

How the Baroque Learned to Speak Spanish

Este artículo estudia la construcción teórica del barroco y el neobarroco, y argumenta que estos conceptos juegan un papel inquietante en la crítica hispánica actual: más allá de su capacidad denominativa, sirven para perpetuar la marginación internacional de la literatura española y latinoamericana. Eso es, su función consiste, entre otras cosas, en reinterpretar la literatura hispánica moderna como fruto de una supuesta identidad o sensibilidad atemporal e intransferible. Hoy se tiende a creer, en efecto, que el barroco es una estética de algún modo arraigada en España y América Latina, signo de un desfase cultural frente al resto del mundo. Pero este hecho resulta irónico, porque la historia del concepto revela todo lo contrario: la participación activa del mundo hispánico en los principales debates estéticos del siglo xx. En su origen el barroco fue uno de los temas más discutidos de la literatura comparada, y sólo poco a poco fue adquiriendo resonancias identitarias. Reconocer esta historia nos llevaría a cuestionar el supuesto carácter barroco de España y América Latina y a insistir en su centralidad en la modernidad estética global.

For better or worse, the baroque holds a central place in Hispanic and Latin American criticism, both as a name for early modern or colonial literature and as a label for postmodern or postcolonial cultural production. It refers to a dizzying variety of styles, modes, ideologies and periods, many of them mutually exclusive, and it encompasses an equally dizzying array of variants – neobaroque, ultrabaroque, *neobarroso*, New World Baroque, *barroco de Indias*, etc. – with narrower historical or geographic bounds. Nevertheless the baroque tends to suggest, at least in its most recent incarnations, a handful of recurring traits: a contorted use of language, a self-conscious theatricality, a general sense of excess – and above all, an engagement with a specifically Hispanic or Latin American tradition. The term does have currency in other national literatures, of course, particularly German and Italian, but in Spain and Latin America its role is unique, for it has become much more than a mere label applied to a certain seventeenth-century style. Not long ago José Ramón Jouve Martín and Renée Souldre-LaFrance deemed the baroque “un concepto

fundamental a la hora de entender la modernidad y la posmodernidad en el mundo hispánico" (6). In effect, the baroque has become indispensable for discussions of identity, modernity and aesthetics. But why? Is its prominence proof of some uniquely Hispanic sensibility? Or is it rather symptomatic of a certain critical amnesia?

In what follows I argue that "baroque" and "neobaroque" play a troubling role in contemporary criticism: no mere stylistic designations, they in fact serve to sideline the Hispanic world from global discussions of aesthetic modernity. Underneath the familiar stories about baroque's Hispanic roots, or about the neobaroque's divergence from European and North American postmodernism, lurks a very familiar, and very objectionable, set of assumptions – that Spain and Latin America have little to say to their cultural neighbors, and play no real role in a larger story of modern culture. To put it more polemically, "baroque" and "neobaroque" are not neutral aesthetic labels: they are the very terms by which the Hispanic world is written out of literary history.

By this I mean that they are used to recast much modern Hispanic literature as the product of a timeless "baroque" cultural identity, an identity that is by definition unique to Spain and Latin America. With these terms critics perpetuate, in effect, the already marginal status of Spanish-language cultural production, by positing its basic incommensurability with – and hence irrelevance to – the broader world. This applies more to the neobaroque (the main target of my critique) than to its early modern counterpart, but the terms work in tandem and reinforce each other. It is almost an article of faith that the Hispanic world occupies a liminal space within the West, set off by a colonial baroque in the past and a postcolonial neobaroque in the present. Ironically, however, a history of the baroque – that is, a history of the concept, rather than the period or style it refers to – reveals something dramatically different: Latin America and Spain's intimate participation in the debates that have defined aesthetic modernity since the beginning of the twentieth century.

To be clear, my objection is not to the period or style known as baroque, nor to any baroque author, Hispanic or otherwise, but to the often uncritical, self-marginalizing way the term is used in Spanish and Latin American scholarship. My argument is thus wholly compatible with a certain defense of the baroque – that is, a defense of the period or style. Jesús Pérez-Magallón, for example, argues compellingly that the baroque has been erased from a genealogy of modern thought that finds the seeds of critical rationalism only in the Reformation and the Enlightenment; his larger complaint is the virtual absence of the Spanish-speaking world from a macronarrative of modernity.¹ This is my complaint, too, though here I seek to untangle the knot by pulling on the opposite end of the

rope. I approach the baroque by studying its history as a concept – its invention, its sudden popularity, and its slow entwinement in Hispanic identity discourse.

The baroque began as the topic of lively debate across national boundaries, a debate in which Spanish and Latin American critics took an active role, along with their counterparts from the rest of Europe and the Americas. Only later did the term take on identitarian overtones, and this crucial shift, from shared concern of literary history to unique expression of Hispanic culture, is largely overlooked, much to the detriment of contemporary scholarship. Acknowledging this past would mean abandoning the notion that Spain and Latin America have somehow “always” been baroque.

Thus questions of intellectual history take on a theoretical urgency. Indeed, while my aims here are critical – polemical even – my method is by necessity historical. Understanding this concept’s troubling role in contemporary Hispanic criticism requires pinpointing when and how it acquired its national significance. It requires, in short, showing how the baroque learned to speak Spanish.

DEVIATION FROM THE NORM

One common explanation for the baroque’s importance in the Hispanic world turns to the history of the term itself. As it happens, “baroque” derives from the Portuguese *barroco*, a jeweler’s name for an irregular pearl, which itself may come from the Latin for wart (*verruca*) or an Arabic term for pebbly earth (*burāq*), and which at some point may have combined with the scholastic term *baroco*, a mnemonic device for a certain type of syllogism thought to be of questionable validity.² Few commentators on the baroque fail to trot out these facts, often in service of a specious point: if deviation, from the perfection of the sphere or the soundness of logic, is visible in the word’s very origins, and if deviation turns out to be a fairly good description of what baroque style does with Renaissance ideals of balance and clarity, then surely its starring role in the Hispanic world needs no justification. Like the baroque, aesthetic modernity in Spain and Latin America – so the argument goes – is perennially deviant, deficient or exceptional.

Yet etymology reveals virtually nothing about what the term means now, or how it achieved its notoriety. Drawing a parallel between an irregular jewel and an equally “irregular” Hispanic modernity merely reaffirms that notoriety without explaining it. It says little about why a term once reserved for seventeenth-century architecture can also describe the literature, art and film of today.

A more fruitful approach might start with its current uses. Pierre Charpentrat proposed just such a method in the 1960s as he sought (not without sarcasm) to explain the baroque's sudden and unexpected popularity in France:

Que le mot ait fini par se délester de tout contenu en passant dans le domaine littéraire puis dans tous les domaines, et en revenant, après ce circuit, contaminer la critique artistique, que ses utilisateurs perdent de vue le vieil axiome logique "A n'est pas non-A," chacun en convient aisément. Reste qu'il remplit, ou du moins a rempli, une *fonction*. (123, emphasis in original)

Taking a cue from Charpentrat, one might ask how it functions in contemporary Hispanic and Latin American studies. Whatever else it is, the baroque is a conceptual tool, one which critics put to a range of uses. And as it appears in discussions of contemporary culture, as the neobaroque, its most conspicuous function is to stress the parallels and continuities with the early modern past. In various ways, Roberto González Echevarría, Irlomar Chiampi, Mabel Moraña, Pedro Aullón de Haro, Lois Parkinson Zamora and William Egginton – to name only a handful of the most visible – turn to the seventeenth century to make sense the twentieth and twenty-first.

Given their very different political and theoretical commitments, one cannot easily generalize about the work of these and other critics. Much neobaroque scholarship is illuminating: Carlos Gamarro's *Ficciones barrocas* (2010), for example, introduces a simple but effective baroque typology to discuss Borges, Cortázar, Onetti and others whose style is not obviously exuberant or exaggerated. In a very different key, Luis Martín-Estudillo's *La mirada elíptica* (2007) astutely traces baroque echoes in contemporary Spanish poetry.

Taken as a whole, however, this body of work gives the impression that a huge swath of culture in Latin America and Spain, from the avant-garde to the postmodern, is ultimately an instance of a larger, multi-century baroque sensibility. How else could it apply to everyone from Nicolás Guillén to Frida Kahlo, from Gabriel García Márquez to Guillermo Carnero, from Alejo Carpentier to Pedro Almodóvar? Just as critics explain the baroque by way of etymology, they often find the key to Spain and Latin America's modernity in a foundational moment or Golden Age.

No doubt there are compelling reasons for studying, say, José Lezama Lima or Severo Sarduy, or even some of the Spanish *novísimos*, alongside Luis de Góngora, the baroque poet who remained a key referent for their aesthetic projects. But viewing recent cultural production as the "return" of a baroque sensibility quickly imbues the term with a significance far

beyond aesthetics. It becomes, as John Beverley has argued, not merely a moment in Spain and Latin America's past, but an integral part of their cultural identity:

For such an optic, the Baroque constitutes above all the prefiguration or prehistory of the present, not something that is valid in its own terms. Hence the impossibility of leaving the Baroque behind, consigning it to the past, because it remains as a kind of unerasable sign of the Latin American as such, with a constantly shifting, perpetually original referent: *barroco indígena, barroco de Indias, barroco criollo, mundonovismo, "lo real maravilloso," neobarroco, barroco postmoderno, neobarroso, ultra-barroco...* (16)

Beverley takes aim at the widespread enthusiasm for the baroque, and in particular at the teleological reading that makes the baroque appear as the origin of contemporary Latin America. As a period or its defining style, the baroque coincided, he points out, with the darkest moments of Spanish colonialism. Celebrating it today as a uniquely Latin American or Hispanic force for liberation, an anticolonial aesthetic visible in both the present and the past, thus requires a perverse disavowal of history. Or, turning the tables, one might conclude that subsuming past violence into a vibrant artistic synthesis is one of the concept's functions.

This is the argument Jorge Luis Marzo makes in *La memoria administrada: el barroco y lo hispano* (2010). Marzo approaches the baroque not as a given reality, but as a particular kind of story told about Spain, its former empire, and their relationship to the rest of the world. As he writes, "el barroco es un término fundamentalmente ideológico, razón por la cual devendrá un constante campo de batalla" (30). Like Beverley, Marzo's focus lies in the way a consensus about a baroque essence in Hispanic culture erases – and forecloses discussion of – historical violence:

Pensar que existe una cultura previa a las sociedades da como resultado un empobrecimiento social y político muy conveniente para quienes justamente buscan la desactivación de toda disensión, de quienes persiguen que la memoria no pueda ser rescatada del ruido ensordecedor del consenso. (203)

In Marzo's analysis, the gesture that erases historical violence also assigns Spain and Latin America an irreducible otherness, a difference or exceptional quality that sets them apart from the rest of the world. The baroque, he observes, is imagined as "moderno pero fuera del marco de lo 'anglosajón'" (198). Here a second function of the concept becomes clear, one already mentioned above and visible in many of the term's apparently

contradictory meanings: it affirms a Hispanic difference or exceptionalism. As a historical period or a contemporary strategy, a defense of obscurantism or a response to colonialism, the baroque is imagined in its deviation from European models of modernity – whether this means secularism and Enlightenment, imperialism and exploitation, or classical beauty and austere minimalism.

Marzo and Beverley go a long way toward clarifying the baroque's current uses as a way of understanding the past and present. Yet their work leaves open the separate (and crucial) historical question that I address here – namely, how the baroque acquired such a peculiar and troubling function in the first place. That such a term has come to play an outsized role in contemporary Hispanic and Latin American studies is, or should be, an astonishing fact. For the baroque is not *only* a style visible in the seventeenth or twentieth centuries, nor is it just an ideological instrument for misreading the past. It is a tool that critics over the years have put to widely different ends. In fact, the baroque's recent past—its genealogy, one might say, as opposed to its etymology – reveals it to be a widely cosmopolitan concern, not a uniquely Hispanic sensibility. It shows, in short, that Spain and Latin America are not isolated from the cultural mainstream but among its most significant tributaries.

Accounts of the baroque usually emphasize the contradictions and ambiguities that cling to the term. Walter Moser's recent (and very valuable) conceptual history, for example, leads to the unsatisfying conclusion that the baroque is, indeed, a very slippery concept. And it is – but its development is historically legible. My account, while far from exhaustive, presents this development as a narrative, both to make sense of the term's seemingly contradictory meanings, and to show how it became possible to conceive of a “return” of the baroque today. This notion emerged by surprise, if not exactly by accident, from a number of distinct debates which can be plotted over time, and which broadly define the parameters of discourse on the baroque. Critics have seen the baroque as a historical period, a transhistorical style, an ideological mechanism, a national or ethnic expression, and finally, in its twentieth-century incarnation, a response to modernism or postmodernism. These five discussions – about periodization, style, ideology, identity and modernity – overlap in many ways, but can best be understood one by one.

If the baroque has become, as Francisco Ortega observes, “a privileged concept for accessing the actuality of our own era,” it is essential to ask when and why that privilege came about (183). It seems natural today to link modern Spain and Latin America to the baroque, yet this circumstance is itself highly unnatural, and has nothing to do with pearls or syllogisms – and everything to do with the aesthetic debates

that, over the first half of the last century, spanned Europe and the Americas. Far from a symptom of its distance and irrelevance, the baroque is proof of the Hispanic world's engagement with the wider world.

RENAISSANCE AND BAROQUE

To begin with, the adjective "baroque" is much younger than the seventeenth-century art it describes. Imported from French to the other European languages in the eighteenth or nineteenth century, it became an established art-historical category only in the 1890s. As a concept it is thus barely a century old. ("Barroco" did not appear in the *Diccionario de la Real Academia* until 1914) One early definition, in the *Encyclopédie méthodique* (1788), confined it to architecture and dismissed it as "une nuance du bizarre" (210). Other sporadic appearances in the nineteenth century are similarly negative and vague.³ Not until Heinrich Wölfflin's *Renaissance and Baroque* (1888), and his even more influential *Principles of Art History* (1915), did the term begin to shed its pejorative connotations and become a neutral period designation. While Wölfflin's first book focused on architectural evolution in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italy, the second extended the term to drawing, painting and sculpture, and broadened the scope to include Germany as well. More importantly, it reduced post-Renaissance changes in taste to a powerful (if schematic) framework of five paired traits: where Renaissance art had been linear, planar, closed, multiple and "absolutely" clear, the baroque was "painterly," recessed, open, unified and "relatively" clear. Wölfflin sums up these five contrasts as the difference between being and becoming. The baroque, he writes, "in place of the perfect, the completed, gives the restless, the becoming; in place of the limited, the conceivable, gives the limitless, the colossal. The ideal of beautiful proportion vanishes, interest concentrates not on being, but on happening" (*Principles* 10). He thus presents discrete formal innovations as part of a larger shift, toward the end of the sixteenth century, in the understanding of art and beauty, and even of humanity's place in the cosmos.

Wölfflin's approach set the tone for later critics, who linked the baroque to the emergence of a modern consciousness or to the propagation of a Counter-Reformation ideology. Even more decisive was his formalism: by reducing the baroque to five stylistic traits, each of them readily transferable to different contexts, he cleared the way for the term's application to other, historically remote periods. Both lines, ideological and formal, develop out of Wölfflin's work; two other lines, on the baroque's national affiliation and significance for the modern world, grew dominant only later.

After Wölfflin the popularity of the baroque exploded. According to René Wellek, who charted its enormous vogue in “The Concept of Baroque in Literary Scholarship” (1945), the term quickly spread across Europe in the 1910s and 1920s, and soon grew beyond Germany and Italy to encompass Spain, Portugal and Latin America, as well as to the low countries and central Europe (71). In the span of a few decades, “baroque” succeeded in establishing itself as the dominant term for the century following the Renaissance in European art and architecture (although now it is generally said to follow a post-Renaissance “mannerism” – a somewhat separate story).⁴ It quickly crossed genre boundaries as well, and by the 1920s referred to literature as well as the visual arts (75).

I cite these facts not because they are forgotten or overlooked, but because the conclusion they point to is seldom drawn by critics today (even if mid-century writers like Sarduy knew it well): in its origins – its very recent origins – there was nothing particularly Hispanic about the baroque. Only in 1929 did it arrive in Spanish literary criticism, when Ludwig Pfandl introduced it as a name for the second half of the Golden Age, drawing attention to its novelty. No doubt the celebration of the third centenary of Góngora’s death, in 1927, facilitated its adoption. But while Góngora quickly became synonymous with the baroque, he was not initially commemorated as a baroque poet, for the simple reason that the word had not yet come to designate a literary-historical moment.⁵ Earlier critics had employed the term, but mainly as a vague stylistic description, not a definite period. In the 1930s and 1940s, however, it quickly caught on among critics from both sides of the Atlantic, such as José Ortega y Gasset, Américo Castro, Pedro Henríquez Ureña and Mariano Picón Salas.⁶ Before long it had comfortably ensconced itself as the name of the period immediately following the Renaissance in Hispanic literatures – not just architecture or painting. The baroque had begun to speak Spanish, but it was still far from monolingual.

By the 1960s, throughout Europe and the Americas, the term had taken hold of the critical imagination. Today this popularity has faded from memory, yet in its heyday, the baroque constituted one of the foremost topics of comparative literature scholarship. In 1974 one critic, Harold Segel, went so far as to claim that “[p]robably no area of literary study has evoked so much interest and controversy in recent years as the *Baroque*” (3, emphasis in original). Much of this controversy centered on periodization, though the term’s geographic, national and cultural limits also fueled endless debates: was it strictly a Catholic affair? Did England have a baroque? Did it express a spiritual crisis or untroubled sensuality? Could one speak of a baroque philosophy, science or mathematics? Such questions might now seem rigid and schematic, or too general in their

formulation, and it is perhaps no coincidence that the term's popularity, at least as a period term, began to wane just as "theory" arrived on the academic stage.

Nonetheless, these largely forgotten debates provided the backdrop for the work of a number of authors whose more theoretical approaches to the subject remain canonical: Michel Foucault's *Les Mots et les choses* (1969) responds to mid-century discussions of periodization across countries and fields of knowledge, while Walter Benjamin's book on *Trauerspiel* (1925) belongs to the initial wave of baroque enthusiasm in Germany. (Benjamin's book, incidentally, was not widely translated or cited until the 1970s, and thus remained marginal to the concept's early development.) Many of these debates highlighted the term's novel or provisional nature. Tellingly, as late as 1967, Theodor Adorno could deny the existence of musical baroque, dismissing any talk of it as "ideology in the precise sense of false consciousness" (136). Such comments serve as a reminder that the baroque was invented, not simply unearthed.

Today, of course, at least within Hispanic criticism, the term is so thoroughly established that no one feels obliged to justify its use. Yet as a result, it is harder to see just how recent and contingent its success was. Lois Parkinson Zamora, for example, offers the following familiar account of the baroque's "rediscovery" in *The Inordinate Eye* (2006):

For two hundred years the Baroque had been considered irrational and reactionary when compared to the "Enlightenment" that followed it, but by the 1920s, Enlightenment rationalism had itself become oppressive and, in some cases, totalitarian. The seventeenth-century Baroque had subverted Classical norms of reason and order, and now again, in the early twentieth century, it seemed possible that the Baroque might counter the sterile structures of Hegelian historicism and instrumental reason. (286)

Certainly, French or Spanish neoclassicists anathematized much of what preceded them, but they could hardly dismiss the baroque outright, for the simple reason that, as an object of study, it did not yet exist. Indeed, not all the writers now called baroque needed rehabilitation in the 1920s: Góngora did, of course, but Cervantes had probably never fallen out of favor, while Calderón's and Lope's recuperations began in the nineteenth century.

The trouble with the familiar account above lies in the assumption that it makes sense to ask what the eighteenth or nineteenth century thought of "the baroque," as though the concept were self-evident and needed only a name. It was not. Rather than the revival of a long-maligned period or style, the 1920s saw the invention of a new literary-historical

tool, one capable of grouping together Cervantes, Lope, Quevedo, Góngora, Calderón, Sor Juana and others, distinguishing them from their sixteenth-century predecessors, and linking them to their contemporaries elsewhere. Without its very recent invention, moreover, the baroque could not have “returned” as neobaroque in the twentieth century – nor could it be imagined as an alternative to metropolitan models of aesthetic modernity. Nor, to quote Beverley again, could it “come to be thought of as a sort of episteme or ‘deep structure’ of Latin America as such” (14). The baroque’s current prominence in Hispanic and Latin American literature begins not in the seventeenth century itself – as Zamora, González Echevarría and others suggest – but in the early twentieth, with its creation as a period in the history of culture.

CLASSICAL AND BAROQUE

Questions of period, chronology and definition guided much early scholarship on the baroque. Paradoxically, however, they gave rise to a distinctly ahistorical or transhistorical set of debates, because once the period’s distinctive features had been identified as a set of abstract principles, it became easy to find those same principles elsewhere. If baroque poetry abounds in conceits, antitheses, metaphors, and bombast, then surely similar poetry in other centuries should also be called “baroque”? And if these stem from a more general tendency toward exuberance and exaggeration, then couldn’t any exuberant expression be seen as an instantiation of an eternal baroque spirit?

A number of early twentieth-century art critics developed this line of thought. But it was Eugeni d’Ors who went furthest, proposing that the history of culture could be seen as an alternation between two “eons” or artistic constants: the classical and the baroque. He put forth this theory in his idiosyncratic and influential book *Lo barroco* (1935).⁷ As the title makes clear, his concern is not *el barroco*, that is, a specific European historical period, but *lo barroco*, regardless of where or when it appears. D’Ors’s definition largely follows Wölfflin’s: his baroque denotes painterliness, depth, dynamism and, “por encima de todo, aquella propensión a lo teatral, lujoso, retorcido, enfático, que la sensibilidad menos ejercitada advierte inmediatamente en lo Barroco” (74). These words refer specifically to the “chapterhouse window” in the Convent of the Order of Christ, in Tomar, Portugal, and the fact that the window dates from the early sixteenth century (and hence belongs chronologically to the Renaissance) drives home his point: the baroque knows no historical or geographic bounds. It continually reappears, argues d’Ors, in the most varied times and places. And while one “eon” may dominate certain periods or regions, examples of both can be found side by side: Voltaire he

deems classical, while Rousseau is baroque. D'Ors sums up his theory as follows:

1°. El Barroco es una constante histórica que se vuelve a encontrar en épocas tan recíprocamente lejanas como el Alejandrinismo lo está de la Contra-Reforma o ésta del período "Fin-de-Siglo"... 2°. Este fenómeno interesa no sólo al arte, sino a la civilización ... 3°. Su carácter es normal [i.e., not pathological or indicative of decline] ... 4°. Lejos de proceder del estilo clásico, el Barroco se opone a él de manera más fundamental todavía que el romanticismo; el cual, por su parte, no parece ya más que un episodio en el desenvolvimiento histórico de la constante barroca. (70)

Armed with this set of principles, d'Ors sets out to uncover manifestations of the baroque throughout history, giving a Latin taxonomical name to each "species" of the genus *Barocchus*: *Barocchus romanticus*, *Barocchus nordicus*, *Barocchus buddhicus*, *Barocchus finisaecularis*, even a *Barocchus posteabellicus*, which corresponds to the interwar avant-gardes.

Given d'Ors's flair for overstatement, it is hard to know how seriously to read him, and his taxonomy, in particular, seems somewhat tongue-in-cheek. But it would be a mistake not to take him at his word, for while his framework is ambitious, not to say outlandish, he was not alone. Oswald Spengler, Ernst Curtius and Gustav Hocke took similarly transhistorical approaches. Moreover, some version of the classical-baroque binary remains active in contemporary scholarship, albeit in a more attenuated and less schematic way. Pedro Aullón de Haro, for example, recently edited a massive book of essays along Orsian lines entitled *Barroco* (2004), with articles on the Chinese baroque, Hellenistic baroque, and medieval Arabic baroque, among many other questionable variants. More importantly, many critics from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s endorsed d'Ors's theories more or less as he formulated them – most notably, Alejo Carpentier.

D'Ors casts his theory as an original and newly triumphant approach to the history of culture. Whatever its faults or merits, his work reveals how much work went into defining the baroque as the opposite of the classical. Wölfflin had paved the way with his binaries, but such a stark distinction did not follow on its own. It needed, rather, to be created by writers like d'Ors – and he happily takes credit for doing so. After all, most analogous period terms (Enlightenment, say) do not form half of a larger all-encompassing binary. Without the work of d'Ors and others, baroque would have likely remained a period designation, and talk of its contemporary "return" would sound as odd as a "return of the Renaissance." By making it transhistorical, a principle eternally opposed

to the classical, d'Ors paved the way for later critics to identify baroque aesthetics in the twentieth century.

Elevating the baroque to the status of a transhistorical entity had two other key consequences. First, it led to a dramatic simplification of what the term meant, and second, it helped give it an ideological thrust. The first consequence is already apparent in d'Ors: erasing the baroque's narrow historical bounds also blurs its formal parameters, since traits like "excess" or "extravagance" can be found anywhere. Borges's famous aperçu, that the baroque is simply "aquel estilo que agota (o quiere agotar) sus posibilidades y linda con su propia caricatura," applies equally well to anything overdone, no matter how slight the resemblance to seventeenth-century styles (9). Likewise, when Néstor Perlongher defines the baroque as the distortion or subversion of a preestablished style, he relies and expands upon d'Ors's earlier polarization.

The second consequence stems from the first. Once the baroque starts to imply resistance to aesthetic authority, it quite easily takes on a radical ideological charge: it becomes not merely a freer style, but the style of liberation. Contemporary work on the baroque as an inherently radical force (such as that of Chiampi, Zamora, Kaup and Egginton) arises from this earlier opposition to a conservative "classicism."⁸ But the question of how the baroque became shorthand for an aesthetics of resistance involves a distinct and more complicated set of discussions.

COUNTER-REFORMATION AND COUNTERCONQUEST

That critics today often see a radical politics in the baroque is odd, because early critics found only the opposite: the expression of absolutism and Catholic orthodoxy. Probably the first to emphasize the baroque's political dimension was Werner Weisbach, whose book *Der Barock als Kunst der Gegenreformation* (1921), neatly sums up its argument in its title: the baroque is the "art of the Counter-Reformation." According to Weisbach, baroque art "translates the ideas of the Counter-Reformation into images," turning away from the humanist spirit of the Renaissance toward a retrenchment in Catholic orthodoxy (60). Consequently it flourishes only in countries under the sway of the Counter-Reformation: in Italy and, most especially, in Spain. Responding to the challenge posed by Protestantism, the church seeks "to protect its prerogatives, to consolidate and enlarge its domain through a propaganda calculated for spirit and soul, eyes and ears" (37). But art enlisted for this purpose quickly loses its innocence and becomes calculated for its effect on the viewer: "Catholic art takes on something pointed, tendentious, propagandistic ... To encapsulate what gives this representation its essential character, we may call it a process of subjectivization and

psychologization" (222). As it acquires a propagandistic quality, baroque art makes a direct appeal to the viewer; it seeks to overwhelm and persuade – one could argue that this is the function of *trompe-l'œil* paintings or church ceilings that seem to open up onto the infinite.

Weisbach's thesis quickly gained wide acceptance, and his influence is visible in the work of Helmut Hatzfeld, Mariano Picón Salas and, most significantly, José Antonio Maravall, whose landmark study *La cultura del Barroco* (1975) takes Weisbach's basic insight and develops a much more nuanced model of the social role of baroque cultural production. Maravall argues that baroque art does not merely express or promote Catholic values, but in very subtle and indirect ways tries to inculcate a conservative ideology in viewers and readers. He takes the baroque to be a period of history (particularly Spanish history) characterized by having a *sociedad dirigida*, a guided society, in which the monarchy and the church ably use artistic production to shore up their authority. "[T]odo el arte barroco," he writes, "viene a ser un drama estamental, la gesticulate sumisión del individuo al marco del orden social" (90). Unlike Weisbach, Maravall sees this not as a return to medieval orthodoxy, but as an increasingly sophisticated method of promoting the interests of the state. Quite subtly, baroque art asks the viewer to identify with the dominant values:

Aplaudir a Lope, en su *Fuenteovejuna*, era estar junto a la monarquía, con sus vasallos, sus libres y pecheros. Aplaudir a Quevedo era también lo mismo, aunque pudiera surgir el caso de una discrepancia, mayor o menor, entre los que formaban el grupo dirigente ... No, claro está ... porque se propusiera en el texto o en el lienzo o en el escenario la adhesión a un sistema, sino porque se ayudaba a preparar la mentalidad que había de servir a ello de base. (195-96)

Certainly, Maravall acknowledges that the vast array of baroque cultural production does not endorse a single view, but he insists that the fundamental orientation of literary and artistic works in that period is conservative. And while critics often contest his thesis or accept it only with qualifications, it remains a touchstone for discussions of politics and culture in seventeenth-century Spain. Fernando Rodríguez de la Flor's *Barroco* (2002), for example, challenges Maravall's thesis by stressing the entropic forces at play in the cultural production of the period.

A very different response to Weisbach came two decades before Maravall's book, in the series of lectures that José Lezama Lima published as *La expresión americana* (1957). While not directly contradicting Weisbach, Lezama turns his thesis on its head: "Repitiendo la frase de Weisbach, adaptándola a lo americano, podemos decir que entre nosotros

el barroco fue un arte de la contraconquista” (80). Neither Weisbach nor Maravall discuss colonial America at any length, and Lezama argues that across the Atlantic the baroque took on a different character. “Counterconquest” refers to both a resistance to colonial authority and an American “conquering” of European forms. Lezama finds the prime examples of this in the work of the Andean sculptor José Kondori, whose church façade in Potosí incorporates numerous Incan motifs, and in the work of the Afro-Brazilian sculptor Aleijadinho (Antônio Francisco Lisboa), whose striking, contorted statues adorn churches in Minas Gerais. Their work shows a synthesis of cultures from Iberia, America and Africa:

El arte del indio Kondori representaba en una forma oculta y hierática la síntesis del español y del indio, de la teocracia hispánica de la gran época con el solemne ordenamiento pétreo de lo incaico ... El arte del Aleijadinho representa la culminación del barroco americano, la unión en una forma grandiosa de lo hispánico con las culturas africanas.⁹ (105-106)

In Lezama’s view, their achievement holds great political import, for it shows that America has created something new – something uniquely hybrid or *mestizo* – and no longer depends culturally on Europe. Significantly, Lezama situates the baroque in the eighteenth century, and declares it to be “firmemente amistoso de la Ilustración” (84) and a cultural precursor to the wars of independence, since it “prepara ya la rebelión del próximo siglo, [y] es la prueba de que se está maduro ya para una ruptura” (104). Thus Lezama gives the baroque a radically different ideological orientation: no longer conservative or retrograde, it is the first expression of America’s aesthetic independence, as well as a herald of its political liberation.

This reversal had a tremendous impact. Its influence can hardly be exaggerated, since it made possible a whole new line of thought about the seventeenth century and its relation to the present. Implicitly or explicitly, criticism that takes the baroque as something contestatory or resistant to political authority – which is to say, the bulk of work on the neobaroque and a fair amount on the historical baroque – refers back to Lezama’s notion of “counterconquest.” One can in fact draw a direct line from Lezama to Sarduy, who sees in the baroque the aesthetics of revolution—or rather, aesthetics *as* revolution. In “El barroco y el neobarroco” (1972), Sarduy outlines a trend in Latin American art and writing characterized by a highly self-conscious use of language that obscures its referent. This trend, which he calls the neobaroque (the coinage is his), corresponds to a loss of faith in the certainties of reason, truth or God:

Barroco que en su acción de bascular, en su caída, en su lenguaje *pinturero*, a veces estridente, abigarrado y caótico, metaforiza la impugnación de la entidad logocéntrica que hasta entonces lo y nos estructuraba desde su lejanía y su autoridad; barroco que recusa toda instauración, que metaforiza al orden discutido, al dios juzgado, a la ley transgredida. Barroco de la Revolución. (184)

On the surface, Sarduy's poststructuralist vocabulary has little to do with Lezama's "will to form," and in any case he is referring mainly to art and writing from the twentieth, not the seventeenth, century.¹⁰ Yet the revolutionary thrust he gives the term relies on Lezama's earlier ideological reversal. Ultimately the notion of "counterconquest" allows the baroque to become the very opposite of what Weisbach had claimed – and, perhaps less obviously, underpins the term's application to contemporary writing. Had Lezama not found the seeds of revolution within the American baroque, Sarduy might well have chosen a different designation for the "revolutionary" tendencies he discerned; similarly, later critics would likely not have spoken of a return of the baroque if this meant a return of the Spanish Inquisition. A revolutionary, contestatory notion of the baroque makes it possible to imagine its return in the first place.

Lezama's ideological reversal served also as a national or continental reversal: the baroque ceased to be just Spanish or Hispanic and became additionally, even centrally, Latin American. And just as the revolutionary vision of the baroque never quite displaced the reactionary version, its ties to these two identities – Hispanic and Latin American – coexist in an uneasy tension.

HISPANIC OR LATIN AMERICAN?

Surprisingly, the baroque did not strike early critics as especially Spanish. Wölfflin initially limited his baroque to Rome, while Wilhelm Worringer, viewing it as a variant of Gothic, found it quintessentially German. And Benedetto Croce, for his part – no fan of what he deemed "artistic ugliness" (24) and "aesthetic sin" (32) – noted sadly that the baroque was ultimately Italian (37). By the mid 1920s, however, thanks to Weisbach's emphasis on the Spanish roots of Counter-Reformation spirituality (16), when critics chose to identify the baroque with one country in particular, Spain topped the list. And Spain, conversely, came to be seen as essentially baroque. No doubt the polarization of baroque and classical further facilitated this identification: if France's *grand siècle* is synonymous with classicism and Spain's *siglo de oro* is eminently

baroque, then it becomes easy to elevate both terms to the status of national identities.

In the 1940s, Helmut Hatzfeld did just that. Stressing Spain's importance for the baroque, Hatzfeld advanced a remarkably ambitious claim: all manifestations of baroque art and writing across seventeenth-century Europe stem from a powerful, distinctly Spanish sensibility with a fondness for brashness, paradox, religiosity and figurative language (430-31). "Estos aspectos permanentes del espíritu y arte españoles ... [s]on tan fuertes y tan arraigados en suelo español, que ni siquiera pudieron desaparecer por influjo del Renacimiento italiano, de espíritu tan diverso." In fact, just the opposite occurred: "en la misma Italia políticamente hispanizada[,] el Renacimiento, a fines del siglo xvi, resulta influido por esos rasgos hispánicos" (434). Thus even if Italy could technically claim the first manifestations of baroque art, these had their origins in a Spanish spirit.

According to Hatzfeld, the baroque is less the art of the Counter-Reformation than simply the art of Spain. Yet these two views are hardly incompatible – indeed, Enrique Lafuente Ferrari, who translated and prefaced Weisbach's book in 1942, sees the two as interchangeable. "Si el barroco es el arte de la contrarreforma," writes Lafuente, "su más pura y honda manifestación es el arte español y en especial la literatura, la plástica y la pintura de nuestro país" (47). This baroque character outlasts the superficial rococo, Romantic, or symbolist influences from elsewhere in Europe, for "la vida del gran arte español queda estrechísimamente vinculada al arte barroco mismo y a los ideales que comportaba y que en nosotros suponían la conjunción feliz con nuestra vocación nacional" (43). These ideals are, of course, deeply conservative. Lafuente regards the backlash against humanistic learning as the height of Spanish achievement, and even attributes Spain's seventeenth-century political decline to its heroic yet extenuating efforts to defend the church (15). And while few today share his nostalgic view of the Counter-Reformation, it hardly looked out of place in Spain in the early years of Francoism.

Elsewhere, when critics shared Lafuente's main insight – that the baroque was essentially Spanish and conservative – they tended to lament its prevalence. Mariano Picón Salas, for example, notes in his expansive cultural history *De la conquista a la independencia* (1944) that south of the Pyrenees the baroque became "un estilo nacional," one that was "anti-Renacimiento y anti-Europa en cuanto España estaba negando, o planteando de otra manera, aquellos valores de la conciencia moderna" (99). This aesthetic spread to the American colonies, where it left a lasting imprint. "A pesar de casi dos siglos de enciclopedismo y crítica moderna," he writes, "los hispanoamericanos no nos evadimos enteramente aún del

laberinto barroco. Pesa en nuestra sensibilidad estética y en muchas formas complicadas de psicología colectiva” (101). He tempers this negative judgment with by acknowledging that the baroque underwent a process of transculturation in the colonies. The indigenous population adapted European forms for their own expressive ends and inscribed “en el lenguaje del barroco católico español su propia voluntad artística” (108). Picón Salas was not alone in this observation. Art historian Ángel Guido had studied cultural fusion in colonial architecture in 1925, as Pál Kelemen would again in 1951. Recognition of how the baroque changed in its colonial encounter served as an important preliminary for Lezama’s “counterconquest,” which reversed the political orientation attributed to the baroque, as noted above, and made it emblematic of the New World. No longer dour and Spanish, the baroque could become rebellious and American.

A gradual slippage allowed such national identification: first, critics discovered a Spanish baroque; then, they began to find Spain eternally baroque: and last, they saw the baroque as essentially Spanish. With regard to Latin America a similar progression occurs: Latin America is the product of a cultural syncretism; the prime example of this syncretism is the baroque; Latin America is baroque; the baroque is Latin American.

It hardly needs stating that this identification with Latin America opened the door to the baroque’s resurrection as a twentieth-century aesthetic. Had the baroque not become Latin American (after first being Spanish, and then being declared an expression of American rebellion) there would likely be no neobaroque, no twentieth-century return. Though Lezama did not actively promote the baroque for contemporary art, his contemporary Alejo Carpentier did. As early as the 1960s Carpentier hailed the baroque as “el legítimo estilo del novelista latinoamericano” (*Tientos* 41), and he later declared the continent essentially, eternally baroque: “América, continente de simbiosis, de mutaciones, de vibraciones, de mestizajes, fue barroca desde siempre” (*Razón* 61). Somewhat puzzlingly, he claims that this baroque identity predates even the arrival of European colonizers; its main source, however, lies in the blending of European and American cultural heritages:

¿Y por qué es América Latina la tierra de elección del Barroco? Porque toda simbiosis, todo mestizaje, engendra un barroquismo. El barroquismo criollo se acrece...con la conciencia que cobra el hombre americano...de ser otra cosa, de ser una cosa nueva, de ser una simbiosis, de ser un criollo; y el espíritu criollo de por sí, es un espíritu barroco. (*Razón* 64)

The mixing of peoples and cultures, Carpentier claims, created an exuberance of forms, visible not only in the baroque art, architecture and literature of the colonial period, but in a lasting sense of Latin American identity. Carpentier makes perhaps the most extravagant statement equating baroque and Latin American, and while few later critics have put it quite so explicitly, in subtle ways the notion that the baroque is Latin American or Hispanic persists.

To be sure, the baroque's increasing identification with Latin America did not erase its earlier attachments to Spain. Very likely the ambiguity one still finds between "Hispanic" and "Latin American" in discussions of the baroque stems from these two ways of giving the baroque a national or regional identity. This ambiguity in fact allows the baroque's latest movement: its re-importation into Spain. Whereas the neobaroque (as opposed to the historical baroque) had long been considered a uniquely Latin American affair, recently Óscar Cornago, Luis Martín-Estudillo and others have extended the label to peninsular figures. Thus, after becoming a Spanish sensibility in the 1920s and 1930s, and a Latin American expression in the 1960s and 1970s, the baroque now finds itself on both sides of the Atlantic, and, at various times and for various critics, Hispanic and/or Latin American.

Just how important these questions are for contemporary scholarship should by now be clear. There is nothing obvious about this range of national identifications – yet they are marshaled to support far-reaching claims about Spanish-language literature and culture, not only in the past but also in the present. Assuming that the baroque forms a sort of timeless cultural substrate allows critics to make a very common and very troubling claim: that aesthetic modernity in the Spain or Latin America is a perpetual return to the baroque.

BAROQUE AS MODERN

The seventeenth century falls immediately after one conventional starting point of modernity (the Renaissance) and immediately before another (the Enlightenment), and is home to a whole galaxy of changes, any one of which arguably signals the origin of the modern: Cartesian rationalism, Newtonian physics, the rise of cities and preindustrial factory production, the creation of trading corporations, the establishment of the balance of powers and the dramatic expansion of commercial and colonial empires. The baroque's place in all this – either as a minor constellation, visible only from certain latitudes, or as the very sign under which the modern world is born – depends on the observer. In the Anglophone world, the former view prevails, as Pérez-Magallón has shown. Even in Hispanic and Latin American studies, where the baroque's importance is widely

accepted, its relevance to the present varies greatly, for the reasons outlined above: tying the baroque to Counter-Reformation Spain or pre-revolutionary Latin America means assigning it two very different roles in a larger historical narrative. In one, the baroque turns away from the modern and back toward a millennial Christian tradition; in the other, it reaches forward to Enlightenment and revolution, revealing a cultural maturity that prefigures independence. As the baroque came to signify political resistance (particularly in Latin America), it began to loom large in discussions of the continent's place in modernity.

The baroque has another claim on relevance to modernity: its popularity closely tracks the rise of international modernism. The first hints appear in the 1850s, the first major works appear toward the turn of the century, it peaks between the wars and toward mid-century seems to lose its novelty, without exactly disappearing. However imperfect the analogy, the baroque's creation occurred just as art, and thought about art, underwent a major revolution. Why?

Walter Benjamin found the answer in its resonance with contemporary movements, arguing that "like expressionism, the baroque is not so much an age of genuine artistic achievement as an age possessed of an unremitting artistic will" (55). Wellek, too, linked the baroque's popularity to a perceived (but misleading) affinity between the seventeenth and early twentieth centuries. "Baroque poetry was felt to be similar to the most recent German expressionism, to its turbulent, tense, torn diction and tragic view of the world," he writes, adding that this perception dovetailed with "a genuine change of taste, a sudden comprehension for an art despised before because of its conventions, its supposedly tasteless metaphors, its violent contrasts and antitheses" (76). Rightly or wrongly, the early twentieth-century critics who created the baroque did so partly in their own image – just as Lezama and Carpentier would later understand the baroque as the origin of their own modernity. Much of its appeal lay in its ability to reflect the present.

A small but decisive shift occurs when the baroque ceases to be merely an art from the past that speaks to the present and becomes something more, a name for a contemporary aesthetic practice. This shift takes place in the early 1970s, with the publication of Sarduy's essay "El barroco y el neobarroco" (1972). Not only does Sarduy translate features of baroque aesthetics into a poststructuralist idiom, he outlines a baroque trend in contemporary cultural production, thus inaugurating a line of criticism that applies the term as a way of describing the most up-to-date, most theoretically informed art and writing.¹¹ Sarduy found an early follower in the Argentine poet Néstor Perlongher, who edited an influential volume of Latin American "neobaroque" poetry entitled *Caribe*

transplatino (1991). More significantly, perhaps, in the early 1990s the idea started gaining critical traction. In particular, Roberto González Echevarría's *Celestina's Brood* (1993), which links between seventeenth- and twentieth-century writers, popularized a subfield of neobaroque scholarship that has since then only grown. Today the baroque's centrality to contemporary Hispanic and Latin American literature is unquestioned.

Common to much contemporary work – which naturally varies in its approaches, assumptions and objects of study – is a thematization of the tension between modernity and the baroque, either in its historical or contemporary guise. In 1998 alone, three books appeared with both words in their title: Bolívar Echeverría's *La modernidad de lo barroco*, Chiampí's *Barroco e Modernidade*, and Petra Schumm's edited volume *Barrocos y modernos*. Echeverría, in particular, intriguingly reads the baroque as an “ethos” or attitude toward the contradictions inherent in capitalist modernity. William Egginton has even suggested that the baroque is the aesthetic counterpart to *the* problem of thought underlying the modern writ large: the non-correspondence of appearance to reality. In brief, the baroque, as a contemporary aesthetic or a historical period, is inevitably tied to a question of modernity – at least in Hispanic and Latin American criticism.

Granted, the term shows up outside these disciplines, though in a less sustained way. In 1980s France, thanks largely to Sarduy, it enjoyed a short-lived vogue in which Deleuze, Lacan, Genette and many others took part. Christine Buci-Glucksmann and Omar Calabrese also devoted books to the topic, finding in the baroque a likeness to international postmodernism or poststructuralism, and more recently, Angela Ndalianis and Monika Kaup have extended the term to a North American context. Despite these efforts, though, “baroque” and “neobaroque” have yet to gain currency outside Hispanic and Latin American studies. But in a sense this comes as no surprise: one of the term's crucial functions is to claim a distance from a mainstream modernism, avant-garde or postmodernism. To use “baroque” in other critical traditions, where these terms are less vexed, makes little sense.

Not unlike postmodernism, the term neobaroque is starting to show its age. Whatever differences one chooses to draw between the two, both evoke a moment of theoretical enthusiasm that has perhaps begun to pass. In response, critics have put forth other variations on “baroque” that retain the neobaroque's function – claiming an alternative, Hispanic form of aesthetic modernity – while presenting it as something more novel. Around 2000, Elizabeth Armstrong and Victor Zamudio-Taylor coined “ultrabaroque” as a term for what Armstrong called “a very

contemporary, postmodern, exuberant visual culture with inextricable ties to a historical period, style, and narrative" (4). And in 2009 Zamora proposed the term "brut barroco" (taken, oddly enough, from a magazine advertisement for Freixenet cava) to refer to this next generation of baroque aesthetics: "brut barroco recycles the historical baroque, as does the neobaroque, but now with the neobaroque also recycled, its parodic energies [are] redoubled" (135). One might even expect to see a "metabaroque" – and one would not be disappointed, as a recent essay by Miguel Romero Esteo has proven. What has yet to be proposed (so far as I know) is a "postbaroque," presumably because this would entail an attempt to leave the baroque behind, to reach toward something different, which is precisely the opposite of what this terminological multiplication does. For the seemingly endless series of terms allows the baroque constantly to return, in new guises and under new forms, always to be invoked as the most advanced aesthetic practices, the most recent theoretical insights, proof that Latin America or the Hispanic world is on par with, yet crucially apart from, Europe and North America.

A FORGOTTEN DIALOGUE

Overlapping, repeating, revisiting the same questions, the branches of baroque discourse examined here do not so much form five independent debates as a single discussion, which, in its evolution and slow accumulation of secondary threads, persists today. Approaching each discussion separately merely highlights how much conceptual work went into creating the baroque as it is now understood. It is this linked series of debates, and not the recycled references to irregular pearls or defective syllogisms, that constitutes the most relevant past of the baroque.

The foregoing account, compressed as it is, reveals a baroque quite different from the timeless figure of deviation or imperfection inscribed in its etymology. It shows the product of several very specific and ultimately very contingent conceptual developments. Of course, contingent does not mean arbitrary: the critics and authors who turned their attention to the baroque had very solid reasons for seeing it as reactionary, revolutionary, Spanish, Latin American, etc. Yet none of these associations is an inert historical fact, but the result of a process of invention, modification, and elaboration. To appreciate this point one need only compare the term's fortunes to those of "metaphysical," still preferred for much English poetry of the same period. Donne, Herbert, Marvell and the other metaphysical poets undoubtedly benefited from the surge of interest in seventeenth-century writing that spread throughout Europe in the 1910s and 1920s; not unlike Góngora, they had until then occupied an ambiguous place in the canon. But "metaphysical" never became synonymous with

Englishness, nor with an opposition to classicism, nor with a transhistorical aesthetic mode – it remains a narrow stylistic-period designation.

Conversely, even if one assumes that “baroque” filled a necessary role, that some concept was needed to situate Hispanic culture in or against classical European models – and one need not assume this – then “baroque” is hardly the most obvious choice. In the 1920s alone a number of plausible contenders suggest themselves: Valle-Inclán’s *esperpento*, for example, or José Bergamín’s *disparate*, or even Jorge Mañach’s *choteo*. Later, *lo real maravilloso* and magical realism perform a similar function with regard to Latin America, and it is surely no coincidence that the baroque’s rise to prominence closely follows magical realism’s loss of critical immediacy. It almost seems as though, even as the terms change, the key ideological function – arguing for Hispanic cultural exceptionalism – remains the same.

Pedro Lange-Churión’s essay, “Neobaroque: Latin America’s Postmodernity?” (2001) serves as a helpful illustration of this point, and of a common reading of the neobaroque. To equate the neobaroque with postmodernism, argues Lange-Churión, is to ignore its roots in Latin American history:

If the cultural products of Latin America (ostensibly its literature) display effects of pluralism, fragmentation, dissemination, pastiche, and self-referentiality, it is not because they are postmodern, or ahistorically neobaroque, which is the same thing. Rather it is because these effects are neobaroque in as much as the neobaroque is historically rooted in the Latin American baroque. This historicity is disregarded by the North American and European postmodern theorizations. (270)

According to Lange-Churión, one cannot call European culture “neobaroque,” nor can one properly call Latin American literature “postmodern”; he sees them as opposed, just as, centuries earlier, baroque literature opposed philosophical rationalism. For a European critic to use the word neobaroque outside a Latin American context (as do Calabrese or Buci-Glucksmann, both of whom he criticizes) is either colonialist, or ahistorical, or both. Similarly, to call Sarduy “postmodern” would be to ignore the Latin American roots of his aesthetic practice.

Leaving aside the fact that virtually all of the writers dubbed “neobaroque” acknowledged their debt to an array of non-baroque and non-Latin American traditions, the argument is problematic for another reason: his claim, some version of which appears in much neobaroque scholarship, requires a considerable conceptual amnesia. In emphasizing

the “historical rootedness” of the neobaroque, Lange-Churión ignores the actual history of the term and concept, its origins in a series of critical debates shared by both Europe and Latin America.

A history of the baroque, as a theoretical object or conceptual tool, does not reveal a Hispanic or Latin American world at odds with Europe and North America, remaining apart from or outside of a broader Western modernity. What it shows is just how enmeshed Spain and Latin America are in wider discussions of aesthetics, not (or not only) in an early modern moment but above all throughout the very recent ‘late’ modernity of the twentieth century. Often cited as evidence of their cultural exceptionalism, the baroque offers compelling proof of their engagement with the rest of the world, and of their central place in global narratives of what it means to be modern.

Northwestern University

NOTES

- 1 Pérez-Magallón writes that “the Enlightenment could be incorporated into a genealogy of modernity characterized by empiricism, rationalism, and Protestantism. This exclusive grand narrative of modernity offered no room for the Baroque (Gothicism), a defining feature of superstitious, barbaric, uncivilized peoples incapable of reason. Falling under the term *Early Modernity*, however, some Iberian works can be accepted and embraced – a Cervantes purged of his baroque baggage, for example –, without significantly modifying a history which excludes the Hispanic world from the genesis of the ‘true’ modernity” (n.p.). Juan Luis Suárez has argued for the baroque as a rubric for studying transatlantic cultural complexity.
- 2 The entries *baroque* and *barroco* in the *Oxford English Dictionary* and the *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española* both trace the origins to the jeweler’s term. The *Littré* supports the hypothesis that this word itself came from the scholastic mnemonic device *baroco*, though this once-popular view has now generally been discredited, and Bruno Migliorini’s argument against it is often cited as definitive. Helmut Hatzfeld fancifully suggests that the name comes from the Indian city Bharuch, where the Portuguese established a pearl trading post in the sixteenth century (418).
- 3 In the examples Luis Monguió unearths from early nineteenth-century Spain, for example, *barroco* is not a period term but an adjective denoting impurity. In the *Cicerone* (1855), Jacob Burckhardt writes of a post-Renaissance baroque style in architecture and sculpture (in painting he calls it “mannerism”), but he insists that this style rarely rises above the level of vulgarity (366). The

baroque's transformation from dismissive epithet to period label occurred only very slowly over the nineteenth century.

- 4 The history of the term "mannerism" is sufficiently complicated to make a lengthy explanation impossible here. Mannerism has been proposed as a) a style distinct from both Renaissance and baroque, b) a facet of the baroque, and c) an alternative name for the baroque. In art history, the first option has largely won out; in fact, much of what Wölfflin initially called baroque (sixteenth-century Roman architecture) is now considered mannerist. In literary studies, the question of mannerism's existence and relation to the baroque animated a number of debates throughout the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, but by the late 1970s the term had largely disappeared from sight. John Rupert Martin's classic *Baroque* (1974) provides a clarifying explanation of mannerism in art history, while Frank Warnke's *Versions of Baroque* (1972) charts both terms' many contradictory uses in mid-century literary criticism.
- 5 In fact, the word hardly appears in the centennial publications. Alonso, in his edition of the *Soledades*, refers to Góngora's "barroquismo" as one trait among many, and complains about how the term's overuse.
- 6 Weliek notes that Spain was particularly amenable to the new term, "since Gongorism and conceptism presented clearly parallel phenomena which had but to be christened baroque" (76).
- 7 The book appeared in Spanish only in 1944, nine years after appearing in French translation.
- 8 Egginton and Kaup distinguish between a "minor" or destabilizing baroque strategy, and a "major" strategy that merely reinforces the social or economic order.
- 9 Lezama likely learned of Kondori and Aleijandinho through the work of Kelemen and Guido. As Zamora points out, Guido apparently coined the term *indiátide*, which Lezama uses to refer to the caryatid columns with indigenous figures.
- 10 A certain ambiguity between these words is inevitable, for no two critics use them the same way. In Sarduy's essay, the baroque reflects a de-centered (but ultimately stable) world, whereas the neobaroque reflects a world with no epistemic grounding at all.
- 11 Carpentier discusses baroque style in *Tientos y diferencias* (1964) but presents it as just one aspect of the contemporary Latin American novel. His more explicit statements appear in *Razón de ser* (1976).

WORKS CITED

- ADORNO, THEODOR. *Ohne Leitbild: Parva Aesthetica*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1967.
- ALONSO, DÁMASO. "Claridad y belleza de las *Soledades*." *Soledades*. By Luis de Góngora. Ed. Dámaso Alonso. Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1927. 7-36.

- ARMSTRONG, ELIZABETH. "Impure Beauty / Belleza Impura." *Ultrabaroque: Aspects of Post Latin American Art*. Ed. Elizabeth Armstrong and Victor Zamudio-Taylor. San Diego: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2000.
- AULLÓN DE HARO, PEDRO, ed. *Barroco*. Madrid: Verbum, 2004.
- BENJAMIN, WALTER. *The Origins of German Tragic Drama*. Trans. John Osborne. London: Verso, 1998.
- BEVERLEY, JOHN. *Essays on the Literary Baroque in Spain and Spanish America*. Woodbridge, Suffolk: Tamesis, 2008.
- BORGES, JORGE LUIS. *Historia universal de la infamia*. Madrid: Alianza, 1997.
- BUCI-GLUCKSMANN, *La Raison baroque: de Baudelaire à Benjamin*. Paris: Galilée, 1984.
- BURCKHARDT, JACOB. *Der Cicerone: eine Anleitung zum Genuss der Kunstwerke Italiens*. Vol. 3. Basel: Schweighauser'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1855.
- CALABRESE, OMAR. *L'Età neobarocca*. Roma: Laterza, 1987.
- CARPENTIER, ALEJO. *Razón de ser*. Caracas: Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1976.
- . *Tientos y diferencias*. Montevideo: Arca, 1967.
- CHARPENTRAT, PIERRE. *Le Mirage baroque*. Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1967.
- CHIAMPÌ, IRLEMAR. *Barroco e Modernidade: Ensaio sobre Literatura Latino-americana*. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 1998.
- CORNAGO BERNAL, ÓSCAR. "El barroco de la segunda mitad del siglo xx en España." Aullón de Haro 1161-1197.
- CROCE, BENEDETTO. *Storia della Età barocca in Italia: Pensiero, Poesia et letteratura, Vita morale*. Bari: Laterza, 1946.
- D'ORS, EUGENIO. *Lo barroco*. Madrid: Tecnos, 2002.
- ECHEVERRÍA, BOLÍVAR. *La modernidad de lo barroco*. México: Era, 1998.
- EGGINTON, WILLIAM. *The Theater of Truth: The Ideology of (Neo)baroque Aesthetics*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2010.
- ENCYCLOPÉDIE MÉTHODIQUE. Paris: Pankrouke, 1788.
- FOUCAULT, MICHEL. *The Order of Things*. New York: Pantheon, 1970.
- GAMERRO, CARLOS. *Ficciones barrocas: una lectura de Borges, Bioy Casares, Silvina Ocampo, Cortázar, Onetti y Felisberto Hernández*. Buenos Aires: Eterna Cadencia, 2010.
- GONZÁLEZ ECHEVARRÍA, ROBERTO. *Celestina's Brood: Continuities of the Baroque in Spanish and Latin American Literature*. Durham: Duke UP, 1993.
- GUIDO, ÁNGEL. *Fusión hispano-indígena en la arquitectura colonial*. Rosario: Casa del Libro, 1925.
- HATZFELD, HELMUT. *Estudios sobre el barroco*. Madrid: Gredos, 1964.
- JOUE MARTÍN, JOSÉ RAMÓN and RENÉE SOULODRE-LAFRANCE. "Introducción: *The Hispanic Baroque Project* y la constitución del barroco." *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos* 33.1 (Fall 2008): 1-10.
- KAUP, MONIKA. *Neobaroque in the Americas: Alternative Modernities in Literature, Visual Art, and Film*. Charlottesville: Virginia UP, 2012.

- . "Becoming-Baroque: Folding European Forms into the New World Baroque with Alejo Carpentier." *CR: The New Centennial Review* 5.2 (2005): 107-149.
- KELEMEN, PÁL. *Baroque and Rococo in Latin America*. New York: Macmillan, 1951.
- LAFUENTE FERRARI, ENRIQUE. "La interpretación del barroco." Introduction to his translation of *El barroco, arte de la Contrarreforma*. By Werner Weisbach. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1942.
- LANGE-CHURIÓN, PEDRO. "Neobaroque: Latin America's Postmodernity?" *Latin America and Postmodernity: A Reader*. Ed. Pedro Lange-Churión and Eduardo Mendieta. Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2001. 253-73.
- LEZAMA LIMA, JOSÉ. *La expresión americana*. Ed. Irleamar Chiampi. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1993.
- MARAVALL, JOSÉ ANTONIO. *La cultura del barroco: análisis de una estructura histórica*. Barcelona: Ariel, 1975.
- MARTÍN-ESTUDILLO, LUIS. *La mirada elíptica: el trasfondo barroco de la poesía española contemporánea*. Madrid: Visor, 2007.
- MARZO, JORGE LUIS. *La memoria administrada: el barroco y lo hispano*. Madrid: Katz, 2010.
- MIGLIORINI, BRUNO. "Etimologia e Storia del Termine 'Barocco.'" *Manierismo, Barocco, Rococò: concetti e termini*. Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1962.
- MONGUIÓ, LUIS. "Contribución a la cronología de *barroco* y *barroquismo* en España." *PMLA* 64.5 (1949): 1227-31.
- MORAÑA, MABEL. "Baroque/Neobaroque/Ultrabaroque: Disruptive Readings of Modernity." *Hispanic Baroques: Reading Cultures in Context*. Ed. Nicholas Spadaccini and Luis Martín-Estudillo. Nashville: Vanderbilt, 2005. 241-81.
- MOSER, WALTER. "The Concept of the Baroque." *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos* 33.1 (Fall 2008): 11-37.
- NDALIANIS, ANGELA. *Neo-Baroque Aesthetics and Contemporary Entertainment*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004.
- ORTEGA, FRANCISCO A. "History of a Phantom." *A Companion to Latin American Literature and Culture*. Ed. Sara Castro-Klaren. London: Blackwell, 2008. 182-196.
- PÉREZ-MAGALLÓN, JESÚS. "The Baroque: The Intellectual and Geopolitical Reasons for a Historiographical Erasure." *Dossiers du Grihl* 2012.2 (2012). <<http://dossiersgrihl.revues.org/5197>>
- PERLONGHER, NÉSTOR. "Prólogo." *Medusario: muestra de poesía latinoamericana*. Ed. Roberto Echavarrén, José Kozer y Jacobo Sefamí. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1994. 19-30.
- PICÓN SALAS, MARIANO. *De la conquista a la independencia: Tres siglos de historia cultural latinoamericana*. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1958.
- PFLANDL, LUDWIG. *Geschichte der Spanischen Nationalliteratur in ihrer Blütezeit*. Freiburg im Breisgau, Herder & Co., 1929.

- RODRÍGUEZ DE LA FLOR, FERNANDO. *Barroco: Representación e ideología en el mundo hispánico (1580-1680)*. Madrid: Cátedra, 2002.
- ROMERO ESTEO, MIGUEL. "De lo barroco y lo metabarroco." Aullón de Haro 1241-55.
- SARDUY, SEVERO. "El barroco y el neobarroco." *América Latina en su literatura*. Ed. César Fernández Moreno. México: unesco/Siglo xx, 1972. 167-84.
- SCHUMM, PETRA, ED. *Barrocos y Modernos: nuevos caminos en la investigación del Barroco iberoamericano*. Madrid: Iberoamericana, 1998.
- SEGEL, HAROLD. *The Baroque Poem: A Comparative Study*. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1974.
- SUÁREZ, JUAN LUIS. "Hispanic Baroque: a Model for the Study of Cultural Complexity in the Atlantic World." Trans. Estefanía Olid-Peña. *South Atlantic Quarterly* 72.1 (Winter 2007): 31-47.
- WEISBACH, WERNER. *Der Barock als Kunst der Gegenreformation*. Berlin: Cassirer, 1921.
- WELLEK, RENÉ. *Concepts of Criticism*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1963.
- WÖLFFLIN, HEINRICH. *Principles of Art History: The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art*. Trans. M. D. Hottinger. New York: Dover, n.d.
- . *Renaissance and Baroque*. Trans. Kathrin Simon. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1977.
- WORRINGER, WILHELM. *Form in Gothic*. Trans. Herbert Reed. London: Alec Tiranti, 1957.
- ZAMORA, LOIS PARKINSON. "New World Baroque, Neobaroque, Brut Barroco: Latin American Postcolonialisms." *PMLA* 124.1 (2009): 127-42.
- . *The Inordinate Eye: New World Baroque and Latin American Fiction*. Chicago: Chicago UP, 2006.