



Tradition and Modernity in the Hispanic Baroque

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Abstract: Since Werner Weisbach's works on the Hispanic Baroque appeared, that period has been object of a deep historical analysis. In the present work, I aim at applying Weisbach's methodological perspective to the analysis of that cultural movement, which emerged in the early years of the 17th century. It is my intention to explain why the Hispanic Baroque is considered a cultural 'hinge' where tradition engaged in a dialogue with modernity.

Keywords: Hispanic, Baroque, Tradition, Modernity.

1. INTRODUCTION

In 17th-century Italy emerged a cultural movement characterized by an outburst of exuberance in form and expression. It was the Baroque. It soon spread across Europe and produced many of the greatest artworks known to the present.

The 20th century brought about a renewed interest in that period, which was studied, since then, from a historical perspective. Among the most relevant works in this corpus we find *Baroque as an Art of Counterreformation*, by German-Swiss Historian Werner Weisbach (1948) and *Culture of the Baroque: Analysis of a Historical Structure*, by Spanish historian José Antonio Maravall (1975). During a talk about the latter book, held on the twenty-fifth anniversary of its first edition, Hispanicist Fernando de la Flor commented that "the hermeneutical model set up by that seminal book has reached its peak and calls for an extension".^[1]

Although I find that observation plausible, I consider it necessary to review the guidelines of this model before delving into the analysis of de La Flor's ideas about the Baroque, mainly exposed in his work *Baroque. Representation and Ideology in the Hispanic World (1580-1680)*. His theoretical approach sides with the epistemological assumptions that emerged in the 1960s, which introduced the term crisis of representation. During that decade, it became clear for many thinkers that neither the discourse of literature nor that of the mass media were based on reality. This idea was strongly supported by French philosopher Jean Baudrillard, in his essay *Simulacra and Simulation*, where he declared that "the age of simulation thus begins with a liquidation of all referentials."^[2]

Wilhelm F. Hegel (1770-1831), was the first thinker in viewing the gap between modernity and tradition as a philosophical problem. Reflecting on history issues, he observed that modernity "can no longer take or no longer wants to take its criteria of orientation from old models: it has to extract its normativity from itself."^[3]

This gap grew wider in the 19th century due to Baudelaire's aesthetic principles. According to the French poet, the artwork was at the intersection of two temporal axes: eternity and today.

But much before that radical split, from the beginning of the 16th century to the end of the 17th, extended a period that Marshall Berman called “the first phase of modernity,” when people already had “little or no sense of belonging to a modern public or community within which they could share their efforts and hopes.”^[4] Despite that state of confusion, though, it was a period when two opposing worldviews, the medieval and the modern, were able to engage in a dialogue which took shape both at the ideological and formal level. An example of this convergence was the lack of differentiation between allegory and symbol. Those differences were explained later by Walter Benjamin, who, facing the limitation of the allegorical to a didactic plane, justified its preponderance in a complex dialectic that wove together the immanent and the absolute.

Wilhelm F. Hegel (1770-1831), was the first thinker in viewing the gap between modernity and tradition as a philosophical problem. In the present study, after addressing Maravall’s and de La Flor’s, models, I will develop my view of the Baroque focusing on the formal level of the dialogue between tradition and modernity. I aim at justifying that the Hispanic Baroque took place in a “hinge time,” that is, in a temporal segment where modernity and tradition coexisted.

2. BAROQUE, TELEOLOGY AND ENTROPY

In the prologue of *Baroque. Representation and Ideology in the Hispanic World*, Fernando Rodríguez de la Flor proposes “to undo the serene, democratic, liberal and stabilizing interpretations we have made of it.”^[5]

Among these interpretations, Historian José Antonio Maravall’s certainly stands out. In his work *The Culture of Baroque. Analysis of a Historical Structure*, he proposed a hermeneutical model considered hegemonic. Although de la Flor maintains that this model has come to an end, he qualifies Maravall’s work as “seminal,” that is to say, essential for the study of the Baroque. Hence, I find its fundamental guidelines worth reviewing.

From an epistemological perspective, Maravall used the idea of structure, which does not refer to formal aspects but to psychological constructions researchers make, which he called sets. These are constructs where historical facts are refined and interpreted by bestowing them on meaning.

For the Spanish historian, the Baroque is not a stylistic concept, but an epochal one. He outlined this theory in 1944, in his book *Spanish Theory of the State in the 17th Century*. Instead of this title, he commented, he could have named that work *Spanish Theory of the State in the Baroque*. With this, he wanted to show that all the aspects of the 17th-century culture “coincide as factors of a historical situation, influencing it and one another.”^[6]

The first thinker who noticed the epochal roots of the Baroque was Swiss philosopher Jacob Burckhardt, who referred to that movement as “disordered forms of Renaissance classicism,” the same observation made by architectural historian Cornelius Gurlitt while studying the churches of Rome.

In early-20th-century Germany, the conception of the Baroque changed from a formal to an epochal view. At that time, Heinrich Wölfflin, Alois Riegl and Werner Weisbach had started studying that movement in its formal aspect but highlighted its connection with historical circumstances. For example, Weisbach described a “Baroque of the Counter-Reformation,” linked to the Church mission and, fundamentally, to the Society of Jesus.^[7]

By following this methodological perspective, Maravall did not limit his research to connecting the ideological with the stylistic, or to mention what formal elements recur over time. On the contrary, he focused his attention on the “articulation of political, economic and social situations which form a single reality. It is one of those unrepeatable realities [...] what we call Baroque.”^[8] That articulation of different factors in an epochal circumstance makes the Spanish Baroque a unique and unrepeatable concept.

Maravall considers the Spanish Baroque as the product of a specific background and argues that its main characteristic was political dirigisme. That political profile gave place to a State Baroque -as Fernando R. de la Flor called it- where political elites used all the cultural manifestations available to indoctrinate the masses. Based on this teleological direction, Maravall defined the Spanish Baroque as a “set of media of the most varied types, brought together and articulated to operate adequately with men.”^[9]

Spanish Baroque built political dirigisme on an anthropological belief: that it was possible to control behavior rationally, even when people could have irrational motivations. For this purpose, knowledge of human nature was imperative. At a pedagogical level, this belief was supported by Comenius, who in his *Didactica Magna* pointed out the need to know the students before starting the educational task. At a political level, the Baroque monarchic absolutism searched for the subjects' consent. It was an extremely conflictive time, where "adherence to one or the other of the competing forces implies an opinion, which equals an ideological line of thought."^[10]

In sum, these are the outstanding guidelines of the hermeneutics considered as "hegemonic" by De la Flor. The Spanish professor remarks that Maravall focused on persuasive rhetorical aspects at the moment of elaborating it. Art theorist Giulio Argan had already emphasized this aspect when he stated that "Baroque means a verification of Aristotelian thought, not only related to the influence of his *Poetics*, which we already discussed, but mostly concerning his *Rhetoric*."^[11] Persuasive rhetoric was a typical feature of the Spanish Baroque, Maravall said. But its main characteristic, he added, was a strong teleology: the political indoctrination of the masses.

In turn, philosophers and writers such as Severo Sarduy and Gilles Deleuze studied other aspects of the Baroque that had not been taken into account by Maravall's hegemonic interpretation. Rodríguez de La Flor observed that "the clear ability of its expressive system to go in the opposite direction to any established goal was not taken into account."^[12] That plus ultra can be considered a form of hypertelia, a phenomenon associated with excess and transgression. More precisely, hypertelia is the excessive growth of a part concerning the whole, a mechanism working beyond its function, a movement that exceeds its objectives. Such was the excess generated by the Baroque, excess that caught the attention of authors such as Georges Bataille and Roger Caillois, according to whom it "refers to a state in which the representation mechanisms go beyond their apparent manifestations, driven by the condition of excessiveness that characterizes them"^[13]. Baroque art was excessive in "its ability to deconstruct and pervert, in the first place, all that we can call class interests."^[14]

According to Maravall, in Spanish Baroque, two forces struggled: privilege and reaction against progress and revolution. De la Flor believes that the action of a third force has to be added to this dichotomous model, "in which radical skepticism, nihilistic thinking and dissolving and melancholic strategies are embodied, along whose paths go [...] a good part of our symbolic producers."^[15] The Baroque State relied on the belief that humans were inexorably advancing towards a Universal Democracy. For that reason, they did not want to admit those reactive forces product of skepticism and disenchantment. During the 16th century, humanistic idealism had naïvely "believed it could elucidate the mediate causes and trusted that books were the key to understanding the world."^[16] It was a moment of disappointment but also of reflection, as British historian John Elliott stated when he described it as the beginning of a "collective introspection."^[17]

In a letter addressed to the Prime Minister Count-Duke of Olivares, Spanish diplomat Count of Gondomar compared their country's monarchy with a sinking ship. This image depicted the irreversible decline perceived at the time, a result of the process of "collective introspection" when the Castilian people wondered why God had abandoned them. The question was not strange considering that the Castilians saw themselves as the people chosen by God to defend the Catholic faith and convert Native Americans. Their messianic nationalism contrasted with the feeling of frustration prevailing in 17th century Spain. However, this feeling did not always lead to hopelessness. On the contrary, some thinkers like Pedro de Ribadeneyra thought that the military setback against England was "a sign of special favor from God since it forced the Castilians to strengthen their faith, purify their intentions and correct their morals and customs."^[18]

In addition to that argument based on supernatural explanations, there was a naturalistic view, which compared the evolution of an empire with human life: a person is born, grows up and dies. Similarly, an empire raises, reaches its glory, then it faces sickness and decline. That was the fate of great empires such as ancient Rome and Spain: temporal vicissitudes were not alien to them. Despite their differences, both conceptions shared an awareness of the Spanish decline. Diego de Saavedra Fajardo described this phenomenon in his *Idea of a Christian Political Prince Represented in One Hundred Emblems*, where verse LX expresses it with singular emotion:

An arrow sent from a bow, either mounts or falls,
Without suspending in the air; like time present,
Which is so imperceptible, that it no sooner is?
But is past: Or like angles in a circle, where the acute
Becomes obtuse, without ever forming a right angle. The
First point of the arrows consistence is the first of its declination;
The higher it mounts, the nearer 'tis to its fall.
All things when they arrive at their highest pitch, must
Necessarily decline: [...]^[19]

If the state suffered from a terminal illness, it was necessary to alleviate its body's suffering. The science of governing is like the medical science: it cannot prolong a patient's life indefinitely but can only "control the course of fever by applying suitable remedies."^[20]

At the beginning of the 17th century, the Spanish state was dying, and its subjects longed for the times when it was in excellent health. There was a general wish to restore it. "Restoration" and "decline" were the terms most widely used in days when rulers did not care for transforming structures but only sought for changes in economy and ruling style. Social discomfort prevailed in the Baroque and made cultural dirigisme or any other teleology useless. Drastic measures had to be applied to restore the state health, such as bleeding and amputating the organs affected by the disease.

This worldview led politicians such as of Zúñiga and Olivares to develop reformist plans, not always successful. Count-Duke of Olivares tried in vain to "rescue the Spanish ship from the impending shipwreck". His failure marked the end of the "Baroque aeon" and brought about national disasters such as the Catalan rebellion, the secession of Portugal and the independence of the Netherlands. These events, which occurred before the Peace of Westphalia, anticipated the end of Spanish dominance and caused an identity crisis that revealed an abysmal dichotomy: a profound decline on the material plane and a rich and creative activity on the symbolic one.

Rodríguez de la Flor, referring to that period, agrees with Hegel's ideas about historical evolution: the best artistic creations spring up in times of collective catastrophes.^[21]

3. BAROQUE AND MODERNITY

German philosopher Wilhelm Friederich Hegel used the term modernity as an epochal concept. Since he did so, this word became a synonym for a new era.

Traditionally, the term era had two meanings: one sacred and one profane. The first one referred to the time that would culminate with the second coming of Christ, while the second one expressed "the conviction that the future has already begun: it means the age that lives oriented towards the future."^[22] The profane conception prevailed, and so modernity conveyed a sense of brevity, where the present is only a fleeting moment. The eager search for the time to come led to a break with the past and tradition. Its most important consequence was that modernity had to "extract its norm from itself."^[23]

In this context emerged the idea of self-determination, which Hegel raised to the category of a philosophical problem. He maintained that modernity had brought about the separation of the spheres of knowledge and faith. However, the foundation of science, morals and art was the subjectivity principle, that is to say, the abstract self in the Cartesian view, or the absolute self-consciousness described by Kant. But neither of those views offered a sense of stability. That is why what characterized the modern spirit was a feeling of estrangement or, more precisely, of detachment. We can understand this image if we compare modernity to the branch of a tree cut out from its trunk – tradition- and is, therefore, deprived of the sap. Despite his lucid diagnosis, Hegel could not solve the problem of self-awareness. In his work *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, he defined the Absolute as "the highest concept of all, which belongs to the modern age and its religion."^[24] It was a strong concept which was, however, insufficient to transcend the limits of the subject. Thus, he conceived "the

overcoming of subjectivity within the limits of the philosophy of the subject.”^[25] Hegel called it split modernity because it had not reached an absolute radicality.

The influence of the first phase of modernity in the Hispanic sphere was pointed out by José Antonio Maravall, in his article “The process of secularization in Habsburg Spain.”^[26] In that text, he observes that “after many decades criticizing Burckhardtian interpretation, we have at last realized the considerable remains of medieval tradition that are preserved both in the Renaissance and the Modern worlds.”^[27] Consequently two main tendencies, the secular and the religious, represented modernity in Spain as in the rest of Europe. Although those tendencies seemed to be opposed, they co-existed in some authors such as Niccolò Machiavelli. The Italian author, who advocated the separation of politics from morals and religion, still showed traces of religious beliefs in some of his works. For example, In History of Florence, he narrated how Providence saved that city. In the 16th century, the Duke of Medici signed peace with the King of Naples. Angry about that, Venice and the Pope threatened Florence. But “by providential intervention,” the Great Turk Mahomet besieged the Island of Rhodes and distracted Medici’s enemies from their intentions. Machiavelli reflected upon that episode: “God, who has always taken special care of it [the city] when it was in such extreme dangers, brought about an unexpected incident.”^[28]

Modernity coexisted with tradition in other fields, too, for example, formal literary discourse. One sample was the lack of differentiation between allegory and symbol prevailing in the middle ages, which led to a “symbolic-allegorical vision of the universe” where the singular referred to the universal. In modern times, Goethe tried to end that vision in his famous aphorisms, where he excluded the allegorical from the poetic. But that exclusion was later rejected by Walter Benjamin who proved the prevalence of allegory in the Baroque worldview.

That surviving allegorical vision of the universe proves that the break between modernity and tradition did not occur in the Spanish Baroque.

4. DIALECTIC OF THE BAROQUE ALLEGORY

Before starting the analysis of Benjamin's work which justifies the prevalence of allegory, I would like to discuss the differentiation between allegory and symbol put forward during the Enlightenment.

For early-18th-century thinkers, the symbol was “the natural image that makes immediately perceptible a meaning other than the one attributed to it.” On the other hand, the allegory was considered “a conventional and arbitrary conceptualization.”^[29] Contemporary philosophers continued adhering to that pair of opposites. For example, when Paul Ricoeur discussed the symbology of evil, stated that it is associated “to a general definition of the symbol” distinguished by double meaning.^[30] That double meaning occurs when the literal significance refers to a representative one, only accessible to us when examining the relationship between them. Then he differentiated symbol from allegory explaining that the latter “fulfills a purely didactic or ornamental function.”^[31] However, Dutch historian Johan Huizinga (1872-1945) maintains that medieval symbolic-allegorical conception persists nowadays. In his famous essay, “The Waning of the Middle Ages,” he expressed that “our own life intertwines with that mysterious sense of the world.”^[32] Allegory submerges us in an atmosphere of mystery that Romanticism ignored, focused, as it was, on the immanence of the symbol.

Romantic thinkers maintained that the beautiful, being a symbolic configuration, merged with the divine. They considered that the individual was part of the transcendent, disregarding the fact that a human’s range of action had its limit in the concept of the “beautiful soul” created by the Romantic current itself. For this reason, the field of the symbolic lacked the dialectical foundation of the Baroque allegory. By means of these assumptions, Walter Benjamin justified the pre-eminence of the allegory over the symbol in contemporary movements inspired in the Baroque. According to Benjamin, allegory was still in force although the Enlightenment philosophers had not understood it, as evidenced by Goethe. In a letter to Schiller, the author of Faust remarked that poetry “expresses something particular without thinking about the general, or alluding to it.”^[33] After this emphatic statement, the allegorical was reduced to a mere didactic exercise. Schopenhauer expressed a similar idea: “if therefore, an allegorical image also has artistic value, this value is completely separate and is

completely independent of what the image provides as an allegory.”^[34] Furthermore, in assimilating allegory to the exercise of writing, Goethe destroyed the concept. In Benjamin’s opinion, that conception expressed total ignorance of the spirit of the allegorical, absolutely different from conventional writing.

To refute the romantic conception of the symbol, Benjamin based on G. Friedrich Creuzer’s analysis in *Symbolism and Mythology of the Ancient Peoples*. This work, of a historical-anthropological character, assumes that it is the momentary what marks the symbol and its clearest examples are the divine announcements that ancient Greeks used to look out for, which they called *symbolon*, whose fundamental characteristics were the momentary and the concise. The symbol is similar to the phantasmagorical: both could be defined as shivering of the soul. Along with the momentary, other characteristics of the symbol are the clarity, the charming and the beautiful. These last three features, a legacy from Greek sculpture, are the synthesis of that classical spirit that German archaeologist and art historian Johann Winckelmann revered. Human essence adjusts its shape to the plastic symbol but overflows the mystic symbol, because “with the infinite force of its essence, it shatters the earthly form as if it were a too fragile vase.”^[35] The romantic symbol aimed at its full manifestation in the finite, in the individual. This aspiration distanced it from allegory, which, according to Hegel, “does not contain, in substance or form, a true personification, a living individuality.”^[36] Although the symbol had reached its formal fullness, romantic aesthetic attempted to connect it with infinity and doing so “it abandoned the external world to take refuge in itself.”^[37] In Benjamin’s opinion, that was a vain aspiration since the symbol lacked the necessary dialectical complexity to transcend the finite.

From a semiotic perspective, Romanticism most significant contribution was the emphasis placed on the temporary dimension. While there is a temporary totality in the symbol, the allegory implies progress in a series of moments;^[38] then, it includes the myth. Winfried Menninghaus points out a subtle difference between Creuzer’s and Benjamin’s views about allegory and myth, because “both, in turn, are only displays, explanations of pre-mythical symbology.”^[39] A myth is the unfolding of a series of cultural clusters (gods, demi-gods, heroes and stories) that arise from the exegesis of symbols. Therefore, if the myth “decomposed its momentary totality into a series of moments, it would adopt the form of an allegory” [italics by the author].^[40]

The main guidelines of Hegel’s Aesthetics explain the Romantic preference for the symbolic. In the third part of this work, he deals with the “System of particular arts,” and studies the relationship of the Absolute Spirit with the different aesthetic manifestations, which range from the organic to the purest spiritualization. At the beginning of this process, the Absolute Spirit manifests itself in nature. Then it takes on the arts: here the process of spiritualization begins. This path can be compared to the building of a temple. Here the Divine adopts an external, material form: the temple is the House of God. Before starting the building process, the ground is cleared from weeds and debris. Then, architecture – symbolic art par excellence – makes its entrance. Later, Sculpture comes into play as a vehicle for God’s manifestation. Sculpture is a singular art in which the Spirit has not been violated by the passions – a view that agrees with Winckelmann’s ideal. Once the temple is built, the parishioners who attend religious services bring the pathos, the passion, which expresses itself by means of more flexible materials such as color and sound. So the sacred house also adds painting and music represented by hymns and religious psalms (due to their purity, painting, music and poetry are the Romantic arts par excellence). Finally, the growing wish for spiritualization finds its most eminent expression in poetry, since the spirit finds a better dwelling in the Idea than in the affections. As Raymond Bayer observes, this is the moment when the Absolute Spirit exchanges art by philosophy.^[41]

The desire for aesthetic purity in Romanticism contrasted with the hybridization between literature and fine arts of the Baroque, when literary expressions were “full of concetti in a generalized emblematic style. The same happened to music and other arts, games and artifice parties and even customs and ritual gestures.”^[42]

Walter Benjamin claimed that the essence of allegory, so dear to Baroque culture, was condensed in one particular book: *The Hieroglyphic Science of Humanism in the Allegory of the Renaissance, especially in the triumphal arch of Emperor Maximilian II*, by Karl Giehlow. This work, of historical character, highlights “the efforts of humanist scholars to decipher hieroglyphs.”^[43] Such efforts started from analyzing an emblematic text: *Hieroglyphica*, supposedly written by Horapollo at the end of the 5th century. Humanist Claude Mignoult revealed the nature of that text at the beginning of his work:

“in ancient times, those who wrote something about the divine, either Greeks or barbarians, intended the principles of things to remain veiled and looked for the truth itself (*to alethés*) to enigmas, signs, symbols or certain allegorical figures. The famous Greek oracles fulfilled the same condition.”^[44]

That desire for aesthetic purity in Romanticism contrasted with the hybridization between literature and fine arts in the Baroque when literary expressions were “full of *conceits* in a generalized emblematic style. The same happened to music and other arts, games and artifice parties and even customs and ritual gestures.”^[45]

That type of symbolic representation reveals Plato’s influence, especially with regard to access to the invisible –the world of ideas–through its visible manifestations. In turn, Horapolo’s work dealt exclusively with enigmatic hieroglyphs, that is, with mere pictograms that differed from phonic signs. Their use was justified by arguing that they were suitable for teaching the sacred. Renaissance literature cultivated this type of writing, which the Italian artist and scholar Leon Battista Alberti called *rebus*. Unlike the linguistic sign, the hieroglyph’s meaning remains unaltered by time; here resides its interest. But there was another, less rational, reason: as scholar Marsilio Ficino observed, the Egyptians believed that hieroglyphs reflected the Divinity’s thoughts, which escaped temporal dimensions. Similarly, Renaissance humanist Pierio Bolzani maintained that the ancients had “the conviction that Egyptian hieroglyphs contain a hereditary wisdom which clarifies all darkness of nature.”^[46] Baroque emblems, a genre so closely related to hieroglyphs, aimed at the elucidation of the occult. Emblems evidence the Baroque profound interest in the enigmatic and the hidden. That was why Walter Benjamin asserted that Baroque teleology “was not concerned about earthly happiness or ethics of human creatures, it aimed only at instructing them in mysteries.”^[47]

At the beginnings of Modernity, the opposition between the sacred and the profane was clearly stated. However, allegory was the vehicle which connected both worlds, raising material reality to a supersensible plane. At a formal level, the equivalent to this religious dialectic was the relationship between convention and expression, because—as Benjamin said—“allegory is both: convention and expression; and both are, from the start, antagonistic.”^[48] However, in *Origin of the German Trauerspiel*, the German theorist admits the conventional nature of that rhetoric figure comparing it with history, which –as Giambattista Vico had alerted–is made up according to individual interests. For this reason, even when it was a vehicle of expression, allegory was considered a convention. This dialectical relationship is not fulfilled by the symbol, which Romanticism reduced to the mere manifestation of an essence. Thus, Benjamin categorically asserts that “The allegory of the seventeenth century is not a convention of expression but the expression of a convention. Consequently, it is an expression of authority: secret, in concert with the dignity of its origin and public, in concert with the sphere of its validity.”^[49]

It is this dialectical relationship what allows allegory to weave the finite together with the Absolute.

5. CONCLUSION

No image shows the estrangement of modernity more clearly than that offered by Max Weber at the end of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Here the German sociologist supported the prediction made by seventeenth-century English theologian Richard Baxter about the lust for wealth in nascent capitalism. To the latter author, such desire would weigh on men not just “like a light cloak, which can be thrown aside at any moment.”^[50] Paradoxically, capitalism escalated during modernity, and “fate decreed that the cloak should become an iron cage.”^[51] The break with Protestant asceticism showed the sense of derangement that marked modernity, which caused the separation of knowledge from the faith, a breach that never healed. However, in the first phase of modernity –when the Baroque emerged–that split had not reached such a radical character as it did after the French Revolution.

In early modernity, the tradition survived both on the ideological and formal level. It is at the latter that I have carried on my analysis of the Hispanic Baroque. In this study, I have confirmed the dialectical complexity of the Baroque allegory. Walter Benjamin exposed the same idea in his thesis: the Baroque allegory outlived the romantic symbol because the latter could not exceed the balance of classical form. A sample of Baroque dialectical complexity was the taste of the humanists for Egyptian hieroglyphics, a sacred script created to safeguard doctrine. Baroque allegory, like hieroglyph, was at the same time sacred and conventional since religious concepts require a rigorous codification. Similarly, at the beginning of modern times, allegory was an expression of the convention.

My aim in writing this study has been to contribute to the general understanding of the Hispanic Baroque as a movement that emerged in a “hinge” historical time: a time in which two opposed worldviews, the medieval and the modern, coexisted. That circumstance made it possible for modernity to feed on the source of tradition.

I hope that the emphasis on historical facts will help the reader see the Baroque as an epochal concept, as José Antonio Maravall defined it in his seminal work. However, I do not think that there exists any “hegemonic” interpretation, only an account for some aspects of a complex reality: the Hispanic Baroque culture.

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