

## **Cinematic Neo-Mannerism or Neo-Baroque? Deleuze and Daney**

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### **Abstract**

It has often been argued that the concept of neo-baroque provides a more concrete content to our historical period than that of postmodernism. The more scarce revalidations of the concept of mannerism, by contrast, are usually based on the assumption that postmodernism relates to modernism in the same way as mannerism to Renaissance classicism. Instead, with Gilles Deleuze I argue that far from being the sign of impotence in the face of true creativity, mannerism expresses an a-historical struggle for formal renewal from within any classical Style. Moreover, it does so to a greater extent than the baroque. If mannerism constitutes the aesthetic potential of the baroque, then the baroque in itself is more adequately defined by its social or religious function. Drawing on film critic Serge Daney, I develop this distinction into a reinterpretation and revaluation of the rise of cinematic 'postmodernism' in the 1980s and 1990s.

### **Résumé**

Un grand nombre de publications défend l'idée que le concept du néobaroque, plutôt que celui du post-modernisme, offre un cadre concret pour décrire notre période historique. Cependant, les revalidations beaucoup plus rares du concept de maniérisme sont souvent basées sur l'idée que le post-modernisme se rapporte au modernisme de la même manière que le maniérisme se rapporte au classicisme de la Renaissance. Par contre, je voudrais, dans la lignée de Gilles Deleuze, défendre l'idée que le maniérisme, plutôt que d'être un signe d'impotence à la lumière de la véritable créativité, est l'expression d'une lutte a-historique pour un renouvellement formel à l'intérieur de tout style dit classique. Alors que le maniérisme constitue le potentiel esthétique du baroque, le baroque même serait plutôt définie par sa fonction sociale et religieuse. En prenant les travaux de Serge Daney comme point de départ, je prends cette distinction comme point d'appui pour une ré-évaluation du cinéma postmoderne des années 80 et 90.

**Key words:** baroque, mannerism, postmodernism, cinema, cliché's

It has often been argued that the return of the baroque is the sign of our time. The concept of neo-baroque would provide a more concrete content to our historical period than the more ideological concept of postmodernism. This was perhaps also Gilles Deleuze's inspiration in *The Fold. Leibniz and the Baroque*, one of the classics in neo-baroque studies, when he argued that in the second half of the twentieth century, with composers such as Cage or Berio and artists ranging from Dubuffet to Rauschenberg, 'we have a new baroque and a neo-leibnizianism' (Deleuze 1993: 136). By contrast, the far more scarce attempts to give a contemporary revalidation of the concept of mannerism are usually based on the assumption that postmodernism relates to modernism in the same way as mannerism to Renaissance classicism. According to Robert Venturi, mannerism, like postmodernism, is rich in its contradictory dimensions, in its paradoxical alliances, in its multiple evolutions, to such an extent that its mobility becomes its very essence. Today as in the 16<sup>th</sup> century we discover in art and literature many mannerist traits: a fervent erudition and a sharp critical spirit; a painful melancholy, but often crafted upon the rhythm and love for life, willing to take great risks; an homage to intelligence and imagination whilst also cultivating the patient work of the hand and genius in their strangeness; the play of surfaces and loss of interpretation; the replacement of emotion with libidinal energies; the splintering of subjectivity etcetera.<sup>1</sup> (Venturi & Scott Brown 2004, esp. 73-104 and 212-7) What this short inventory makes clear, however, is that mannerism entails more than its negative connotation of cheap pastiche and excessive stylization in the margins of a greater, more classical style. In what follows, I argue that contrary to being the sign of impotence in the face of true creativity, mannerism expresses an a-historical struggle for formal renewal from within any classical Style, no matter whether renaissance or modernist. Moreover, it does so to a far greater extent than the baroque. My first step is therefore to separate the mannerist moment in visual art from that of the baroque. Inspired by the works of Deleuze, I argue that mannerism constitutes the aesthetic potential of the baroque, whereas the baroque in itself is more adequately defined by its social or religious function. Subsequently, I will reinterpret and reevaluate the rise of so-called 'postmodernism' in the 1980s by differentiating a cinematic 'neo-mannerism' from the more customary 'neo-baroque' through an exploration of the resonances between the writings of film critic Serge Daney and Deleuze's books on cinema.

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<sup>1</sup> In fact, modernist architects such as Le Corbusier, Wittkower and Colin Rowe have already recognized a certain mannerism in their own projects. Cf. Delbeke 2010.

### **What is Mannerism?**

Although the notion of mannerism recurs in several of Deleuze's writings, it is never developed in any systematic way. Even in *The Fold*, mannerism stays entirely subordinate to 'its working relation (*rapport opératoire*) with the baroque' (Deleuze 1993: 36-7). Yet a concept of mannerism can be separated from the baroque through a close-reading of key passages in Deleuze's work on visual art, especially in *Francis Bacon. The Logic of Sensation* and *The Fold*. Comparing Deleuze's notion of mannerism in his discussion of Francis Bacon to his concept of the Baroque, it seems that, whilst the baroque pushes the anti-classical and revolutionary 'catastrophe' of mannerism to the extreme, it simultaneously and paradoxically forms a conservative and restorative reaction to it.

In art history, mannerism generally refers to European art of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, situated chronologically between Renaissance classicism and the early baroque, with firm roots in the former and partly overlapping with the latter. Although they usually set out from the imitation of natural models and previous masters, mannerists tend to subordinate this imitation to a spiritual quest for intensification and renewal based on a confrontation between nature and artistic creativity. It is because of this confrontation that modern expressionism discovered in mannerism an alternative to the opposition between academic realism on the one hand and impressionistic idealism on the other. The expressionists recognized in mannerism a spiritual catastrophe similar to that of their own time to the extent that mannerism coincided with the first great crisis of capitalism, which radically shuffled the conditions for artistic creativity. Given an imposing classicism that was mastered with great virtuosity, the question becomes how the artist can overcome the mere imitation of classical examples and ultimately boils down to the subjectivating question of 'what does it mean to have an idea?' instead of 'what is objectively given in nature'?

For Deleuze, too, this is the artistic problem par excellence, on the condition that the aesthetic idea is never given on beforehand but must be invented and developed according to a subjective 'manner'. Mannerist artists are 'visionaries' of ideas, he writes, provided that these are 'treated like potentials already *engaged* in one mode of expression or another and inseparable from the mode of expression, such that I cannot say that I have an idea in general.' (Deleuze 2006: 312) This radically undermines the classical hierarchy between the stage of conception and

the stage of execution. For whereas in classical representation the potential idea slumbering in a given material is first 'seen' by the eye of the intellect and then realized in manual work, mannerism – the Italian *maniera* deriving from *mano*, hand – sets up a 'frenetic zone in which the hand is no longer guided by the eye and is forced upon sight like another will' (Deleuze 2004: 137). Mannerism therefore consists of a 'manual intrusion' (Deleuze 2004: 138) in the cerebral codes that organize the affective and signifying regime of the work of art.

Take religion. At the same time that the Council of Trent issued explicit instructions for Counter-Reformatory art, mannerism utilizes figurative depictions in its quest to incarnate a more intense spiritual presence than classicism was capable of and in this way invents 'a properly pictorial atheism' (Deleuze 2004: 9). One of Deleuze's favourite examples in painting is El Greco's *The Burial of Count Orgaz* (1562), which is divided between, on the lower half, 'a figuration or narration that represents the burial of the Count' and, on the upper half, 'a wild liberation, a total emancipation: the Figures are lifted up and elongated, refined without measure, outside all constraint.' (Deleuze 2004: 9) Content to refer to the existing code of the Church, the painting transforms spirituality into a 'will to art' that lies not in the imitation of nature or the communication of a sacred narrative, but in the expressive *maniera* that makes the figures enter directly into an order of celestial sensations. It is precisely this mannerist paradox of an 'atheist spirituality' that Deleuze rediscovers in Bacon's crucifixions and popes, where the residues of figuration still form an important framework. It is true that El Greco was a deeply religious painter, whereas Bacon was an uncompromising atheist. But just as Bacon had to free the canvas from the 'natural' regime of photographic clichés, the mannerists needed to free their figures from their representational, ecclesiastical function. (Deleuze 2004: 10)

Or take the classical regime of optic space. Following Aloïs Riegl and Wilhelm Worringer, Deleuze defines classical representation by the aesthetic laws that force sensation into molds that serve the perfection of optical contours in central linear perspective, which in turn 'first of all expresses the organic life of man as subject.' (Deleuze 2004: 125-6) A 'technical plane of composition' (Deleuze & Guattari 1994: 193) projects sensation onto a neutral surface of which the material itself seems to include the mathematical rules of perspective, such that the contour is no longer the common limit of foreground and background on a single plane but becomes 'the self-limitation of the form' (Deleuze 2004: 125). By contrast, mannerism denaturalizes the organic regime of classicism by setting up a 'haptic' space in which there is

only a 'shallow depth' or an almost sculptural 'thickness' that simultaneously separates and intertwines foreground and background. In Parmigianino's *Madonna dal Collo Lungo* (1534-50), a manual intrusion decodes optical depth by manipulating the pre-pictorial order of 'figurative probabilities' into 'free manual traits' (Deleuze 2004: 98) that reorient the visual whole: '*manipulated chance*, as opposed to *conceived* or *seen probabilities*.' (Deleuze 2004: 94) Starting from any 'operative set of traits and color patches, of lines and zones' (Deleuze 2004: 101-2), mannerist painting thus lays out a properly artistic or 'aesthetic plane of composition' on which 'it is no longer sensation that is realized in the material *but the material that passes into sensation*.' (Deleuze & Guattari 1994: 194)

The most striking consequence of these mannerist breaks with representation is deformation. As the hand is no longer dominated by the eye, contours are forced into relation with all kinds of abstract 'forces of pressure, dilation, contraction, flattening, and elongation' (Deleuze 2004: 58). Yet even if the figures now find themselves in an intimate embrace with the ground, they cannot do without a certain cohesion and form. Deleuze draws an analogy between Michelangelo and Bacon, who are both mannerist insofar as they escape from classical figuration neither through geometric abstraction nor through the informal, but through the isolation of the 'Figure' from its 'natural' element of figuration and narration without completely disrupting it. Bacon's studies after Velazquez, for example, are neither formless distortions of a well-formed original nor merely spectacular transformations from the spasm to the smile. Instead, they are instantaneous deformations of sensation irreducible to all optical resemblance and cultural convention. As Bacon tells David Sylvester, painting is about expressing the event of 'the scream more than the horror' (Deleuze 2004: 34). If his deformations may sometimes seem cruel and sensational, this has nothing to do therefore with the visual representation of some psychological content, but with the 'violence of sensation'. Through painting, the eye itself attains a haptic function or close vision and partakes in a 'body without organs': the body of a haptic spirituality that precedes the extended body or the organism but that is traversed by a myriad of unformed vital intensities. Bacon's bodies are 'hysteric' bodies with 'eyes all over' (Deleuze 2004: 52), with each eye corresponding only to a 'temporary and provisional presence' (Deleuze 2004: 48), whilst manner or style is precisely the exclusively self-referential unity of the material composition of such an 'excessive presence, the identity of an already-there and an always-delayed' beyond all actual figuration.

The great achievement of mannerist deformation is thus that it renders time or becoming visible in painting – not just a time that flows and can be narrated as such, but also one that is always out of step, enduring and coexisting with other times in an open ‘Whole which is constantly becoming’ (Deleuze 1986: 82; Deleuze 2004: 48). If there is still an optical resemblance between the strained postures of Michelangelo’s figures or Bacon’s spasmodic distortions on the one hand and natural images on the other, this is therefore no longer preformed by an optical model, but only the effect of a ‘variable and continuous mold’, of a manual ‘modulation’ of plastic forces. (Deleuze 2004: 97-8) For just as becoming is never an imitation, resemblance neither has a reference nor does it lack one. (Deleuze 1993: 95) Rather, it is always an ‘analogical expression’, ‘a resemblance produced with accidental and non-resembling means’ (Deleuze 2004: 98, 115, 158). This irreducibility of pictorial manner or style to any actual figuration or resemblance cannot be emphasized enough as mannerist procedures of deformation are usually judged by art historians in the pejorative sense of *manierato*, that is, either as unnecessary artificial or arty deviations from some classical model suggestive of effortless accomplishments (*sprezzatura*) or as angst-ridden indulgences in the grotesque. By contrast, Deleuze emphasizes that mannerism is particularly true-to-life, not to our lived experience, but to the vital becomings underneath. It is ‘a kind of declaration of faith in life’ (Deleuze 2004: 61, 43, 130).

### **Distinguishing Mannerism and Baroque**

Each of the main components of the Deleuzian concept of mannerism as developed in *The Logic of Sensation* – the manual intrusion, the renewal of spirituality, haptic space, the Figure as a specific escape from figuration, the hysteric body, the realism of deformation – returns in his discussion of the baroque. But there mannerism no longer appears as an independent style, as if it lacked sufficient unity to be considered on its own. My thesis, however, is that its fragmentary nature is precisely what enables us to discover in mannerism, and not in the baroque, a true precursor to contemporary art.

Deleuze opens *The Fold* by asserting that ‘[t]he baroque refers not to an essence but rather to an operative function, to a trait.’ (Deleuze 1993: 3) This operative function is that of the fold continued to infinity. It is only in the baroque that the fold exceeds the replication of the contours of a finite body and becomes itself constitutive of form instead of being a mere attribute of

something that is folded. The fold is therefore the manual or haptic element that conditions the baroque work of art, like the veins in marble or the differentials between light and dark in oil paint. Just as in the figural painting of Bacon deformation does not deny form, the baroque art of the fold is an ‘informal art par excellence ... but informal is not a negation of the form’ (Deleuze 1993: 35, translation modified). Rather, baroque abstraction is precisely what ‘posits form as folded’, since baroque materials cannot be worked but through the folds they already hold. This means that forms are no longer forms of content, but forms of expression. The expressive autonomy of the fold endows the material with the capacity to become expressive of itself and exceed the content that is expressed in it. Bernini doesn’t sculpt a body covered over with a wrinkled coat, but bends a matter of variable density or texture and distils from it a body that is lost in a drapery of velour. Moreover, there is an intermedial continuity that turns each medium into the content of another medium. Just as Michelangelo played with the ‘double function’ (Rudolf Wittkower) of sculpture and architecture in the *Biblioteca Laurenziana* (1571), Bernini’s churches and *palazzi* are total works of art in which painting, sculpture and architecture are successively folded into one another on a shared plane of composition. As in mannerism, the work of art thus refers to an infinite sequence of aberrant durations that are virtually caught up in a wider, abstract movement: ‘[t]he object is manneristic, not essentializing: it becomes an event.’ (Deleuze 1993: 19)

But then how does Deleuze distinguish mannerism from the baroque? Perhaps an answer can be found when he speaks of ‘the working relation (*l’identité opératoire*) of the baroque and the fold’ (Deleuze 1993: 34). This indicates that mannerism relates to the baroque in the same way as the fold. To this must be added that Deleuze concludes his chapter on the baroque by observing that ‘[t]he paradigm becomes “mannerist,” and proceeds to a formal deduction of the fold.’ (Deleuze 1993: 38) Folding, in other words, is the manner in which the baroque proceeds. Yet if the Baroque receives its operative identity with the fold, this doesn’t necessarily go for mannerism. Deleuze gives numerous other (Egyptian, Byzantine, gothic) examples of manual intrusions that deform the classical regime of optical contours and perspective. More importantly, if the fold is the distinguishing trait of the baroque, this is due to a difference in aim. For whereas the material and spiritual crisis of the Renaissance forces the paradigm to become mannerist, the baroque uses this paradigm for the ‘schizophrenic reconstruction’ of a regime of form and spirituality ‘on another stage’ (Deleuze 1993: 68). According to those art historians who

approach mannerism from a structurally anti-classicist point of view, there is a strong heretic tendency in mannerism which is on a par with the baroque attempt to reimpose a unitary sense and composed order upon the world. In the terms of Wylie Sypher, the baroque answer to mannerist 'disintegration' was a 'reintegration' by means of an overwhelming magniloquence that disarms the violence of sensation and restores it to the violence of the figurative spectacle. (Sypher 1955: 183-5, 34) In a similar fashion, what Deleuze recognizes in Leibniz is the ultimate attempt to come to terms with a mannerist world. If the paradigm is mannerist, then 'the extreme specificity of the baroque' (Deleuze 1993: 34) must be the 'formal deduction' of the fold from the *theatrum naturae et artis* that is the world as it is composed by God. Indeed, baroque folding is inseparable from a *Hang zum Gesamtkunstwerk* that guarantees the unity of a Whole. Like Bernini's ideal of *bel composto*, the harmonious unity of various media, Leibniz's demand for pre-established harmony is what makes the ambition of the baroque surpass that of mannerism. Instead of material contingencies, the baroque seeks material reassurances, first and foremost by theologically sanctioning the veneration of images and the piety of the body. The fold is thus paradigmatic for the *ex cathedra* submission of the Counter-Reformation to the uncertainties and flexibilities of the mannerist world. It is indeed the operative unity of the baroque, but the baroque remains merely parasitical on mannerism's will to art. Folding is precisely the manner in which the baroque solves local dissonances and reinstalls a meaningful totality that prevails over the folds of which it is composed.

This pattern of a mannerist crisis in art that tends to be neutralized or sublimated by baroque over-coding has recurred several times in the history of art. It has often been argued, however, that today, after the total aestheticization of politics and the total politicization of art, the relevance of the total work of art can only lie in its failure, where it reveals its principal openness, its unformed interstices, and its fragmentary nature. We should wonder therefore if, instead of interpreting the recent artistic past in terms of a 'neo-baroque', it might henceforth not be more adequate to speak of a 'neo-mannerism'. At the very least, it seems that we will need both concepts and understand each in its irreducibility to the other.

### **Daney: Mannerism and Baroque in Cinema**

This appears to have already been Deleuze's intuition as well. His most explicit discussion of a then contemporary mannerism concerns the potential of cinema to free sensibility from our

televised and informatized economy of representation and recognition. In a preface to Daney's *Ciné Journal*, a collection of contributions to *Libération*, he praises the author for having developed the concept of 'a mannerism that's the essence of art, but also a battlefield.' (Deleuze 1995: 78) An artistic image in cinema is the product of a fight against clichés, a fight that leads, echoing Riegl's description of the mannerist transition from classical to baroque art, to the 'convulsive confrontation' of the two competing 'wills to form', a 'tense, convulsive form of cinema that leans, as it tries to turn round, on the very system that seeks to control or replace it.' (Deleuze 1995: 75, 77, 195n10; Deleuze 2006: 321-4)

The concept of mannerism gained prominence in the debate on cinematic mannerism and baroque of a 1985 issue of *Cahiers du cinéma* entitled 'Le cinéma à l'heure du maniérisme' (nr. 370, cf. nr. 360 & 361) and continued to occupy a central place throughout Daney's oeuvre as a critic. In one of his last reviews, he situates the birth of cinematic mannerism with Otto Preminger's *Laura* (1944), a moment in the history of Hollywood after nothing would be natural anymore. This film, according to Daney, is the story of a gaze that comes too late, i.e. an expressionless and impersonal gaze that replaces the portrait. The amateurish play-acting of Gene Tierney and Dana Andrews confronts us with a strange innocence, 'a brilliant and nervous, almost mineral frigidity' in the face of 'a world of useless complications, facultative truths and ricocheting light'. Even if they both belong to a world in which people talk constantly, Preminger's heroes seem to have nothing but their eyes to use for listening, whilst their organs for communication are struck with hysterical infirmity. For this reason, Daney argues, 'mannerism has nothing to do with putting on airs (*faire des manières*), it means to take samples.' Mannerism concerns the 'know-how (*savoir faire*)' necessary to substantify or 'render consistent the image in isolation of anything else', that is, 'to save the appearances once the organs of fascination have become independent of the bodies they decorate.' (Daney 1993: 71-2)

From the beginning, Daney's focus has been on the 'mannerist school of American cinema'. In a review of Francis Ford Coppola's *One from the Heart* (1983), he develops a contrast with Vincente Minelli's *Brigadoon* (1954) and *The Clock* (1945). Both directors have made movies that are like musicals, with much singing and dancing involved, but with one important difference: whereas in Minelli, decors and personae share a common world and reinforce each other like Leibnizian monads, this is no longer the case with Coppola, in whose work 'bodies, lighting, objects, decors, camera and songs are all hurled with different success

into space, into trajectories that still need to be calculated' (Daney 1986: 124-5). For this reason, Daney argues that '[t]his Italo-American is our Parmigianino or our Primaticcio. Everything he loses on one side (spontaneity, humor, inspiration), he gains on the other (invention, melancholia, courage).' (Daney 1986: 198-9) So what is Coppola's mannerism?

Nothing happens to human beings, everything happens to images – to Images. Images become characters with pathos, pawns in the game. We tremble for them, we want them to be kindly treated, they are no longer just produced by the camera, but manufactured outside it, and its “pre-visualization,” thanks to video, is the object of what little love is left in the cold hearts (I am exaggerating) of the filmmakers. In a mannerist world, actors “of flesh, blood and celluloid” are quickly reduced to the status of stand-ins and quotations of themselves, to visual signals. They're still there, but they've ceased to be interesting ages ago. (Daney 1986: 125-6)

According to Daney, this mannerist rupture is partly due to the introduction of video in 'electronic cinema', pioneered by Coppola using a live relay in recording. Coppola chose to direct while viewing video feeds from five different stages simultaneously, whilst an off-line editing system provided him with on set composing tools. In this way, for the first time in the history of cinema an animatic would be the basis for an entire feature film, fully extending the stage of conception into the stage of execution. (Ferster 1998) In this way, Daney says, video almost immediately turns everything that was never seen before into a *déjà vu*. (Daney 1986: 198) The world remains a stage, but the stage is no longer a world and, as a consequence, no longer the place for illusions and dreams. Instead, a multiplication of illusions has led to a proliferation of (mainly bad) dreams, dreams that lead to the suffocating lives in the midst of the solidified American dream of Las Vegas. They are 'dreams without dreamers', a situation Daney summarizes with William Burrough's concept of 'control': 'The image is “treated well” (thanks to video) whilst the actors 'are put under surveillance' (due to video).' (Daney 1986: 125)

So far, Daney's analysis of visual culture hardly differs from other analyses of a postmodern image regime, the era of the ascent of the simulacrum. What distinguishes his concept of mannerism from that of postmodernism, however, is also what makes him interesting for Deleuze: namely that both cinema and film criticism still have an active political role in the creation of new aesthetic experiences and new ways of thinking. Whilst it is true that video has

developed a great deal in the direction of control, just as would later happen with digital technologies, Daney refuses to hold Coppola entirely responsible for this development. Analogous to Deleuze's distinction between the aesthetical and technical planes of composition, he makes a distinction between the poetic function of video and its social function. Mannerism, for Daney, describes this ambivalent situation of immanent critique in which the will to art seeks to develop 'an art of control that would be a kind of new form of resistance.' (Deleuze 1995: 75) This point is best illustrated through the role of advertisement.

For a very long time now, cinema has been inseparable not only from video, but also from television, which in turn depends on advertising. But even in this case of complete economic dependence, an aesthetic use is still possible precisely to the extent that films are not just the 'result' of their material conditions of production, but also their 'embodiment' or 'mirror' (Daney 1993: 71). On the one hand, advertising is 'social engineering' by definition, with the advertiser-designer as 'the slave of a social interactivity in which he functions as a sophist or an overpaid mercenary, a tool in the communication kit' (Daney 1996a). Yet on the other hand, Daney observes that advertising aesthetics has introduced one of the most important operations of contemporary aesthetics: the mannerist isolation of the figure from the ground, or the disjunction between body and environment, detail and whole. The 1991 Benetton commercial with the bloodied, unwashed newborn baby with umbilical cord still attached forms only the continuation of an already long history of amputation, transplants, quotes, appropriations, and all kinds of parasitism in advertisement. This history has broken the natural solidarity of bodies and characters with their surroundings, such that, as in Luc Besson's *Le grand bleu* (1988),

one can't tell much of a story through them, almost nothing is known of their innermost movements, nor anything of how they get along with one another (even sexually). The ads, let's not forget, are not only "little films", but they unfold in a deserted world, where at most two bodies fit on the screen, where the singularity of the bodies echoes no off-screen regularity. (Daney 1996)

Hence it is from advertisement, Daney argues, that a 'mannerist wave has washed over the best of cinema in the last ten years', in which cinema has kept up 'a hysterical-affective relation with advertising (Wenders, Jarmush etc.)' (Daney 1996b). At the same time, however, he warns that

this relation or will to art may well be running out of steam, i.e. turn into a mere mannerism. From Arthur Penn's *Mickey One* (1964) to Coppola's *Rumble Fish* (1984), cinema has transformed into a 'cadaver': 'In 1964, it was Penn who was mannered (*qui faisait des manières*). In 1984, it is the public (...) *Rumble Fish* that is spontaneously mannered (*maniéré*).' (Daney 1986: 198) In other words: when the playful deformation of natural relations of figuration and narration itself has become an advertisement cliché, it may well be unnecessary to ask cinema to become its witness: 'The bodies of advertising are to cinema what those of religious trinketry were to sacred art: a terminal stage before the renunciation of the image (or its effective replacement by automatons)' (Daney 1996b).

As in the classical liberal arts, in cinema, too, we must therefore always be wary of the moment when the mannerist will to art is transformed into the social function of the baroque. Daney gives the example of Sergio Leone, who, with *The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly* (1966), entered into a mannerist confrontation with the classical heritage of John Ford, especially his personae and the distances between them, only in order to return to a strange kind of baroque classicism in *Once Upon A Time in America* (1984). Whereas initially Leone had discovered a new landscape – a desert that is too ample for the little bodies and their dramatic actions, such that everything happens only through the eyes of the actors whilst the real subject of the film is not the 'Man with No Name' but the event of the civil war in all its impersonal cruelty – his later work meant a return to a more photogenic sentimentalism:

It is rare that a film situates itself exactly at the point where the secret of a classical art is about to disappear in baroque propositions of which the recipes are about to become so successful. It is rare that a cineaste is honest (or schizo?) enough, even to the point of simply juxtaposing – with any possible reconciliation – that which is nothing but reconcilable. More rare still is that instead of getting away from this divide, his talent feeds on it. (Daney 1993: 50-1)

We can even find this ambiguity of mannerism and baroque in one and the same film, once we take into account the material consequences of watching films on television or computer screens. To watch a film again on television, as Daney tells us, confronts us with the effects of its 'cinematic style' (Daney 1993: 36). It reveals all the more clearly the formal aspects of uncoded cinematic materiality responsible for pathic effects and new types of subjectivity or spirituality,

and in this way ‘sanctifies’ television, to use a Godardian expression. This is what happens in *Twin Peaks* (1990-1991), in which the mannerist features of David Lynch’s films – the flashbacks that explain little but introduce footnotes or brackets in the middle of the film, like the suspended durations typical of B films, combined with the Hitchcockian fluctuations between obscenity and sexual phobia, between the unsavory organic and the glaze of a smooth surface, and between dry logic and irrationality – come out all the more convincing. Everything happens as if we are merely waiting for the convulsive movements of the main figures to stop, leaving us with mere puppets or inert toys:

We enter Mannerism when we take (from inside) and we leave Mannerism when we animate (from outside). Mannerism is a game because it’s very close to the pleasure of a child who plays at disemboweling his dolls or at dismantling his toys. Mannerism is therefore destined to a certain *disappointment* (no knowing how to put back together what has been broken). It’s the moment when, from an aquarium – this cultural breeding ground and catalogue of existing effects – we pull out a few fishes and make them last a bit more, the time to watch them do a few movements outside their natural element. The proof is: what usually doesn’t convince me in Lynch’s films is precisely what I like in *Twin Peaks*. The spectacle of time is perhaps better “at home”, where people waste their time in front of the TV. (Daney 2009)

Yet it is because of these very same mannerist effects that, vice versa, a film can also quickly become boring when broadcasted on television. This happens not only because certain other specific properties of cinema – qualities and directions of light, definition, shape, composition, size, texture, and the institutional conditions of social and communal reception – are irrevocably lost, but also when a film is turned into a mere escape from reality, an early baroque cliché of *sprezzatura*, even if, as Daney writes, the initial will to art consisted of an active intervention in an audiovisual reality. The *amused ennui* of Dario Argento’s *Inferno* (1970), for example, on the one hand results from the properly aesthetic or mannerist invention of a dramatic action of things and personae that is too hurried to have any dramatic meaning. The film sets up a ‘false functionalism’, in which ‘the things and the personae (seen as objects) are there solely for serving nothing.’ Their hurried agitation is the very signature of the film, the artistic *maniera* by which all images are stamped Argento. On the other hand, however, as soon as the film becomes

broadcasted on television, its autonomous will to art gets snowed under by its new social function. As Daney writes:

The passage from mannerism to baroque is the passage from “serving nothing” to “serving nothing but the Nothing”, the great *Nada* that is in need of great features. Mannerism can afford itself to be as modest and merry as the exercise of a schoolboy. In this sense, *Inferno* was already a film of our time ten years ago. For, if advertising aesthetics is the serious face of mannerism, the parody of the horror movie is its frivolous face. It suffices to see *Inferno* interrupted (right after the scene of the guillotine) by nine spots in a row to see these two faces of mannerism overlay one another. (Daney 1993: 85)

### **Deleuze and Daney: Neo-Mannerism**

The last passage resonates remarkably well with Deleuze’s historical observation that mannerism and baroque form an episode in which theological functionalism – for what else is the principle of sufficient reason, with Leibniz playing the role of ‘God’s attorney’ – ‘is being contested on all sides’. For whereas the baroque response to the world’s misery is made through ‘an excess of principles, a hubris of principles’, such that ‘Some Thing is kept rather than nothing’ at all cost, perhaps mannerism already forebodes the modern moment in which ‘nothing rather than something’ is kept or served. The passage from mannerism to baroque would then coincide with the temporary and provisional attempt to reconstitute a classical reason in the ‘long history of nihilism’ (Deleuze 1993: 67; Deleuze 1989: 131).

The same historical schema is used by Deleuze in his ‘Letter to Serge Daney’. With a grand gesture, he situates Daney’s vision on cinema and its confrontation with new media in the periodization of visual art developed by Riegl, who distinguished three tendencies in art: the beautification of nature (related to polytheism), the spiritualization of nature (related to monotheism), and the competition with nature (when art becomes an aim in itself). Following Daney, Deleuze associates the first of these tendencies with pre-war cinema (‘the encyclopedia of the world’ behind the movement-image, e.g. Eisenstein), the second with post-war cinema (‘the pedagogy of perception’ of the time-image, e.g. Resnais or Welles), and the third with the rise televisual power (‘the professional training of the eye’, in which ‘the world is lost, the world itself “turns to film,” any film at all’ and “the background in any image is always another

image’’). (Deleuze 1995: 68-72; Deleuze 1989: 265) In each period, art seeks to add something to nature. When film becomes television, however, ‘the conditions for the aesthetic function of cinema’ (Deleuze 1995: 73, translation modified) seem to be absent, since television finds its own specific identity and perfection, like that of video or advertisement, not in an aesthetic or expressive function, but in a social or communicative function. Just as the social function of radio, combined with the manipulative power of the state (whether rooted in fascism, communism, or Hollywood), caused the classical movement-image to degenerate into a ‘representation of mere violence and sexuality, combining gratuitous cruelty with organized stupidity’ (Deleuze 2006: 284), the time-image has been overrun by the social world of television, ‘a world of controllers and controlled communing in their admiration for technology’ (Deleuze 1995: 68-72). Yet despite ‘all the forces it has served’, Deleuze agrees with Daney that the cinema of the 1980s and 1990s still preserves an aesthetic function and should be capable of exploring the resources of new media, whereas in television itself, innovations occur only accidentally and unexpectedly, like ‘a brand of lavatory paper reviving American comedy.’ (Deleuze 1995: 73)

The problem of cinema is not that the prying zoom of television or the instant replay of video compete with the realistic dream universe at a theatrical distance and replace it with a realism of illusions and virtual images intimately operated in our heads. On the contrary, ‘the brain is the screen’ (Deleuze 2006: 283), Deleuze rejoices. Already the automatic movement or ‘self-temporalization’ of movement-images made emerge in us a ‘spiritual automaton’, a ‘machinic assemblage’ of images no longer bound to the human condition, but expressive of aberrant and non-organic durations. (Deleuze 1986: 156; Deleuze 1989: 263; Deleuze 2006: 283) The real problem of cinema is rather that, with television and video, the ‘professional eye’ precludes any experiment with perception and constantly seeks to establish a substitute for nature. This happens as soon as the automatism leaves no interval between itself and the social sphere, thus submitting the entire domain of sensation to the engineering of cliché images:

these floating images, these anonymous clichés, which circulate in the external world, but which also penetrate each one of us and constitute his internal world, so that everyone possesses only psychic clichés by which he thinks and feels, is thought and is felt, being himself a cliché among the others in the world which surrounds him. ... In order for people to

be able to bear themselves and the world, misery has to reach the inside of consciousness and the inside has to be like the outside... *How can one not believe in a powerful concerted organisation*, a great and powerful plot, which has found the way to make clichés circulate, from outside to inside, from inside to outside? (Deleuze 1986: 208-9)

This is the story of the ready-made circuits of the brain both Daney and Deleuze find narrated by Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* (Daney 1986: 75; Deleuze 1989: 206): an image-brain completely de-subjectified against a background of equally indifferent images. Just as the sixteenth and seventeenth century bore the sign of a spiritual catastrophe, for both Deleuze and Daney this 'manic depression' or 'vertigo' (Deleuze 1995: 78) of audiovisual culture defines the battlefield of a postmodern mannerism, where it no longer suffices to short-circuit television and everything depends on whether we succeed in preventing television of 'short-circuiting the extension of cinema into the new types of image.' (Deleuze 1995: 76) As Daney writes, the problem is that television trivializes things and forgets that its own medium is already charged with content. Just as in mannerist cinema the material enters into sensation, its baroque remediation on television or Youtube merely realizes sensation in matter: 'Because cinema has gone through the scanner of television, it has lost a material layer, in other words, it has lost its lustre' or 'soul'. For this reason, cinema must invent a renewed 'material imagination'. (Daney 1986: 74-5) Not that slow materiality suffices to escape from control. (Deleuze 1995: 73-4, 79) The folded thickness of the image merely provides the material traits for a spiritual metamorphosis of facts. It takes an act of creation in excess of what is given – a supplementary beautification, spiritualization, or competition vis-à-vis nature, in other words, an artistic manner or style – to make that happen. But there are always haptic ideas hidden in any situation, no matter how cynical and hopeless it may appear. To extract and employ these ideas is the spiritual aim of mannerist cinema, its very future-orientedness: 'Whether we are Christians or atheists, in our universal schizophrenia, *we need reasons to believe in this world*. It is a whole transformation of belief.' (Deleuze 1989: 171-2)

This temporalizing orientation of a spirituality in crisis is perhaps what constitutes the strongest connection between Daney's film criticism and Deleuze's cinema books. It implies the need for a pedagogy of the image capable of teaching us new formalist ambitions in relation to new media technologies. At the same time, we can look back at the by now classical time-image

to see what such a pedagogy could look like. For not only would Daney's essays on Godard and Straub-Huillet (both in Daney 1983) prove immensely influential for Deleuze's discussion of pedagogy in *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, Daney himself later realized that his concept of images, which achieved a density, opacity and potential for disjunction, was quasi-Deleuzian. (Cf. Dowd 2010)

Just as classical painting reduced the material thickness of its plane of composition to the formal depth of psychological-organic perception, the classical cinema of movement-images still piously anchored the autonomous film image in the sensory-motor schemata of organic human sensibility. In the Soviet school of Eisenstein's dialectical compositions or the French impressionism of Gance, montage aims at the logical concatenation of images adequate to their social function: 'what it is in our interest to perceive, by virtue of our economic interests, ideological beliefs and psychological demands'. It is these movement-images that are considered clichés: 'A cliché is a sensory-motor image of the thing. ... We therefore normally perceive only clichés' (Deleuze 1989: 20). But this does not mean that all movement-images are necessarily clichés, since sometimes our interests turn spiritual and the movement-image becomes creative. Especially in the expressionist cinema of Lang and Murnau, we can recognize an aesthetic outside from where the image 'constantly attempts to break through the cliché, to get out of the cliché.' (Deleuze 1989: 21) However, in order for this hidden image, the 'time-image', to become visible, and thus for cinema to do justice to its medium immanent, nonhuman capacities of sensation, it is necessary that our sensory-motor schemata jam or break and the practical interests that bind us to the present are suspended by an encounter with the unexpected (Deleuze 1989: 20) – a catastrophe which Deleuze, like Daney, recognizes as the caesura in the history of cinema formed by the Second World War. In the time-images of Welles, Resnais, Antonioni, Tarkovski or Ozu, the image is no longer primarily a sign of narrative action, but becomes first and foremost an optical and sound reality in its own right. Hence although both movement-image and time-image express time, the first represents it only indirectly and reductively, whereas the second presents it in 'its pure state'.<sup>2</sup> Much more than the *figura serpentinata* in mannerist visual art,

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<sup>2</sup> If time is the fourth dimension of the four-dimensional space of the movement-image, writes Deleuze, then spirit becomes the first dimension of the five-dimensional space of the time-image. (Deleuze 1989: 178) The time-image is the shallow depth of cinema, in which 'bodies became more Dantean, were no longer, that is, captured in actions, but in postures and the ways they're linked' (Deleuze 1995: 70). Or in Daney's words, whereas 'classical' cinema is a *mise-en-scène* in which each image is a temporary mask hiding an organic depth, 'I will call "modern" the cinema that "accepts" this shallow of the image, that claims it for itself and – with humor or out of anger – thought it could

which breaks up the continuum of successive perceptions and replaces it with the trans-spatial simultaneity of different stages of movement, thus fixating the fact of movement in an instantaneous becoming (Van Tuinen 2011), a time-image ‘renders visible, and creative, the temporal relations which cannot be reduced to the present’ (Deleuze 2006: 290; Deleuze 1989: xii). Its cornerstone is the ‘crystal-image’, which substitutes for the empirical or organic form of time passing its transcendental or spiritual form, in which a myriad of coexisting virtual temporalities – recollections, dreams, worlds – are fused with the flowing present, as so many heterogeneous durations that constantly feed on each other. Here the spiritual automaton of cinema reaches its immanent limits or superior state of intensity, in which the medial ground rises to the surface and orients itself towards the new: ‘The cinema, even more than painting, conveys a relief in time, a perspective in time: it expresses itself as perspective or relief.’ (Deleuze 1986: 23-4, 112) With the time-image, it brackets its representational qualities and gains what Deleuze calls, with Nietzsche, ‘the powers of the false’ (Deleuze 1989: 131). Just when the world itself has become an illusion, cinema reinvents its illusory powers, rendering visible becomings that are ‘essentially falsifying’. In Daney’s words: ‘The truth of the lie was yesterday. The powers of the false are for today.’ (Daney 1986: 198)

So does this power of the false, this ‘resemblance with accidental and non-resembling means’ constitute the essence of mannerism in cinema? Throughout the *Cinema* books, Deleuze consistently confronts a ‘classical cinema’ with ‘modern political cinema’ (Deleuze 1989: 213, 218) and a “‘classic’ organic system’ to ‘an inorganic or crystalline system with no less vitality’ (Deleuze 1995: 67). Yet in his Letter to Serge Daney, Deleuze reserves the concept of mannerism for the more recent past in which ‘the world itself is turning cinematic, becoming “just an act” directly controlled and immediately processed’ by television and digital information and communication technologies. Everything happens as if, after the crisis of the movement-image, there has taken place another catastrophe, such that the cinema of the time-image, having itself become classical, could only betray itself, i.e. it can only ‘stop “being cinematic,” stop playacting, and set up specific relationships with video, with electronic and digital images, in order to develop a new form of resistance’ (Deleuze 1995: 76). In other words, if cinema is truly capable of competing with nature, it had to merge into video art or new media art.

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make a war machine out of it, against the illusionism of classical cinema and the estrangement of the production line, hence against Hollywood.’ (Daney 1993, 78-9)

Following Daney, Deleuze discusses the beginnings of this new mannerist experimentation in movies from the 1980s by Coppola, Syberberg and Snow. Meanwhile we could add the inter-medial experiments from the 1990s of Peter Greenaway, whose ‘cinema of ideas, not plots’ attempts to ‘take cinema out of the cinemas’ under the sign of a strict rejection of the neo-baroque and its ‘emotional sensationalism’.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, Deleuze emphasizes that there can be no proven method or general recipe:

Your [Daney’s -svt] concept of mannerism is particularly well-founded, once one understands how far all the various mannerisms are different, heterogeneous, above all how no common measure can be applied to them, the term [of mannerism] indicating only a battlefield where art and thought launch together with cinema into a new domain, while the forces of control try to steal this domain from them, to take it over before they do, and set up a new clinic for social engineering. (Deleuze 1995: 77, translation modified)

Unlike the baroque, which finds its operative unity in the fold taken to infinity, the list of media and styles in mannerism is inexhaustible in principle. Within the *maniera moderna* (Vasari 1991, ‘Preface to the Third Part’), Vasari already distinguished a variety of manners: besides the *maniera dolce* of Raphael and the *maniera grande* of Michelangelo, the anatomical manner of Pollaiuolo, the diplomatic manner of Bronzino and so on, each forming a singular handling of design, material and situation. In a similar fashion, Daney catalogues the manner of Leone (the cinema of eyes), a Coppola-universe (the biased amplification of details with the sole aim of making them, like a little solo in jazz), or a Zurlini-effect (the virtuous movements of the camera as if it were a persona). (Daney 1993: 36-7) In each case, manner consists of a spiritualizing becoming-pictorial or becoming-cinematic of some uncoded, prepictorial or precinematic material. Even the most clichéd classical image is initially based on this expressive unity of matter and manner, material and sensation, such that no artistic style can ever be entirely

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<sup>3</sup> In an interview, Greenaway mentions Fellini and Viola as two major inspirations for his exhaustive and self-referential play with the insoluble tension between the database form of images and the various analogous and digital interfaces that structure them cinematically. This play can be called neo-mannerist precisely insofar as it is distinguished from the (neo-)baroque: ‘Just as Roman Catholicism would offer you paradise and heaven, there is an equivalent commercial paradise being offered very largely by the whole capitalistic effect, which is associated with Western cinema. This is my political analogy in terms of the use of multimedia as a political weapon. I would equate, in a sense, the great baroque Counter-Reformation, its cultural activity, with what cinema, American cinema predominantly, has been doing in the last seventy years.’ (Greenaway 2001)

generalized, as if there would be a classical style and its experimental variations. Instead, all style in art contains a minimum of experimentation or abstraction. The modern avant-garde has certainly gone furthest in this transition from the 'what' to 'how'. Yet at the same time, its experimental character is already foreshadowed by the surprising modernity of the mannerists. Maybe this could also shed new light on how we evaluate and interpret contemporary developments such as the rising prominence of HBO series, in which it is no longer cinema that passes into television, but television that turns itself into cinema or even into the visual novel.

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