand what the Baroque had really entailed. For ages there have been places where what is seen is inside: a cell, a sacristy, a crypt, a church, a theatre, a study, or a print room. The Baroque invests in all of these places in order to extract from them power and glory […] Finally, the architectural ideal is a room in black marble, in which all light enters through orifices so well bent that nothing on the outside can be seen through them, yet they illuminate or colour the décor of a pure inside […]. The Monad is the autonomy of the inside, an inside without an outside. It has as its correlative the independence of the façade, an outside without an inside.[230]

Early in my research, while I was applying the strategies of psychogeography to Palermo, I began to consider the importance of its churches. Even before my reading and re-reading of Deleuze, I noticed a startling relationship between façade and interior. In Sicily, and in the Mediterranean region in general, this contrast between the baroque exterior, ornate and complex with architectural drama, with windows and doors leading nowhere—such that the façade is pure 'façade'—is made more dramatic by the violence of light on the limestone, an effect increased by the contrast of the inside, when, upon entering the building, one falls

[229] Tim Ingold, *Making* (London: Routledge Classics, 2013), 132.
[230] Deleuze, *The Fold*, 31.

into a boundary-less dark space. According to Deleuze, this transition or flipping between façade and interior, from flattening light to recessive darkness, invites questions about the relationship between inside and outside. This is no mere abstract idea: it is experienced through sight and the other senses. The experience also provides a potent metaphor for the human body, whose skin, all surface, contains a labyrinthine and endlessly folded interior space. Much of Deleuze's reading of Leibniz's theories on matter depart from empirical observation yet are borne out by modern science.

Plate 5. Martin Cole. *Chiesa di San Francesco di Assisi*, Palermo, 2015.

The image in Plate 5 was the first church interior photograph with which I was satisfied. *La Chiesa di San Francesco di Assisi* is Gothic, but the statuary, chapels, and altars are Baroque. I was interested in the way the light from outside was forcing its way through, along the gap at the bottom of the entrance, and how this light contrasted with the single electric light bulb. The interplay of light and dark was reinforced further by the white plastic bag next to the janitorial supplies catching light at the right side of the entrance. The creeping light working its way through seems to me to point to the effort taken to keep exterior light out.

Plate 6. Martin Cole. *Spinaci*, Palermo, 2014.

Plate 7. Martin Cole. *Chiesa di San Francesco di Assisi*, Palermo, 2016.

I determined that I should use church interiors alongside street scenes, in part, to question the notion of exterior and interior. Thereby, I might not simply illustrate the juxtaposition of the façade and the interior, but also foreground an aspect of the street that, in this location, has an unusually interior quality: tall buildings are often so close together that there is little to no view of the sky, creating a space that has the quality of an interior.

Plate 8. Martin Cole. *Capo*, Palermo, 2014.

Plate 9. Martin Cole. *Church Interior Ballaro*, Palermo, 2017.

In Palermo, this interiority provides a double metaphor for the labyrinth—a reflection of the claustrophobic nature of Palermo's centre, and of Palermo's recent history of cover-ups, oppressions, and suppressions. Caravaggio's paintings of the street or of countryside (for

instance, *The Conversion of St. Paul* (Fig. 14), depict exterior spaces as if they are interiors. The critic and writer John Berger observes that Caravaggio's:

> [...] *chiaroscuro* allowed him to banish daylight. Shadows, he felt, offered shelter as can four walls and a roof. Whatever and wherever he painted, he really painted interiors. Sometimes—for the *Flight into Egypt* or one of his beloved John the Baptists—he was obliged to include a landscape in the background. But these landscapes are like rugs or drapes hung up on a line across an inner courtyard […] Those who live precariously and are habitually crowded together develop a phobia about open spaces which transforms their frustrating lack of space and privacy into something reassuring.[231]

Fig. 14. *The Conversion of St Paul*, 1600 Santa Maria del Popolo Rome.

[231] Berger, *Portraits*, 84.

Plate 10. Martin Cole. *Palazzo Courtyard*, Palermo, 2015.

Palermo's approximately six hundred churches dominate the street plan of the Old City and are a feature of every street and square. They are an integral part of the architectural cloister of the city, forming streets that feel interior, penetrated only by slanting light, obliquely, with much remaining obscured in shadow or darkness. This transition from the near-viewless streets, oppressed by massive walls, into church interiors with huge, indefinite spaces, became a key experience and quality that I wanted my photography to embody. This intention was further informed by Deleuze's consideration of the decorations of a baroque church in *The Fold*. He takes note of a painting framed by striated marble and repeated folded and curvilinear motifs that bleed into the walls, the ornate facades, the rounded pediments and steps, and out into the architecture of the city—endlessly replicating folds and creating a total environment.[232] I wanted to capture this moving between church interior and street, as if one was folding into the other and back again.

By necessity, light is a core constituent of photography. In this series, I wanted to make light an object in its own right, a place-specific entity. Palermo, and Sicily as a whole, is known for its powerful, almost punishing light.[233] As with Naples, it is associated with *chiaroscuro* that found its apogee in the paintings of Caravaggio. Consequently, the use of *chiaroscuro* in the photographs was a conscious choice that enabled me to consider the collision between the sun and architecture, between nature and culture, and between the present and the past.

[232] Deleuze, *The Fold*, 4.

[233] Authors such as Lampedusa have used the light of Sicily as a metaphor for violence, cruelty, and oppression, i.e., something to hide from.

In his chapter on Naples, Chambers brings together a number of elements discussed here: *chiaroscuro*, Deleuze, urban planning, and the dualistic nature of the Baroque, which is also the hidden and repressed nature of modernity. He writes:

> In the unresolved division between mind and body, terrestrial decay and celestial perfection, between darkness and light, the framing of thought, and life, comes to be suspended in a fluctuating ambiguous balance: caught between the flat tabular frame of reason and the infinite spread and inter-layered folds of the body of becoming.[234]

He continues, quoting the Italian translation of Deleuze:

> […] between *a spiegare* (to explain, expound, unfold) and *a piegare* (to fold, wrap, crease), there emerges the *spiegamento* (the explication, the spreading out, the unfolding). Contrary to the fixed point of Cartesian rationalism, there is the multiple point of view revealed by the body, where to explain is to disclose a complexity to be subsequently traced in the folds, creases, and envelopments of the world. In this sense, the centrality of rhetoric to the baroque world—and hence to Naples—is not an idle or 'ornamental' matter. The art of seeing and comprehending has to be sensually assembled: it is diverse from abstract knowledge or mere information. In the violent instability of the Counter-Reformation and the uncertain world of a new social, political, geographical, and scientific order, knowledge demands conviction; a mute consensus is insufficient. Sometimes the construction, whether in architecture, theatre, or thought, leans more towards the light; sometimes, more towards the shadows. Invariably, it recognises its hybrid provenance in both.[235]

Strikingly, throughout this passage, Chambers writes about the Baroque in the present tense. That tense makes the Baroque present and ongoing rather than historical, as it is described by Deleuze, Benjamin, Buci-Glucksmann, and Bal.

[234] Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings*, 95.
[235] Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings*, 96.

Fig. 15. Harry Callahan. *Bystander,* in *A History of Street Photography,* Chicago, 1953. Colin Westerbeck Joel Meyerowitz, 1994.

As we have seen, Caravaggio has been especially influential on filmmakers and photographers, and the visual concept of *chiaroscuro* is now hardwired into visual culture. Street photography makes extensive use of light in this manner, for instance in Harry Callahan's photograph of a woman and child in Chicago (Fig. 15), where the *chiaroscuro* is created by the city's huge skyscrapers. Paul Graham's recent work, *The Present* (Fig. 16), contains, at least in part, an homage to the street photography of 1960s and 1970s New York—the light reacting with the high-rise environment to create a lit stage in a highly baroque fashion.

Fig. 16. Paul Graham. *The Present*, New York, 2018.

Plate 11. Martin Cole. *Via Vitorio Emanuel*, Palermo, 2016.

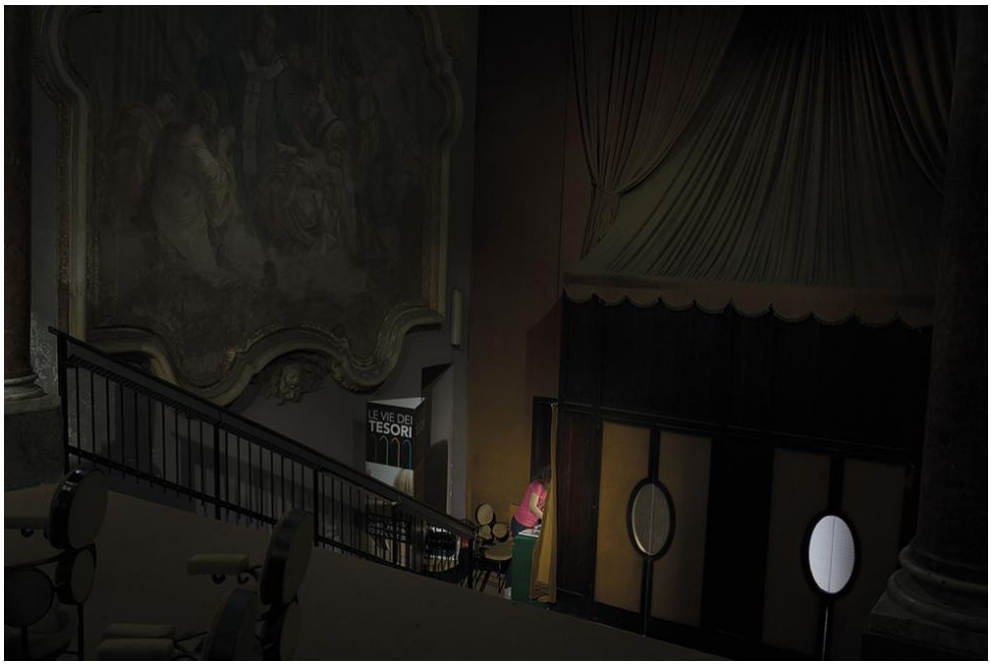

Plate 12. Martin Cole. *Interior.* Palermo.

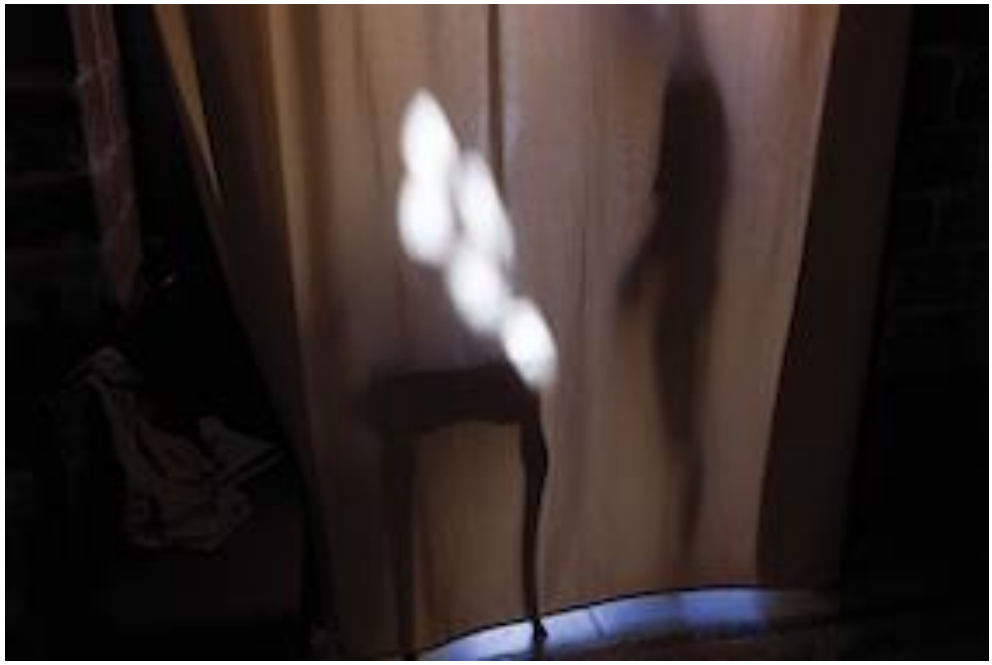

Plate 13. Martin Cole. *Martoranna*, Palermo, 2014.

The word '*dietriolia*' is often used in Palermo to mean 'behind the surface'. It refers to that which cannot be seen, like conspiracies. The theatrical lighting deployed in my photographic essay, in which many things fall into deep shadow, thus also provided me with an apt metaphor for a place with an historically problematic relationship with truth and transparency—where many things remain hidden.

This body of work is threaded through with another motif related to 'the hidden': drapery or veils. I made no conscious decision to seek out these elements, or to include images that contained them in the book. However, I began to recognise them as key elements of many pictures that I considered successful. Palermo is full of drapery, awnings, and other coverings over doorways or in market-places. In most cases, it serves as protection against the sun. But, in other situations, it has no apparent practical concerns beyond decoration. Bal's consideration of drapery in baroque art draws on the work of the American art historian Irving Lavin. According to Lavin, drapes or veils, widespread in baroque art, were a device used to symbolise a temporal break: 'the almost hallucinatory relationship between past and present that is a hallmark of the period'.[236] Lavin maintains that this relationship between the past and the present, i.e. the drapery, 'deprives perception of its object'.[237] Focusing on this aspect of the interface between past and present, Bal points towards alternative, non-linear interpretations of history that became an integral aspect of the photographs.

In a photograph, darkness may arguably serve the same purpose, particularly where a few details still remain. Those cases give one the impression that, if you try, you might be able to see into it. In the images, I tried to emphasise baroque motifs by recreating a sense of a space enfolded within darkness: claustrophobic, limited, but simultaneously expansive, as darkness is recessive and boundary less.

[236] Lavin Irving, quoted in Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio*, 3.
[237] Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio*, 3.

Fig. 17. Andreas Serrano. Santa Maria Del Rosario Gesuatti, 1991.

Plate 14. Martin Cole. *Il Vero Street*, Palermo, 2019.

Within this image sequence, I also wanted to make the people of Palermo an integral part of the environment, not merely apprehended by their absent traces. This attitude was informed by the concept of embodied photography as baroque practice. The practice involves not only the body represented, but also the reciprocal and mobile presence of the photographer. As discussed in Chapter Four, the photographer's position is, itself, inscribed in the image. The inclusion of people in the images as integral components also serves to bring the present into the image. In that present, social realities are referenced, even if they remain opaque. The everyday motions of the distinctive inhabitants of the city also generate their own baroque rhythms and compositions, and important connection to the works of Caravaggio and his relationship to the real.

Plate 14 displays baroque motifs of *chiaroscuro*, drapery, and veiling in the smoke that moves across the frame, both transparent yet obscuring. Someone—possibly a tourist—takes a photograph across the path of a young man—perhaps a migrant. In the foreground, a second photographing figure is hidden in shadow. The veil of smoke emanates from the grill of the street-food stall, above which we see the words, slightly truncated 'Il Vero Street' or, 'The True Street'. The final 't', as well as the last word—'food'—are missing but assumed. Behind, a man—perhaps a local—waves at someone behind the viewer. The street recedes into baroque façade and corrugated iron. It is likely not the typical image of an Italian street. For me, the main point of interest in this image is the intersection of multiple viewpoints. We are invited to consider the scene from the point of view of the viewer or photographer; of the young man with the bicycle who appears to look straight at the camera, but, on closer inspection, is actually looking slightly sideways; of the red-haired photographer looking across the frame; of her shadowy companion or double; of the waving man; and of the two customers at the street stall. This is a tangled intersection of viewpoints as is referred by in Chambers' analysis of Caravaggio's *Seven Works of Mercy*.

Plate 15. Martin Cole. *Ballaro*, Palermo, 2015.

The other photographic influence on my work is the tradition of street photography, in particular the work of modernist photographers such as Frank and Winogrand, and present-day practitioners such as Phillip Lorca di Corcia, and Paul Graham, among others. Finally, there is the influence of Caravaggio's paintings, bearing the obvious *chiaroscuro*, but equally importantly other motifs and characteristics which I attempted to channel through a practice itself indebted to street photography.

Earlier, I described the striking relationship between the paintings of Caravaggio and a certain sort of hand-held photography that Caravaggio variously prefigured. The crux of the picture essay lies in using these practices and forms—documentary photography and street photography—to create and engage with a narrative that is both specific to a place, and also inserts itself into a meshwork of ideas centring around the Baroque as both a past and contemporary phenomenon. This type of handheld embodied photographic practice is one that has certain baroque characteristics that are persistently relevant across time. Consequently, I approached the act of photographing the city through the lens of my understanding of the Baroque.

Concluding Thoughts

This research project set out to investigate, through a photographic practice, the city of Palermo. The research evolved rapidly to incorporate broader research fields that could provide deeper insight and richer perspectives on the task. From this expanded research field—the intellectual contribution of multiple texts, images, and theories which integrated into a form of Ingold's 'meshwork'—I developed an understanding that increased my awareness of the intricacies and paradoxes of the subject. These, I discovered, could not simply be illustrated, even represented, but demanded an embodied approach. The interlinked set of concepts provoked by the nature of Palermo overlapped in the broad concept of the Baroque. The Baroque allowed for the fusion of a rich historical past with a complex present involving notions of baroque space—a space based on a real space created by architecture, and modified by human usage.

This photographic practice falls within the broad category of fine art/documentary usage as defined by James Lingwood in his 1994 essay, *Different Times*, discussed in Chapter Three. The practice that evolved contained elements of Lingwood's various modalities, especially the snapshot and the picture as thought-form crossing over into each other. All the photographs began as snapshots, being taken with a handheld camera, often on the move. Much subconscious, embodied apprehension happens in an instant, but deliberation is returned to the work though the long process of poring over the pictures, being open to their contents, and editing the sequence into a book-bound picture essay. This amounts to a severing of the link between the moment of taking a picture and the richer meanings of the photograph itself, which often contains effects not seen or understood at the time of making. This somewhat paradoxical methodology, whereby the embodied moment gives way to reflective deliberation, resonates clearly with the ornate, baroque framework.

The deliberate constraints imposed on the photography research—the location, the equipment, the method—give the sequence a natural homogeneity. Certain conscious descriptions augment this, such as the foregrounding of *chiaroscuro* effects and the interchange of exterior and interior.

As the research developed, other elements became involved: real-life events and situations; certain sites to which I would return many times in different years; religious services and festivals; and, in particular, the flow and life of the markets. These recurrent motifs found their way into the work as a consequence of methodology, but their contribution was only fully recognised through reading contemporary theory on the Baroque. That reading brought me to consider, mainly within the photography itself, but also theoretically, whether there might exist such a thing as 'baroque practice', and whether the Palermo sequence could fall into that category.

Therefore, I attempted to link the concepts of baroque thought and practice, both past and present, with the genre of street photography. In recent years, a number of photographic practitioners—including Graham, Melanie Manchot, and Lorca di Corcia—have, as the critic Rosemary Hawker explains, attempted to repopulate the street to readdress the urban

experience as something other than an empty space.[238] According to Hawker, these photographers seek to transgress the dichotomy of viewing the city as either full or empty of people. Instead, they imagine new dynamics and relationships in the street. This viewpoint accorded with my sense of the inhabitants of Palermo articulating the city spaces with flow and rhythm. In a Benjaminian sense, and certainly in a baroque fashion, the city is a corpse—we humans are the flora and fauna that, feeding of it, give it life.

Throughout the research, I expanded my knowledge and understanding of the interrelated aspects of my subject. The photographic essay is, consequently, indebted to important theoretical contributions, which I shall briefly reiterate and summarise.

The work of Mieke Bal provided insight to the Baroque as trans-historical entity, as evidenced in the work of Serrano, Reed, and Hatoum, among others. Bal allowed me to position my practice in relation to the notion of quotation, and to understand how photographic reference to the paintings of Caravaggio might contribute to the project. Her redefinition of received notions in art history connect with the lived reality of an urban space like Palermo, a baroque space where the relationship between past and present is not only on display, but under constant revision.

Christine Buci-Glucksmann's work was another major influence on the research. Both *Baroque Reason* and *The Madness of Vision* outline the central importance of the Baroque period to Western culture. The texts, rich with allusion and irreducible to strictly rationalist propositions, pull the reader into a rich, enfolded reality both philosophical and highly subjective. Buci-Glucksmann provided further insight on the Deleuzian fold, which affected the layout of the book, within which a certain 'messiness' is permitted among images of different formats and points of view, bound together by the constant interplay of light and dark elements. The acceptance of a wide range of visual influences into the project, from Caravaggio to Paul Graham, which initially seemed problematic, might be attributed in part to Buci-Glucksmann's call for non-linear and non-programmatic approaches to cultural production.

James Lingwood's essay 'Different Times' offered a means of bridging photographic practices and Mediterranean studies via Braudel's ideas about time. These ideas were developed to explore the discipline of history through the study of a region. But they are usefully transferred into visual culture and particularly to lens-based media. Bal's ideas on quotation in art and culture, and their origins in the work of Bakhtin, are also reinforced in Lingwood's text.

Iain Chambers' work was a point of departure for this research. His unfolding of the baroque matrix of Naples—Palermo's sister city—provided a theoretical blueprint, allowing me to view Palermo as an essentially baroque space. Chambers' writing is based on first-hand experience intermingled with theory. This hybridity erodes boundaries between disciplines: between art (of all genres), writing, music, cuisine, anthropology, geography, and architecture. His writing also embodies a baroque, Deleuzian approach that seeks to fold

[238] Rosemary Hawker, 'Repopulating the Street: Contemporary Photography and Urban Experience History of Photography', *History of Photography* 37 (2013): 346.

together previously disparate fields of knowledge to create a new and more useful perspective.

Behind most of these reference texts lies Deleuze's Fold. That opaque concept blends philosophy, mathematics, and subjective poetics, but offers new ways of conceptualising society, culture, and art. The spirit of Deleuze's Fold is contained also within these images of Palermo, in which a photographic practice is used as a vehicle to fold together disparate elements in baroque structures and sequences.

'The Baroque Photograph' of the title resonates on multiple enfolded levels. The baroque city of Palermo, in its brooding historical complexity, remains the primary subject and context for the photography. It also becomes the source material for an overarching examination of 'baroqueness' and its relevance to contemporary society. Repeated motifs—*chiaroscuro*, exterior-as-interior, the labyrinth-ruin—point to seminally baroque components of a specific place. They also generate, within the photography, their own, unexpected baroque structure, narrative, and symbolism without geographic limit. The sequence of images is activated by people, the diverse occupants of a city who unconsciously embody its baroque nature. Their animating presence speaks to a baroque aspect that might exist in all urban spaces where the patterns of usage, custom, memory, and myth determined by human activity create a messy script for living below the threshold of architecture and town planning—albeit influenced by both. The photographs, made under the influence of powerful image-makers, primarily Caravaggio, and in consciousness of the history of street photography, are also influenced by thinkers such as Bal and Buci-Glucksmann, whose writings engage philosophically with 'baroqueness', and who seek to find bridges between a philosophical baroque, real life, and artistic practice. Crucially, through the contemplative analysis of Caravaggio's paintings, mediated by the work of Chambers and Bal, the activity—and effect—of hand-held photography itself became what I would term 'a baroque dance of point-of-view', inextricably bound up with the perspective of the human body and the relationship of the observer to the observed. The embodiment of these in-folded influences in the moment of photographing, as well as in the longer process of reflection and selection, imbue the photo-essay with deep-seated baroque properties that speak at once to the specificities of the city of Palermo, but more significantly to what Palermo and the Baroque offer our problematic and complex contemporary world.

I leave the final words to Buci-Glucksmann, and her rendering of Quevedo's poem *El mundo por de dentro,* or *The World from Within,* with which she begins her book *Baroque Reason*:

> Imagine a city with several entrances, a labyrinthine proliferation of squares, crossroads, thoroughfares and side streets, a kind of multibody of the past and memory. In short a baroque town: Rome, Vienna, perhaps Mexico City. Here a *flâneur* is eagerly seeking out the new and the strange scale-games played with reality and unreality. In this theatre the traveller with no homeland and no source of rest meets a venerable old man. 'Who are you?' he asks. I am disillusion *(yo soy el desegano)* comes the reply. The man takes him on a tour of this phantasmal city with a thousand faces. They come to a main street, nameless and without end, inhabited by a thousand figures: the street of hypocrisy. And here they find a beautiful woman who leaves their hearts filled with sighing and desire, a gentle face of snow and roses

wrapped in her own aura—the very object of love. The master of disillusion then reveals all: her teeth have been artificially whitened, her hair dyed, her face skilfully made up, and behind the appearances age and death are doing their work. Everywhere in this street of the mighty and beautiful, the world is upside down. Madame Fashion and Madame Death are on the prowl. It must be turned the right side up again: to baffle all the frontiers of the real and unreal, belief and knowledge, world and theatre; to see the world from within.[239]

Plate 16. Martin Cole. *Broccolo*, Palermo, 2019.

[239] Buci-Glucksmann, *Baroque Reason*, 39.

Bibliography

Bakhtin. Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination*. Edited by Michael Holquist. Translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981.

Bal, Mieke. *Quoting Caravaggio: Contemporary Art, Preposterous History*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1999.

Beneviste, Emile. *Problems in General Linguistics.* Miami, FL: University of Miami Press, 1971.

Benjamin, Walter. *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. Translated by John Osborne. London: Verso, 1998.

Berger, John. 'Caravaggio: A Contemporary View', *Studio International* Volume 196, Number 998, 1983.

——. *Portraits*. London: Verso, 2015.

Braudel, Fernand, *The Mediterranean in the Ancient World*. Translated by Sian Reynolds. New York, NY: Penguin, 2001.

——. *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, *Volume 1*. Translated by Sian Reynolds. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995.

Buci-Glucksmann, Christine, *The Madness of Vision: On Baroque Aesthetics*. Translated by Dorothy Z. Baker. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2015.

——. *Baroque Reason: The Aesthetics of Modernity*. Translated by Patrick Camiller. SAGE Publications, 1994.

Cassano, Franco. *Southern Thought And Other Essays on the Mediterranean*. Translated by Norma Bouchard and Valerio Ferme. New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2012.

Caygill, Howard. 'The Significance of Allegory in the Ursprung des Deutchen Trauerspeils', in *1642: Literature and Power in the Seventeenth Century*. Edited by Francis Baker, Jay Bernstein, John Coombes, et al. Colchester: University of Essex, 1981.

Chambers, Iain. *Mediterranean Crossings: The Politics of an Interrupted Modernity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008.

Consolo, Vincenzo. *Fuga Dall'Etna* [*Escape from Etna*]. Rome: Donzelli, 1993.

——. *Reading and Writing the Mediterranean*. Translated and edited by Norma Bouchard and Massimo Lollini. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006.

Coverley, Merlin. *Psychogeography*. Pocket Essentials, 2010.

de Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Translated by Steven F. Rendall. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988.

Debord, Guy. 'Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography, Situationist International Anthology', in *Psychogeography.* New Edition. Edited by Merlin Coverley. London: Pocket Essentials, 2010.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Felix Guattari. *What is Philosophy*. Translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1994.

Deleuze, Gilles. *The Fold*. Translated by Tom Conley. London: The Athlone Press, 2006.

di Lampedusa, Giuseppe Tomasi. *The Leopard*. Translated by Archibald Colquihoun. London: Vintage, 2007.

Dolezel, Lubomir. *Possible Worlds of Fiction and History*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010.

Fabian, Johannes. *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object.* New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2014.

Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin White Masks*. Translated by Charles Larn Markmann. London: Pluto Press, 2008.

Flusser, Vilem. *Gestures*. Translated by Nancy Ann Roth. Minneapolis, MN: The University of Minnesota Press, 2014.

Focillon, Henri. *The Life of Forms of Art*. Translated by George Kubler. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1942.

Francese, Joseph. 'Vincenzo Consolo's Poetics of Memory', *Italica* Vol 82, No.1 Spring, 2005.

Gilroy, Paul. *Postcolonial Melancholia*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2005.

Graham-Dixon, Andrew. *Caravaggio: A Life Sacred and Profane*. London: Penguin Books, 2010.

Harris, W.V. *Rethinking the Mediterranean*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Hawker, Rosemary. 'Repopulating the Street: Contemporary Photography and the Urban Experience', *History of Photography* 37, 341–352, 2013.

Hazard, Paul. *The Crisis of the European Mind 1680–1715*. Translated by J. Lewis May. *New York Review of Books*, 2013.

Hills, Helen. *Rethinking the Baroque*. New York, NY: Ashgate Publishing, 2011.

Holly, Michael Ann. *Past Looking, Historical Imagination and the Rhetoric of the Image*. Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1996.

Ingold, Tim. *Lines*. London: Routledge Classics, 2016.

——. *Making*. London: Routledge, 2013.

Ippolito Pestellini Laparelli. *Palermo Atlas*. by OMA for Manifesta, 2018.

Jay, Martin. *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth Century French Thought*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994.

L.P. Hartley. *The Go-Between.* New York, NY: Penguin Modern Classics.

Laparelli, Ippolito Pestellini. *Palermo Atlas*. Published by OMA for Manifesta, 2018.

Lingwood, James. *The Epic and the Everyday: Contemporary Photographic Art*. Edited by Martin Caiger-Smith. The South Bank Centre at the Hayward Gallery, 1994.

Macfarlane, Robert.: 'A Road of One's Own'. Times Literary Supplement, October 7th, 2005.

Marin, Louis. *To Destroy Painting*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Matvejevic, Predrag. *Mediterranean: A Cultural Landscape*. Translated by Michael Henry Helm. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999.

McEvilley, Thomas. *The Exile's Return: Towards a Redefinition of Painting in the Postmodern Era*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Gay Science*. New York, NY: Random House, 1974.

Occupations. A photo essay by Anselm Kiefer. 1975

Purcell, Nicholas. 'The Boundless Sea of Unlikeness? On Defining the Mediterranean', *Mediterranean Historical Review* 18, no 2, 2003.

Robb, Peter. *M: The Caravaggio Enigma*. London: Bloomsbury, 2011.

Rostler, Martha. *Decoys and Disruptions: Selected Writings, 1975–2001*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004.

Solnitt, Rebecca. *Wanderlust: A History of Walking.* New York, NY: Penguin, 2001.

Van Reijen Willem. 'Labyrinth and Ruin: The Return of the Baroque in Postmodernity', *Theory, Culture and Society* Vol 9, 1–26, 1992.

Vidler, Anthony. *Warped Space: Art Architecture and Anxiety in Modern Culture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000.

von Goethe, Johann Wolfgang. *Italian Journey*. Translated and introduced by W. H. Auden and Elizabeth Mayer. London: Folio Society, 1816.

Weil, Simone and Rachel Bespaloff. *War and the Iliad.* Translated by Mary McCarthy. New York Review of Books, 2005.

Wigoder, Meir. 'Some Thoughts about Street Photography and the Everyday', *History of Photography* 25, no. 4, 368–378, 2015.

Williams, David. ‘Performing Palermo Protests Against Forgetting’, in *Performing Cities*, ed. Nicholas Whybrow. London: Palgrave McMillan 2014.