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## **Kubrick's Neobaroque Spectacle: An Aesthetic Analysis of Artificiality and Violence in *A Clockwork Orange*\***

**Abstract:** This article examines Stanley Kubrick's film *A Clockwork Orange* through the concept of neobaroque. Starting with the basic elements of *mise-en-scène* such as costumes, scenography, and positioning of the body inside the shots, the aesthetic analysis of the film will move towards more abstract concepts such as spectacle and violence. By identifying these elements inside the film, the film itself could be understood, I argue, as a neobaroque film. Neobaroque film neither refers to a genre or a period in film history. It is an aesthetic term, with implicit references to changes in modern society, denoting a specific but also dynamic constellation of expressive and thematic elements in a given film. Occasional references to Baroque art are included not to make closer ties between two periods or forms of expression, but to suggest and show more clearly where neobaroque concepts stand in relation to the Baroque ones. *A Clockwork Orange* is not of the only neobaroque film. However, one thing that singles out *A Clockwork Orange*, is the number of traits, or neobaroque topoi, which are condensed in it. In this article, I will point out the most prominent ones, which are firmly embedded in the aesthetics of the film.

**Keywords:** A Clockwork Orange; Stanley Kubrick; neobaroque topoi; aesthetic analysis; spectacle; violence

### **From Baroque to Neobaroque – The Development of Baroque traits through Periods of Social Disquiet**

The term 'Baroque' originated as an explanatory denominator in art history and was later introduced to other scholarly disciplines. Starting with the his-

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torical Baroque, the term had pejorative connotations at first. It was used to describe a style in art that developed from Mannerism, and was regarded as a degeneration of Renaissance art. It was also perceived as an aesthetic response to the broader social crisis of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The religious disquiet that marked the new social reality also induced cultural transformations, in which Baroque style emerged as the new visual expression.<sup>1</sup> Aside from being linked to the crisis of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Baroque has been defined as a unique set of stylistic traits in other periods marked by societal crises, of which the 20<sup>th</sup> century is exemplary. Cultural and social changes and the proliferation of violence were common grounds for the development of Baroque and neobaroque forms in these two periods.

However, Baroque is much more than just a period in the history of culture. It is also a formal phenomenon, which should not just be observed as a category of the spirit, but also as a category of form (Calabrese 1992). Heinrich Wölfflin defines Baroque as a “painterly” style, and goes on to define it in purely stylistic terms (Wölfflin 1964, 80). His theory of Baroque as a style is one of the most prominent and influential, while his general observations of works of art in formalistic terms are fundamental for understanding Classicism and Baroque not just as historical periods, but also as abstract totalities (Calabrese 1992). Henri Focillon, in his work *The Life of Forms of Art*, further developed a theory of form as something which is not constrained to a specific period in history. As he asserts, “form is primarily a mobile life in a changing world” (Focillon 1992, 44).

High Baroque, precocious or metaphysical Baroque, neobaroque and colonial Baroque are all different terms for, as Gregg Lambert calls them, “species” of the Baroque (Lambert 2004, 2). Historically disparate, they all share a common ground in historical Baroque, with its morphological preconditions.<sup>2</sup> Volumes have been written on what the Baroque is, whether it existed, or if it exists only in a “non-place of language” (Lambert 2004, 5). However, these problems will not be considered here. The terms ‘Baroque’ and ‘neobaroque’ will be used as cultural determiners with specific aesthetic programs, leaving aside the aforementioned debates.

For the purpose of this article, it is more necessary to observe the Baroque in term of its aesthetic and stylistic concepts than in its historical context. To make a connection between the historical Baroque and contemporary ‘neo-baroque taste’, it is necessary to comprehend Baroque in its external, formal elements, which can be traced in different historical epochs. Observed in a formal way, Baroque is often collocated with Classicism. Wölfflin charts the difference be-

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<sup>1</sup> The disquiet and insecurity were created as a consequence of changes in previous periods – the ravages of plague, the Thirty Years War, etc. (Maravall 1986, 83).

<sup>2</sup> With the term ‘historical Baroque’, I refer to the Baroque that started at the beginning of the seventeenth century and lasted for approximately a century.

tween the two periods, and explains that Baroque is imbued with phenomena or forms that confront classical ones. Interchanging its position as the dominant style with Classicism over the centuries, Baroque regained pre-eminence again in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, identified this time as neobaroque.

Calabrese explains this through the concept of mentality, which for him is a “shared perspective of taste” (Calabrese 1992, xi). The term ‘mentality’ presupposes a common system of aesthetic and other values that shape the entirety of society. The character of one society or epoch depends on the system of shared features, and the codification of this system starts with phenomena that model “series” and “families” of common forms (Calabrese 1992, 5). These phenomena may be by nature contradictory, but they are unified around one dominant idea. The idea or internal form that shaped cultural traits in both the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries is distinctively Baroque. For the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this did not mean the resurrection of the historical Baroque. Just as the idea of progress has been disregarded as overtly deterministic, any conception of the Baroque’s cyclic rejuvenation must be dismissed. Baroque is not just a historical period, but also “a formal quality of those objects in which the attitude is expressed” (Calabrese 1992, 15). However, it is also, at the same time, a historical period with defined stylistic categories and “a formal constant” (Calabrese 1992, 17).

The art of the Baroque period, if compared with Renaissance art, appears “dynamic, colorful, theatrical, artificial, passionate, sensual, opulent, versatile, citational, ‘interpretational’, and, overall, excessive” (Degli-Esposti Reinert 2008, 51). The new Baroque art responded to wider social changes, starting with changes of perception. Geographical and scientific discoveries led to a transformed perception of the world, bringing a distinct feeling of insecurity into the social core of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Mental and perceptual insecurity, with the borders of the known world constantly changing, stimulated changes in the scopic regimes of the time.<sup>3</sup> This new observational regime comprised of “the conceit, mannerist representation, repetition, parody, satire, the *menippea*, intertextuality, mirroring, *trompe l’oeil*, the labyrinth, carnivalization, morphing of forms, staging, distortion, contradiction, instability, disorder, chaos, detail, and fragment” (Degli-Esposti Reinert 2008, 52).

All these elements of the scopic regime are also present in different cultural practices. Their presence is felt in literature, music and other art forms. In a 20<sup>th</sup>-century context, these elements of historical Baroque formed a new aesthetic category named neobaroque (Degli-Esposti Reinert 2008). Calabrese (1992) defines these elements through pairs of concepts such as rhythm and repetition, limit and excess, detail and fragment, instability and metamorphosis, disorder

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<sup>3</sup> Scopic regime is defined by Christian Metz as an act of observation, investigation and interpretation. The term is used here in a similar manner (Degli-Esposti Reinert 2008, 52).

and chaos, the knot and the labyrinth, complexity and dissipation, the approximate and the inexpressible, and, finally, distortion and perversion. Patricia Lynn Bornhofen (Bornhofen 1995), employing her background in literary theory, describes neobaroque as a conscious recycling of the Baroque. She makes tighter connections between the two concepts, emphasizing the elements of baroque mirror, cosmography, chaography, simulacrality, and excessive and monstrous Eros in her thesis. In another seminal work, *Neo-Baroque Aesthetics and Contemporary Entertainment*, Angela Ndalians defines neobaroque through similar aesthetic traits as Calabrese. She observes seriality, repetition, intertextuality, labyrinths and virtuosity through their manifestations in contemporary media, although devoting more attention to science fiction than to other film genres (Ndalians 2004).

### Neobaroque and Film – Charting the Theoretical Field

As part of a broader cultural environment, films, together with other forms of cultural expression, partake in the creation of a specific ‘unconscious’ of our times. This thought potentially points in another direction as well, from totality towards films themselves, since, in Calabrese’s words, “the totality of a culture produces an individual unconscious, a collective unconscious and ‘unconscious of the work’” (Calabrese 1992, 10). Therefore, films also partake in the aestheticization of the broader visual and cultural environment. As much as films influence the dominant aesthetics of a period, they are also influenced by it. Together with other communicative phenomena, films are “endowed with [an] underlying form or structure” that they hold in common with other cultural objects (Calabrese 1992, 10).

The relationships between the neobaroque and films have not yet been fully explored. Only the films of Peter Greenaway are widely acknowledged as neobaroque: this connection has been established on the grounds of the similarities between his visual expressions and those of Baroque artists. The composition of the shots, visual opulence, richness in texture and stylistic elaboration are all elements in his films pointed out as distinctly neobaroque.

There are only a handful of authors that deal with the topic of neobaroque and film. Cristina Degli-Esposti Reinert relates Greenaway’s works to the Baroque painterly style (Willoquet-Maricondi and Alemany-Galway 2008). She has written several texts on the topic of neobaroque film, analyzing Sally Potter’s *Orlando* and works by Greenaway and Fellini.<sup>4</sup> Sean Cubbit dedicates a chapter in

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<sup>4</sup> The articles are “The Neo-Baroque Scopio Regime of Peter Greenaway’s Encyclopedic Cinema”, *Cinefocus* 4 (1996): 34–45, “Federico Fellini’s Intervista or the Neo-Baroque Creativity on the Analysand on Screen”, *Italica* 73 (2) (Summer 1996):

his book *The Cinema Effect* to exploring neobaroque film, where he mostly uses the term “Hollywood baroque” (Cubitt 2004, 217). In her study *Neo-Baroque Aesthetics and Contemporary Entertainment*, Ndalianis (2004) deals mainly with science fiction films, especially blockbusters, emphasizing elements such as seriality, spectacle, special effects and labyrinth as distinctly neobaroque. Patricia Lynn Bornhofen (1995) touches upon this subject in her work on Baroque and neobaroque poetics, dealing mainly with Greenaway’s film *Prospero’s Books* in relation to its textuality and simulation. The sheer number of different concepts used in these works shows that neobaroque is not completely defined or a closed system. It remains a developing system, so the changeability of concepts and their understanding should not come as a surprise. The explored concepts manifest themselves on different levels, from the textual to the visual.

In this article, *A Clockwork Orange* will be analysed through several Baroque elements that are present and developed further in neobaroque aesthetics. Antirealism, point of view, spectacle and violence are among the most common ones, and represent the core of the neobaroque peculiarity that defines this film. All these elements have a common origin in Baroque forms and manifestations. Taken together, these different strands of expression and signification add up to “baroque scopic regime”, i.e. a semiotic organisation of visual space in accordance with Baroque principles ((Degli –Esposti Reinert 2008, 51). In what follows, these elements will be further explained through an aesthetic analysis of the film material.

### The Visual Antirealism of *A Clockwork Orange*

The question that arises when trying to establish a relationship between neobaroque and film is inevitably one concerning reality and artifice. Although it can be said that every film is an artifice, I am particularly interested in the intentionally constructed artifice, the space of the film deliberately devised to be at odds with the reality in which we are living.

One of the characteristics of the neobaroque film is the promotion of diegetic spaces or worlds (Cubitt 2004). The actors as agents of narrative move through a space that is not grounded in a reference to everyday lived reality. This type of representation is related to *Imitatio*, a concept from the 16<sup>th</sup> century denoting the pleasure created by formal excellence rather than by the real similitude of an artwork to nature. The artist arranges elements of his work so as to convey ideas and values; a straightforward referentiality to the world outside the work is not necessary (Cubitt 2004).

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157– 72, and “Sally Potter’s *Orlando* and the Neo– Baroque Scopic Regime”, *Cinema Journal* 36 (1) (Fall 1996): 75– 93.

*A Clockwork Orange* is devised as film-theatre. The space created inside it does not necessarily follow a narrative structure, but plays out its theatricality, its obtrusion of narrative-space coherence, in order to disjoint itself from any notion of realism. Theatre, as a medium which is both similar to and vastly different from film, possesses these characteristics. It has a stage, draws borders and deliberately displays its distinction from the auditorium. Kubrick's film is evaluated by Mario Falsetto (2001) as one with an extremely pronounced theatrical quality. Theatricality is defined as comprising of theatrical space and time, frontality, choreography of movement, stylization and exaggeration (Falsetto 2001). Exaggeration comes from both the exuberance and the mutation of the scenery in order to achieve opulent, artificial effects, and also from specific uses of the camera and editing.

An example of exaggeration and theatricality in the film's scenography is Alex's house. Blaring colours, shining surfaces, and the plastic, artificial effect of the whole space convey stylistic and emotional detachment from reality. The effect is so exuberant and flamboyant that it crosses the limits of plausibility. The home is playfully at odds with the possibility of a real home; everything in it is just too pronounced, too colourfully aggressive. This applies to Alex's mother as well. Depicted mostly inside this space, she is a grotesque caricature of a motherly figure, with her fluorescent wigs, nylon clothes, and general disregard for her son's wellbeing.<sup>5</sup> She takes pills in order not to hear him when he comes back home at night, and only knows that he is *helping, like here and there, as it might be*. The father, on the other hand, is rendered implausible through his plainness and conservative attire, which is at odds with the exaggerated space of their home.

The other place that draws attention is Korova's Milkbar. It seems, as Randy Rasmussen (Rasmussen 2001) contends, that it is tailored for Alex. Naked, white plastic female figures comprise most of the furniture and decoration in the bar. They also serve as beverage dispensers. Their whiteness complements the whiteness of Alex and his droogs' costumes in the opening shot of the film. The effect is one of a theatrically devised stage with the main actors positioned on it, not of a public bar where members of a gang sit and wait to intoxicate themselves before a night of ultraviolence.

The theatrical subtext of the film is further exemplified in several other scenes, including the attempted rape in a dilapidated casino and those which take place in the prison and hospital (Falsetto 2001). In the hospital, Alex is strapped to a chair and forced to watch violence on a screen as a form of treatment; later, he exhibits his 'cured' state on a stage specifically set up for him in

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<sup>5</sup> Dijana Metlić links the grotesque look of the mother with her attempt to hide her class belonging (Metlić 2016, 490).

the hospital. In the hospital scene, the Baroque opulence of the decor is transformed into radical simplicity. This is the other mode for creating artificiality, or antirealism, which does not resort to richness in visual description, but instead relies on stern, limited visual elaboration.

Another scene devised in this manner is the first exercise in ultraviolence by Alex and his *droogs*. The scene takes place in a narrow concrete underpass. The sequence starts with a shot showing a bottle on the ground. Then, the camera zooms out to show the person holding it. It is an old beggar in a clean, empty space. Elements normally associated with underpasses, such as dirt, graffiti and garbage, are limited or nonexistent. Kubrick does not allow for any additional elements of scenography to render this scene more realistic than it is. He keeps qualifying elements within the *mise-en-scène* to a minimum, preserving the image in a caravaggesque form of Baroque aesthetics, with a dark background and complete focus on the main actors in the scene. The beating of the beggar is shot from an angle which places the entrance of the underpass in the background. The pale, cold light that spreads from it creates a strong chiaroscuro and forms a sort of aureole around the scene of violence. Alex and his droogs, dressed in white, complement the pale, clean and cold depiction of the brutal act. They are almost dematerialized into shadows by the use of light and colours.

The neobaroque artificiality of diegetic space, devised in order to demonstrate formal excellence and conveyed through interventions in the decor, scenery, and costumes, is also conveyed through playing with the possibilities of the filmic medium. Editing, camera movement and fast or slow motion cinematography all function as tools in communicating artifice and exposing the medium itself. Several scenes are especially contrived in this manner, including the sex scene in Alex's room and the fight between Alex and his droogs on the riverbank.

The sex scene has no romantic connotations. The shot is taken with a fixed camera and was subsequently sped up during the editing process. Alex and his partners "make sex look mechanical, like a slapstick chase from a silent movie" (Rasmussen 2001, 130). The whole scene gains a grotesque character through the use of an accelerated and synthesized version of Rossini's *William Tell* overture.

Kubrick is often criticised as being an overly intellectual director, with films of cold emotional sentiment. James Naremore points that this sentiment has its origins in Kubrick's film technique, which relies heavily on shifts between hand-held camera shots and tracking movements, often accompanied with odd acting. His actors resort to slow, equally-paced dialogue, which adds to the peculiarity and deviates from established "cinematic naturalism" in films (Naremore 2006, 4). These traits alienate the viewer, but this alienation is insufficient in itself, as Naremore states, to reach a full understanding of the effect Kubrick's films produce. Grotesque, considered through the broader term 'artificiality' and defined

as a “psychological strategy aimed at defamiliarizing the everyday world and thereby controlling the absurdities and terrors of life”, is one of the devices that support this alienation and deviation from realism (Naremore 2006, 6).

In Kubrick’s films, the grotesque is devised through the ways actors use their bodies and through play with film’s technical possibilities. As a director pre-occupied with the human body, Kubrick ties different emotional opposites into it, provoking disparate responses. The grotesqueness of the body in Kubrick’s film is achieved with make-up, masks and costumes. Several of these aspects have already been explained, such as the costumes of Alex’s parents: they are grotesque in relation to the space they inhabit. The costumes and phallic masks of Alex and his droogs evoke a similar estrangement from reality. The framing, the positioning of the body inside the frames, and the play with shot duration also reach grotesque effects at times.

A small sequence in the scene where Alex is listening to *a bit of the old Ludvig Van* in his room after the night of ultraviolence is one of the best examples of grotesqueness. Four statuettes of the crucified Christ are linked together on Alex’s table, resembling a group of Can-Can dancers. The fast jump-cut editing following the rhythm of the music breaks down the Christs’ bodies into pieces, showing each part separately in consecutive shots. This editing strategy develops movement out of static objects and layers that movement with music for the grotesque effect of the whole sequence. It pronounces the artificiality of the diegetic world and the medium itself: this is one of the neobaroque’s traits, as “the diegesis of neobaroque is not only self- enclosed but also self- referential” (Cubitt 2004, 238).

### The Spectacle of Violence/ Violence as Spectacle

The use of violence in the Baroque period was careful, and rulers together with their collaborators employed it in order to induce fear and thus make people aware of “their place within the order” (Maravall 1986, 163). One infamous Baroque trait is “pedagogy of the sentiments of violence”, utilized through the visual spectacle of violence showing death, blood and pain inflicted on human bodies (Maravall 1986, 163) The Chronicler of Madrid describes one religious procession that took this specific form:

“Some [members of a procession walk] with skulls and crosses in their hands...their heads are covered with ashes and crowns of thorns, and are pouring blood...piercing their chests with stones, with muzzles on their mouths and the bones of the dead in them, and everybody praying the psalms. Thus they went down the Calle Mayor and the Palace and returned to their convents in a trek lasting more than three hours, which amazed the Court and left it in full of examples, tenderness, tears and devotion” (Maravall 1986, 249).

In another example, Charles Dickens describes how violent imagery looked inside the St. Stefano Rotondo Church in Rome:

“...the hideous paintings with which its walls are covered...such a panorama of horror and butchery no man could imagine... Grey-bearded men being boiled, fried, grilled, crimped, singed, eaten by wild beasts, worried by dogs, buried alive, torn asunder by horses, chopped up small with hatchets: women having their breasts torn with iron pinchers, their tongues cut out, their ears screwed off, their jaws broken, their bodies stretched upon the rack, or skinned upon the stake, or crackled up and melted in the fire: these are among the mildest subjects” (Dickens 2011, 195).

As these quotes demonstrate, violence and violent imagery were present not just on the walls of the churches, but also in religious ceremonies during the Baroque period. The human body needed to be punished: through this suffering, or just by contemplating it, the person could reach the upper spheres of spiritual existence. As the Jesuits proposed, and the painted cycle in St Stefano Rotondo shows, each individual should use these images as a pretext, as a starting point for a more personal spiritual experience.<sup>6</sup> In this way, the Baroque experience of violence was always impregnated with a moral and religious subtext. Moral and spiritual teachings guided the viewer via the route of personal development. By gratifying the senses, this imagery taught as well.

Ruthlessness, violence and cruelty shaped many of the European works of the Baroque period and the same concepts also shape some art today as well. *A Clockwork Orange* engages with violence in a specific neobaroque mode. How can this violence be related to neobaroque *spectaculosità* and, furthermore, which filmic traits are used to establish this?

As Ndalianis explains, “the art of spectacle was an art which did not pretend to anything beyond pure spectacle of pleasure...it was precisely this love of illusion, of the pleasure of surprise, of enchantment, coupled with a blurring of the distinction between illusion and reality, which was essentially baroque” (2004, 171). Spectacle, with its primary goals of astonishing the observer, convincing him of the power of the patrons who ordered the work, and solidifying belief in certain religious dogmas, was regularly used in the Baroque period. Baroque painted ceilings, spectacular fountains, and the bloody imagery of religious sacrifice were all created with the idea to *movere et delectare*.<sup>7</sup> “Baroque form is often associated with a delight in visual spectacle”, concludes Ndalianis (2004,

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<sup>6</sup> The imagery in St. Stefano Rotondo was devised as a programme that visually followed pieces of advice from *Exercitia spiritualia*, a literary work by St. Ignatius Loyola. This piece was widespread in Baroque period and advised the creation of visual religious imagery in the mind of the observer through the senses (Bailey 2003, 7).

<sup>7</sup> The Horatian rhetorical principle of *movere, docere et delectare* changed in the Baroque period to only *delectare et movere* (Bornhofen 1995, 60).

156). To move the observer emotionally through a gratifying or terrifying form completes the peculiarity of the Baroque.

The violent scenes in *A Clockwork Orange* are devised as a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, but delivered in the spirit of pure visual pleasure common to the traditional Baroque unity of architecture, sculpture and painting. Three scenes from the film are the most prominent carriers of the film's *spectaculosità*. These scenes aestheticize violence in order to develop the level of artifice necessary for the concept of spectacle.

The first scene takes place in the derelict casino where Alex and his droogs meet the Billyboy gang. The scene starts with a zoom-out shot from the top of the stage moving downwards, where Billyboy and his gang are trying to rape one young *devotchka*. A Baroque *trompe l'oeil* depiction of a landscape with a balcony and flowers covers the ceiling above the scene. With one shot, Kubrick unifies them into one space, the space of a theatre. Art and primitive, violent action are fraternized and aesthetically equalized. The viewer is led to admire the spectacle that is put on for him, without placing moral judgments – it is a beautiful, spectacular theatre of violence. The technical excellence in conveying this shot is coupled with excellence in the decor and choreography.

While the Billyboy gang performs its carefully choreographed 'rape ballet' on the stage, Alex and his droogs observe it from the shadows of the auditorium. The classical differentiation of the stage and the audience is first breached by the music, in this case Rossini's Overture to *The Thieving Magpie*, which is persistent throughout the sequence and brings the two spaces together. The music creates a new immersive space which will physically engage Alex and droogs in the violent performance with the stage actors, the Billyboy gang. The created effect is brawling violence choreographed in such a way as to avoid any realistic depiction. Jumping, hitting, breaking furniture and twisting and turning comprise a disorderly sequence formed of bits and pieces. The speed of the editing, which quickens with the speed of the music, again turns the sequence into a pure aesthetic depiction, scuttling with its speed any possibility of moral observation. The sequence is cartoonish: the matching of the music and the movements testifies to its artificiality and formal excellence (McQuiston 2008).

The second scene is the fight between Alex and his droogs. The scene is shot with the group walking along a marina. As the other members of the group want to remove Alex from his leadership position, he starts a fight in order to reestablish his dominance. The representation of the fight is in slow motion. The sequence of punches, pushes and cuttings is slowed down so that the viewer can take in every movement and facial expression. This slowing down ensures that every detail is fully comprehended. Directing the attention of the viewer with detail, balletic choreography and facial expressions, the scene neutralizes any deeper emotional or ethical engagement. Admiration of the technical excellence of the "strangely beautiful attack" is sufficient to grant enjoyment (Ramussen 2001, 132).

The acts of violence culminate in the killing of Catlady. The brutal act of murder, too serious to be just 'balletized' as in the previous scenes, engages the viewer more closely. As Alex breaks into Catlady's house, he finds himself in a more familiar setting than in previous scenes. Catlady's artistic taste has transformed her living space into one similar to Alex's bedroom, with images of naked woman in submissive poses on the walls. Bewildered at first, and appalled by Catlady's attitude towards him, Alex grabs the large plastic phallus lying on the table besides the door and starts to taunt her. In contrast, and in order to protect herself and respond in a similar manner, she grabs a bust of Beethoven. The following fight sequence is a grotesque dance with a doubled phallus (the sculpture and Alex's mask) on one side and an old, skinny lady with a Beethoven bust on the other.

As if especially devised to provoke laughter and to undermine the effect of the upcoming murder, the scene is followed by a sympathetic use of the camera, which shifts between two points of view, giving each of the characters enough time to establish agency. The resolution of this dance is filmed in extreme close-up and with considerable editing speed. The act of murder is not elaborated on in detail; instead, the camera lingers over a painting of a mouth, which takes the place of Catlady's crushed head.

This cartoonish and static ending to the scene introduces another medium into the film. The scene of killing is cut with a static image of a painting on which the camera zooms in and out. The detachment from a realistic depiction of the murder is thus complete. The cartoonish ending and the richness of the used motifs and strategies conveys the spectacular effect. Complete enjoyment in the scene is not hampered by the brutality of the killing. There is no blood, no shots showing the body. Instead, Kubrick decides to show only the playful and colourful foreplay of the murder.

The violence, with overtly choreographed movements, Rossini's music and 'choreographed' editing, establishes the scene as a spectacle detached from any moral burden. The viewer is invited to enjoy the scene; it functions within the Baroque frame of *movere et delectare*, with no intention to *docere*. In *A Clockwork Orange*, violence is simply a spectacle, established for enjoyment and with none of the rhetorical pretensions of its classical counterparts.

Randy Rasmussen compares the violent scenes in the film, especially the one in the ruined casino, with classical Hollywood Westerns. Although he does not describe them as neobaroque spectacles of violence, he notes that while Westerns and, I add, other violent scenes in a large number of action movies "typically relish the thrill of a fight", they regularly impose a "righteous outcome in order to satisfy our collective moral sensibilities" (Rasmussen 2001, 120). In contrast, the violence in *A Clockwork Orange* violates this principle. As Rasmussen elaborates, "violence lingers for the sheer pleasure of it. Alex

administrates the coup de grâce to his rival with howling, wild-eyed ecstasy” (Rasmussen 2001, 120).

These scenes (or even the whole film) push the limits of the film medium to an extreme. The visual effects Kubrick uses – dancing, music, fighting, slow motion, editing, the whole *mise-en-scène* – are, to quote Calabrese, just a “‘theater of surfaces’, or intertextual conjugations” (Calabrese 1992, 57). Formal and aesthetic facets gain a centrality that is re-appropriated from the narrative context of classical cinema. The film is evolving around different experiences – “si sta abbandonando la logica narrativa...torna dal racconto verso la fotografia cinematografica cercando sempre meno di raccontare e sempre più di mostrare” (Bernardi 2000, 11–12).<sup>8</sup>

### Neobaroque *Clockwork Orange* – Concluding Remarks

In their work *In Remediation: Understanding of New Media*, the authors Jay Botler and Richard Grusin argue that “all media, no matter how ‘new’, rely on media past. New media always retain a connection with past forms...contemporary media ‘remediate’ or refashion prior media forms” (Ndalianis 2004, 6). Neobaroque aesthetics demonstrates the same process. Aesthetic concepts of the Baroque are now appropriated and changed by the new media in order to fit novel modes of expression. Regarding the context of the film, neobaroque finds its expression on different textural layers, from the visual surface to the narrative structure and the use of the technical means of the medium itself.

The wholeness of the devised space in the film, assisted by the technical possibilities of the media, creates a neobaroque image replete with different concepts. Diegetic space in the film is created as overtly artificial. It is not mimetic, but represents a simulacrum of reality that drifts away from its formal replication. This is achieved on several levels, from specificities in *mise-en-scène* to specific use of filmic tools, such as camera work and editing. The creation of this type of space is a necessary precondition for the creation of the spectacle. In the case of *A Clockwork Orange*, spectacle is most closely tied to acts of violence. The role of the spectator in this case becomes prominent, since spectacle loses its function without a referential other, in this case the observer in the cinema. Lingering on the Baroque concept of *spectaculosità*, the purpose of this violent spectacle is not to draw any moral conclusions. Rather, its main goal is the seduction of the observer’s senses. However, these elements are not self-sufficient; only through their mutual interaction in relation to the observer is the more holistic image of the film’s neobaroque aesthetic world created.

<sup>8</sup> The film “departs from narrative logic, it returns from story to filmic photography, seeking not to tell but to show more.”

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*Kjubrikov neobarokni spektakl:  
estetska analiza artifičijelnosti i nasilja u Paklenoj pomorandži*

U ovom tekstu se ispituje film Stenlija Kjubrika *Paklena pomorandža* kroz koncept neobaroka. Pošavši od osnovnih elemenata mizanscena kao što su kostimi, scenografija i pozicioniranje tela unutar kadra, estetska analiza filma će otići korak dalje, ka apstraktnim konceptima poput spektakla i nasilja. Identifikujući takve elemente u filmu, smatram da se film može razumeti kao neobarokni. Neobarokni film ne označava ni žanr ni period u filmskoj istoriji. To je estetički termin, s implicitnim referencama na moderno društvo, koji otkriva specifičnu ali i dinamičku konstelaciju izražajnih i tematskih elemenata u datom filmu. Povremeni osvrti na baroknu umetnost uključeni su ne zato da bi učinili bližim veze između dva perioda umetničkog izražavanja, već da bi sugerisali i jasnije pokazali na koji način se neobarokni koncepti odnose prema baroknim. *Paklena pomorandža* nije jedini neobarokni film. Međutim, ono po čemu se *Paklena pomorandža* izdvaja jeste broj crta, neobaroknih toposa koje film sadrži. U ovom članku ja ću ukazati na najznačajnije neobarokne crte, tesno povezane s estetikom filma.

*Ključne reči:* Paklena pomorandža, Stenli Kjubrik, neobarokni toposi, estetska analiza, spektakl, nasilje

*Le spectacle néobaroque de Kubrick:  
une analyse esthétique de l'artificialité  
et de la violence dans Orange mécanique*

Cet article analyse *Orange mécanique*, un film de Stanley Kubrick, à travers le concept du néobaroque. En commençant par les éléments basiques de la mise en scène tels que les costumes, la scénographie et le positionnement du corps dans des scènes, l'analyse esthétique du film évolue vers des concepts plus abstraits tels que le spectacle et la violence. Je soutiens qu'il est possible de le comprendre comme un film néobaroque par l'identification de ces éléments à l'intérieur du film. La notion de film néobaroque ne renvoie ni à un genre ni à une période précis dans l'histoire du film. Il s'agit d'un terme esthétique; avec des références implicites à des changements dans la société moderne, dénotant une constellation spécifique mais également dynamique des éléments expressifs et thématiques dans le film en question. Des références occasionnelles à l'art

du baroque sont incluses non pas pour créer des liens plus étroits entre deux formes d'expression, mais pour suggérer et montrer plus clairement le rapport qui existe entre les concepts néobaroques et ceux du baroque. *Orange mécanique* n'est pas le seul film néobaroque. Cependant, une chose qui distingue *Orange mécanique*, est le nombre de traits ou de topoï néobaroques condensés en lui. Dans cet article, je vais mettre en relief les plus importants, fortement intégrés à l'esthétique du film.

*Mots clés:* Orange mécanique, Stanley Kubrick, topoï néobaroques, analyse esthétique, spectacle, violence

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