The Baroque in Literature, Art, and Music

Most literary scholars place the time of the baroque in literature as the period between 1580 to 1680 (e.g., Frye-Baker-Perkins). The period, as formulated by musicologists, runs from 1600 to 1750 or 1759 (e.g., The Oxford Dictionary of Music). Art historians subdivide the baroque regionally, as well as give somewhat differing chronological ranges, such as Frederick Hartt in his Art: A History of Painting, Sculpture, Architecture (4th ed., Abrams, 1993; the seventeenth century in Italy; the seventeenth century in Catholic Europe outside Italy; the seventeenth century in Protestant countries; the eighteenth century -- including rococo; 1590-1750); H.W. Janson in his History of Art (5th ed., Abrams, 1997; the baroque in Italy and Spain; the baroque in Flanders and Holland; the baroque in France and England); Fred Kleiner, Christin Mamiya, and Richard Tansey in Gardner's Art Through the Ages (11th ed., Wadsworth, 2001; “Because of the problematic associations of the term and because no commonalities can be ascribed to all of the art and cultures of this period, we have limited use of the term in this book. Wherever it is used, we have provided characteristics that anchor the term Baroque in particular cultures -- for example, Italian Baroque as compared to Dutch Baroque”); Marilyn Stokstad, et al. in Art History (3rd ed., Prentice-Hall, Abrams, 2002; baroque art in Europe -- with many subdivisions -- and North America; roughly 1593-1722). William Fleming in his Arts and Ideas subdivides by not only region but also social class (Holt, 1955; the Venetian Baroque; the Counter-Reformation Baroque; the Aristocratic Baroque; the Bourgeois Baroque; the Baroque, Limited). As summed up in The Oxford Dictionary of Art, eds. Ian Chilvers, Harold Osborne, and Dennis Farr (Oxford UP, 1988, 1994): “Primarily [the term] designates the dominant style of European art between Mannerism and Rococo . . . Secondly, it is used as a general label for the period when this style flourished, broadly speaking, the seventeenth century.”

While many reference works give the etymology of the word baroque as from the Portuguese term for an irregularly shaped pearl (hence the ideas of bizarre or odd), even this derivation is not completely certain, since some scholars have traced the origin of the word from baroco, the name of the fourth mode of the second figure in the scholastic terminology of syllogisms (hence the concepts of overly sophisticated and bad taste).

Two good overall descriptions of the period, its complexity, and its manifestations in literature, the visual arts, and music are given by William Fleming in Arts and Ideas (7th ed., Holt, 1986) and Lawrence Cunningham and John Reich in Culture and Values (Holt, 1985). Fleming outlines the many oppositions to be found in the period:

The Baroque period was one of restless oppositions, violent clashes, and vast expansion. It was an age of reason when the mind and imagination opened up new worlds of scientific knowledge and artistic creativity. It was an era of religious reorientation, with Europe split between loyalty to Roman Catholicism and to various forms of Protestantism. It was an age of empire building with European countries staking out new overseas territories. It was also a time of absolutism, with the consolidation of political power leading to strong centralized states. The French philosopher Rene Descartes [during the Baroque period] laid the cornerstone of the Age of Reason [that follows the Baroque] with the declaration “I think, therefore I am.” His skeptical attitude is revealed in his remark that the only thing that cannot be doubted is doubt itself. His method is described in his equally apt statement that only the things the mind perceives clearly and distinctly are true.

Other scientists added to the list of discoveries. Isaac Newton’s speculations on celestial mechanics led to the formulation of the laws of universal gravitation. Both Newton and Baron Leibniz devised the infinitesimal or differential, calculus, a mathematics capable of dealing with infinity and with a universe in constant motion. Robert Boyle’s book The Sceptical Chymist set forth the laws that became the basis for modern chemistry. And William Harvey’s researches into the functions of the heart and circulation of the blood began modern medical science. This brave new world of matter in motion was not born without a continued challenge from religious sources. Roman Catholicism first met the Protestant threat by an inner reform of its own, the Counter-Reformation. At the Council of Trent, the basic doctrines of the Church were reaffirmed, the clergy rededicated itself to religious work and the Index of books that good Catholics were forbidden to read was compiled. Earlier,
the Universal Inquisition had been set up to weed out beliefs thought contrary to Church doctrine and to punish the guilty.

New religious orders were also founded. A former Spanish soldier, Ignatius Loyola, organized the Society of Jesus [the Jesuits], a militant organization that fought Protestantism, carried on missionary work all over the world, and established schools with new methods of study. The Spanish mystic Teresa of Avila reorganized the Carmelite order of nuns. The Roman social worker Philip Neri and his Oratorian Fathers brought religious inspiration and instruction to the poor and oppressed people of the cities.

In the wake of the great navigators and explorers, western European kingdoms established vast world empires. Spanish America included the entire west and southeast coasts of South America, all of Central America, and parts of North America. Spain also claimed island possessions all over the globe, notably the Philippines, which were named after King Philip II. With the gold and silver of the New World pouring into its treasury, Spain became for a time the richest nation on earth.

Portuguese possessions included Brazil, settlements all along the west and east coasts of Africa, and others as far as India and China. The Dutch turned their eyes to Asia, establishing the Dutch East India Company with rights to trade in the silks and spices of the Orient and to rule territories that included Ceylon, the Malay Peninsula, and Indonesia. The French created colonies and trading posts in Canada and the St. Lawrence and Mississippi valleys. The latter, including all the middle part of what is now the United States down to New Orleans, was named Louisiana after Louis XIV. The English, meanwhile, laid claim to all of northern Canada centered around Hudson Bay and Newfoundland, as well as to the east coast of North America extending from Maine to Virginia, where the thirteen original colonies were founded.

Politically, Europe was divided by the rivalries of ruling families and the competition of strong national states. Charles I of Spain was elected Charles V of the Holy Roman Empire in 1519. This brought Spain, Flanders, Holland, the Germanies, and Austria under a single powerful ruler. He also inherited the great Spanish empire. Charles V tried to contain Protestantism and at the same time quarreled with the Pope. He blocked the advances of the Ottoman Turks in eastern Europe and the Balkans, and checked French ambitions in Italy, which was hopelessly divided into small city-states and rival provinces. With the exception of Venice, all Italy was brought under Spanish dominion. After Charles V's reign, his brother became ruler of the Germanies and Austria, while his son Philip II succeeded as king of Spain, Flanders, Holland, and the overseas territories.

In France, the kings had gained control of the army and expelled the English. Louis XIII's astute prime minister, Cardinal Richelieu, and his successor under Louis XIV, Cardinal Mazarin, consolidated the absolute monarchy and created a powerful centralized state. After the horrors of the Thirty Years' War, France became the dominant European power.

England had prospered under the Tudors, but when Queen Elizabeth's successors began moving toward a more absolute monarchy such as those of France and Spain, a bitter struggle with Parliament ensued. After Charles I had governed alone for eleven years, he was confronted with a civil war, and was captured, tried, and beheaded. The civil war and the Puritan Revolution swept Oliver Cromwell into power. After his death, the British genius for compromise once again came to the fore, and the Restoration [from 1660 onwards] under the more limited monarchy of Charles II allowed for representative government and political freedom.

Despite its turbulence and turmoil, the baroque period was a favorable climate for the arts. Grandeur and magnificence were the order of the day. Emperors, kings, popes, and princes vied with one another to attract great artists to their courts. Immense building programs were undertaken, and large commissions were forthcoming. The arts were, in general, caught up in the service of Church and state, and were involved in the creation of the myths of the miraculous and the majestic. (pp. 275-76)

**Baroque Rationalism**

Stimulated by the explorations of navigators of the globe, the scanning of the skies by astronomers, and the advances of inventors, the baroque mind reassessed the world and the place of human beings in the universe. Galileo's telescopes confirmed Copernicus' theory of a solar system in which the earth revolved around the sun rather than vice versa. The concept of the unmoving Aristotelian universe thus had to yield to one that was full of whirling motion. Since the earth was no longer considered as a fixed point located at the nerve center of the
cosmos, human beings could hardly be regarded any longer as the sole purpose of creation. It was some consolation, however, to know that this strange, new, moving universe at least was subject to mechanical and mathematical laws, and therefore to a considerable extent predictable. Copernicus and Kepler as well as the other scientists were convinced of its unity, proportion, and harmony; and the fact that the human mind had the privilege of probing into the innermost secrets of nature—if the intellect proved equal to the task—was a great challenge.

The rationalism of the 17th century, then, was based on the view that the universe could at last be understood in logical, mathematical, and mechanical terms. As a philosophy and semireligion, this world view had far-reaching consequences by preparing for the theories of positivism and materialism, the doctrines of deism and atheism, and the mechanical and industrial revolutions.

While Greek rationalism had been based on the perception and measurement of a stable, immobile world, baroque rationalism had to come to terms with a dynamic universe. Scientific thought was concerned with movement in space and time. The need for a mathematics capable of understanding a world of matter in motion led Descartes to his analytical geometry, Pascal to a study of cycloid curves, and both Leibniz and Newton to the simultaneous but independent discovery of integral and differential calculus.

Baroque invention also led to refinements in navigation, to improvements in the telescope and microscope for the exploration of distant and extremely small regions of space, the barometer for the measurement of air pressure, the thermometer for the recording of temperature changes, and the anemometer for the calculation of the force of winds. Astronomers were occupied with the study of planetary motion; William Harvey discovered the circulation of the blood; and physicists were experimenting with the laws of thermodynamics and gravitation.

Newton's concern with mass, force, and momentum, his speculations on the principles of attraction and repulsion, and his calculations on earthly and heavenly mechanics led him to a monumental synthesis that he presented to the British Royal Society in 1686 and published in London a year later. Newton's *Principia*, as it was called, embraced a complete and systematic view of an orderly world based on mechanical principles, capable of mathematical proof, and evident by accurate prediction. His work was, in fact, a scientific *summa*, or summation, that established the intellectual architecture of the new view of the universe.

Such a changed world view was bound to have important consequences for the arts, which responded in this case with a ringing reassertion of human supremacy and a joyous acceptance of this new understanding of the universe. The application of rationalistic principles to aesthetic expression is by no means accidental or casual. Before he became an architect, Christopher Wren was a mechanical inventor, an experimental scientist, and a professor of astronomy at London and Oxford. As a founder of the Royal Society, he was in close contact with such men as Robert Boyle and Isaac Newton.

The fellows of the Royal Society appointed John Dryden to a committee the purpose of which was to study the English language with a view toward linguistic reforms. They recommended that English prose should have both purity and brevity, so that verbal communication could be brought as close to mathematical plainness and precision as possible. Dryden's embarrassment in writing an opera that was designed to please the ear rather than gratify the intellect was therefore quite understandable.

The music of Purcell and Handel was based on a system of complex contrapuntal principles and tonal logic in which given premises, such as sequences or repeated ground basses, are followed by predictable conclusions. Moreover, it is characterized by intellectual discipline, symmetry, clarity, and a sure sense of direction. Their forms are models of brevity in which each part has its place, no loose ends are left dangling, and the cadences bring everything to a positive finish.

Like Wren's architecture and Dryden's poetic drama, Purcell's and Handel's musical art reflects an assured self-confidence, an inventive spirit that gave birth to new forms, an exploration of novel optical and acoustical ideas, and a conviction that a work of art should be a reflection of an orderly and lawful universe.

**Dynamics of the Baroque**

The baroque period was one in which irresistible modern forces met immovable traditional objects. Out of all the theological conflicts, philosophical discussions, scientific arguments, social tensions, political strife, warfare, and artistic creation came both the baroque style and the modern age.
The baroque world was one in which oppositions that were impossible to reconcile had to find a way to coexist. The rise of rationalism was accompanied by the march of militant mysticism. The aristocratic cult of majesty was echoed by the bourgeois cult of domesticity. The internationalism of Roman Catholicism was in conflict with the nationalism of the Protestant sects and rising monarchies. Religious orthodoxy had to contend with freedom of thought. The Jesuits brought all the arts into their churches, while Calvin did his best to exclude the arts as vanities. Philip II built a magnificent mausoleum and monastery, while Louis XIV erected a pleasure palace and theater. Charles I tried to force an absolute monarchy on England, and Cromwell's answer was a republican commonwealth. The printing press made books available, while suppression by censorship took them away. The boldest scientific thinking took place alongside a reassertion of the belief in miracles and a renewal of traditional religious beliefs. Newton’s *Principia* and the final part of John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* appeared in London within two years of each other. The arts demonstrated similar oppositions. In Spain, the emotional involvement of El Greco was succeeded by the optical detachment of Velázquez. In France, the spontaneity of Rubens was followed by the academic formalism of Poussin. In Holland, the broad humanity of Rembrandt led to the specialization and precision of Vermeer.

Such oppositions could hardly be expected to resolve themselves into a single uniform style. At best, they could achieve only a temporary resolution and a fusion of forms, such as those found in a Counter-Reformation church, the Versailles Palace, Rembrandt’s visual dramatization of the Bible, and Purcell’s operatic synthesis. In them, forceful striving and restless motion are more characteristic than calm and repose. Baroque art thus emerges from these tensions and speaks in eloquent accents of the expanding range of human activities, grandiose achievements, and a ceaseless search for more powerful means of expression.

**Expansion of Space and Time.** The conflicts of the baroque world took place within a tremendously enlarged sense of space and time. The astronomers told of remote regions populated by an infinite number of stars. Pascal speculated on the mathematical implications of infinity. The gardens and avenues of Versailles were laid out in keeping with this vastly extended concept of space. The vistas led the eye toward the horizon and invited the imagination to continue beyond. The unification of the vast buildings and gardens there brought baroque society wholly within the scope of nature and declared it to be a part of the new measurable universe.

Wren’s attempt to bring his cathedral, parish churches, and public buildings into one all-embracing scheme was also in keeping with this image of the comprehensive baroque universe. Painters likewise delighted in leading the eye outside their pictures and attempted to convey the impression of infinity through the bold use of light and exaggerated perspective effects. The Dutch landscapists tried to capture atmospheric perspective, and Rembrandt was concerned with the infinite gradations of light. Through use of illusionistic effects, ceilings of Counter-Reformation churches opened the skies and tried to promote the feeling of a world without end.

In music, there was a corresponding expansion of tonal space. The organs and other keyboard instruments were built to include a wider range from bass to soprano. Both the wind and the stringed instruments were constructed in families, ranging all the way from what the English organist and composer Orlando Gibbons called the “Great Double Base” to the high soprano register of the violin. Louis XIV and Charles II incorporated this string family into groups of twenty-four players, thus increasing both resonance and volume of sound through the doubling process. The use of chromatic harmony with all the half-tone, or half-step, divisions of the octave was the internal extension of the same idea. Purcell’s opposition of ground basses and soprano melodies emphasized the baroque love of a spacious distribution of resonances. His adoption of the Venetian double chorus and his dramatic use of the echo effect in *Dido and Aeneas* were still further evidence of the desire of baroque composers to increase the perception of space through sound.

Above all, the baroque universe was in ceaseless movement. Whether a rationalist thought of it in terms of whirling particles or a mystic as full of swirling spirits, both saw their world as a whirlpool of spheres and spirals making infinitely complex patterns of motion. Kepler’s planets revolved in elliptical orbits. Counter-Reformation churches were built over undulating floor plans. Their walls rippled like stage curtains. The decorative lavishness of their facades further activated the heavy masses of masonry and increased their rhythmic pulsation. Under their domes terra-cotta angels flew in orbits. The unyielding stone of the statuary finally rose off the ground and melted into a myriad of fluid forms. Paintings escaped from flat wall spaces and took flight to concave surfaces of the ceilings, where they could soar skyward and where more daring perspective effects were possible.
Baroque music also mirrored a moving universe. Its restless forms took on the color of this dynamic age, and its sound patterns floated freely through their tonal spaces freed from gravitational laws. No longer in bondage to religious ritual, to the dance, or to poetry, it was now completely emancipated. Of such ideas and materials was the image of this brave new baroque world constructed. (pp. 337-339)

Cunningham and Reich also give a perceptive overall view of the baroque period:

By about 1600, the intellectual and artistic movements of the Renaissance and Reformation had taken a new turn. Although the cultural activity of the next one hundred and fifty years was the natural outgrowth of earlier developments, the difference in spirit — already signaled by the middle of the 16th century — was striking. The chief agent of the new spirit was the Roman Catholic Church. After initial shock at the success of Protestantism, the Catholic Church decided that the best defense was a well-planned attack. Switching to the offensive, the Church relied in great measure on new religious orders like the Jesuits, founded as early as 1534, to lead the movement known as the Counter-Reformation. Putting behind them the anxieties of the past, the chief representatives of the Counter-Reformation gave voice to a renewed spirit of confidence in the universality of the Church and the authority of its teachings. They reinforced this position by vigorous missionary work throughout Europe and in the Americas and the Far East.

At the same time, Catholics at home were reminded of the power and splendor of their religion by a massive quantity of works of art commissioned to enforce the chief principles of Counter-Reformation teachings. The official position of the Church had been newly stated at the Council of Trent, which met sporadically from 1545 to 1563. Now it was the task of religious leaders and, under their guidance, of the artists to make this position known to the faithful. New emphasis was placed on clarity and directness. The impression of the Church’s triumphant resurgence was further reinforced by a new emphasis on material splendor and glory. In Rome itself the construction of a number of lavish churches was crowned by the completion at last of Saint Peter’s and the addition of Bernini’s spectacular piazza, or square, in front of it, while throughout Catholic Europe there developed a rich and ornate art that I could do justice to the new demands for expressive power and spectacle.

The term used to describe the new style, at first in derision but since the 19th century simply as a convenient label, is baroque. The word’s origins are obscure. It may be related to the Portuguese barroco, which means an irregularly shaped pearl, or perhaps to baro, an Italian term used to describe a complicated problem in medieval logic. In any case, baroque I came to be applied in general to anything elaborate and fanciful, in particular to the artistic style of the 17th and early 18th centuries.

Although strictly speaking baroque is a term applied only to the visual arts, it is frequently used to describe the entire cultural achievement of the age. To extend its use to literature, music, and even intellectual developments of the same period inevitably implies that all the arts of the Baroque period had certain characteristics in common. In fact, a close comparison between the visual arts, music, and literature of the 17th and early 18th centuries does reveal a number of shared ideas and attitudes. It is important to remember from the outset, however, that this artistic unity is by no means obvious. A first glance at the cultural range of the period actually reveals a quite astonishing variety of styles, developing individually in widely separated places and subject to very different political and social pressures.

In this respect, the Baroque period marks a significant break with the Renaissance, when Italy had been the center of virtually all artistic development. In spite of the impact of the Counter-Reformation, the Reformation itself had begun an irreversible process of decentralization. By the beginning of the 17th century, although Rome was still the artistic capital of Europe, important cultural changes were taking place elsewhere. The economic growth of countries like Holland and England, and the increasing power of France, produced a series of artistic styles that developed locally rather than being imported wholesale from south of the Alps. Throughout northern Europe the rise of the middle class continued to create a new public for the arts, which in turn affected the development of painting, architecture, and music. For the first time, European culture began to spread across the Atlantic, carried to the Americas by Counter-Reformation missionaries [manifested, for instance, in the Mexico City Cathedral of 1656-1717].

The much greater geographic spread of artistic achievement was accompanied by the creation of new artistic forms in response to new religious and social pressures. In music, for instance, the 17th century saw the
birth of opera and of new kinds of instrumental music, including works for orchestra like the concerto grosso. Painters continued to depict scenes from the Bible and from classical mythology, but they turned increasingly to other subjects including portraits, landscapes, and scenes from everyday life. Architects constructed private town houses and started to take an interest in civic planning instead of devoting themselves exclusively to churches and palaces.

A similar richness and variety can be found in the philosophical and scientific thought of the period, which managed temporarily to reconcile its own pursuit of scientific truth with traditional theological and political attitudes. By the end of the 17th century, however, the practical discoveries of science had begun to undermine long-accepted ideas and to lay the basis for the new skepticism that came to dominate the 18th century.

It would be unwise to look for broad general principles operating in an age of such dynamic and varied change. Nonetheless, to understand and appreciate the baroque spirit as it appears in the individual arts it is helpful to bear in mind the chief assumptions and preoccupations shared by most baroque artists. Whatever the medium in which they worked, baroque artists were united in their commitment to strong emotional statements, to psychological exploration, and to the invention of new and daring techniques.

Perhaps the most striking of these is the expression of intense emotions. In the Renaissance, artists had generally tried to achieve the calm balance and order they thought of as typically classical; in the Baroque period, artists were attracted by extremes of feeling. Sometimes these strong emotions were personal. Painters and poets alike tried to look into their own souls and reveal by color or word the depths of their own psychic and spiritual experience. More often, artists tried to convey intense religious emotions. In each case, far from avoiding painful or extremely emotional states as subjects, their works sought out and explored them.

The concern with emotion produced in its turn an interest in what came to be called psychology. Baroque artists tried to explain how and why their subjects felt as strongly as they did by representing their emotional states as vividly and analytically as possible. This is particularly evident in 17th-century opera and drama, where music in the one case and words in the other were used to depict the precise state of mind of the characters.

The desire to express the inexpressible required the invention of new techniques. As a result, baroque art put great emphasis on virtuosity. Sculptors and painters achieved astonishing realism in the way in which they handled their media. Stone was carved in such a way as to give the effect of thin, flowing drapery, while 17th-century painters found ways to reproduce complex effects of light and shade. Baroque writers often used elaborate imagery and complicated grammatical structure to express intense emotional states. In music, both composers and performers began to develop new virtuoso skills; composers in their ability to write works of greater and greater complexity, and performers in their ability to sing or play music in the new style. In fact, some pieces, like toccatas — free-form rhapsodies for keyboard — were principally intended to allow instrumentalists to demonstrate their technique, thus inaugurating the tradition of the virtuoso performer that reached a climax in the 19th century. (pp. 298-300)

Following are examples (with Notes and Questions) of Baroque literature in national literatures, given alphabetically by nation or language (American, British, French, German, Italian, Spanish).

**Examples of the Baroque in Literature: American**

While Anne Bradstreet (c. 1612 - 1672) is sometimes mentioned in connection with the Baroque in American literature, the pre-eminent figure is another great early American poet (and clergyman), Edward Taylor.

“Another Meditation at the same time” (c. 1683) by Edward Taylor (1642-1729)

Am I thy gold? Or purse, Lord, for thy wealth;  
Whether in mine, or mind refined for thee?  
I’m counted so, but count me o’er thyself  
Lest gold-washed face, and brass in heart I be.
I fear my touchstone touches when I try
Me, and my counted gold too overly.

Am I new minted by thy stamp indeed?
Mine eyes are dim; I cannot clearly see.
Be thou my spectacles that I may read
Thine image and inscription stamped on me.
If thy bright image do upon me stand
I am a golden angel* in thy hand.
Lord, make my soul thy plate*: thine image bright
Within the circle of the same enfoil.
And on its brims in golden letters write
Thy superscription in an holy style.
Then I shall be thy money, thou my hoard:
Let me thy angel be, be thou my Lord.

[*golden angel = British coin, showing archangel Michael slaying a dragon *plate = (1) a thin, flat piece of metal on which an engraving is to be cut; (2) dishes, utensils, etc., of silver or gold, collectively; (3) a dish or other container passed in churches for donations of money

1. How is the imagery of this poem by a minister (who wrote hundreds of such poems) surprising, extravagant, and clever? 2. How does a technological element show in the poem? 3. How is the poem make an interesting parallel to John Donne’s “Valediction: Forbidding Mourning”?]

Examples of the Baroque in Literature: British

British Prose: Baroque - Among British prose writers of the period, Sir Thomas Browne (1605-1682), a British physician, is cited, and his works Religio Medici (“Religion of a Physician”) and Hydriotaphia or Urn Burial (philosophical observations evoked by the discovery of old burial urns in a field) have fine examples of Baroque prose. Not enough recognized as Baroque is the masterpiece The Anatomy of Melancholy by scholar Robert Burton (1577-1640), whose monumental, sprawling study of what today would be called “depression” which revised and expanded five times, ever increasing its length and collection of English, Latin, and many other quotations and authorities (three volumes in the widely available edition).

British Poetry: Baroque - The most eminent and often-mentioned baroque poets in English literature are, alphabetically, Richard Crashaw (1612-1649), John Donne (1572-1631) [see his poems “Batter My Heart” and “The Flea” in Sayre2 (21.3, 21.4) or Sayre1 (25.2, 25.3); see also his “Valediction: Forbidding Mourning” on the general Humanities website], George Herbert (1593-1633) [see the document for Herbert on the Prinsky Humanities webpage], and John Milton (1608-1674) [see the first 124 lines of Paradise Lost, on the general Humanities website; see also selections from Paradise Lost in Sayre2 (24.5, 24.5a-b) or Sayre1 (28.5 and 28.5a-b).

Baroque British Poetry: Richard Crashaw (1612-1649) - Notes and Questions

“To the Infant Martyrs*” (1646) by Richard Crashaw

Go, smiling souls, your new-built cages* break:
In heaven you’ll learn to sing, ere here to speak*.
Nor let the milky fonts that bathe your thirst
Be your delay;
The place that calls you hence is, at the worst,
Milk all the way*.
**"martyrs": reference to the Holy Innocents, the infants murdered by Herod in an effort to destroy the newborn Jesus, who was honored as King of the Jews by the Magi (Matthew 2.16-18). **"cages": their bodies. **"here to speak": the word “infant” comes from the Latin *infans*, meaning “unable to speak.” **“Milk all the way”: the Milky Way will replace their mothers’ milk.]

“I Am the Door”* (1646) by Richard Crashaw

And now th’art set wide ope, the spear’s sad art,
Lo! hath unlocked thee at the very heart;
    He to himself* (I fear the worst)
    And his own hope
    Hath shut these doors of heaven, that durst
    Thus set them ope.

[“He to himself” = the soldier using the spear]

“On the Wounds of Our Crucified Lord” (1646) by Richard Crashaw

O these wakeful wounds of thine!
    Are they mouths? or are they eyes?
    Be they mouths, or be they eyne*,
    Each bleeding part some one supplies*.

Lo! a mouth, whose full-bloomed lips
    At too dear a rate are roses.
Lo! a bloodshot eye! that weeps
    And many a cruel tear discloses.

O thou that on this foot hast laid
    Many a kiss and many a tear,
    Now thou shalt have all repaid,
    Whatso’er thy charges were.

This foot hath got a mouth and lips
    To pay the sweet sum of thy kisses;
    To pay thy tears, an eye that weeps
    Instead of tears such gems as this is.

The difference only this appears
    (Nor can the change offend),
The debt is paid in ruby-tears
    Which thou in pearls didst lend.

[**“eyne”: an old plural form for “eyes”; “some one supplies”: each wound of Christ is either an eye or a mouth]

1. How is the imagery and figurative language in these poems ornate and extravagant? 2. How does some of the imagery or figurative language have a kind of technical component? 3. (3a) How might connections be seen between the imagery or figurative language in these poems and that of the book of Song of Songs (alternate titles are Song of Solomon, or Canticle of Canticles) in the Bible? (3b) How does the imagery or figurative language in these poems somewhat forecast the painting of Salvador Dali? (3c) What poem did Crashaw write about an art work depicting St. Teresa, and what Baroque elements may be found in both the poem and the art work as
described in Crashaw's poem?

Baroque British Poetry: John Donne (1572-1631) - Notes and Questions

For the poetry of John Donne, see his poems “Batter My Heart” and “The Flea” in Sayre2 (21.3, 21.4) or Sayre1 (25.2, 25.3); see also his “Valediction: Forbidding Mourning” on the general Humanities website. How is the imagery or figurative language in the poems ornate, extravagant, and sometimes technological?

John Donne’s “Batter My Heart” (also known as “Holy Sonnet XIV”) N&Q - 1. (1a) How does the figure of speech paradox pervade this sonnet? What does it help both in individual instances and cumulatively to convey about the religious issues in the poem? (1b) How are the extended metaphors of erotic sexuality and of warfare used both in the octave and sestet of the sonnet? How do the octave and sestet function as distinct parts? 2. (2a) How is one of the three components of the Trinity separately portrayed or embodied in the verbs or lines 2 and 4? (2b) How do the verbs of line 2 correspond, in parallel, with the verbs of line 4? (3a) How are the extended metaphors of sexuality and warfare used in an extravagant and surprising way? (3b) How does the imagery of this poem in some ways parallel Bernini’s statue The Ecstasy of St. Teresa?

John Donne’s “The Flea” N&Q - 1. (1a) How does each of the three stanzas mark a new stage or development in the little drama or plot or storyline of the poem’s action? (1b) How at each stage of the plot does the male speaker use ingenuity in attempting argumentation or persuasion aimed at seducing the listener or addressee of the poem? (1c) How does the speaker completely reverse his basis of argumentation -- but not his aim -- in the third stanza, relative to the first and second stanzas? (1d) In what ways does the poem have a humorous tone, including in the portrayal of the speaker? 2. How does the speaker use religious imagery and vocabulary in arguing or attempting persuasion of something very secular?

John Donne’s “Valediction: Forbidding Mourning” N&Q - 1. This poem has some of the most famous “metaphysical” imagery of all poetry, the kind of imagery that elicited the censure of British readers and critics in the Restoration and Eighteenth century, including from critic, poet, and essayist Dr. Samuel Johnson. Why would Dr. Johnson and some other readers -- especially in the Age of Reason -- not approve of the metaphor or conceit Donne uses for the two lovers in the sixth quatrain and especially the extended metaphor or conceit Donne uses for the two lovers in the seventh through ninth quatrains? 2. In this poem, how do general motifs in Donne's poetry occur of (a) religious imagery or vocabulary applied to romantic love, (b) microcosm vs. macrocosm, and (c) the special mathematics of John Donne (1 + 1 = 1 ; or 2 = 1)?

Baroque British Poetry: George Herbert (1593-1633) - Notes and Questions

George Herbert’s poems, gathered in his main collection, The Temple, contain main Baroque elements: (a) ornateness -- in style, wordplay, and variety of poetic forms; (b) the dramatic -- e.g., the dramatic monologue in “The Collar,” intensity and change in the lyric poems (e.g., from sad to joyous), the “shaped poems” (also called “picture poems,” “carmen figuratum,” “pattern poems,” “figure poems”) which have pictorial pictures embodied in the poem; (c) the dynamic -- e.g., the dramatic monologue in “The Collar,” intensity and change in the lyric poems; (d) strong emotions (e.g., anger, anguish, piety, religious love); (e) monumentality -- 162 poems in The Temple (plus Preface, the “Church Porch,” and Codas, “The Church Militant” and “L'Envoy”). The poem also contains prevalent references to visual art, including the shaped poems, and music (much musical terminology in the poems, relating to the poems’ content).

Baroque British Poetry: John Milton (1608-1674) - Notes and Questions

Milton’s Paradise Lost (and some of his other poems, as noted in various books about the Baroque in literature, or books about the Baroque in Milton’s writing, prose as well as poetry) manifests several elements of the Baroque in art or music: (a) gorgeous, ornate language -- including word choice (e.g., Latinism, ornate and prevalent
allusions, prevalent punning), figurative language (epic similes, metaphors, many other figures of speech),
grammar (anastrophe, length of sentences) (b) related to tenebrism and chiaroscuro are repeated light-dark
contrasts and references in a prevalent motif throughout the work (starting with how Hell is illuminated, as noted
in Book 1, in one of the most famous oxymorons in literature: “darkness visible”); (c) the work is extremely
dynamic -- as in Satan’s journey to escape from hell and his reconnoitering of planet earth from space (Book 1) or,
the War in Heaven (Book 6); (d) the work is extremely dramatic -- e.g., the debate in Pandemonium about what
to do (Bk 1), the drama of the fall of Adam and Eve (Book 9); also, suspenseful moments (e.g., in Bk 1 -- who will
volunteer to break out of Hell and scout? in Bk 3 -- who from the heavenly host will volunteer to sacrifice for
humanity?), Satan’s soliloquies, the Temptation and Fall in Bk 9; (e) the work contains intense emotions -- e.g.,
Satan’s rebelliousness and anguish, Adam’s and Eve’s romantic love; (f) the work contains strong contrasts -- e.g.,
light vs. dark, good vs. evil, Satan vs. Jesus, male (Adam) vs. female (Eve); (g) like many Baroque paintings and
sculptures, Milton’s epic poem has an open form -- the very end of book with Adam & Eve leaving (Book 12), the
periodic openings out into much later events (after Genesis 1-3) (Book 12); (h) the work is monumental (like some
Baroque works of art and music), having twelve books and 10,000 or so lines, and also a sense of spaciousness; (i)
the work in some sense embodies the musical concerto grosso form (one solo instrument vs. the orchestra), as
found in Satan vs. the other demons in Book 1, Jesus vs. the other angels in Book 3, Abdiel vs. the rebel angels in
Book 5. The work also contains descriptions of Baroque art (St. Peter’s cathedral, which Pandemonium resembles
in the construction, in Books 1-2) as well as music (detailed allusion to organ music in Book 1 in the construction of
Pandemonium).

Examples of the Baroque in Literature: French

French poets cited as Baroque would include Jean Bertaut (1552 - 1611), Jean de La Ceppede (1550? - 1622), Jean-
Baptiste Chassignet (1578? - 1635?), Agrippa D’Aubigne (1552 - 1630), Girard de Saint-Amant ( 1594 - 1661), Jean
de Sponde (1557 - 1595), and Theophile de Viau (1590 - 1626).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Cette rouge suer” by Jean de la Ceppede (1550? - 1622)</th>
<th>“This Red Sweat Slowly Falling” by Jean de la Ceppede</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cette rouge suer goutte a goutte roulante Du corps de cet Athlete en ce rude combat Peut estre comparee a cette eau douce et lente Qui la sainte montagne en silence rebat</td>
<td>This red sweat slowly falling drop by drop From the body, locked in strife, of this Athlete, Could be compared to the water slow and sweet That silently flowed from the sacred mountain’s slope.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L’aveugle-nay (qui mit tous les siens en debat Pour ses yeux) fut lave et cette eau doux oulante Et dans le chaud lavoir de cette onde sanglante Toute l’aveugle race en liberte s’esbat.</td>
<td>The man born blind who put his goods at stake To gain his eyes, was washed in that sweet flood, And in the warm bath of this wave of blood The blinded race its comfort free doth take.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Et l’un, et l’autre bain ont redonne la veue. Siloe du pouvoir don’t le Christ la pourveue; Et cettuy-cy de sang de son propre pouvoir. Aussi ce rare sang est la substance mesme De son coeur, qui pour faire a nuict ce cher lavoir Fond comme cire au feu de son amour extreme.</td>
<td>Both this and the other bath have given sight: Siloam indeed from Christ hath borrowed might, But this bath of blood of his own power doth heal. Thus is this blood the very substance rare Of his heart, which all night long this bath to fill Melts like wax in his love’s surpassing fire.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examples of the Baroque in Literature: German
German poets cited as Baroque would include Paul Fleming (1609 - 1640), Andreas Gryphius (1616 - 1664), Christian Hofmann von Hofmannswaldau (1617 - 1679), Martin Opitz (1597 - 1639), Jacobus Revius (1586 - 1658), and Friedrich von Spee (1591 - 1635).

\[ \text{“Andacht” by Paul Fleming (1609 - 1640)} \]

Ich lebe. Doch nicht ich. Derselbe lebt in mir,
Der mir durch seinen Todt das Lebel bringt herfur,
Mein Leiben war sein Todt, sein Todt war mir mein Leben,
Nur geb-ich wieder Ihm, was Er mir hat gegeben.
Er lebt durch meinen Todt. Mir sterb’ich täglich ab.
Der Leib, mein Irdnes Theil, der ist der Seelen Grab.
Er lebt nur auff den schein. Wer ewig nicht wil sterben.
Der muss hier in der Zeit verwesen und verderben,
Weil er noch sterben kan. Der Todt, der Geistlich heisst,
Der ist als denn zu spat, wann uns sein Freund hinreisst,
Der unsern Leib bringt um. HERR, gieb mir die Genade.
Ich lebe; doch nicht ich, sondern der andre lebt mir.
Ich lasse mich gantz dir.
Ich wil nicht meine seyn. Nim mich nur, gieb dich mir.

\[ \text{“Devotion” by Paul Fleming} \]

I live; yet ’tis not I. He lives in me,
Who through his death my life did fast decree.
My life to him was death, his death my life,
Now give I him again what once he gave,
Through the death of me he lives. I live each day,
The grave of my body shuts my soul away;
It only seems to live. Who will not die
Must here in time decay and waste and sigh,
While yet he can, die. The spirit’s death
Comes then too late, when his friend has robb’d our breath
And laid our body low. Lord, give me grace,
That my body’s use may not my soul disgrace.
My Everything, my Nought, my Death, my Life
I have in me. If you help’st I am safe.
Nor will, nor may, nor can I judge my needs;
That leave I thee, for thou alone hast deeds;
But wishes I. To thee then give I me.
I will not be mine. Only take me; give me thee.

1. What parallels can be seen between this poem and John Donne’s poem “Batter my heart”?

\[ \text{“Uber die Geburt Jesu” by Andreas Gryphius (1616 - 1664)} \]

Nacht, mehr denn lichte Nacht! Nacht, lichter als der Tag,
Nacht, heller als die Sonn’, in der das Licht geboren,
Das Gott, der Licht wohnhaftig, ihm erkoren:
O Nacht, die alle Nacht’ und Tage trozten mag!

O freudenreiche Nacht, in welcher Ach und Klag,
Und Finsternuss, und was sich auff die Welt verschworen
Und Furcht und Hollen-Angst und Schrecken ward verloren.
Der Himmel bricht! doch fällt numehr kein Donnerschlag.

Der Zeit und Nachte Schuff, ist diese Nacht ankommen!
Und hat das Recht der Zeit, und Fleisch an sich genommen!
Und unser Fleisch und Zeit der Ewigkeit vermass.
Der Jammer trube Nacht, die schwarze Nacht der Sunden
Dess Grabes Dunkelheit, muss durch die Nacht verschwinnden.
Nacht lichter als der Tag; Nacht mehr denn lichte Nacht!

\[ \text{“On the Birth of Jesus” by Andreas Gryphius} \]

Night more than any light! Night more than day!
Night brighter than the sun where light is born;
Which God, who dwells in light, chose as his own!
O Night which days and nights all comfort may!

O Night of joy where all lament and pain
And darkness grim and all to earth betrayed
And fear of Hell and horror are allayed!
Though Heaven opes, no thunder falls amain.

Who made all days and nights this day is come,
And taken weights of time and flesh to him,
And rendered flesh and time forever bright.
The wretched night, the dark night of our sins,
The darkness of the grave, to nought returns.
Night more than day! Night more than any light!

1. How are the imagery and figurative language ornate and extravagant in this poem? 2. How is the figure of speech paradox used pervasively? 3. How is strong contrast of light and dark (cf. tenebrism or chiaroscuro in the visual arts) used thematically?
Examples of the Baroque in Literature: Italian

Italian poets cited as Baroque would include Giuseppe Artaile (1628 - 1679), Tommaso Campanella (1568 - 1639), Giambattista Marino (1569 - 1625), Giovan Leone Sempronio, and Torquato Tasso. Pre-eminent among these in the Baroque is Marino, whose influence helped create a movement in imitation of his poetry designated “Marinism.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Durante il bagno” by Giambattista Marino (1569 - 1625)</th>
<th>“During the Bath” by Giambattista Marino</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sovra basi d’argento in conca d’oro io vidi due colonne alabastrine dentro linfe odorate e cristalline franger di perle un candido tesoro.</td>
<td>On a silver base, within a shell of gold, I saw two alabaster pillars rise, While perfumed crystal floods revealed the prize Of purest pearl a treasure manifold.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-- O -- dissi -- del mio mal posa e ristoro di natura e d’amor mete divine, stabilitate per l-ultimo confine ne l’ocean de le dolcezze loro;</td>
<td>I said, “Oh designed solace of my pain, Object divine of nature and of love, From the ocean of your sweetness do not move, As its final limits still you must remain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fossi Alcide novel, che i miei trofei dove mai non giungesse uman desio, trasplantandovisi in braccio erger vorrei; o stringer, qual Sanson, vi potess’io che col vostro cader, dolce darei tomba a la Morte, e morte al dolor mio!</td>
<td>Were I a new Alcides* I should show [*= Hercules] Erect my standard where until this morrow No man’s desire has reached; or could I borrow The strength of Samson, I should overthrow Those columns, which in falling would bestow A fragrant tomb to Death, death to my sorrow.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“La Bella Schiava” by Giambattista Marino (1569 - 1625)</th>
<th>“The Beautiful Slave” by Giambattista Marino</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nera si, ma se ‘bella, o di natura fra le belle d’amor leggiadro mostro; fosca e l’alba appo te, perde e s’oscura presso l’ebeno tuo l’avorio e l’ostro Or quando, or dove il mondo antico o il nostro vide si viva mai, senti si pura o luce uscir di tenebroso ichiostro o di spento carbon nascere asura? Serva de chi m’e serva, ecco dh’avolto porto di bruno laccio il core intorno, che per candida man non fia mai scioltio. La’ve piu arde, o Sol, sol per tuo scorno un sole e nato; un sol, che nel bel volto porta la notte, ed ha negli occhi il giorno.</td>
<td>Black you are, yet beautiful, of nature a lovely marvel ’midst love’s beauties fair. Dark is the dawn compared to you; beside your ebony and purple ivory dims. Now when, now where did our world or the old so vivid light to flow from murky ink ever behold, or feel so pure a fire to which extinguished carbon did give birth? A servant of my servant, see, I bear my heart, all twisted ‘round with cords of brown, which ne’er can loosened be by snow-white hand. There where, O Sun, you brighter burn, a Sun is born to bear you solely scorn; a Sun whose face the Night, whose eyes the Day convey.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. How does this poem parallel Shakespeare’s Sonnet 130 “My Mistress’ Eyes Are Nothing Like the Sun”?

Examples of the Baroque in Literature: Spanish

Poets usually named in connection with the Spanish baroque are, chronologically, Luis de Gongora (1561 - 1627), Lope de Vega (1562 - 1635), Juan de Arguijo (1567 - 1623), Francisco de Medrano (1570 - 1607), Rodrigo Caro
(1573 - 1647), Pedro Espinosa (1578 - 1650), Francisco de Quevedo (1580 - 1645), Francisco de Rioja (ca. 1583 - 1659), Esteban Manuel de Villegas (ca. 1589 - 1669), and Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz (1651 - 1695).

Of these poets, Gongora is most frequently mentioned, his popularity at the time having led to a movement in imitation of his poetry known as “gongorism.” Lope de Vega is better known as a dramatist, and his dramas have elements of the Baroque. Also often mentioned in connection with the Baroque are Quevedo and Sor Juana.

“Mientras por competir con tu cabello” by Luis de Gongora (1561 - 1627)

Mientras por competir con tu cabello
oro brundo e Sol relumbra en vano,
mientras con menosprecio en medio el ilano
mira tu blanca frente el lilio bello;

mientras a cada labio, por cogello,
siguen mas ojos que al clavel temprano,
y mientras triunfa con desden lozano
de el luciente cristal tu gentil cuello;

goza cuello, cabello, labio y frente,
a antes que lo fue en tu edad dorada
oro, lilio, clavel, cristal luciente

no solo en plata o viola troncada
se vuelva, mas tu y ello juntamente
en tierra, en humo, en polvo, en sombra, en nada.

“While in a Competition with Your Hair” by Luis de Gongora

While in a competition with your hair
the sun, like burnished gold, must gleam in vain,
while your white forehead contemplates with scorn
the lovely lily growing ’midst the plain;

while more eyes follow each lip, in pursuit,
than early-blossoming carnations seek,
and while with proud disdain your gentle neck
o’er lucent crystal triumphs easily,

take pleasure in your forehead, neck, hair, lip
before what had been in your golden age
carnation, lucent crystal, lily, gold,

not only silver or plucked violet
become, but you and it together turn
into earth, smoke, dust, shadow, nothingness.

“Reconocimiento propio, y ruego piadoso antes de comulgar” by Francisco de Quevedo (1580 - 1645)

Pues hoy pretend seria tu monumento,
Porque me resucites del pecado,
Habitame de gracia renovado
El hombre antiguo en ciego perdimiento.

Sino retrataras tu nacimiento
En la nieve de un animo obstinado,
Y en corazón pesebre acompañado
De brutos apetitos, que en mi siento.

Hoy te entierras en mi, siervo villano,
Sepulcro a tanto huesped vil y estrecho,
Indigno de tu Cuerpo soberano.
Tierra te cubre en mi de tierra hecho:
La conciencia me sirve de gusano:
Marmol para cubrirte da mi pecho.

“Prayer before Communion” by Francisco de Quevedo

Since I would be today thy monument
So that from sin thou may’st my soul revive,
Inhabit me, I beg, and make alive
My former self, from blind imposinment.

If not, thou’lt trace again thy birth so low
In the cold snow of my stubborn willful mind,
And in my heart a manger thou shalt find,
Surrounded by the bestial lusts I know.

I inter thee in myself, a wretched slave,
For so much grace a sepulchre too vile,
Unworthy all to hold thy body brave.
I cover thee in me, made out of soil,
Wherein I living worms of conscience have:
To cover thee, Oh make me marble whole!
Read and study the poem by Sor Juana in Sayre “To Her Self Portrait” (27.4 in Sayre; 23.4 in Sayre2). See also the several poems in translation by Sor Juana included on the general Humanities website. Following are the original version of the poem in Sayre, along with translations other than the one (by Willis Barnstone) included in Sayre.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original</th>
<th>Translation 1</th>
<th>Translation 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;A su retrato&quot; by Sor Juana (1651 - 1695)</td>
<td>&quot;On Her Portrait&quot; (trans. Kate Flores)</td>
<td>&quot;This coloured counterfeit&quot; (trans. Samuel Beckett)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Este que ves, engano colorido, que del arte ostentando los primores, con falsos silogismos de colores es cauteloso engano del sentido; este, en quien la lisonja ha pretendido excusar de los anos los horrores, y venciendo del tiempo los rigores triunfar de la vejez y del olvido, es un vano artificio del cuidado, es una flor al viento delicada, es un resguardo inutil para el hado: es una necia diligencia errada, es un afan caduco y, bien mirado, es cadaver, es pozo, es sombra, es nada.</td>
<td>What here you see in deceiving tints, Vaunting its crafty artistry In specious syllogisms of color, Is a discreet delusion of the sense; This which flattery would fain pretend Could expite the horrors of the years, The cruelties of time obliterate, And triumph over age and nothingness, ‘Tis but of apprehensiveness a futile artifice, ‘Tis but a brittle blossom on the wind, ‘Tis against fate an unavailing wall, ‘Tis merely a folly diligently mistaken, ‘Tis merely a senile ardor, and truly seen ‘Tis a corpse, dust, shadow, nothing at all.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| "This coloured counterfeit" (trans. Samuel Beckett) | "She Attempts to Minimize the Praise Occasioned by a Portrait of Herself Inscribed by Truth -- Which She Calls Ardor" (trans. Margaret Peden) | "She Attempts to Minimize the Praise Occasioned by a Portrait of Herself Inscribed by Truth -- Which She Calls Ardor" (trans. Margaret Peden) |}

1. How do the various translations (including Barstone’s in Sayre) of Sor Juana’s sonnet compare and contrast with each other?
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