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## THE FUGITIVE WAVE– THE SYMBOLISM OF FLUIDITY IN THE BAROQUE CULTURE

**Abstract:** The Baroque world was a flowing one, a realm of slippery presences in constant flux. Everything seemed to be in endless motion –the space, the time, the emotions and the man itself. It was a deeply shifting world, and this absence of solidity and certainty would come to define both the macro and the microcosms of these inconstant times. It was in the Baroque that the man was unmoored from fixed convictions of faith, land and existence, and became a “floating subject” in a polycentric ever fluid world. Like the style itself, the man became decentralised, forever ambulating through the peripheries with no centre.

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In the introduction to his book “Liquid Modernity” from 1999 Zygmunt Bauman proposes that the qualities of fluids, and the fluidity itself, are most fitting metaphors for the present and the modernity of our own age:

We associate ‘lightness’ or ‘weightlessness’ with mobility and inconstancy: we know from practice that the lighter we travel the easier and faster we move.

These are reasons to consider ‘fluidity’ or ‘liquidity’ as fitting metaphors when we wish to grasp the nature of the present, in many ways novel, phase in the history of modernity.<sup>1</sup>

He elaborated that those specific qualities of fluids and liquids – their inconstancy and mutability, the ease with which they change their shape for avoiding or dissolving obstacles - is a characteristic of the perpetually changing nature of our

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1 Z.Bauman, *Liquid modernity*, Cambridge, 2000, 2.

present society, and respectively the nature of ourselves. This fluid quality befitted the novel, contemporary, perceptions of time as well as of space, denoting an unpredictable world that is forever changing its shape, like water itself. Speaking of the *liquefaction* of modernity in our present, Bauman without noting it, described the process that has already taken place. There was a fluid world long before ours - it possessed equally flowing boundaries of time and space, while the notions of the presence and of the self were pronouncedly fluid.

*Just as there is nothing new under the sun, there is nothing stable, perpetual, nor permanent, because everything has a continuous mutability* wrote Rodrigo Caro when describing his own seventeenth century world.<sup>2</sup> He depicted the universe rather close to the one we inhabit, and a man that occupied it was disconcertingly similar to ourselves.

The Baroque man was, in many respects, our unforeseen predecessor. Regardless of the fact that the *Man of the Renaissance* was so habitually perceived as the first truly modern individual, it was the *Man of the Baroque* that was our most fitting ancestor. His age, not unlike ours, was one of crisis, paradox and disquiet.<sup>3</sup> It was the period in which such fundamental issues as the notion of time, of space and of belonging were thoroughly re-examined. It was in the Baroque that the man was unmoored from fixed convictions of faith, land and existence, and became a “floating subject” in a polycentric ever fluid world. Like style itself, the man became decentralised, forever ambulating through the peripheries with no centre.

Inevitably, the flowing world of the Baroque generated an equally fluid style. It was the unique style in the history of art that possessed a profound sense of malleability manifested as a remarkable ability for adaptation, alteration and change.<sup>4</sup> This quality transformed the originally purely European culture, in the first global phenomenon. It was the first time in European history that one style became so omnipresent that it encompassed not only the old but also the New World and the far East. Wherever the Jesuit missionaries arrived and where colleges were founded, there arrived also the Baroque visual idiom and the Baroque notion of the world and the man's place in it. From Salamanca to Macao, from St. Omer to Sremski Karlovci, Baroque world and the Baroque style were in an everlasting process of appropriation and amalgamation. It reversed the usual hierarchies between the centre and the periphery, allowing for the plurality of centres to develop, each equally notable and remarkable in its own version of the Baroque. This was a singular moment in European history that borderline cultural phenomena, like Orthodox or English Baroque, generated some of the remarkably unique works of art that were equal in their importance to those created in European capitals.<sup>5</sup>

2 Rodrigo Caro in J.A. Maravall, *Baroque Culture: Analysis of a Historical Structure*, Manchester, 1988, 225.

3 For the concept of the Baroque age as the age of paradox see J.A. Maravall, *op. cit.*; J. Todorović, *Spaces that Never Were in Early Modern Art: Exploration of Edges and Confines*, Newcastle upon Tyne, 2019,

4 The idea of the *universal Baroque* was discussed in recent reconsiderations by Robert Harbison and Giovanni Careri, but it was with P. Davidson's *The Universal Baroque*, Manchester, 2007) that this new understanding of expanded Baroque received an appropriately detailed examination. See also J. Todorović, “The Baroque Has no Metropolis – Peter Davidson and the Universal Baroque”, in *European Theories in Former Yugoslavia: Trans-theory Relations between Global and Local Discourses*, Newcastle upon Tyne, 2014, 187-192.

5 See P. Davidson, *op.cit.*

Consequently, it was a glorified and perpetual work in progress that embraced plurality and diversity unprecedented in the preceding periods.

It could be said that the Baroque world was truly a flowing one, a realm of slippery presences in constant flux. It was a deeply shifting world, and this absence of solidity and certainty would come to define both the macro and the microcosms of this inconstant age.<sup>6</sup>

Thus it would be important to examine 'this first fluid age,' and explore its conditions as well as diverse forms of its liquidity, not in order gain a novel perspective on this dawn of modernity, but to better understand the fluidity of our present state.

Similarly to other Baroque phenomena, fluidity encompassed a rather complex and wide ranging set of manifestations – from the swirls of angels on the ceilings of Pietro da Cortona, and the polyvalence of space in the complex interiors by Guarini to the fluidity of being that marked equally the statues of Messerschmidt and Bernini's Borghese mythologies. Each of these aspects initiated the complex process that, as would be presented later, formed the foundation of our modern concept of the world and of ourselves.

### *Fluid geographies*

The world of the Baroque was fluid on several levels - primarily it was politically and demographically an emblem of everlasting change. The great schism between the Catholics and Protestants commenced a profoundly troubled time of political and religious upheavals, of wars and insurrections, of exoduses and passages. Borders of European domains were continually drawn and redrawn in the late sixteenth and throughout the seventeenth century, thus reflecting the continuously shifting balance of power.<sup>7</sup>

Besides the new political divisions that transformed the map of the Early Modern world, there was one particular confine that could be seen as the embodiment of fluidity itself – the southern edge of the Habsburg Empire. This border was not only fluctuating and shifting as borders in these turbulent times often did, but it was entirely and quintessentially liquid.

It followed the flow of the river Danube - that flowing demarcation line between two Empires, two faiths and essentially two worlds. As a prominent demarcation line it stood out conspicuously in the maps of the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires – representing a challenge and engendering a sense of marvel in its beholder.<sup>8</sup> Any re-

6 Although the concept of fluidity in the Baroque age was noted as early Wölfflin in his seminal work from 1888 (J. Wölfflin, *Renaissance and Baroque*, 58-71), it never had a comprehensive study devoted to this issue. In later scholarship the same issue of fluidity was discussed in some of the key theoretical books but also it never merited a publication on its own: R. Martin, *Baroque*, London, 1964, 197-223; R. Assunto, *Infinita contemplazione*, Naples, 1979, 154-159; R. Harbison, *Reflections on Baroque*, London 2002, 1-32; P. Davidson, *op. cit.*, 12-25 and J. Todorović, *Večna sadašnjost – barokna kultura u modernoj književnosti*, Beograd, 2018, 115-140.

7 For shifting borders in the Baroque world see A.J. Maravall, *op.cit.*, 225-251 and J. Todorović, *op. cit.*, 41-73.

8 On the representations of Danube the bibliography might be endless but I would like to recommend: Đ. S. Kostić (ed.) *Dunavom od Bezdana do Beograda*, Belgrade, 2012; Dj.S. Kostić, *Dunavski limes Feliksa Kanica*, Beograd, 2011; B. Fuchs E. Weissbourd (eds.), *Representing Rivalry in Early Modern Mediterranean*, Los Angeles, 2015.

spectable Habsburg or Ottoman Emperor that aspired to aggrandise his territories had to confront with this formidable barrier. Thus, the Danube, and its border cities like Belgrade, were an ever fluid contested territory where the exercise of the imperial powers was at its most potent and in almost perpetual fluctuation.

The Danube was not only a border, it was a divide between Christendom and Islam, between the West and the Orient. In the Early Modern age the notion of the world divided into Christendom and Islam was a standard element of the contemporary worldview, but it was never absolutely fixed and coexisted with some more fluid perceptions. The confines of Empires, as well as of faiths were vast, moveable and subject to changes and shifts. On the one hand, the edge of the vast Empires, that could be applied both to Habsburg and Ottoman ones, was often under lesser control which allowed for far more transgressions to occur.<sup>9</sup>

As a *literally fluid* border – the Danube line was even more porous than usual, allowing for diverse forms of connections and interconnections to take place. Whether these were the intertwining of cultures or languages, or far more mundane processes of espionage and smuggling, this space remained liminal not only in a physical, but also in a deeply metaphorical sense. It was a line of negotiations, of diplomacy and exchange. But it was also the main commercial and travel route that connected Central Europe with the Ottoman Empire and the Black Sea.<sup>10</sup>

Charting of such slippery territories was of the utmost importance as manifested in the respective maps of Habsburg and Ottoman Empires in which the Danube always had the pride of place and was conspicuously marked by signs of possession denoting each of the Empires that ruled over these contested lands.<sup>11</sup> Added vignettes of large cities on its banks, like Ulm, Vienna, Buda or Belgrade gave more information about the lands in its flow but it was only a footnote to its vastness and complexity. The Danube could never be represented in its entirety, no map was ever large enough, to even denote the notion of possession. Thus a number of complex projects was devised to chart this watery border. In 1772 in his *Danubii Fluminis...* John Baptist Homann charted this space in the sequence of maps that follow the entire course of the Danube. He almost succeeded in depicting the absolute fluid space, that did to only demarcate the border and became a realm in itself, transcending powers and empires, languages and confessions.

One of the most grandiose endeavours devoted to the mapping of the entirety of Danube was undertaken by Count Luigi Fernando Marsigli. In 1726 he produced his monumental work in six volumes *Danubius Pannonico-mysicus: observationibus geographicis, astronomicis, hydrographicis, historicis, physicis, perlustratus et in sex tomos digestus. T. 1*,<sup>12</sup> where he treated not only the physical elements of this liquid border, but devoted separate sections to its flora and fauna, its mineral riches and,

9 See B. Fuchs E. Weissbourd (eds.), *op. cit.*, 13-33.

10 See also Đ. S. Kostić (ed.) *op. cit.*

11 P. Brumett, "Mapping\_Trans-Imperial Ottoman Space: Alterity and Attraction", in B. Fuchs E. Weissbourd (eds.), *op. cit.*, 33-58.

12 On Marsigli's book see: J. Stoye: *Marsigli's Europe. The life and times of Luigi Ferdinando Marsigli, soldier and virtuoso*, New Haven, N.J., 1994; also V. Mihailović, *Na granicama Balkana: L.F. Marsilji i rimska baština*, Beograd, 2018.

inevitably its history. It became a veritable monument to this fluid boundary, a confine that no map could ever contain, a feat only ever again achieved in literature, in an equally grandiose ode to Danube, written by Claudio Magris.<sup>13</sup>

With significant political shifts and changeable confines Baroque became an epoch very close to our own - an age also notably marked by migrations as ours is. In this period diverse peoples were continuously displaced - they were crossing and re-crossing the European space in the exoduses grand and small. It was the time of continuous voyages where entire nations and *ethniae* sought their fortunes in the Old or the New World. It was an epoch of perpetual movement where the figure of *homo viator* most fittingly described the man of the age.

While for the Orthodox Serbs the migration in 1690 from the Ottoman into Habsburg Empire was seen as the *Great Exodus* and a defining episode of their history, in the macrocosm of the Baroque epoch, their migration was just one of many. Equally pivotal for its protagonists was, chronologically rather close, the exodus of Jews from Poland, Ukraine and Russia in the 1640s following the terrors that were inflicted under Boris Chmelnicki and his Cossacks. But this passage, alas, was also just one of the countless voyages exiled Jews undertook in those times.

On the other side of Europe, one realm was partially defined by the migrants and migrations that swept over its territories. The Dutch Republic in the seventeenth century became, for its particularly tolerant politics, a unique harbour for all kinds of religious and political migrants. This process left a lasting mark in the Dutch culture and, as recent scholarship proposes, it was even responsible for the construction of the specific Dutch national identity - the one that would develop both in opposition to and belongingness of this entirety of refugees. It was indeed a unique phenomenon in the Baroque world, the time when the notion of "national identity" has yet to be born.

In the Baroque age these movements, grand and small, forever reshaped the established sense of space making it so easily transformable, and ultimately more liquid than ever before.

### *Fluid souls*

When one observed the map of the Baroque world, it was not only interspersed with continually changing confines, and great migrations, but also with seemingly ceaseless fluctuations of individuals that transgressed wider spaces than before. Religious wars and controversies moved Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox alike. Sometimes it was only to the protected territory of a neighbouring domain, but more often, it was a voyage into the unknown, where a safe haven could be sought, biography rewritten and identities forged. This particular process resulted, for instance, in the unexpectedly large presence of Scotsmen in the Austrian Habsburg army and an equally notable number of the Orthodox Serbs in the service of the Russian Tzar.

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13 C. Magris, *Danubio*, Milano, 2011.

The Scotsmen in the Austrian Habsburg service frequently achieved remarkably high positions, and often entire families were connected to the Habsburg court. The same practice had existed in the previous centuries, but was greatly accelerated by the Reformation. The most notable of these Scottish mercenary families was the Leslies, in particular its illustrious member Count Walter Leslie of Balquhain (1607-1667).<sup>14</sup> He was not only decorated by the Habsburg Emperor for his military services, but was also nominated as Imperial ambassador to the Sublime Porte 1665-66, with responsibility for ratifying the Treaty of Vasvar with Sultan Mehmet IV.<sup>15</sup> It was a high military and diplomatic recognition usually reserved for his Austrian or Hungarian peers. These respective groups of migrating officers followed expectedly the prospect of the better employment, but even more importantly, they pursued the invisible lines of confession. For the Catholic Scottish aristocracy, serving a Catholic Sovereign was seen as a desirable prospect, in the same way that their Serbian counterparts hoped that the service under the Orthodox Russian Tzar would bring greater benefits and ensure the preservation of their confessional integrity.

Among the Serbs employed by the Russian court the majority came from the Austrian Habsburg Empire and much rarely from the territories under the Ottomans. One of the most intriguing examples is that of the count Sava Vladislavich-Ragusinsky (1668-1738), also known as the “Illiryan count” who with his life and career exemplified not only this fluidity of movement that designated so many lives in the Baroque world, but also something that would be discussed further on, the very liquidity of identity.<sup>16</sup> Like many of his contemporaries, Ragusinsky throughout his life perceived movement as the fundamental principle of his existence, knowing too well that the only *constant thing is constant change*.

The Count Ragusinsky was not only a merchant and a diplomat, greatly knowledgeable in the international law and international trade, but also a man who established the first intelligence service at the court of Peter the Great. Although from Herceg Novi he grew up in the Republic of Dubrovnik (Ragusa), the city from which he derived his name. He started his career as a merchant in Istanbul, but fairly quickly realised that his knowledge of internal and foreign affairs of the Ottoman Empire could be employed for other means. In the absence of an established Russian Embassy and intelligence office in Istanbul, Ragusinsky was entrusted by the Russian court with several delicate diplomatic missions. Over the years, while secretly conducting different forms of espionage, he established his *commercial network* throughout the Ottoman Empire that even spread as far as the Republic of Venice and France. One of his most noteworthy missions were negotiations of the new treaty in 1725 in Kyakhtha with the Qing Empire of China, that regulated for next few centuries the border between Russia and China. As a true merchant Count

14 For more information on the Scottish presence in the Habsburg armies, see D. Worthington (ed.), *Scots in the Habsburg Empire*, Leiden, 2014, and Ibid. (ed.), *British and Irish Immigrants and Exiles in Europe 1603-1688*, Leiden, 2010.

15 On this diplomatic mission by Count Walter Leslie see J. Todorović, *op.cit.* (2019), 119-131.

16 There are hardly any references on Ragusinsky but there is Article I, *The British and Foreign Review or European Quarterly Journal*, vol.XII, 1-46; Dučić, J. *Grof Sava Vladislavić: jedan Srbin diplomat na dvoru Petra Velikog i Katarine I*, Beograd-Pitsburg, 1942.



Ragusinsky used this opportunity to further the trade between the respective empires and even propose the construction of an Orthodox chapel in Beijing following the arrival of the first Archimandrite sent to China by Peter the Great.

With his life and deeds Count Ragusinsky truly exemplified the notion that the Baroque not only brought on the polyvalent understanding of space and time, but the equally polyvalent notion of the self. Thus this period was prolific with personages such as the “Illyrian count”, whose characters and the sense of identity were as metamorphic as continuously changing imagery in the Baroque mirrors of time...

Another conspicuous, and deeply fluid character of the age, was certainly as great polymath as he was an adventurer – Juraj Križanić S.J. (1618-1683).<sup>17</sup> Although this Jesuit missionary would merit a chapter on his own, he deserved to be at least noted in this overview of fluid souls. Throughout his life he travelled from Croatia, to Austria, Italy, Poland-Lithuania, Turkey, and Russia, where he spent fifteen years (1661-1676) in exile in Tobolsk, Siberia. During his rather incredible career Križanić proved to be the first pan-Slavist of the age, with truly revolutionary concept of the unity of the Catholic and Orthodox churches (that failed for the last time at the Council in Florence in 1439) and a creator of a remarkable political utopia, but also an individual with almost endless possibilities of amalgamation. Although born in Obrlj in Dalmatia, educated in the Jesuit college in Zagreb and later at the school for Theology in Bologna, he easily convinced the Russian Tzar Alexei Mikhailovich that he was indeed an Orthodox Serb, Ivan Bjelih from Bihać. Even when it was discovered that he was an imposter upon his second journey to Russia, and exiled to Siberia, Križanić managed to secure a state bursary and write his most influential work – his utopian programme for the reform of the Russian Empire known as *Politics*.<sup>18</sup> At the same time he made a unique pan-Slavic grammar for his very own perfect language that united all Slavic languages into one. In this linguistic endeavour he mirrored another of his fellow Jesuits, possibly the most notable polymath of the time – Athanasius Kircher.<sup>19</sup> With the idea of a unified polyvalent language that so cunningly reflected his own notion of self, Križanić embodied not only his own desire of united Orthodoxy against Protestants and Muslims, but the idea that came into light only centuries after his death – that of the Yugoslav state and an equally hybrid Yugoslav identity.

Fluid identity, in the Baroque age, not only encompassed the concept of geographical and professional flexibility, or the pronounced mutability of the self as exemplified by Križanić, but also a religious and a confessional one. The change of scene that was brought about with Reformation, and the ensuing religious and political upheavals gave a novel connotation to the issue of conversion, while also opened up a possibility of confessional fluidity previously unheard of.<sup>20</sup> Although

17 On Juraj Križanić and his remarkable endeavours see: *Znanstveni skup u povodu 300. obljetnice smrti Jurja Križanića : (1683-1983: zbornik radova*, dio 1 i 2, Zagreb, 1985; *Život i djelo Jurja Križanića : zbornik radova*, Zagreb, 1974; V. Jagić, *Život i rad Jurja Križanića : o tristo godišnjici njegova rođenja*, Zagreb, 1917.

18 J. Križanić, *Politika ili Razgovori o Vladalaštvu*, Zagreb, 1947.

19 On Kircher's search for the ideal language see: U. Eco, *The Search for the Perfect Language*, London, 1997.

20 On the issue of conversion in the age of the Baroque see J. A. Maravall, *op.cit.*, 149-173; I. Fossi, *Inquisition, Conversion and Foreigners in Baroque Rome*, Leiden, 2020.

the concept of conversion was part of Christian history since the dawn of Christianity, in the Baroque age it became a prime subject of current affairs and current iconography. It implied not only the usual transition from one faith to another, but most importantly, from *one form of Christianity to another*. Thus, the matter of conversion in the Baroque world became more multifaceted and diverse than ever before, and consequently influenced rather varied and even more mutable sense of identity.

For each of the sides in the religious controversy between Catholics and Protestants that divided and defined the Europe of the time, the concept of conversion had a place of utmost importance, and they all used different methods to achieve it. Protestants mainly viewed it as a matter of Divine intervention, while Catholics employed a remarkably varied powers of persuasion in order to attract a greater number of the faithful. This burning issue influenced the new role of visual imagery, a renewed veneration of the first, early Christian, converts, and consequently a new iconography. Without this novel urgency endowed upon the act of conversion Caravaggio's *Conversion of St. Paul* would have never held so much weight, nor the great cycle devoted to Constantine in Santa Maria Maggiore could shape in such respect the early modern perception of history. Albeit the first Christian Emperor, Constantine was also seen as the most important convert in the history of Christianity, and thus the ideal model for the present age. Whether it was a conversion of the Christians in Europe or the inhabitants of the newly conquered New World, *the change of the soul* was one of the pivotal questions of the time.

One remarkable painting of Dutch seventeenth century unites this fluidity of the soul, with a supreme metaphor of fluidity – the water itself. A highly political allegory of conversion painted by Adrian van der Venne in 1614 is situated in and on water and named “Fishing for souls”. Nowadays part of the collection of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam it represents the split between different religious denominations during the Twelve Year Truce between the Dutch Republic and Spain. The entire scene is situated in an Arcadian river surmounted by a rainbow, while on the shores there are carefully depicted all the political protagonists of this truce. On the water there are two large boats – a Protestant and a Catholic one. While the Protestant one managed to catch some souls in its net with the great help of the allegories of Hope, Faith and Charity the Catholic one is empty<sup>21</sup>. This moralistic allegory of conversion is staged on water for several reasons. It makes a direct Biblical reference to John 21:6 (“Cast the net over the right side of the boat, and you will find something. So they cast it and were not able to pull it in because of the number of fish.”) where Christ metaphorically instructs the apostles to fish for the souls and consequently to evangelise the world. On the other hand, it implicitly refers to the less evident fluidity that of confession and ultimately of the soul itself.

But conversion was a much more complex and multifaceted matter, and it shaped the Early Modern identities in an unprecedented way. Primarily, conversion in the Early Modern world was equally voluntary and involuntary depending both on the religious and political context in which the individual resided as well

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21 The now visible souls in the Catholic boat are added much later.



as on its social standing. As can be expected, the lower classes were often subjected to involuntary conversion, forced upon by their Lords or the clergy. The upper classes could perceive it as a matter of choice or foundation for a more favourable political aggrandisement, as embodied in one of the most famous converts of the age – Queen Christina of Sweden (1626-1689).<sup>22</sup> She truly personified what Catholic church needed in those turbulent times! An ultimate proof of faith and the inspiration for all Protestant souls to follow. Although she was remembered in history as one of the greatest patrons of art, the veritable “Minerva of the North” that invited the most esteemed intellectuals of the age to her court, Queen Christina was for the Catholic Church the ideal convert. When she arrived in Rome on December 20<sup>th</sup> 1655 as a newly converted Catholic she was given the triumphal entry by the pope Alexander VII that few of her contemporaries ever received.<sup>23</sup> She was welcomed by the exalted Romans along the streets under the triumphal gate designed by Bernini and greeted by the Pope himself. The prints created to commemorate her triumphal entry were several and were sold and resold long after this solemn even had taken place. From the commemoration of an ephemeral spectacle, they were turned into the supreme proof of papal propaganda. One of these prints by Horatio Marianri *Cavalcade undertaken in Rome in honour of the Queen Christina of Sweden* 1655 follows the usual matrix reserved for the important triumphal entries in the papal capital. Her portrait presides over the carefully represented curving line that abstracted the meandering movement through the urban space of Rome. As befitting such occasion, her procession symbolically connected some the most important *Papal* landmarks of Baroque Rome – from the Porta del Popolo, over Castel San Angelo, to its splendid close in the Piazza San Pietro as befitted an illustrious Catholic convert. The movement of ceremonial procession, depicted as faithfully as possible in the two dimensional medium of print, was also in its form quintessentially fluid. It was, obviously, meant to transmit the meandering movement of the procession, but also it could have implicitly denoted the very mutability of both the fabric of the papal city, devoted on that particular day to the honour of the Swedish Queen, and the celebrant’s converted soul.

Acts of conversion, often celebrated as the “turns of the soul”, became particularly fluid issue in those societies whose existence could be seen as *liminal*, where the change of confession conveyed, if possible, an even greater weight. Sometimes conversion was seen as only temporary, as a cunning means in obtaining the desired social standing, or indeed the needed level of education. Such practice was noted among the Orthodox high clergy first in Kiev in the late seventeenth and later in the Archbishopric of Karlovci in the eighteenth century. Both domains were under the dual threat – on the one hand of conversion into Catholicism, and on the other into Unitary church. The only available means of strengthening Orthodox faith in Kiev and later in Karlovci was, among other strategies, found in the provision of

22 For the life of Queen Christina of Sweden see: S. Ackerman, *Queen Christina of Sweden and Her Circle: The Transformation of a Seventeenth Century Libertine*, Brill, 1991.

23 For a more detailed account of Queen Christina’s entry into Rome see: R.M. San Juan, *Rome – A City Out of Print*, Minneapolis, 2001, 122-127.

high quality education that could rival that of the Jesuit colleges. Thus, before they founded their own colleges on the Jesuit model like The Spiritual Academy of Peter Mohyla in Kiev or the Latin school in Sremski Karlovci, the high clergy found that temporary conversion, one of necessity, was an excellent method in obtaining the necessary education.<sup>24</sup> They would convert into Uniates, study in Jesuit colleges like Collegio Romano or St. Athanasius and then, on their return home, return to their original confession. The conversion to Uniates proved to be less of a transgression, and less perilous than the direct conversion to Catholicism, while equally obtaining entry into Jesuit colleges. Such heightened sense of adaptability and malleability of their respective confessional identities enabled the high clergy to gather knowledge diverse enough to lead extensive spiritual and political reforms in their respective centres and to place firmly their realms into the map of the Baroque world.

### *The fluidity of presence*

The fluidity of the self, at this age, also had its more sombre equivalent – the very ephemerality of presence. Although each period in the arts and culture left a lasting monument to its confrontation with fragility of existence, only in the Baroque the presence and absence, the life and death would be so inseparably intertwined. This obsession with the end of our time invaded almost all the elements of the Baroque visual repertoire, as well as Baroque poetry. Thus its obsession with metamorphoses, with mutability and the vanishing worlds. As English Baroque poet William Drummond wrote:

All only constant is in constant change,  
What done is, is undone, and when undone,  
Into some other figure doth it range;  
Thus rolls the restless world beneath the Moon.<sup>25</sup>

If the entire world is *constant change* or *nothing but movement* as Montaigne proclaimed, if it was indeed a *perpetual pilgrimage* as believed by Suarez de Figueroa, than existence was nothing but a glorified flow.

But this flux of our mortal sustenance was, in the Baroque, constantly directed by a relentless current – that of time.<sup>26</sup> When French poet Jean Ogier de Gombauld wrote about the unstoppable power of time, he named it the *fugitive wave*, the ultimate force that swept everything in its wake. It carried the materiality of the world itself, obliterating our deeds and lives with it. A visual equivalent to Gombauld's embodiment of fluidity of time, was the representation of the perpetual flux in the art of Gianlorenzo Bernini.<sup>27</sup>

24 For the issue of these 'educative conversions' see: M. Timotijević, *Srpsko barokno slikarstvo*, Novi Sad, 1998; J. Todorović, *Entitet u senci: mapiranje moći i državni spektakl u Karlovačkoj Mitropoliji*, Novi Sad, 2010.

25 "The Instability of Mortal Glory" by William Drummond in *William Drummond of Hawthornden: Poems and Prose*, London, 115.

26 On the issue of time in the age of the Baroque see: J.A. Maravall, *op. cit.*; J. Todorović, *O ogledalima ružama i ništavilu*, Beograd, 2012.

27 For the issue of movement in the work of Gianlorenzo Bernini see among others: R. Wittkower, *Bernini*, London, 1964; J. Kenseth, 'Bernini's Borghese Sculptures – Another View', *The Art Bulletin*, 58 (1981), 191-210;

More than any artist of his time Bernini was obsessed with the concept of fluidity, movement and everlasting change. Billowing draperies, shifting bodies and iridescent surfaces gave the supreme expression to the equally mobile *movements of the soul*. He used specific metamorphic marble to decorate his Cornaro Chapell and his Church of San Andrea al Quirinale firmly believing that its flickering qualities would add yet another layer of mutability and motion to his immovable work. As his biographer Filippo Baldinucci pointed out: *he rendered stones animate and colours eloquent*. In his work Bernini used wood to represent marble and marble to represent fabric, leaves and fire. Everything could become anything else, and like our own lives it was susceptible to mutation.

For Bernini not only marble was movable, malleable and metamorphic, but also the artistic media themselves. He was the first artist to create sculptures, his Borghese mythologies, to be purposefully experienced in motion, while his revolutionary confluence of different media in *bel composto* was the legacy of polymedia art for centuries to come. Consequently, some of his works conveyed the notion of relentless flow of time with more force and greater urgency than any other artwork of the period. While one of the most poignant depiction of this merciless flight of time was his grand allegory of Death/Time that resurfaced amid billows of swirling marble brocade underneath the *Tomb of the Pope Alexander VII*, it was also present in the upswept drapery and allegories in the *Tombs to Ippolito Merenda and Giovanni Valtrini*, and was given an utmost expression in flowing, levitating group of the *Ecstasy of St. Theresa*.

However, there was one, now sadly lost work by Bernini, where the fluidity of time, of art and the matter itself reached levels not explored by any other artist of the Baroque age. During the pontificate of the pope Alexander VII Bernini created several *memento mori* pieces that perfectly complemented the deeply contemplative temperament of the esteemed pontiff and gave an utmost expression to the fluidity of the life and the self. According to Bernini's son and biographer Domenico Bernini one was the bronze coffin that the Pope kept as the grand reminder to his transience in the papal chambers, the other a curious *memento mori* object destroyed in coming centuries.<sup>28</sup> This *memento mori* was conceived as, in modern terms, a very witty installation which transgressed even the amalgamation of media present in his *bel composto*. It was a marble skull with bones with small holes designed to hold different real flowers meant to complete the *memento mori* composition. Although such compositions in paint were standard features of the *vanitas* still-lives, and even sometimes appeared in stone on marble tombs, never before the passage and flow of transience and time was given such veritable form. Even if this piece seemed simple in its description, it possessed the plurality of fluidity rarely present in the Baroque culture. It was the fluidity of material, the mutability of existence and the pure changeability of matter that represented not only the flow of time, but the evanescence of the world itself.

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A. Bollard, 'Desiderio and Diletto: Vision, Touch and Poetics of Bernini's Apollo and Daphne', *The Art Bulletin*, 82 (2000), 309-30.

28 See D. Bernini, *The Life of Gianlorenzo Bernini: a translation and a critical edition*, Pennsylvania, 2011, 404.

Another, less direct, but equally powerful image of evanescence and fluid presence was woven by Antonio Grano into the *pietra dura* landscape that decorates the presbytery in the church of Il Gesu in Palermo.<sup>29</sup> This grand undulating countryside, executed in rich blues and greens of semi precious stones turned this pastoral landscape into a strangely fluid watery world. The rich hues of greens and blues, the semi transparency of alabaster, the gold specs of lapis lazuli shimmer and flicker with every source of light, giving to the entire scene a heightened sense of unreality, or reality that is shifting as movable as life itself. Although meant only as a background for the dramatic stucco sculptures of *David's Anger* by Giacommo Serpotta, this landscape complemented the sculptures and their dramatic movement. The imposing gestures and twists of the main protagonists seemed perpetually repeated by this endlessly moving land, thus reminding us that absolute source of movement, the grand movement of Time.

The age of fluid geographies, of nations and individuals in constant movement, thus embraced mutability and impermanence as the main principles of being. The same principles that would resurface so disconcertingly in our own time:

Delay, decay. Living, living,  
Never moving, ever moving.  
Iron thoughts came with me.  
And go with me:  
Red river, river, river.<sup>30</sup>

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29 For shorter remark on this work see: J. Todorović, *Večna sadašnjost: barokna kultura u savremenoj književnosti*, Beograd, 2018, 83.

30 From the poem *Virginia* in T. S. Eliot, *Complete Poems and Plays*, London, 2004, 139.

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### ТАЛАС КОЈИ ИЗМИЧЕ: КОНЦЕПТ ФЛУИДНОСТИ КАО ЈЕДАН ОД САЖИМАЈУЋИХ КУЛТУРНИХ ФЕНОМЕНА БАРОКНОГ ДОБА

**Сажетак:** Иако се концепт флуидности често појављује у теорији и критици уметности и културе нашега доба, осећај флуидности, времена, простора и човека, била је први пут суштински дефинисана у барокно доба. Флуидност времена и простора прожима све елементе барокне мисли. Још од средине 19. века, флуидност је препозната као једна од кључних квалитета барокне културе. Она је захватила све елементе постојања и стваралаштва, али је била посебно изражена у визуелним уметностима и књижевности тога доба. Такође, чинила је нераскидиви део барокног стила и попут њега била заснована на идејама сталне мене и промене.

Барокни уметници су често користили управо метафоре течности, воде, неухватљивост њеног мрешкања, њене сталне променљивости и варљивости њених одблесака да би описали несталност нашег кратковоког постојања. Барокни човек, како су често говорили барокни песници, био је ношен том неумитном матицом времена. Међутим, није само време било флуидно, већ је флуидност захватила саму суштину постојања. Барокни човек је сматрао да је флуидност у сржи нашег бивствовања и да је наше биће флуидно и пролазно попут дима, магле и треперавих пламенова, који су често коришћени као алегорије човековог битка.

Иако је флуидност одавно препозната као водећа одлика барокног стила, никада до сада није јој била посвећена посебна пажња, нити је флуидност барокне културе виђена као најавна флуидности нашег доба. Зато, овај текст има задатак да се дубље позабави феноменом флуидности у епохи барока, да истражи све његове појавности паралелним сагледавањем визуелних уметности и књижевности.

**Кључне речи:** барок, флуидност, миграције, разговори, флуидност присутности, краткотрајност, Антонио Грано