

Cuba and the Neobaroque:  
Twentieth-Century Reformations of Cuban Identity

by

Stephen Cruikshank  
BEd, University of Alberta, 2011

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# **Supervisory Committee**

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## Abstract

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This thesis project explores the connection between Cuban identity and the twentieth-century Neobaroque. The paper approaches the Neobaroque as a concept that reoriginates or "refracts" culture, implying a relationship between Baroque forms and post-colonial Latin America that creates a transformation of cultural expression. Furthermore, the Neobaroque is seen relating to questions of cultural identity, post-colonialism, transculturation, *mestizaje*, and Latin American modernity. The Neobaroque's relevancy with Cuba is stipulated in twentieth-century writings of three Cuban authors known as the Cuban triumvirate: José Lezama Lima, Alejo Carpentier, and Severo Sarduy. Similar themes of these writers concerning the Neobaroque's connection with the urban environment of Havana as well as connections to José Martí's writing *Nuestra América* are highlighted as key components connecting the Neobaroque with Cuban culture.

## Table of Contents

Supervisory Committee .....	ii
Abstract .....	iii
Table of Contents .....	iv
Introduction: The Cuban Triumvirate .....	1
Chapter One: The Heart of Cuba's Neobaroque .....	6
Chapter Two: Exploring the Baroque Sea: The Baroque According to José Lezama Lima in "La curiosidad barroca" .....	30
Chapter Three: Alejo Carpentier and the New World Baroque .....	55
Chapter Four: Severo Sarduy: The Artificialization of Language and Culture .....	81
Conclusion: Cuba Re-originated .....	104
Bibliography .....	109

## **Introduction**

### **The Cuban Triumvirate**

The Baroque reappears in Latin America in the twentieth century as a phenomenon that ruptures both temporal and geographical limits, appropriated as the "Neobaroque". According to Lois Parkinson Zamora and Monika Kaup, the term Neobaroque originally hails from Haroldo De Campos' essay "The Open Work of Art" (1955) and is later used by Severo Sarduy to explain modern Baroque strategies of artificialization in language and literature. Nonetheless, as Zamora and Kaup clarify, the term Neobaroque is "applicable to all reconstitutions of the Baroque and New World Baroque as twentieth-century aesthetics and ideologies" (13). According to Walter Moser, there is a temporal-spatial rupture seen in the Neobaroque that "[makes it possible] to understand the Baroque as a "concept," acting like a mobile entity, [that] can travel, change places, disappear in one spot and reappear elsewhere . . . assum[ing] new functions and receiv[ing] new meanings" (12). It is as a conceptual entity that the Baroque reappears in twentieth-century Latin America, inspired by the Historical Baroque of the seventeenth and eighteenth century, and centralized within its Latin American context. As such, the Neobaroque is often used in post-colonial studies of art, history, science, and cultural identity during the twentieth century. In particular I am interested in how the twentieth-century discussions of the Neobaroque relate to understanding Cuban identity. With the intention of directing my focus to one country, I am led to reflect on the words of José Antonio Maravall: "Se puede y tal vez es conveniente hoy por hoy hablar del Barroco de un país, pero sin olvidar de mantener el tema dentro del contexto general" (48). That said, my intention is to speak of the Baroque in Cuba, but under the general context of the Neobaroque. Cuba proves particularly relevant to Neobaroque studies due to the influx of Cuban writings on the subject during the

twentieth century. In particular these writings were developed by a group of three Cuban writers known under title of the Cuban triumvirate: José Lezama Lima (1910-1976), Alejo Carpentier (1904-1980), and Severo Sarduy (1937-1993). The writings of these authors found a particular interest in using concepts of the seventeenth-century Spanish Baroque to help define the structural transformations of Latin American culture and identity. This may seem to be a strange occurrence considering that the historical Baroque developed during a period highlighted by the colonial exploits of Spain. In the context of Cuba, colonialism brought about African slavery, the virtual end of the indigenous populations on the island, and years of economic exploitation that took advantage of the potential of sugar production. It would seem then, that periods of colonialism such as the historical Baroque would carry with it negatively charged opinions, however such was not the case. Rather, these writers understood the Baroque of the twentieth century not as a “regression” to the historical Baroque, but rather as an “appropriation” of it. The purpose of writers such as Lezama Lima, Carpentier, and Sarduy was not to revert cultural identity to its colonial past, but rather to appropriate the concept of the Baroque within the Latin American present, establishing an identity with strong historical roots, yet all the while being independently American.

In his essay "Seeking a Cuba of the Self: Baroque Dialogues between José Lezama Lima and Wallace Stevens," Christopher Winks similarly recognizes the importance of Cuba's involvement with the Neobaroque due to its writers. Recognizing that the majority of the fomenters of this Baroque revival hail from Cuba, he claims: “It would therefore seem appropriate at least to pose, if not necessarily provide a decisive answer to, the question why so much of this important turn in Latin American art and literature derives impetus from the Caribbean, a region with its own distinctive historically and cultural trajectories that are not

wholly assimilable to a continental schema” (598). The same question motivates this study. That the "impetus" of the Neobaroque is derived from Cuban art and literature is a factor that should not be overlooked in Neobaroque studies. This is because there is often seen to be an important connection between the developments of Cuban culture and the Neobaroque. One manner of explaining this connection is through the similarity between cultural and artistic categories. Important characteristics of the Neobaroque style, such as its impulse toward inclusivity, disposition to include oppositional elements, and deconstructionist tendencies can be seen to derive from the cultural formations undergone on the island. As discussed in chapter one, the Neobaroque and Cuban culture become particularly intertwined through topics of cultural diversity (*mestizaje*), cultural evolution (transculturation), and strategies of confronting modernity (transmodernity). For this reason, the Neobaroque theories of the Cuban triumvirate become relevant to a wide range of postcolonial studies. Nowadays, to attempt to study the post-colonial development of Latin America without discussing the Neobaroque would be like discussing a construction project without a blueprint. Sarduy in fact, saw the Neobaroque like a "blueprint" for reading into Latin American literature. In that sense, it would not be farfetched to acknowledge that the Neobaroque also acts like a twentieth-century "blueprint" for reading into Cuban culture.

Concerning the work of the Cuban triumvirate, it is clear that Lezama Lima's writings acted as the catalyst for the latter theories of Carpentier and Sarduy, in particular through his Baroque theory stipulated in the essay "La curiosidad barroca" (1957). As will be discussed in chapter two, Lezama Lima reveals the Baroque and Neobaroque under an inclusive relationship combining both European and American art forms into one. The Neobaroque then collages together seventeenth- and eighteenth-century colonial forms with post-colonial forms, European

and American, into a unified cultural image of Latin America that is shaped by a history of artistic expression. As seen in chapter three, Lezama Lima's contemporary, Alejo Carpentier, borrows from the theories of Catalan philosopher Eugenio d'Ors in order to develop his conception of the Baroque as a timeless and constant "spirit" that is manifested in various cultures and times. America, according to Carpentier, is understood to have always been Baroque, a condition represented in the historical consistency of Latin American culture to persevere under the tensions between modernity and traditionalism— a common Baroque opposition. As such, Carpentier represents the Baroque as a disposition for progress— a creative impulse that arises where there are elements of transformation, mutation, or innovation (*La novela* 123). Furthermore, in light of the theories of Lezama Lima and Carpentier, Severo Sarduy steps beyond cultural and historical implications of the Neobaroque, and discusses the Neobaroque as primarily a linguistic referent that implies a system of artificiality in writing. As discussed in chapter four, Sarduy's term artificialization reveals a deconstructive disposition in language that is explained according cosmological theories of the seventeenth century and modern origin theories such as the Big Bang. These theories are in turn applied to the structure of Baroque art and culture. In all, Cuba provides us three important twentieth-century critics on the debate of the Neobaroque, each developing the topic in different ways.

When we analyze the similarity between the theories of Lezama Lima, Carpentier, and Sarduy we are often guided back to the literary foundations that motivated these three. In particular, we can see similar themes taken from the writings of the Cuban national hero and nineteenth-century revolutionary José Martí (1853-1895). In a manner of speaking, the emphasis of Martían ideology in the theories of the Cuban triumvirate connects the Neobaroque to the history and ideology developed in Cuba during the nineteenth-century. Of particular importance

is Martí's work *Nuestra América* in which he advocates for the unification of Latin America through the elimination of racial categories, liberal reforms free from European and American control, and a political ideology sustained in a government under the control of native inhabitants of the country. In "Lo barroco y lo real maravilloso" Carpentier describes *Nuestra América* to be an important example of Baroque writing:

José Martí, tan directo, tan elocuente, tan, diríamos, tan explícito en sus discursos políticos, cuando se suelta la pluma y escribe por su gusto, como en el antológico estudio que escribe a la memoria de Carlos Darwin nos resulta un artífice maravilloso de la prosa barroca, y en su ensayo fundamental, *Nuestra América*, donde se definen todos los problemas de América en pocas páginas, es un maravilloso ejemplo de estilo barroco. (134)

Martí thus acts as a foundation for the Neobaroque theories of Lezama Lima, Carpentier, and Sarduy, revealing in their works a strong reference to the history of Cuba. Within the connections of Martí's ideology and the Neobaroque, the importance of *mestizaje* (cultural and racial mixing) seems to be the key. Cultural diversity, becomes orientated around the diversity of expression represented in Baroque form and it is *mestizaje* that appears to be the glue that connects the expressions of culture with that of the Baroque.

## Chapter One

### The Heart of Cuba's Neobaroque

When thinking of the Baroque, the figures of gold-filled and elegant seventeenth-century churches in Europe and Latin America are more likely to come to one's mind rather than a Caribbean island more renowned for sugar, cohibas, and Fidel Castro. Nonetheless, in the twentieth century the Baroque was particularly important in concepts surrounding Cuban writings and culture. We know that out of Cuba came a contingent of twentieth-century writings circulating the theme of the Baroque, however the question of why Cuban culture and the Baroque are connected can seem rather obscure. For example, why is it that Cuba, a country far less representative of the Baroque than countries such as Mexico, Peru, and Brazil, finds such an interest in using the Baroque to appropriate theories of cultural identity? As Carpentier admits, "Cuba no es barroco como México, como Quito, como Lima" (*Tientos* 73). In fact, in comparison to the Baroque presence in other countries, he states that "Cuba no llegó a propiciar un barroquismo válido en la talla, la imagen o la edificación" (73). Nonetheless, discussions of Cuban identity and the Baroque seem to go hand in hand. For example, cultural anthropologist Cécile Leclercq sees an importance connection between the Baroque and Cuban identity due to the Baroque's identification with Cuban nature: "la cubanidad se realiza a través de la exaltación de la particularidad de la naturaleza cubana: la geografía fue el primer signo de identificación" (233). Leclercq's theory stems primarily from Carpentier's evaluation of the Baroque's connection with nature as stipulated in his theory of *lo real maravilloso*. Nature is utilized by Carpentier to create a literary style founded on the "marvellous" quality of Latin America seen in its

landscapes, natural beauty, and tropical vegetation.<sup>1</sup> As Leclercq clarifies, for Carpentier "el estilo barroco nace y se arraiga en la naturaleza barroca del subcontinente americano" (229). Seeming as the Neobaroque implies a distinction between European and American sources, nature –utilized as a reference point for the differences between Europe and America– thus becomes an important tool in the appropriation of the Neobaroque. As Leclercq clarifies, Cuban writers are known to use nature to express a European/American dialectic:

Las diferentes escrituras de la naturaleza cubana expresan todas una voluntad diferenciadora: los escritores cubanos se dedicaron a describir la tierra cubana, haciendo recalcar paulatinamente la zanja que separaba España de Cuba. Todas las corrientes literarias participaron de este planteamiento particular de la cubanidad a partir de la naturaleza, desde perspectivas distintas, pero esbozando siempre una definición de la incipiente nacionalidad cubana: los diferentes intentos de hacer resaltar la diferencia de la realidad insular en contraposición con España fueron realizados a través de la enumeración lexical poética de la flora y fauna insulares; fueron seguidos de la investigación y descripción científicas de la naturaleza, de la interiorización romántica y glorificada de la patria, la evocación idílica de la campiña, la estetización de la tropicalidad y el mito del paraíso perdido. (233)

Carpentier's fascination with nature seems to be guided by his universal perspective— that is his tendency to locate the Baroque beyond Cuban borders, particularly in countries he visited such as Haiti and Venezuela. Overall, however, he is concerned with the contexts of Latin America as a whole. Indeed, Carpentier recognizes a connection between Cuba and the rest of Latin America:

[E]n la Cuba de hoy, no sólo el estudio de la historia de la patria, sino la historia toda del continente, convencidos como lo estamos de que nada latinoamericano puede sernos indiferente, y que las luchas, los logros, los dramas, las caídas y los triunfos, de las naciones hermanas del continente, son acontecimientos que nos conciernen directamente, y promueven nuestro júbilo o nuestra congoja, según se ofrezcan al mundo para motivo de gozo o de momentáneo desconsuelo. (*La novela* 86)

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<sup>1</sup> See Carpentier's essays "Lo barroco y lo real maravilloso", 128- 131; "La ciudad de las columnas", 61.

On the other hand, Lezama Lima is more likely to be seen focusing on specific examples within Latin America, giving particular attention to Cuba. It is in fact the atmosphere of his home city of Havana that motivates his interest on the Baroque. In an excerpt about Havana, written on January 11, 1950,<sup>2</sup> Lezama Lima reveals the capital city as an eclectic, almost living entity, that is overflowing with Baroque characteristics. He describes the city as representing a "nostalgia" of the tower of Babel, a metaphor for the dispersion of its urban developments and chaotic nature:

La ciudad muestra el orgullo de un pensamiento que se crea, que se hace creación, y de un crear centrado por el gobernario del hombre. Al levantarse frente al bosque o circularlo –cosas todas que se evocan el día dedicado al ingeniero–, la ciudad no se redujo a entelequia ni se afianzó como palpable de la teoría de las ideas, cobró sensibilidad como un monstruo que se despereza y después es triplicado por el canto del gallo y por el sueño de las aves ligeras. Pues en realidad la ciudad espira y aspira, se aduerme, se hincha graciosamente en su asimilación, se demora por sus laberintos y reaparece con nuevas criaturas de rostro más complicado. Prolifera en erizos y torres frente al bosque; o se adentra en el mar, amigada con las arenas; muestra su limpidez en su verticalidad, afinación para penetrar en imperios más unificadores, o se va desenrollando en su barroca horizontalidad de acarreo, en el oleaje de sus inmensas y orgullosas sùmulas, que al fin tienen que soportar un sentido, reducirse a un punto.

Desde las ciudades griegas, edificadas sobre lo que se ve, en las culturas del ojo, hasta las grandes ciudades que parecen levantadas sobre una visión memorable, sobre las infinitas variantes sinfónicas, allí está la plenitud humanista frente a las potencias innominadas, los organismos inferiores y el frío caos. Dentro de la ciudad, el molino y el horno, el pozo y los jardines, los canaletos y los subterráneos, las terrazas y las escalinatas, una inmensa dinastía de expresiones vivientes, de símbolos encarnados, crecen y respiran en un lentísimo misterio. De ahí que toda ciudad tenga la nostalgia de la Torre de Babel y de la Escala de Jacob, de una finitud sin cesar creciente y de un modelado sueño. Orgullo de la incesante edificación y humildad del total hundimiento, ciudades devoradas por los milenios y reconstruidas por las barbas de un rey asirio, por un relieve de cacería o por el asa de una jarra, dispuestas a renacer y a configurarse de nuevo. (132)

It is interesting to note the similarity of metaphors that Lezama Lima uses here to describe the environment of Havana with those he uses to describe the Baroque in his essay "La curiosidad barroca," published seven years later. The similarities are evident: Havana is described as a

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<sup>2</sup> See Carlos Espinosa Domínguez, entry LXXII in *Revelaciones de mi fiel Habana*, 132.

"bosque," and the Baroque is "[e]l verídico bosque americano" (325); Havana is the heart of "el mar," likewise there is a "mar teñido por una tinta igualmente barroca" (302); Havana develops like an "oleaje de sus inmensas y orgullosas sùmulas," and similarly the Baroque appears like a "sucesión incommovible de oleaje" (321); Havana is in a state of "frío caos," and similarly there is "un barroco frío y un barroco brillante" (302); the Baroque elements of Havana "respiran en un lentísimo misterio," while Lezama Lima titles his essay "La curiosidad barroca" (321).

Furthermore, in the above passage, Lezama Lima describes the expansion of Havana to be delayed by its "laberintos" which gives an immediate reference to Jorge Luis Borges' labyrinth quality of the Baroque. Similarly it awakens Maravall's perspective of the Baroque labyrinth as "una crítica de la sociedad humana . . . [representando alguien] que desea recorrer el mundo para dilucidar su vocación" (316). All in all, we find the Cuban capital acting as a foundation for much of Lezama Lima's metaphorical descriptions of the Baroque. Surely, Havana is considered a Baroque city. The city provides various examples of Baroque architecture: the San Carlos y San Ambrosio seminary (1689); the Basilica and monastery of San Francisco de Asís, built in 1591 and altered to a Baroque style in 1730; the Palace of the Captains General (1792), and the Havana Cathedral (1730). As well, The Great Theatre of Havana (1838), adorned with elegant stone and marble statues over its arched walkways stands out as a rare Neobaroque style in the city's architecture. In particular, the Havana Cathedral –the full name being the Cathedral of the Virgin Mary of the Immaculate Conception– appears to be the central Baroque icon in the Old Havana neighbourhood. Describing the Cathedral, Lezama Lima writes in "La curiosidad barroca" that "la catedral nuestra ofrece un detalle de una calidad y al mismo tiempo grácil belleza, como que concilia la idea de solidez y como una reminiscencia de vuelco marino, de sucesión incommovible de oleaje" (321). Lezama Lima is in particular attracted to the stonework

of the Cathedral. As he implies later in this same essay, the Baroque layout of the Cathedral is a sight of attraction for Havana citizens: “¡Qué habanero en un día de recorrido de estaciones, de fiesteo navideño de plegado secreto por el San Cristobalón, no se ha detenido, después de aquel majestuoso ademán, verdaderamente cardenalicio, de la piedra en un fugato, en el pequeño, sonriente, amistoso balcón, que se entreabre entre el extendido orgullo de la piedra!” (321). If Lezama Lima saw the attention of Habaneros centered on the stonework in the Baroque architecture of Havana, then it is Carpentier who draws our attention to the work of concrete. In fact, in his essay "Conciencia e identidad de América"<sup>3</sup> Carpentier seems to distinguish between the European and American Baroque according to the materials of stone and concrete:

Mientras el hombre de Europa nacía, crecía, maduraba, entre piedras seculares, edificaciones viejas, apenas acrecidas o anacronizadas por alguna tímida innovación arquitectónica, el latinoamericano nacido en los albores de este siglo de prodigiosos inventos, mutaciones, revoluciones, abría los ojos en el ámbito de ciudades que, casi totalmente inmovilizadas desde los siglos XVII o XVIII, con un lentísimo aumento de población, empezaban a agigantarse, a extenderse, a alargarse, a elevarse, al ritmo de las mezcladoras de concreto. (79)

Carpentier's metaphor for urban development realized in the "ritmo de las mezcladoras de concreto" finds particular significance in his earlier essay "La ciudad de las columnas" (1967) where he discusses the dispersion of cement columns throughout Havana. Describing Havana as "la ciudad de sombras" (62), Carpentier discusses the urban development of the city to be characterized by its shaded walkways supported by series of columns. He describes the columns as "una de las más singulares constantes del estilo habanero: la increíble profusión de columnas, en una ciudad que es emporio de columnas, selva de columnas, columnata infinita, última urbe en tener columnas en tal demasía" (65). The "constancy" of the the city's columns becomes one

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<sup>3</sup> Found in *La novela latinoamericana en vísperas de un nuevo siglo y otros ensayos*, 79-87.

of the attributes of Havana, –a city described as a "style without a style"—distinguishing it from other cities in Latin America:

La Habana[,] *estilo sin estilo* que a la larga, por proceso de simbiosis, de amalgama, se erige en un barroquismo peculiar que hace las veces de estilo inscribiéndose en la historia de los comportamientos urbanísticos. Porque, poco a poco, de lo abigarrado, de lo entremezclado, de lo encajado entre realidades distintas, han ido surgiendo las constantes de un empaque general que distingue a La Habana de otras ciudades del continente. (63, italics in original).

Beyond the support for the buildings and walkways of the city, columns likewise become the sustaining force of the Baroque— a representation of the Baroque's disposition to expand. As Carpentier clarifies, "la multiplicación de las columnas fue la resultante de un espíritu barroco" (74). Overall, it is clear in the works of Lezama Lima and Carpentier that Havana, particularly through its architecture, plays a critical role in the Baroque presence in Cuba. The city is without doubt the centerpiece of the Cuban Baroque and the heart of the inspiration for the majority of twentieth-century discourse stemming from the Cuban triumvirate. *Havana is the heart of Cuba's Neobaroque*. It is the location, the center, the pulse of Baroque tensions between colonial and postcolonial expressions that gave life to the appropriations of Cuban identity in the twentieth century.

The connection between Havana and the Neobaroque evolves around the concept of "reorigination," that is to say that the Neobaroque was used as a form of cultural renovation in the twentieth century that sought to differentiate Latin America culture from European modernization. In other words, Cuban culture began to reflect back on Latin American origins in order to appropriate a post-colonial identity in the face of a colonial past. The city then becomes the destination for Latin America's "reoriginated" expression. In her essay, "'The Future is Entirely Fabulous': The Baroque Genealogy of Latin America's Modernity" Monika Kaup

likewise uses this concept of reorigination to explain the Baroque as a vehicle for post-colonial expression:

How does [the Baroque], a term borrowed from European art history help one understand what the colonized were or are doing? One answer is the notion of reorigination: expressive forms do not continue to have the social meaning they had at their origins; social and discursive formations are subject to never-ending flows of appropriation, rearticulation, hegemonic co-optation, and popular subversion. (232)

Lezama Lima's collection of essays titled *La expresión americana* is strong example of reorigination. Here, he develops theories of cultural expression from the perspective of Latin America culture and history. The American (historical) Baroque is revealed as a manner of expression that connects cultural and historical roots of Latin America; a mosaic of indigenous, African and European forms are pieced together by the Cuban author writing in the post-colonial present. It is also here that Lezama Lima endows the project of the Baroque to be realized in the development of the city, or as he states, the Baroque "[r]epresenta un triunfo de la ciudad" (303). Zamora and Kaup connect the concept of reorigination to metropolitan environments: "The growing interest in the historical Baroque was motivated by the need to define local cultures against metropolitan norms. The recodification – we might even say the *reorigination* – of the New World Baroque provided a way to differentiate Latin American forms from European cultural models without denying Europe's role in creating Latin American cultural realities" (8 Italics in original). The urban environment of the city becomes this central "cultural reality" of Latin America representing the place that unifies both European and Latin American cultural products. As Antonio Maravall confirms, "si el Barroco es una cultura urbana, es, sobre todo una cultura de la gran ciudad" (246). Overall one can understand the Latin American city, Havana in particular, to contain the Baroque because of two primary reasons: firstly due to the quality known as *mestizaje* characterized by the city's diverse cultures, and secondly due to the cities

disposition for cultural evolution realized in the process of transculturation. Together *mestizaje* and transculturation are foundational for the "reorigination" of Cuban culture in the twentieth-century, supporting an environment conscientious of its European past, and focused on its post-colonial present. To better understand these characteristics, the connection of *mestizaje* and transculturation with Havana will require further explanation, which we will now turn to.

First of all, we may understand Havana as a city that developed around the concept of *mestizaje*. According to Antonio Cornejo Polar, "it could be said that the category of *mestizaje* is the most powerful and widespread conceptual device with which Latin America has interpreted itself" (116). In the case of Cuba, *mestizaje* has a lot to do with the cultural diversity of the Cuban people and the historical expression that is realized in the urbanization of Havana. Culturally speaking, the Cuban people are defined by their diversity. As Susanna Regazzoni explains, Cuba is a country that represents a world "caracterizado por la diversidad y la amalgama étnica, lingüística, religiosa, social, todos factores que comportan también una identidad dispersa, ambigua" (12). This "dispersed" and "ambiguous" identity is the key factor that paves the way for Baroque integration in Cuban culture. Diversity, dispersion, ambiguity—such factors become realized in the ideology of *mestizaje*. In short, we may understand *mestizaje* as the mixture of racial and cultural categories unified under a single identity. According to Leclercq, the objective of *mestizaje* holds a significant value in the establishment and reaffirmation of Latin American identity. She describes the objective of *mestizaje* as:

[L]a necesidad de reivindicar a América Latina frente a Europa y a los EE.UU., de establecer y reafirmar una identidad propia, de crear formas de expresión artísticas capaces de expresar y difundir la singularidad de su cultura. La mesticidad, con la mulatidad en su versión caribeña, representan una teoría alternativa a las teorías racialistas decimonónicas, y expresan el instinto de conservación de la identidad latinoamericana frente al largo rechazo europeo y norteamericano . . . La rehabilitación y valorización de los diversos componentes culturales del subcontinente y sobre todo de

la miscigenación racial posibilitaban la entrada de las naciones latinoamericanas en la historia universal y acababan con su exclusión. (87)

The last point implied by Leclercq here, concerning the end of exclusion, is fundamental to the meaning of *mestizaje*— it is the progress of exclusivity towards inclusivity; division to union.

In particular, this represents the nineteenth-century *mestizo* project of José Martí as discussed in his work *Nuestra América* (1891). Martí, fighting for Cuba's independence from Spain, saw the island's future determined by the need to fuse together the vast racial distinctions of the country that had been put under prejudice through years of colonial tensions and slavery. Understanding that Cuba— a country flourishing with racial differences (*criollos*, *mestizos*, *mulattos*, Afro-Cubans)— required national unification in order to find independence from Spain, Martí then sought to develop an ideology in which national liberty avoided categories of differentiation found in Cuba's racial diversity. Therefore, for Martí there were no longer races, there were only Cubans; no longer slavery (politically or ethnically), only freedom. As exhorted in *Nuestra América*, race for Martí becomes non-existent in the perspective of American universality:

No hay odio de razas, porque no hay razas. Los pensadores canijos, los pensadores de lámparas, enhebran y recalientan las razas de librería, que el viajero justo y el observador cordial buscan en vano en la justicia de la Naturaleza, donde resalta en el amor victorioso y el apetito turbulento, la identidad universal del hombre. El alma emana, igual y eterna, de los cuerpos diversos en forma y en color. Peca contra la Humanidad el que fomente y propague la oposición y el odio de las razas. (39)

The renowned twentieth-century critic on Cuban culture, Fernando Ortiz, similarly reflects on Martí's anti-racial ideology in his essay "Los factores humanos de la cubanidad." Here, Ortiz uses Martí's ideology to help define Cuban identity under a term that he coins as *la cubanidad*.

Ortiz writes:

[L]a cubanidad no la da el engendro; no hay una raza cubana. Y raza pura no hay ninguna. La raza, al fin, no es sino un estado civil firmado por autoridades antropológicas; pero ese estado racial suele ser tan convencional y arbitrario, y a veces tan cambiadizo, como lo es el estado civil que adscribe los hombres a tal o cual

nacionalidad. La cubanidad para el individuo no está en la sangre, ni en el papel ni en la habitación. La cubanidad es principalmente la peculiar calidad de una cultura, la de Cuba. (77)

Ortiz continues by creating a metaphor of *cubanidad* by representing Cuba and its mixed races to be like a soup concoction called *ajiaco*. As Ortiz describes, "lo característico de Cuba es que, siendo ajiaco, su pueblo no es un guiso hecho, sino una constante cocción. Desde que amanece su historia hasta las horas que van corriendo, siempre en la olla de Cuba es un renovado entrar de raíces, frutos y carnes exógenas, un incesante borbotón de heterogéneas sustancias" (81). For Ortiz, the racial and cultural distinctions of Cuba are blended and "cooked" into a single element, *el ajiaco*, saturating the individual elements together to form a unified taste of *cubanidad*. *Ajiaco* becomes Ortiz's metaphor of Cuban *mestizaje*: "Mestizaje de cocinas, mestizaje de razas, mestizaje de culturas. Caldo denso de civilización que borbotonea en el fogón del Caribe" (81). The concept of *mestizaje* becomes as integrative within Baroque forms as it is within the Cuban people; *mestizaje* is the connecting principle between Cuban culture and the Baroque.

In particular, *mestizaje* finds relevancy with Baroque forms through a process which I discuss further in chapter two regarding Lezama Lima's Baroque theory called "cultural refraction." Rather than a reflection or mimesis of culture, the Baroque is "refracted," that is, it is transformed in a manner that creates a new cultural image. Likewise, this is how cultural ideology such as Martí's mestizo-project, Carpentier's philosophy of cultural solidarity,<sup>4</sup> or Sarduy's literary theory of artificialization becomes integrated into Baroque forms.<sup>5</sup> The cultural ideology of *mestizaje* is "refracted" in a manner that transforms it into an artistic category. Ideology thus becomes form, culture becomes art, hybridity becomes expression. According to Zamora and Kaup "[t]he capacity of the Baroque to overarch contradictions and include

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<sup>4</sup> For Carpentier see essay "Conciencia e identidad de América," 87.

<sup>5</sup> See Sarduy's *Barroco* (1974).

oppositions has made it particularly useful for theorizing cultural difference, as well as for celebrating the hybridity of Latin American cultural products” (8). In that sense, the inclusivity implied in *mestizaje* can be seen as "refracted" in the inclusiveness of Baroque forms. This refraction is then represented in the city, which becomes the urban playground of such oppositions. Architecture, in particular, is the tool of *mestizaje* in the city. Lezama Lima best indicates this in "La curiosidad barroca" when he describes the art of the eighteenth-century Quechua Indian sculptor José Kondori to represent "la síntesis del español y del indio" and the art of African-Brazilian architect Antônio Francisco Lisboa, known as Aleijadinho as "la unión en una forma grandiosa de lo hispánico con las culturas africanas" (324). The works of these artists are then represented as a manner to "synthesize" and "unify" cultural diversity— Spanish with Indian, Hispanic with African. *Mestizaje* is thus represented in the diversity of Baroque forms.

A century earlier than the writings of Lezama Lima, Martí similarly observed that cultural diversity could be represented through architectural forms. In his essay "La historia del hombre, contada por sus casas" Martí analyzes human nature from a historical perspective beginning with the Palaeolithic world and ending in the modern world. He uses the history of diverse architectural styles found in houses throughout the Americas to represent the ethnic diversity —the *mestizaje*— of Latin America.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, in the same way for which the cities of Latin America are identified by their diverse architectural styles, so too is Latin American identity defined by the diversity of its people. Continuing with his essay on the history of humanity, Martí writes:

En nuestra América las casas tienen algo de romano y de moro, porque moro y romano era el pueblo español que mandó en América, y echó abajo las casas de los indios. Las

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<sup>6</sup> Essay found in *La Edad de Oro y otros relatos*.

echó abajo de raíz: echó abajo sus templos, sus observatorios, sus torres de señales, sus casas de vivir, todo lo indio lo quemaron los conquistadores españoles y lo echaron abajo, menos las calzadas, porque no sabían llevar las piedras que supieron traer los indios, y los acueductos, porque les traían el agua de beber.

Ahora todos los pueblos del mundo se conocen mejor y se visitan: y en cada pueblo hay su modo de fabricar, según haya frío o calor, o sean de una raza o de otra; pero lo que parece nuevo en las ciudades no es su manera de hacer casas, sino que en cada ciudad hay casas moras, y griegas, y góticas, y bizantinas, y japonesas, como si empezara el tiempo feliz en que los hombres se tratan como amigos, y se van juntando. (151)

Martí's connection with the variety of Latin American cultures and the variety of architectural styles found in Latin American houses proves to be an early example of the theorization of *mestizaje* within urban contexts. The Neobaroque of the twentieth century reflects Martí's ideology by highlighting American and European diversity under a unified expression. Havana, for example, is a city with architectural styles that proves as eclectic and diverse as its people. Carpentier uses the diversity of columns in Havana to represent the Cuban *mestizaje* in a similar manner that Martí used the diversity of styles of houses. The diverse representation of columns throughout the city is described as the Baroque character of Cuba (its *barroquismo*): "Y como todo mestizaje, por proceso de simbiosis, de adición, de mezcla, engendra un barroquismo, el barroquismo cubano consistió en acumular, coleccionar, multiplicar, columnas y columnatas en tal demasía de dóricos, y de corintios, de jónicos y de compuestos" (*Tientos* 73). Carpentier's theory of columns can be thought of as a metaphor for cultural symbiosis— it is a process of inscribing cultural difference within a similar urbanized space. César Augusto Salgado summarizes this well in his essay "Hybridity in New World Baroque Theory" by explaining that "New World baroque writers thus theorized the hybrid as a hidden inscription of difference within the fictional sameness of official culture, as rebellious graffiti camouflaged in the forest of baroque symbols" (318). In a sense, the diverse styles of columns in Havana thus become Havana's Baroque "graffiti."

Turning now to the second point of Cuban "reorigination," we may understand the process of transculturation as a way to reoriginate culture that is vital to the development of the Neobaroque in Cuba. As a process, transculturation refers to the development of *mestizaje* in Cuba, highlighted in its urban environments such as Havana. The term transculturation is a neologism originally used by Ortiz in his anthropological study on Cuban culture, *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azúcar*. Ortiz defines this transculturation as: "los variadísimos fenómenos que se originan en Cuba por las complejísimas transmutaciones de culturas que aquí se verifican, sin conocer las cuales es imposible entender la evolución del pueblo cubano, así en lo económico como en lo institucional, jurídico, ético, religioso, artístico, lingüístico, psicológico, sexual y en los demás aspectos de su vida" (255). Ortiz then understands Cuba's history to be an evolutionary process described as a "rhythm" that structurally transforms culture at various stages (255). The first stage is represented as a shift from the indigenous Palaeolithic to the Neolithic whose cultures eventually disappear due to their inability to survive the forceful modernizations of incipient Castilian culture. Subsequently, a transculturation occurred with the incessant arrival of white immigrants, primarily Spanish, and yet another transculturation with the influx of diverse cultures from Africa and Asia. These particular events of transculturation therefore come to represent the influencing stages of Cuba's entrance into modernity, which is always followed by the collision of cultures differentiating between either traditional or modern perspectives. Transculturation therefore depends on the adaptive receptivity of traditional cultures, that is, their ability to adapt within the modernizing circumstances. However, it is a process that implies more than merely acculturation, since it requires less of a "fitting into" a new cultural context, and more of a "renovation" of the context itself. For this reason, Ortiz chooses the word transculturation to represent this process. He sees a need to correct

terminological inaccuracy represented by the word "acculturation." Rather, Ortiz describes the process of transculturation as a collection of three phases: "deculturation," or the deconstruction of the culture of origin; "acculturation," or the procurement of cultural elements by another culture; and "neoculturation," or the synthetic operation of traditional and modern elements of culture. Gustavo Pérez Firmat summarizes Ortiz's processes explaining that, "in the case of the black population of Cuba, deculturation involves the extinction of African culture as a signifying totality; acculturation involves the acquisition of fragments of the white man's culture; and neoculturation is the synthesis of the African with the European" (31). The Neobaroque thus becomes integrated into twentieth-century Cuban culture, working together to "deculture", "acculture", and neoculture" Cuba in a way in which it may survive between the modernizations that press it forward and the nostalgia of history that calls it back.

By transforming the concept of "acculturation" to "transculturation," Ortiz demonstrates the structure of transculturation through the very word itself. He thus creates this word to be "meta-transformative"; a transformation of culture accomplished through the transformation of language— both textual and cultural. Like the Neobaroque that is artistically representative and yet contingent upon cultural transformation, we see a similar dynamic in which culture and text are balanced in the same paradoxical structure. With the Neobaroque, the transformations of culture become represented in the transformations of art and can therefore also be understood as meta-transformative. We can see similar examples of terminological transformations by Cuban writers such as Lezama Lima who transforms Werner Weisbach's argument of the Baroque as an art of "counter-reformation" into the term "counter-conquest" (*contraconquista*),<sup>7</sup> Carpentier

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<sup>7</sup> As described in Lezama Lima's essay "La curiosidad barroca".

who transforms the morphological structure of the word "Baroque" into the term *barroquismo*,<sup>8</sup> and Sarduy who transforms Johannes Kepler's cosmological theory of the ellipse into a decentering operation of the Baroque.<sup>9</sup> The Neobaroque is therefore capable of structural, grammatical, and even theoretical transformations. It represents a translational objective of Latin American identity that Carpentier defines to occur wherever there is "transformación, mutación, e innovación" (*La novela* 123).

Cuba's transculturation set in motion a cultural dynamism of *mestizaje* in the country and Havana is by far the key location of its development. Returning to Carpentier's essay "La ciudad de las columnas" we can see that he saw the *mestizo* quality of the Cuban Baroque to depend on the unique urban development of Havana realized through the process of transculturation:

Espíritu barroco, legítimamente antillano, mestizo en cuanto se transculturizó en estas islas del Mediterráneo americano, que se tradujo en un irreverente y desacompañado rejuego de entablamentos clásicos, para crear ciudades aparentemente ordenadas y serenas donde los vientos de ciclones estaban siempre al acecho del mucho orden para desordenar el orden apenas los veranos, pasados a octubres, empezaran a bajar sus nubes sobre las azoteas y tejados. (74)

Using the terms of Zamora and Kaup, Carpentier sees the proliferating columns of Cuba to represent the qualities of "accumulation and accommodation" (242) inherent in the Baroque. The idea is that as Cuba is "trans-cultured," so too is Baroque style, we may say, "trans-styled". Transculturation implies a process of changes in which culture accumulates and accommodates differences within its Latin American context. Baroque forms follow suit. Therefore, the proliferation of the columns' diversity throughout Havana reflects the proliferation of the city's cultural diversity. As Zamora and Kaup clarify, the Baroque is seen as "*originative*, generative, transformative, growing out of cultural collisions, permutations, and creative recyclings" (242;

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<sup>8</sup> As explained in the essay "Lo barroco y lo real maravilloso".

<sup>9</sup> Theorized by Sarduy in *Barroco* (1974).

Italics in original). As Zamora and Kaup indicate here, the Baroque "grows out of culture." We may therefore say that in the context of Latin America, the Neobaroque grows out of the culture of the city; in the context of Cuba, the Neobaroque grows out of the culture of Havana.

If Cuba's Neobaroque is thought to have developed through the process of transculturation and "re-originate" itself in the city of Havana, then there will have had to exist strategies to confront the oppositional factors inherent in the Neobaroque. The Neobaroque, tends to deal with oppositions on three main levels: literature, art/architecture, and culture. On the side of literature, art, and architecture, we can turn to the Neobaroque theories of the third of the Cuban triumvirate, Severo Sarduy. He addresses the Neobaroque oppositions through the process of literary artificialization— a process whereby the Saussurrean principles of the signifier and signified are deconstructed in manners that reveal the artificial disposition of language. Furthermore, Sarduy addresses the oppositions in art and architecture by using cosmological theories to appropriate a theory of Neobaroque decentering. Chapter four of this study focuses a greater degree on the oppositional character of the Neobaroque as discussed by Sarduy. For now, understanding how Cuban identity connects with the Neobaroque requires us to draw our attention to the cultural oppositions confronting the Neobaroque which more often than not concerns the question of Latin American modernity— a cultural dialectic of Latin America realized in the struggle between the modernizing forces of European colonialism and the history of American traditionalism. The debate revolving around Latin American modernity tends to deal with the question of postmodernism in Latin America. Historically speaking, the Neobaroque becomes a conflictive and incongruent reference when speaking of a "postmodern Baroque." It is conflictive because postmodernism implies a progression stemming out of modernity which therefore carries with it neo-colonial implications, as modernity does

colonial.<sup>10</sup> If we reference back to Ortiz's distinction between acculturation and transculturation, we see that acculturation is inspired by colonial tensions,<sup>11</sup> whereas transculturation is inspired by anticolonial transformations.<sup>12</sup> Modernity prescribes a cultural project that better reflects the principles of acculturation than of transculturation. Postmodernity, like modernity, could then be understood as a modernizing objective of an elite over an inferior subject; a modern project of cultural conquest. Kaup explains that "Europe's 'discovery' of America and creation of the first world-system, unifying all parts of the world under its dominance, was thus a logical consequence of Europe's inherent superiority over the non-West" (*Alternative Modernity* 134). The modern tendencies of superiority do not disappear in the post-modern contexts. In particular, the reason for this is economically motivated. Just as modernity was driven by the global economic hegemony of the "non-West," so too do post-modern contexts find economic motivations. In particular, this was a key factor for Fredric Jameson's appropriation of an American postmodern culture: "[T]he whole global, yet American, postmodern culture is the internal and superstructural expression of a whole new wave of American military and economic domination throughout the world" (5). The opposition of the Neobaroque is then caught between

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<sup>10</sup> See Dussel.

<sup>11</sup> Ortiz describes the influx of African slaves to confront a challenge of forced assimilation in the Caribbean: "Más desgarrados que todos, [los negros] fueron aglomerados como bestias en jaula, siempre en rabia impotente, siempre en ansia de fuga, de emancipación, de mudanza y siempre en trance defensivo, de inhibición, de disimulo y de aculturación a un mundo nuevo" (*Contrapunteo* 90).

<sup>12</sup> Ortiz recognizes transculturation to represent a process more inclusive of culture, rather than exclusive. Cultural differences are sustained rather than assimilated: "Entendemos que el vocablo transculturación expresa mejor las diferentes fase fases del proceso transitivo de una cultura a otra, porque éste no consiste solamente en adquirir una distinta cultura . . . Al fin, como bien sostiene la escuela de Malinowski, en todo abrazo de culturas sucede lo que en la cópula genética de los individuos: la creatura siempre tiene algo de ambos progenitores, pero también siempre es distinta de cada uno de los dos" (90).

the "superiority-complex" implied in the meaning of postmodern and the principles of American liberty advocated for in its post-colonial context.

In his essay "Neobaroque: Latin America's Postmodernity?" Pedro Lange-Churión explains that "[t]he baroque is, then, the uncanny of modernity, the region where modernity splits into a crisis" (264). However, the context of the Neobaroque sheds a new light on the post-modern crisis in Latin America. Various scholars confront this question of the Neobaroque in a post-modern context in different ways. In his work *Neo-Baroque* Omar Calabrese avoids it all together, by inserting the term Neobaroque instead of the term "postmodern." He defines the Neobaroque as "the cultural objects of our epoch" (14), which does not imply a "recuperation" of the Baroque per se, but rather a repetition, return, or recycling of a specific historical period. This leads him to define the Neobaroque as "metahistorical" (15). In this sense, the absence of a post-modern referent in Latin America is then replaced with the more culturally applicable and historically relevant "Neobaroque." In another perspective concerning the Baroque's relationship to postmodernity, Irlemar Chiampi in her work *Barroco y modernidad* recognizes in a similar manner to Calabrese that it is impractical to attempt to understand a post-modern position –such as the late capitalism of the American Jameson– within a Latin American context. However Chiampi, rather than replace the term postmodernism, leaves it to its northern context, and goes to work rearranging a southern Latin American perspective based on Neobaroque concentrations of temporality and subject. By this she refers to similar Neobaroque elements that we have discussed concerning Martí and Ortiz's fascination with Latin America's "hybrid subject": *el mestizaje*. The Neobaroque becomes liberated from temporal restrictions in order to derive from the seventeenth-century and reappear in the twentieth-century, something Chiampi describes as the "debilitamiento de la historicidad" (36). The Neobaroque reveals the Latin American subject

as the emblem of cultural turmoil that is defined by a history of suffering. It reveals a subjective transcendence in light of a historically objective superiority (referring to colonial or neo-colonial projects)— a revelation that Chiampi defines as "el descentramiento del sujeto" (36). Therefore, Chiampi is able to use the Neobaroque's temporal and subjective fluency to disconnect it from postmodern positions that point to the Baroque as an archaic reference. This is achieved by highlighting the modern and counter-modern debate. She then does not negate a post-modern condition of the Neobaroque, but similar to the transformative tendency of Ortiz to neologize words, she "translates" the post-modern concept under the Neobaroque context of "la contramodernidad" (37). Under this context, she describes the Neobaroque as such:

[E]l neobarroco es continuidad de [la] tradición; sin ruptura, pero con la renovación de las experiencias anteriores (de ahí el neo), sin cortes, pero con la intensificación y expansión de las potencialidades experimentales del barroco "clásico" reciclado por Lezama y Carpentier, mas ahora con una inflexión fuertemente revisionista de los valores ideológicos de la modernidad. Moderno y contramoderno a la vez, el neobarroco informa su estética posmodernista, como trataré de indicar, como un trabajo arqueológico que no inscribe lo arcaico del barroco sino para alegorizar la disonancia de la modernidad y la cultura de América Latina. (29)

Therefore, according to Chiampi it can be said that the Neobaroque is a "post-modern" aesthetic, but only to the extent for which the postmodern implies a dissonance from modernity.

Following in the steps of Chiampi, other scholars have tackled this post-modern debate, such as Gonzalo Celorio who in his work *Ensayo de contraconquista* recognizes the Baroque as the "punto de partida de la emancipación" (85), an escaping mechanism against colonial opposition. Similarly, Walter Moser in his essay "The Concept of the Baroque" describes the liberating nature of the Baroque as an "emancipation from modernity" (31). On the other hand, Monika Kaup in her essay "Latin America's Alternative Modernity" avoids defining the Neobaroque according to "emancipatory" functions, but rather attributes the Neobaroque to represent the "alternative modernity" of Latin America. Kaup likely proves more ambitious in

this definition due to her fascination with the Neobaroque's anthropological connections revealed in her critiques of global modernity studies of Argentinian postcolonial theorist Enrique Dussel, South Asian historian Dipesh Chakrabarty, and the Argentinian anthropologist Néstor García García Canclini. Kaup recognizes a connection of the Neobaroque to the theories of global modernity in Latin American culture. This leads her to understand the Neobaroque as a "structure-transforming operation" that "points to the transhistorical aspect of an alternate modernity that recuperates residual forms from the archive of the early modern period" (130). The exit or "escape" from modernity, according to Kaup, is only focused on the "narrow Eurocentric modernity that identifies the non-West as the 'undeveloped' frontier of Europe's modern civilizing mission" (133). The Baroque therefore is less an emancipatory tool and more of a trans-historical one. It does not flee from modernity, but rather "transcends" it. This ideology stems from Enrique Dussel's concept of "transmodernity" as presented in his works revolving around the Latin American philosophy of liberation. In an essay titled "Transmodernity and Interculturality," Dussel describes the term trans-modern as "an explicit overcoming of the concept 'Post-modernity'" (41). Dussel is able to distinguish Latin America from a postmodern concept by revealing a distinction between modernity and European hegemony. He explains: "In my view, the four phenomena (capitalism, the world-system, colonialism, and modernity) are contemporary to one another (but they respond to the 'centrality' of the world market)" (41). Historically, we may understand Cuba as responding to the "centrality" of Spain. As Cuba was never fully "modern," then it is difficult to call such post-modern, for "Postmodernism," as Dussel explains, "is a final stage in modern European/North American culture, the 'core' of Modernity" (42). Transmodernity then represents the processes beyond European/North

American cultural reach. It in turn does not represent the integration of Latin America into modernity, but rather its response to such. Dussel explains:

Thus the strict concept of the "*trans-modern*" attempts to indicate the radical novelty of the irruption - as if from nothing - from the transformative exteriority of that which is always Distinct, those universal cultures in the process of development which assume the challenges of Modernity, and even European/North American Post-modernity, but which respond from *another place, another location*. (42 Italics in the original.)

Cuba, thus, can be thought to find itself at this other "place," this other "location," with a historical decentering process loosening the colonial grips of modernity and projecting itself towards a cultural liberation realized through the concept of transmodernity. The Neobaroque then arrives to be the "transmodernizing" tool of Latin America that transfers Cuba into its "alternative modernity," an aesthetic representation decentered from European and North American colonial structures.<sup>13</sup>

Returning to the question of Cuba's urban Baroque, we can understand Havana as a city that is both trans-cultured and trans-modern. As we have seen, it is clear then that the Neobaroque responds to the historical and cultural oppositions through the diversity of culture and style represented in the city. For the sake of clarity, I will refer to these oppositions as "exterior oppositions." However, what seems less discussed in Neobaroque discourse is how the Neobaroque responds to what we may call the "interior oppositions" of the city. By this, I mean to refer to the oppositional qualities, not responsible for developing the city, but rather those created within the dynamics of the city itself— that is to say, the societal pressures of human expression. In particular, I refer to the political dynamics of society realized in the relationship between the city's community (its citizens) and the city's context (its nation); Cubans and Cuba. Such interior oppositions find relevancy with the work of Cuban writers, in particular with

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<sup>13</sup> We may consider such structures as aesthetic, political, economical, and cultural. According to Severo Sarduy, the Neobaroque relates with each of these areas. See *Barroco*.

Lezama Lima. Summarizing an entry of Lezama Lima's review *Origenes* (num. 15, 1947), Abel E. Prieto notes Lezama's description of interior oppositions between two politics: one of the governmental system and the other of the value of Cuban artists:

Existe entre nosotros otra suerte de política, otra suerte de regir la ciudad de una manera profunda y secreta. Han sido nuestros artistas los que procuran definir, comunicar sangre, diseñar movimientos. Pero mientras ellos recorrían las visitudes que les habían sido impuestas, la otra política, la fría, la desintegrada, ha rondado con su indiferencia y su dedo soez esa labor secreta que asombra ver en pie, dando pruebas incesantes de su vocación tensa, inmediata y continua, como quien se dirige a su destino con misional misterio. (318)

In response to Lezama Lima's optimistic gesture concerning the value of artists under the pressures of "cold" politics, E. Prieto writes:

La ciudad (síntesis de toda Comunidad, y de la Nación) está regida, pues, por dos políticas opuestas: la inculta, soez y desintegradora de los gobernantes, de un lado; y la política secreta, integradora de los valores de lo cubano y de las potencialidades del hombre en general, forjada por una minoría de escritores y artistas que ejerce –a través de la creación de una obra sin concesiones– un misterioso poder desde la sombra. De este modo, la fe en la influencia social de la cultura, en sus posibilidades para salvaguardar las esencias nacionales en medio de la descomposición generalizada, se define lúcidamente como un impulso político, decisivo en la conformación del esquema utópico que intentaremos representar. (318)

Firstly, E. Prieto is quick to connect the city as an important synthesis between community and nation. The unity of community and nation is described to confront the opposition between the values of the Cuban artists and the vulgar indifference of governmental authorities (*la política desintegradora*) that proves indifferent to their work. As such, it is the city that becomes the base of such opposition. As Lezama Lima notes, writers and artists represent the potential to "diseñar movimientos." This no doubt holds true in the writings of Martí who sought to design a revolutionary ideology through writing. Similarly we may consider the Neobaroque as a movement designed through works such as those of the Cuban triumvirate. We are left to question whether this then presupposes a connection between Cuban politics and Neobaroque

expression during the twentieth century. Is it merely a coincidence that Cuban writers sought to revolutionize Baroque concepts in the twentieth century during the same time as the developments of the Cuban revolution? Indeed, Sarduy seems to endow the Baroque with a political project when in his work *Barroco* he theorizes a "Barroco de la Revolución" (104). Carpentier, in particular, saw the Cuban revolution as a personal vendetta. As a novelist he sought to translate and partake in the cultural transformations ushered in by the Cuban Revolution:

En cuanto a mí, habiendo asistido a un proceso revolucionario que se produjo en el lugar de América donde menos se pensaba que pudiera producirse, no puedo ni podré sustraerme ya a la intensidad, a la fuerza, por no decir embrujo, de la temática revolucionaria. Hombre de mi tiempo, soy de mi tiempo y mi tiempo trascendente es el de la Revolución cubana. (*La novela* 111)

Likewise, it is also no secret that the revolution brought about political oppositions concerning artistic expression. Written in 1947, the previous citation of Lezama Lima that E. Prieto gives us, in a manner of speaking, prophesies the reality of Cuba's struggle between expression and politics. It is perhaps, as such, that the Neobaroque—an expression flourishing with oppositional categories— finds a home in the political instability of Cuba during the twentieth century. Interestingly, Kaup addresses a similarity between the Historical Baroque and the Neobaroque to be found in the state of crisis. She explains: "One may also point out that the seventeenth-century sense of crisis (civil wars in England and on the Continent as a result of religious and political schisms; cosmological anxieties sparked by the overturning of Heliocentrism) returns in the twentieth-century crisis of Enlightenment reason and political modernity" ("Alternative Modernity" 131). Maravall observes a similar tendency of the Baroque to originate in times of crisis:

[L]a crisis social que tan amenazadoramente se presentó en Europa en las últimas décadas del XVI, y tal vez en España con más fuerza que en otras partes, iba a tener

duración suficiente para permitir que coagularan una serie de formas de respuesta que, repitámoslo una vez más, se sistematizarían bajo la interpretación de la que llamamos cultura del Barroco. (51)

There is no doubt that a sense of crisis was incurred during the revolutionary transformations of Cuba's political system towards the profession of Communism in the twentieth century. Similarly, the crisis of modernity in twentieth-century Cuba can be thought to be a relevant topic concerning the revolutionary actions of the time against US imperialism. However, among such stipulations, the Neobaroque merely fits in theoretically. What we know for sure is that politics and the Baroque have never been subjects far from one another. Culture tends to re-originate along with its systems, and the Baroque, as it seems, is never far behind.

## Chapter Two

### Exploring the Baroque Sea:

#### The Baroque According to José Lezama Lima in "La curiosidad barroca".

In 1957, José Lezama Lima delivered a series of four lectures at the Centro de Altos Estudios in Havana titled *La expresión americana*, which were compiled in a printed version that would later become one of the leading texts reflecting on contemporary Latin American culture and identity.<sup>14</sup> Amongst these four lectures, "La curiosidad barroca" delivered on January 18, has stood out in particular due to its rather elaborate and metaphorical themes. As the title indicates, Lezama Lima believes the Baroque to engender a sense of curiosity. In the essay "The Strut of the Centipede," Gustavo Pérez Firmat mentions that the concept of curiosity is used by Lezama Lima to establish symmetrical binomials between his first essay "Mitos y cansancio clásico" of *La expresión americana*: "On one side, weariness and classicism; on the other, curiosity and the baroque. Just as curiosity offsets weariness, the baroque counters the classical" (198). For Lezama Lima, the Baroque, unlike Classicism, ignites curiosity because of its historical and cultural implications. Nonetheless, he is cautious, unwilling to let curiosity lead to overgeneralizations such as the metaphor he examples at the beginning of his essay, "[l]a tierra era clásica y el mar barroco" (302). There is an implication made in this statement that the Baroque holds a greater significance than Classicism, much like the sea holds greater space than the land. As Gonzalo Celorio comments in his study *Ensayo de contraconquista*, this statement implies an increased significance of the term *Baroque*, which needs to be stipulated more precisely:

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<sup>14</sup> See Pérez Firmat.

"[E]l término *barroco* ha ampliado enormemente su aspecto semántico . . . Esa amplitud referencial del término *barroco* nos exige hacer, así sea someramente, una revisión del concepto, para precisar su significación y determinar su pertinencia al aplicarlo a ciertas manifestaciones de la cultura y las letras iberoamericanas que han sido consideradas como barrocas o neobarrocas. (76)

Curiosity is thus found in the "sea" of the Baroque, enticing its audience in its depth of cultural meaning. As Celorio indicates, the purpose of reviewing the Baroque is to specify its meaning and understand the relevance of its application to cultural manifestations. Lezama Lima aims to do exactly that. He uses the metaphor of the Spanish galleons sailing on the Baroque sea to reflect on the explosion of Baroque studies: "Vemos que aquí sus dominios llegan al máximo de su arrogancia, ya que los barrocos galiones hispanos recorren un mar teñido por una tinta igualmente barroca" (302). These studies included works by scholars such as Werner Weisbach, Carl Gebhardt, Otto Grautoff, and Achilles Stubbe.<sup>15</sup> As Lezama Lima implies, the Baroque "curiously" reappears in the twentieth-century motivating this influx of Baroque studies. It arrives with an "arrogant" tone of entitlement and significance, penetrating cultural studies like ink spreads throughout the water of the sea.

In many ways, "La curiosidad barroca" can be seen as the attempt of Lezama Lima to wade into the waters of the Baroque sea and explore its meaning and cultural implications. It should be noted however, that the manner in which Lezama Lima does so is as poetic as it is explorative. Lezama Lima writes in a manner to incite curiosity in the Baroque, rather than detail its socio-historic facts. He is a poet at heart and it is worth keeping this in mind when confronting "La curiosidad barroca," an essay far more in tune poetically than it is historically. Therefore, Lezama Lima confronts the essay "La curiosidad barroca" using an artistic presentation full of metaphors, allusions, and allegory. His aim is to promote the Baroque

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<sup>15</sup> See Zamora and Kaup, 211.

influence in Latin American identity by connecting American expression with a particular cultural image. In the essay "Latin America's Alternative Identity" Kaup summarizes *La expresión americana* as "a history and theory of Latin American identity and culture, [that] can be viewed as a study of the 'image of Latin America'" (141). It is this image of Latin America that Lezama Lima seeks within the Baroque sea. His intention is not to contrast colonial and post-colonial images, history over the present or vice versa. Rather he paints us a picture of an inclusive Baroque that seeks to collage together seventeenth and eighteenth-century colonial forms with post-colonial forms, European and American, into a unified cultural image of Latin America that is shaped by a history of artistic expression. One way to think about Lezama Lima's depiction of the Baroque is as a process of cultural "refraction". This is because Lezama Lima does not see cultural image as merely a reflection or mimesis of historical forms, but rather as the result of a transformative process occurring between the two. Like the eye that refracts light, thus transforming it in order to inscribe an image on the retina, the Baroque engages with American forms, transforming them into a cultural image. Using Lezama Lima's theories, we could then say that Latin American culture represents the historical refraction of Baroque forms.

Lezama Lima begins in the first pages of "La curiosidad barroca" by rejecting Werner Weisbach's definition of the Baroque as the art of the Counter-Reformation, redefining it as "arte de la *contraconquista*" (303, italics mine). As Zamora and Kaup indicate, this redefinition implies "the art of colonized subjects who appropriate and modify European forms to represent their own distinct cultural identities" (210). That is to say that the Baroque does not imply a conquering objective, but rather the opposite, an inclusive and integrative project. César Augusto Salgado understands counter-conquest as the assertion of a project that dissipates conquering ideologies in favour of a hybridized unity. Furthermore, he indicates counter-conquest to imply a

"healing" quality to it that not only incorporates old and new forms, but ameliorates the latter condition:

Lezama Lima postulates that the baroque in the New World has an invigorating healing capacity that runs opposite to a decadent debilitation in the Old; its assertive hybridity seeks to lessen the psychic wounds of the conquest and bridge caste divisions through a negotiation of cosmologies in which the participation of "alien symbols" is guaranteed in the Rousseau-like *pacto de igualdad* ('egalitarian contract') suggested by the increasingly harmonic cohabitation of disparate sign systems in the hybrid construction. Lezama Lima thus extricates New World baroque art from Weisbach's institutional notion of baroque aesthetics as a propagandistic, state- or church-guided form of discourse. An 'art of Counter-conquest' can only be fiercely antidogmatic, inclusive, and counterhegemonic. (323)

Holding a very similar perspective, Gonzalo Celorio also acknowledges the hybridizing project implied by the term counter-conquest. Celorio recognizes that Lezama Lima's redefinition is the result of the unique hybrid-style of Baroque art. Since the Baroque itself is hybrid, Lezama Lima opts then not to represent it as a conquest. Conquest would imply a contrariety between Europe and America, which would in turn imply a negation of the Baroque's hybrid nature. Celorio elaborates on the hybrid nature of the Baroque, clarifying its purpose to assume an American independence:

La hibridez, la mixtura, la simbiosis hacen del barroco americano un arte bizarro, fantástico, colorido, popular, que lejos de reflejar la sumisión presupuesta por Acosta, es signo vigoroso de la originalidad americana. Por ello Lezama Lima llama al barroco americano, en vez de arte de Contrareforma, arte de *contraconquista*. De tal manera es genuino e intenso en su desarrollo que es claro testimonio de que América está preparada para asumir su independencia." (88)

The American preparation for independence, which Celorio explains to be implied in the term *contraconquista*, is very much dependent upon the establishment of American originality.

Lezama Lima is quick to associate the redefinition of counter-conquest with two aspects of culture that represent exactly that: the city and the quotidian lifestyle of the American:

"Repitiendo la frase de Weisbach, adaptándola a lo americano, podemos decir que entre nosotros

el barroco fue un arte de la contraconquista. Representa un triunfo de la ciudad y un americano allí instalado con fruición y estilo normal de vida y muerte" (303). Firstly, the city is recognized as an outlet for Baroque expression and consequentially the Baroque as a formative tool in the development of the Latin American city. We can look to José Antonio Maravall's study *La cultura del Barroco* to understand the connection between the Baroque and urban contexts. According to Maravall, the prominent cities of the seventeenth-century (he exemplifies Rome, Vienna, Prague, Paris, Madrid, Seville and Valencia) can be considered to represent "la ciudad barroca" (225). According to Maravall the socioeconomic bond between monarchic power, agrarian economy and urban society thus inevitably led to the expansion of urban developments such as those mentioned above, and as a result, the state promoted the Baroque production in those areas. For Maravall, the city and the Baroque therefore function and develop as a single unit:

Pero también aquí se impone una precisión: no sólo la ciudad, ni siquiera la gran ciudad, condiciona la aparición del Barroco, sino que éste va unido a la ciudad que ha perdido su libre iniciativa municipal y se ve convertida en un núcleo administrativo, incorporada y gobernada desde el Estado. El Barroco es un producto urbano en el ámbito de las extensas concentraciones políticas, construidas en torno al poder monárquico, en los pueblos europeos. (250)

Indirectly Lezama Lima prescribes the American city with a Baroque culture, for what Maravall sees in the seventeenth-century urban development of Europe, Lezama Lima sees in the cities of Latin America. He understands the city as "un triunfo" indicating the success of American installation and Baroque form in culture. He exemplifies the works of eighteenth century Quechua Indian sculptor José Kondori (referred to as the Indio Kondori) and the African-Brazilian architect Antônio Francisco Lisboa, known as Aleijadinho. According to Lezama Lima, the insertion of indigenous symbols by the Indio Kondori and African symbols by Aleijadinho in architecture represents the successful integration of American style within a

European form. Architecture is then seen as the gateway to establishing an American form within the city. Reminiscing on the work of the Indio Kondori and Aleijadinho Lezama Lima writes: "He ahí la prueba más decisiva, cuando un esforzado de la forma, recibe un estilo de una gran tradición, y lejos de amenguarlo, lo devuelve acrecido, es un símbolo de que ese país ha alcanzado su forma en el arte de la ciudad" (323). Continuing, Lezama Lima indicates that the succession of American form, which he represent as the ultimate liberty, symbolizes the permanency of the city: "[L]a forma alcanzada es el símbolo de la permanencia de la ciudad. Su soporte, su esclarecimiento, su compostura" (323). The permanency of the city, as defined here, would then imply the ultimate objective and finality of American cultural expression. Baroque form is then implied to be achieved in an urban environment.

Given that Maravall perceives the Baroque and the city to go hand in hand, we can acknowledge that the Baroque condition is dependent upon that of the city. Therefore if Baroque culture is thought to give rise to Latin American expression, we are left to conclude, as Lezama Lima indicates, that Latin America's cultural image is dependent upon its urban context. For this reason urbanism takes on an ontological significance in Latin American culture. Lezama Lima endows the Baroque with an ontological project by declaring it to represent the installation of American individual within the city, "instalado con fruición y estilo normal de vida y muerte" (303). The city is implied as the place representing the style of life; urbanism thus becomes ontology. The normality of life and death described here echoes the prologue of Carpentier's novel *El reino de este mundo* published in 1949, where he describes the concept of *lo real maravilloso* as a "contacto cotidiano" (5). Lezama Lima implies that the Baroque (considered by Carpentier to be a primary example of "lo real maravilloso" in Latin America)<sup>16</sup> relates to the

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<sup>16</sup> See Carpentier's essay "Lo barroco y lo real maravilloso".

existence of the individual, a part of the everyday conditions of life that are established in an urban context. The American triumph can also be seen from the perspective of the Indio Kondori and Aleijadinho. As much as the works of Indio Kondori and Aleijadinho arrive to represent the triumph of the city, they themselves, both American artists, also arrive to represent the triumph of the American. In the last paragraph of his essay, Lezama Lima in fact poetically depicts Aleijadinho to be architecturally "flush" with the buildings of the city, later calling him "el misterio generatriz de la ciudad" (325). It is as if Lezama Lima is bent on connecting the individual with the structural; the American artist with the Baroque form. For this reason, we see the inclination for Lezama Lima to compare the transformation of art as also a struggle of man. Hence he attributes the insertion of American symbols as a "rebellion" of sorts that creates an equal state of representation (European and American), and its artists as the heroes fighting for an independent identity:

Ahora, gracias al heroísmo y conveniencia de [los símbolos del Indio Kondori], precisamos que podemos acercarnos a las manifestaciones de cualquier estilo sin acomplejarnos ni resbalar, siempre que insertemos allí los símbolos de nuestro destino y la escritura con que nuestra alma anegó los objetos.

Así como el indio Kondori representa la rebelión incaica, rebelión que termina como con un pacto de igualdad, en que todos los elementos de su raza y de su cultura tienen que ser admitidos, ya en el Aleijadinho su triunfo es incontestable, pues puede oponerse a los modales estilísticos de su época, imponiéndoles los suyos . . . .(322-323)

Therefore, according to Lezama Lima, there is an American triumph established both in the American city and by the American himself. For this reason, liberty for Lezama Lima seems to imply a territorial victory inasmuch as it does an existential one.

Lezama Lima progresses in his essay by incarnating the Baroque in the form of the archetypal *señor barroco*—"El primer americano que va surgiendo dominador de sus caudales" (303). The *señor barroco* is used to embody what Lezama Lima terms in his earlier essay "Mitos y cansancio clásico" as the "sujeto metafórico," a reference to seventeenth-century American

artists who he explains "actúa[n] para producir la metamorfosis hacia la nueva visión" (10).<sup>17</sup>

Gustavo Pérez Firmat further explains Lezama Lima's delegation of the metaphorical subject in his essay "The Strut of the Centipede":

Unlike his European counterpart, the American artist—Lezama calls him abstractly "the metaphorical subject" ('el sujeto metafórico'), that is, the subject that generates metaphors—commands Western culture without being dominated by it. This combination of foreignness and familiarity allows him to play freely, even irresponsibly, with literary and cultural tradition—somewhat as Lezama himself does in many of his texts. (199)

As Pérez Firmat reveals, there is a benefit to personalizing a temporal and cultural reference, such as the Baroque. By doing so, Lezama Lima poetically liberates his expression of the Baroque by permitting it to be seen as a living personality who associates with friends, eats at banquets, can have conversations, and relate within the culture of where he is placed. Zamora and Kaup describe this intention of Lezama Lima as a way to personalize culture's image. They explain that "[t]hese 'metaphorical subjects' are positioned to create cultural correspondences across class and race divides, and they are also individualized authors; a culture's 'image' is an overarching historical process created and signed by particular artists" (210). The *señor barroco* thus gives reference to a hybridized American form that is able to escape conquering and hierarchal objectives such as class and racial division. Referencing examples of artists mentioned in "La curiosidad barroca," Kaup further exemplifies the hybrid nature of the *señor barroco* by relating Lezama Lima's Baroque hybridity to José Martí's *Nuestra América*. This comparison can be seen in the terminological similarity between *Nuestra América* and Lezama Lima's articulation of the Baroque to be "Ese barroco nuestro" (305):

While this abstract figure of the *señor barroco* is clearly modeled on the dominant criollo landowner class, this *señor barroco* actually emerges from all races, genders, and classes

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<sup>17</sup> Zamora and Kaup describe the *señor barroco* as the embodiment of the metaphorical subjects of Lezama Lima which appear in the seventeenth century. See editors' notes for "Baroque Curiosity" in *Baroque New Worlds*.

of colonial society: the Brazilian mulatto architect Aleijadinho, the son of a Portuguese architect and a slave; Sor Juana; the Mexican scholar Sigüenza y Góngora; the architect El Indio Kondori; and countless anonymous indigenous and mestizo artisans and laborers. Lezama's hybridizing "Our American Baroque" thus belongs to the intellectual family of José Martí's mestizo "Our Americanism." Indeed, Lezama asserts that the baroque that was "ours"—that is, American—made possible the political rebellion of the nineteenth century ('prepara ya la rebelión del próximo siglo') spearheaded by Martí. (Kaup 142)

What Kaup implies here in the last sentence is a connection made by Lezama Lima utilizing examples of indigenous and African influences seen in the works of the eighteenth-century artists the Indio Kondori and Aleijadinho. They are thought to have prepared Martí's revolution a century later by promoting the integration of American style into European forms, an example of *mestizaje* and transculturation. Referencing back to chapter one we can recall that Martí ignored racial categories in favour of the unity of the Americas; he claimed: "No hay odio de razas, porque no hay razas" (*Nuestra* 38). A similar *mestizo*-philosophy is exemplified in Lezama Lima's counter-conquest: in the art of the Indio Kondori it represents "una forma oculta y hierática y síntesis del español y del indio" (324), and in the art of Aleijadinho it represents "la culminación del barroco americano, la unión en una forma grandiosa de lo hispánico con las culturas africanas" (324). Exemplifying the synthetic and unifying forms of the Indio Kondori and Aleijadinho, Lezama Lima then portrays a similar project of *mestizaje* implied in Martí's *Nuestra América*, only rather than hybridized through political nationalism, it is represented a century earlier than Martí in hybridized art forms. In the last pages of his essay Lezama Lima describes the *señor barroco* participating, watching over, and protecting the Inca-Hispanic and African-Hispanic traditions that are represented in the work of the Indio Kondori (the Inca-Hispanic artist) and the Aleijadinho (the African-Hispanic artist): "Vemos así que el señor barroco americano, a quien hemos llamado auténtico primer instalado en lo nuestro, participa, vigila y cuida, las dos grandes síntesis que están en la raíz del barroco americano, la hispano

incaica y la hispano negroide" (324). In this way, the *señor barroco* not only represents the Latin American artist, but also the guidance and installation of *mestizaje* in Baroque form. He is the metaphor of the Baroque, the personalization of the American subject, and the vanguard and guardian of Martí's *mestizaje*.

As Monika Kaup revealed, in a spirit of hybridity and *mestizaje*, Lezama Lima's *señor barroco* tends to engender multiple personalities. As a metaphor, the *señor barroco* is not bound to singular references, but *abounds* in his ability to personalize both European and American artists. However, Kaup (142) tends to associate the *señor barroco* with the totality of artists mentioned by Lezama Lima, when in fact the associations of the *señor barroco* appear more specific, although perhaps slightly convoluted. When we examine the text, we realize that Lezama Lima does not define the *señor barroco* to refer specifically to the eighteenth-century artists Indio Kondori or Aleijadinho. Rather, as I indicated earlier, there is more of an implied relationship with them in which the *señor barroco* participates, watches over, and protects the hybrid foundations of the Baroque realized in their artwork. It is implied that the eighteenth-century artists Indio Kondori and Aleijadinho are the repercussions of the early seventeenth-century Baroque forms. Lezama Lima in fact writes, "La gran hazaña del barroco americano, en verdad que aún ni siquiera igualada en nuestros días, es la del quechua Kondori, llamado el indio Kondori" (322). In this sense, it would seem that the Indio Kondori, and ergo Aleijadinho, are implied more as an "achievement" of the Baroque. That is to say that the work of these architects represents the future ramifications of the *señor barroco*, although not the man himself. Instead, Lezama Lima embodies the *señor barroco* in the form of earlier seventeenth-century artists, three in particular: the Mexican nun Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1651-1695), which realistically would indicate a "Señora barroca"; The Colombian Jesuit priest and writer Don Hernando

Domínguez Camargo (1606-1659); and the nephew of Luis de Góngora and Mexican born scientist Don Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora (1645-1700). The correlation of these three with the *señor barroco* is an obscure one at best. Firstly, Lezama Lima relates the Baroque with Europe's eighteenth-century Enlightenment and indirectly associates this relationship with Sor Juana's quest for a scientific knowledge. Lezama alludes to Sor Juana's known ambition for learning, emphasized in her private library—one of the largest in the New World—that was found in her convent cell:

Ese barroco nuestro, que situamos a fines del XVII y a lo largo del XVIII, se muestra firmemente amistoso de la Ilustración. En ocasiones, apoyándose en el cientificismo cartesiano lo antecede. Los quinientos polémicos volúmenes que sor Juana tiene en su celda, que la devoción excesiva del padre Calleja, hace ascender a 4000; muchos 'precióssos y exquisitos instrumentos matemáticos y musicales', el aprovechamiento que hace para *Primero sueño*, de la quinta parte del *Discurso del método*; el conocimiento del *Ars Magna*, de Kircherio (1671); donde se vuelve a las antiguas sùmulas del saber de una época, todo ello lleva su barroquismo a un afán de conocimiento universal, científico, que la acerca a la Ilustración. (305)

Therefore, the first character of the *Señor barroco* indirectly arrives to be the *Señora barroca*, Sor Juana, since it is her that is described as the link between the Baroque and the Enlightenment. Lezama Lima emphasizes the importance of Sor Juana by later giving an elaborate and artistic critique of her poem "Primero sueño," representing it as the greatest extent of American poetic expression of her time. He explains, "hay una dimensión que nos corresponde *nemine discrepante*, la del sueño, donde sor Juana Inés de la Cruz alcanza su plenitud y la plenitud del idioma poético en sus días. Es la primera vez que, en el idioma, una figura americana ocupa un lugar de primacía" (314). For the second embodiment of the *señor barroco*, Lezama Lima depicts the Colombian poet Hernando Domínguez Camargo, whom he defines to be influenced by Góngora's poetry. For Lezama Lima, the poetry of Domínguez

Camargo represents American innovation and pride while at the same time maintaining an appreciation for the verbal nature represented by Góngora:

[E]n Hernández Camargo el gongorismo, signo muy americano, aparece como una apetencia de frenesí innovador, de rebelión desafiante, de orgullo desatado, que lo lleva a excesos luciferinos, por lograr dentro del canon gongorino un exceso aún más excesivo que los de don Luis, por destruir el contorno con que al mismo tiempo intenta domesticar una naturaleza verbal, de suyo feraz y temeraria. (307)

Lastly, the *señor barroco* is personalized in Sigüenza y Góngora. In the manner for which universal scientific knowledge emerges from Sor Juana, it is the specific appetite for science, physics, and astronomy that Lezama Lima declares to stem from her friend Sigüenza: "En el amigo de la monja jerónima, don Carlos Sigüenza y Góngora, el lenguaje y la apetencia de física o astronomía, destellan como la cola de Juno. Figura extraordinariamente simpática, de indetenible curiosidad, de manirroto inveterado, de sotana enamorada, une la más florida pompa del verbo culto y el más cuidadoso espíritu científico" (306). Lezama Lima later figures Sigüenza to be immersed in Gongorian style and established in the landscape (*paisaje*) of America, implying a European style adopted in an American context (309). More relevant than the former two impersonations, he describes Sigüenza as the archetypal *señor barroco*: "Es el señor barroco arquetípico. En figura y aventura, en conocimiento y disfrute" (309). Therefore, it is with Sigüenza that the *señor barroco* most concretely find its corporeal possession. An important dialectical quality of his character proves crucial for the Baroque embodiment. In Sigüenza, figure and knowledge are contrasted with adventure and enjoyment— an allusion to a balance between history and culture, tradition and innovation. For this reason, he is an ideal embodiment of the *señor barroco* since he represents an American writer and scientist during a time of cultural change realized through the transformations of Baroque form. It was a time that required a balance between traditional appreciation and modern inclination.

As we have seen, the embodiment of the *señor barroco* in American artists exemplifies a creative assimilation of the Baroque in American culture. The *señor barroco* represents the personification of history and culture in the context of human relationship, where the Baroque becomes experiential rather than referential, relational rather than critical. This opens up the Baroque to a metaphorical freedom, one in which as the reader we are no longer analyzing a temporal nor artistic category, but rather something along the lines of a "being," a living entity. In this manner, the Baroque plays a part of history rather than refers to history. Rather than act as a mode of artistic criticism, it becomes a relationship with artists. Lezama Lima further utilizes this metaphorical tool by creating "el banquete literario" (310) or "el banquete del barroco" (313). This banquet sees once again the use of personification to achieve its end, only this time personifying aliments incongruously into artistic subjects. It is a presentation ranging from the appetizers and the main course, to the after-dinner tobacco and music, an abundant display within a sociable atmosphere. Thus at the banquet we are presented with an elaborate array of different elements: the napkin as Domínguez Camargo; cabbage and eggplant represented by Lope de Vega; the olive portrayed as Góngora; the oil as Sor Juana; chilled grapefruit realized in Fray Plácido de Aguilar; crustaceans revealed once more in Lope de Vega; fried onions and jugs of wine personified in Leopold Lugones; quality French wine depicted as Alfonso Reyes; pears as Anonymous Aragonese; the after-dinner tobacco defined as Cintio Vitier; and after-hours Turkish coffee represented by the music of Johann Sebastian Bach (310-113). Pérez Firmat is keen to allude to the motif of "curiosity" in this eclectic banquet by explaining that at the table the "metaphorical subject feasts on culture; his curiosity is a species of voracity" (199). In fact, Lezama Lima goes so far as to define the American artist by "el afán, tan dionisiaco como dialéctico, de incorporar el mundo, de hacer suyo el mundo exterior, a través del horno

transmutativo de la asimilación" (310). There is however a lack of accuracy in the assimilative project of this banquet, particularly when analyzed from a historical perspective given that Lugones, Reyes and Vitier are twentieth-century poets. Much like Lezama Lima does with the *señor barroco*, he uses metaphors to structure elaborative principles while avoiding the consequences of literal criticism. By this, I mean to say that he can cover his lack of scientific and historical accuracy in the poetic artistry of his metaphors. Thus, as he did earlier, he is willing to connect the project of counter-conquest to the triumph of the city without explanation of its connection and similarly seat a heterogeneous grouping of artists at the same Banquet table without much regard for their historicity. Borrowing from Gustavo Pellón's work *José Lezama Lima's Joyful Vision*, Pérez Firmat recognizes the propensity of Lezama Lima to theorize without sufficient explanation:

In Lezama's thought culture is or becomes nature, by which Pellón means that the metaphorical subject does not distinguish between the categories of the natural and the artificial, the mediated and the unmediated, or the evidentiary and the hearsay. For the metaphorical subject, presentation and representation exist at the same level; a represented tree enjoys the same status as the tree, and Lezama himself routinely fails to distinguish between what he has witnessed and what he has only read about, with the result that *La expresión americana* contains any number of misleading assertions of first-hand knowledge. The point is not so much that Lezama bears "false" witness, but rather that his idea of testimony does not countenance distinctions between the primary and the secondary. There is in Lezama a kind of gullibility that allows him to assimilate information without too much regard for its status. The metaphorical subject is liable to swallow anything: the raw, the cooked, and even the half-baked. (200)

In a display of wit, what Pérez Firmat recognizes here is the tendency of Lezama Lima to rely on the presentation of metaphor over facts. Metaphor is presented as sufficient, despite the status of his assimilated subjects, because evidence is not the objective here, curiosity is. Yet, in this sense, it may be best to understand Lezama Lima's "half-baked" metaphorical subject as an intention to enlighten the propensity for Baroque diversity. That is to say that by sitting at the table both seventeenth-century and twentieth-century poets he is able to then affirm their artistic

connection and thus advocate for a transcultural Baroque. The literary banquet thus represents an assimilation of Baroque forms melded together by poetic intent, rather than according to literary status. For the real status of the Baroque that Lezama Lima targets here is that of diversity, *mestizaje*, inclusiveness, and transculturation. Furthermore, by assimilating together artists from both centuries he incites an inquisitive mind to reflect on the nature of the Baroque and the elements represented, rather than on the state of their belonging.

Nonetheless, curiosity still requires some measure of definition. Therefore, near the beginning of his essay, Lezama Lima attempts to address the defining elements of the Baroque. Similar to what he did with the definition of Weisbach, he also reevaluates the ideas of the German art historian Wilhelm Worringer who concluded that "el barroco es un gótico degenerado" (303). According to Lezama Lima, Worringer's theory sees the different modalities of the Baroque to consist of an accumulation without tension and asymmetry without plutonism— a direct result of understanding the Baroque as an extension of the Gothic. Lezama Lima is mindful to avoid such definitions, understanding the Baroque not as a degeneration of style, but rather as a culmination of style. It is not a mimetic form, but rather the highest achievement of originality. This then promotes a concept of the Baroque that is a progression from historical sources rather than a derivation of them— progression implying a Baroque that is continuative, adaptive, and successive, whereas derivation would imply a Baroque that is mimetic, unoriginal, and dependent on previous forms. Therefore, Lezama Lima readdresses the properties of the Baroque, flipping those implied by Worringer, and defining the Baroque to have first a tension; second, a plutonism, and thirdly a plenary style. The first property, the Baroque tension, tends to be represented by Lezama Lima through various architectural examples. He begins by acknowledging a tension in both the Church of Juli and the portals of the Puno cathedral located

in Peru. Describing this tension he writes: "Entre el frondoso chorro de las trifolias, de emblemas con lejanas reminiscencias incaicas, de trenzados rosetones, de hornacinas que semejan grutas marinas, percibimos que el esfuerzo por alcanzar una forma unitiva, sufre una tensión, un impulso si no de verticalidad como en el gótico, sí un impulso volcado hacia la forma en busca de la finalidad de su símbolo" (304). Little is revealed regarding the tension here other than the fact that it contrasts with the Gothic for its lack of verticality yet contains an "impulse" that seeks unification in its form and the finality of its symbol. This discussion of form and symbol takes on a greater significance later in the essay when Lezama Lima, as I mentioned earlier, describes the acquisition of American form to be accomplished in the permanency of the city. He uses a biblical allusion to kings, likely referring to the Old Testament kings of Judah and Israel, in order to compare the establishment of the city to that of a kingdom. The emphasis is on the importance of unity that is reflected in the structure of a kingdom: "[L]a adquisición de una forma o de un reino, está situada dentro del absoluto de la libertad. Sólo se relatan los sucesos de los reyes, se dice en la Biblia, es decir, los que han alcanzado una forma, la unidad, el reino. La forma alcanzada es el símbolo de la permanencia de la ciudad. Su soporte, su esclarecimiento, su compostura" (323). Therefore, the description of a tension that seeks a unified form in search of the finality of its symbol seems to imply that the Baroque is inevitably drawn to the expressive atmosphere found within the city. There, in the city, the Baroque finds unity like a nation does within its kingdom. Following the examples in Perú, Lezama Lima makes note of another tension found in the Rosary Chapel in Puebla, México. This tension is revealed in the attempted meddling of the *señor barroco* who seeks to project an orderly image in the architectural structure yet is met with failure due to the extravagantly utilized space of the Baroque form:

En la Basílica del Rosario, en Puebla, donde puede sentirse muy a gusto ese señor barroco, todo el interior, tanto paredes como columnas, es una chorretada de

ornamentación sin tregua ni paréntesis espacial libre. Percibimos ahí también la existencia de una tensión, como si en medio de esa naturaleza que se regala, de esa absorción del bosque por la contenciosa piedra, de esa naturaleza que parece rebelarse y volver por sus fueros, el señor barroco quisiera poner un poco de orden pero sin rechazo, una imposible victoria donde todos los vencidos pudieran mantener las exigencias de su orgullo y de su despilfarro. (305)

This time, the tension takes form in the spatial dynamics of Baroque architecture, representing a struggle of expression between order and ornamentation. There is an important emphasis made here regarding the various elements of nature: "en medio de esa naturaleza"; "bosque"; "piedra". The tension between order and ornamentation appears to be linked here with another tension of nature, one which sees stone absorb a forest and in which nature appears rebellious and unbridled. This example introduces an important tension between nature and architecture, however as is common with Lezama Lima, the reader is left to interpret nature's role through the rather obscure poetical language. He later clarifies in greater detail the role this tension acquires through examples of the *Zócalo* plaza in Mexico City and in Havana. First off, he reflects the importance of nature by elaborating on the natural American materials used as architectural supplies. These materials are depicted as a source of American wealth that arose out of the heroic poverty of American artists— a dialectic established between natural and economic conditions:

[L]a primera integración de la obra de arte, la materia, la natura signata de los escolásticos, regala la primera gran riqueza que marcaba la primera gran diversidad. La platabanda mexicana, la madera boliviana, la piedra cuzqueña, los cedrales, las láminas metálicas, alzaban la riqueza de la naturaleza por encima de la riqueza monetaria. De tal manera, que aun dentro de la pobreza hispánica, en la riqueza del material americano, de su propia naturaleza, la que al formar parte de la gran construcción, podía reclamar un estilo, un espléndido estilo surgiendo paradójicamente de una heroica pobreza. (319)

The wealth of natural materials appears to set up for Lezama Lima the importance of representing natural contexts in American architecture. Therefore, speaking of the Mexican *Zócalo* and the Havana cathedral he alludes to the relationship between the church and the plaza as "organic":

En la Plaza del Zócalo, de México, o en la catedral de La Habana, la relación con la plaza es orgánica y está hecha en función del nacimiento del cuadrado. Ambos el templo y la plaza, nacieron en una súbita función, no de su realización, como los más importantes de Europa, *a posteriori* del templo, con objeto de domesticar la demasía del templo, que llegaba a aterrorizar al hombre. (319; italics mine)

The organic relationship between the plaza and the church in Mexico and Havana is contrasted with that of European plazas which sees them as a project of domesticating the terrifying excess of the churches. Conforming to the project of counter-conquest, Lezama Lima is usually hesitant to create European/American contrapositions, so too avoid conquering projects that highlight inequality and disparity. However, in this case he chooses to directly contrast the organic quality of American architecture with the domesticated quality found in Europe. Nature, as he seems to imply in this comparison, is a distinguished quality of the American form. Hence, at the end of his essay, Lezama Lima describes the efforts of Aleijadinho's work as a rebellion nourished and purified by the gusts of the American forest: "Son las chispas de la rebelión, que surgidas de la gran lepra creadora del barroco nuestro, está nutrida, ya en su pureza, por las bocanadas del verídico bosque americano" (325). There is an implication made here, that American nature, as indicated by the metaphor of the American forest, acts as the foundation and originality of the Baroque.

Another example worth noting that connects nature to architecture is the correlation between the Havana cathedral and the ocean. Firstly, he uses the vision of a moving ocean to represent the cathedral's blend of solid and graceful beauty. He writes: "Pero para nuestro gusto la catedral nuestra ofrece un detalle de una calidad y al mismo tiempo grácil belleza, como que concilia la idea de solidez y como una reminiscencia de vuelco marino, de sucesión incommovible de oleaje" (321). When observing the front of the cathedral one can see where Lezama Lima saw an ocean-like quality: a visual metaphor realized in the curvature of the

Cathedral wall which rolls over its pillars from one tower to the other like a wave rolls through the ocean surface. He further connects the ocean-like quality of the architecture by poetically comparing the cathedral's stone to the tranquility of the ocean. He explains the stone to resemble the imperatives of the Genesis account of the Bible: "Frente o amigada, quién lo pudiera decir, al natural envió marino, la piedra catedralicia intenta repetir las primeras evocaciones del Génesis, sólo que aquí el espíritu riza la piedra en una espiral presuntuosa que se va acallando en la curva, donde se confunde como en un tranquilo océano final" (321). To understand the implications in his reference to Genesis, we have to refer to his earlier account of the Enlightenment. Here he distinguishes the American Baroque from the European Baroque by referring to writers such as Sor Juana and Sigüenza y Góngora, but also adds to this list the Jesuits that he saw as creating an earthly paradise in their missions in Paraguay which can be compared to the "pure beginnings" seen in the Garden of Eden in the Genesis account. He writes: "No solamente en esa cercanía a la Ilustración, el barroco nuestro se particularizó con eficacia, sino en los intentos de falansterio, de paraíso hecho por los jesuitas en el Paraguay. Con eso se volvía a una inocencia que situaba nuestro barroco en un puro comenzar" (306). Therefore, through the work realized by the Jesuit missions, the Baroque takes on a generative project that seeks to establish an originality of form that compares to the beginning of mankind. It is the same project Lezama Lima describes in the Havana Cathedral. While describing the influence of Italian architect Francesco Borromini in the Cathedral's design, Lezama Lima explains that in relation to the surrounding streets, the Cathedral's design represents a search for origin. He describes it like a search for the beginning of a spiral: "Es como una búsqueda, cierto que un poco tardía del poder central, del punto de apoyo de la ciudad, de participación en la teoría de los comienzos de las murallas. Manifiesta una recta voluntad de querer estar en los principios, en los comienzos de una espiral que se

desarrollará con los basamentos más perennes de los modos de crecimiento de la ciudad" (321). Like the Genesis account, the purity of creation conflicts with the nature of man. Perhaps it is for this reason that we see a duality in Lezama Lima's characterization of the Havana Cathedral where the Baroque is elusive yet strong (320); gives the idea of solidity, yet also of a graceful beauty (321); resembles an overturning ocean, yet a tranquil sea (321); represents a simple relationship established in the surrounding streets, yet a labyrinth of confusion in its corridors; and it is arrogant and evokes pride, yet is full of grace (322). As can be seen in these antithetical descriptions, Lezama Lima is driven to portray the cathedral as a structure defined by incongruity. The search for origins begets a tension realized in the implausibility of pure beginning. As man cannot return to the Garden of Eden, neither does the Baroque find pure originality in America. Ironically, it is this very tension that defines the Baroque in America as unique. In the paradox of the Baroque, American originality is thus found in the tension of origin itself.



2.1 The Havana Cathedral (1748-1777), view from the back of the plaza.



2.2 Close up of the Havana Cathedral

The second property of the Baroque is described by Lezama Lima as plutonism. He describes this as "fuego originario que rompe los fragmentos y los unifica" (303). Named after the Greek god Pluto, the classical ruler of the underworld, the term Plutonism stems from the geologic theory that rock was originally formed through a process of erosion whereby the eroded sediment is heated and solidified through volcanic activity. The erosion of earth material is thought to have been deposited into sea beds that through heat and pressure were reformed from a molten state into sedimentary rock. The heat would expand the earth in places, thus uplifting the new sediments to the surface and forming continents.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, in particular, there are two important implications made by this reference of Lezama Lima. Firstly, there is an implied "erosion" of the Baroque that breaks apart its fragments and secondly a "solidification" that unifies the Baroque like the sediment of rock. This process does not imply an "original" creation, but rather a processional transformation of older forms. According to Zamora and Kaup, "Lezama's plutonism is inspired by José Martí's telluric view of America and its 'new man,' thought to be born from the volcanic fire of the continent and imbued with its creative forces" (215). The key here is "creative forces". One must remember that for Lezama Lima, creativity tends to refer to the innovative process of hybridization rather than a completely independent innovation, that is, American creativity always "refracts," utilizing traditional forms to create modern representations. Furthermore, while commenting on the tension revealed in the Church of Juli and the Puno cathedral in Peru, he describes plutonism as a metamorphosis that pushes the fragments of the Baroque toward their final state: "Vemos que en añadidura de esa tensión hay un plutonismo que quema los fragmentos y los empuja, ya metamorfoseados, hacia su final" (305). We have already discussed the American city as the location for the "final state" of the

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<sup>18</sup> See Encyclopedia Britannica Online.

American form. Therefore, we can recognize the connotations of plutonism here which would imply a metamorphosis of form that is uplifted into the midst of the city like the plutonic sediments of rock rise to the water's surface. Lezama Lima uses the works of the Indio Kondori to represent this plutonic quality of the Baroque. He explains: "En los preciosos trabajos del indio Kondori, en cuyo fuego originario tanto podrían encontrar el banal orgullo de los arquitectos contemporáneos, se observa la introducción de una temeridad, de un asombro: *la indiatide*" (305). The term *indiatide* was originally used by the art historian Angel Guido to define American reinventions of Greek caryatids, sculpted female figures used in the place of columns for architectural support.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, from caryatids to *indiatides*, the Baroque is transformed in a manner that finds American expression within an originally European form. Lezama Lima also represents this process with the poetry of Góngora that he explains undergoes a plutonic process and reappears in the poetry of Hernando Domínguez Camargo: "Es en la América, donde sus intenciones de vida y poesía, de crepitación formal, de un contenido plutónico que va contra las formas como contra un paredón, reaparecen en el colombiano don Hernando Domínguez Camargo" (307). In general, what we are presented with are the examples of American appropriations of European art forms. Whether in architecture or poetry the American form adds its own unique style to a European foundation. It is a process that promotes transculturation by refashioning American culture through the assimilation of its colonial origins. Reminiscing on Brett Levinson's work *Secondary Moderns: Mimesis, History, and Revolution in Lezama Lima's "American Expression"* Augusto Salgado cleverly conveys the tension of American originality or the "other" that is implied in the process of plutonism:

This is what the New World transculturation of the baroque in Lezama Lima's theory allows: the survival of Otherness piggy-backing on the unsuspecting signs of Empire. As

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<sup>19</sup> See the first chapter from Guido's *Redescubrimiento de América en el arte*.

Brett Levinson has argued, Lezama Lima's cultural thought does not cut off the New World baroque from its European source but, rather, shows how the Western paradigm is itself replenished, transfigured, diversified, and, ultimately, constituted through the proliferating inscription of "alien" systems of meaning. Lezama Lima's 'plutonic' theorizing of the hybrid shows how there is always an 'other' within the 'same' (324).

Originality is thus realized through the plutonic transformation that occurs, a creative process that uses traditional forms as the base for American innovation. For this reason, plutonism arrives to be the perfect metaphor since it is a transformative process that creates new formations of continents from previously available material of the earth. It is a process that utilizes previous forms to create new ones. Such is the hybridity of the baroque.

The last property of the Baroque, a plenary style, is implied within the process of plutonism. Whether we call it "plenary" or as Salgado advocates "hybrid," the message of Lezama Lima is clear: the Baroque is an inclusive form that incorporates both the traditional and the modern, European and American forms. The key here is the difference between mimesis and creativity: Plenary is seen as a project of creativity, whereas singularity is seen as mimetic and thus degenerative. Salgado explains: "To Lezama Lima, the American baroque is not a mannerist mimicry of the European but, rather, a creative mode in which Old World styles are *acrecentados*—cultivated, mutated, grown, coaxed—into New World forms of expression" (322). For this reason, I proposed at the beginning of this essay to consider Lezama Lima's theory of the Baroque like a "refraction" that draws from traditional sources and transforms them in the same manner for which the human eye draws in light and transforms it into an image. America's cultural image is not a reflection, but rather, a "refraction." Describing the plenary style of the Baroque, Lezama Lima contrasts it with a degenerative style, advocating for a Baroque that is acquisitive, curious, mysterious, and rooted in its essences:

[N]o es un estilo degenerescente, sino plenario, que en España y en la América española representa adquisiciones de lenguaje, tal vez únicas en el mundo, muebles para

la vivienda, formas de vida y de curiosidad, misticismo que se ciñe a nuevos módulos para la plegaria, maneras del saboreo y del tratamiento de los manjares, que exhalan un vivir completo, refinado y misterioso, teocrático y ensimismado, errante en la forma arraigadísima en sus esencias. (303)

In particular, the acquisition of language plays a key role in defining the plenary style of the Baroque. It is not until near the end of his essay that Lezama Lima reveals José Martí to represent this acquisition. He describes Martí to have acquired a language that represents the written American form: "Es la gesta que en el siglo siguiente al Aleijadinho, va a realizar José Martí. La adquisición de un lenguaje, que después de la muerte de Gracián, parecía haberse soterrado, demostraba, imponiéndose a cualquier pesimismo histórico, que la nación había adquirido una forma" (323). Lezama Lima expands on Martí's acquisition of language in his essay "La poesía cubana." Comparing his poetic expertise to that of the Cuban poet José Julián Herculano del Casal y de la Lastra, he establishes Martí as a figure that, in the spirit of hybridity, culminates traditional and classical works in order to create a new expression. It is clear that Martí's works are for Lezama Lima the prime example of plenary style:

En José Martí culminaron todas las tradiciones cubanas de la palabra, cuyo esbozo y desarrollo vimos en épocas anteriores. Su figura recuerda lo que los místicos orientales llaman el *alibi*, capaz de crear por la imagen la realidad. Su importancia rebasa los límites de nuestra frontera, para ser una figura universal en las perspectivas que proyecta. El desarrollo de Martí, fue muy distinto que el de Casal. Martí retomó la tradición, profundizó el conocimiento de nuestros clásicos, se empapó de las zonas más creadoras de nuestra expresión. Fue un reavivador del idioma, es decir, el español, desde la época de los grandes clásicos, Santa Teresa, Quevedo, Gracián, no volverá a lucir tan ágil, flexible y novedoso como en Martí. (192-193)

We can see that Martí represents for Lezama Lima the essence of American form in writing. Given the examples of previous writers such as Francisco de Quevedo and Baltasar Gracián, Lezama Lima reveals Martí to write in the tradition of the Baroque. The Baroque form is seen as vital to the poetic reformulations established in the nineteenth-century by Martí. This is no less indicated by the fact that Lezama Lima concludes *La expresión americana*, like an epilogue,

dedicating American expression to Martí. As he summarizes, "Martí llega a ser considerado como un maestro de la nueva expresión" (194). Martí arrives to be the ultimate example of dealing with tensile, plutonic, and plenary forms in American expression, the very definition of what it means to be Baroque.

## Chapter Three

### Alejo Carpentier and the New World Baroque

Beginning on May 15th, 1975, a series of papers were given by Alejo Carpentier at the Universidad Central de Venezuela. The four papers highlighted topics on Latin American culture, identity, and the New World Baroque: "Conciencia e identidad de América", "Un camino de medio siglo", "Lo barroco y lo real maravilloso", and "Problemática del tiempo y el idioma en la moderna novela latinoamericana". They were published in México six years later and included in a compilation of essays titled *La novela latinoamericana en vísperas de un nuevo siglo y otros ensayos*. Of these, "Lo barroco y lo real maravilloso" highlights the importance of the New World Baroque as an inclusive form centered on the principles of *mestizaje*. Similar to Lezama Lima, Carpentier draws his insight on the Baroque from the *mestizo* project of José Martí's *Nuestra América* and associates the Baroque with the urban dynamics of architecture, which is particularly evident in another essay of his that discusses the Baroque architecture of Havana titled "La ciudad de las columnas."<sup>20</sup> It is clear that the works of Carpentier are influenced by the writings of his contemporary Lezama Lima. Recognizing the similarities between the Baroque theories of Lezama Lima and Carpentier, Zamora and Kaup highlight the tendency of the two to advocate for an inclusive Baroque:

We understand Carpentier's inclusiveness not as cultural appropriation but as the desire, strongly felt by the 1940's, to engage the Baroque as an instrument "to incorporate the exterior world through the transformative furnace of assimilation," to repeat Lezama's phrase. Carpentier's New World Baroque, like Lezama's, represents an impulse toward inclusion (itself a Baroque impulse), an effort to bridge historical and cultural rupture, to assemble disparate cultural fragments—past and present, European and non-European. Both Carpentier and Lezama construct theories of cultural becoming that reach across the boundaries of fixed identities toward the formulation of yet uncertain ones. This capacity makes their theories relevant to postcolonial contexts worldwide. (9)

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<sup>20</sup> Published in 1964 as part of his volume of essays *Tientos y diferencias*.

The centrality of Carpentier's theory is found in the belief that America is and has always been Baroque: "América, continente de simbiosis, de mutaciones, de vibraciones, de mestizajes, fue barroca desde siempre" (123). Carpentier seeks to "eternalize" the Baroque as an American referent. He therefore deemphasizes its significance as a temporal category, and claims the Baroque as an expressive style that has always represented Latin American culture. As I will discuss further in this essay, Carpentier eternalizes the Baroque by associating it with the ideas of Catalan philosopher Eugenio D'Ors. Carpentier describes the Baroque as a timeless constant, thus giving it a transcultural and trans-historical character that he defines as "un espíritu barroco" (113). By endorsing the Baroque as a constant, Carpentier implies the Baroque to reflect "constant" elements of Latin America such as its natural environment. Thus for Carpentier, the Baroque proves less periodic and stylistic, and more universal and natural. In his writings, this perspective of the Baroque is relayed into cultural themes of Latin America such as the importance of American solidarity, historical constancy, cultural innovation/progression, the natural environment, and urbanism. Throughout this chapter, I discuss each of these cultural themes, and explore the key elements that form Carpentier's perspective on the twentieth-century reformulation of the New World Baroque.

### 1. American Solidarity

Nearing the end of his essay "Conciencia e identidad de América" Carpentier exhorts, "[p]ara mí terminaron los tiempos de la *soledad*. Empezaron los tiempos de la *solidaridad*" (87; italics in original). The process from solitude to solidarity in Latin America reveals an overarching theme that is evident in the 1975 discourses of Carpentier. The message here is clear: Latin America must stand united, or "solidified," under an independent and unified

identity. He draws his inspiration from Martí's teachings of *mestizaje* and Americanism. In this same essay, Carpentier admits rather evidently his personal connection with the work of Martí: "Es cierto –me enorgullezco de ello– que tuve una temprana visión de América y del porvenir de América (me refiero, desde luego, a aquella América que José Martí llamara 'Nuestra América')" (84). Furthermore, he emphasizes that the ideology of Martí is connected to Cuba's history, artists, and revolutionaries. While describing his decision to return to Havana from an extended visit in Venezuela, Carpentier lists previous and current Cuban figures as "voices" that motivated him to return and describes Martí as their inspiration. He mentions various writers who took on important political roles such as the Cuban hero Julio Antonio Mella, the cofounder of the Cuban Communist Party (PCC, *Partido Comunista Cubano*); the Cuban poet and member of the PCC Rubén Martínez Villena; the Puerto Rican writer Pablo de la Torriente Brau who acted as an advocate for abused Cuban farmers in the early twentieth century; the PCC advocate Juan Marinello; the Afro-Cuban poet Nicolás Guillén; and the revolutionary writer and Cuban intellectual Raúl Roa García. Carpentier later closes off by recognizing all those "voices" that had participated in some form in the 1953 assault on the Moncada Barracks in Santiago de Cuba during the 26th of July Movement.<sup>21</sup> Quoting the leader of the movement, Fidel Castro, Carpentier exclaims, "Fuimos guiados por el pensamiento de José Martí," (86). Thus, José Martí, the voice that motivated the voices, created a loud enough call to entice Carpentier to return from Venezuela to Cuba. For it was in Cuba where he held the intention to partake in what he describes as "[el] servicio del gran quehacer histórico latinoamericano" (86). As he later notes, this great Latin American endeavour finds its purpose within the borders of Cuba and is

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<sup>21</sup> The attack on the Moncada Barracks was the initial attempt for a revolutionary overthrow of the Batista dictatorship, carried out by a small contingent of revolutionaries led by Fidel Castro. It was in the end a failure which led to Fidel's imprisonment and later his exile to México.

guided by the ideology of Martí: "Y ese quehacer estaba profundamente enraizado en la historia misma de Cuba, en su pasado, en el pensamiento ecuménicamente latinoamericano de José Martí, para quien nada que fuese latinoamericano hubiese sido nunca ajeno" (86).

Two points are worth revealing in this recollection of Carpentier. Firstly, he is a clear advocate for the previous nineteenth-century and current twentieth-century revolutionary movements of his time. The 1959 Cuban revolution becomes for Carpentier a tangible example of Latin American solidarity. He perceives the Cuban revolution as an example of victory through the unification of Cuban patriots influenced by Martían ideologies of liberty. A greater public advocate for the Cuban revolution than his contemporaries Lezama Lima and Sarduy, Carpentier in fact professes the Cuban revolution to be a victory beyond Cuban borders:

[V]eríamos cumplidos, en el alba del año 1959, con el triunfo de la Revolución cubana, y la reafirmación de ese triunfo en la decisiva y trascendental batalla de Playa Girón, primera gran victoria de una nación de nuestra América mestiza (como la llamara más de una vez, con orgullo, José Martí) contra el más temible de los imperialismos . . . ("El del gigante con botas de siete leguas que nos desprecia" . . . –y vuelvo a citar a José Martí.) (85)

It is not for *nuestra Cuba* that Carpentier attributes the victory of the Cuban revolution, but rather for *nuestra América*. There exists a tendency for Carpentier to place Cuban contexts, such as the revolution, within the broader category of Martí's *Nuestra América*. This leads me to my second point, which is seen in a similar tendency in Carpentier's writing to relay national patriotism within the context of individual existentialism. Martí often spoke in the context of the American "*hombre*" rather than in specific nationalities to avoid geographical divisions and promote the union of all Latin America. Carpentier tends to do the same. One example in particular can be seen at the end of his essay "Conciencia e identidad de América" when he advocates for a unified philosophy within Latin America: "Hombre soy, y sólo me siento hombre cuando mi palpito, mi pulsión profunda, se sincronizan con el palpito, la pulsión, de todos los

hombres que me rodean" (87). Furthermore, in "Un camino de medio siglo" he existentially connects himself with the temporal context of the Cuban revolution: "Hombre de mi tiempo, soy de mi tiempo y mi tiempo transcendente es el de la Revolución cubana" (111). He tends to purposefully skew the distinctions between individual associations (*hombre*) and national associations (*Revolución cubana*) in an effort to provide a figure of inclusivity. Moreover, like Martí who understood that inclusivity must require the right of entitlement—hence America is designated as "ours"—Carpentier similarly entitles the elements of Latin American culture under the category of "ours". Therefore, throughout Carpentier's four essays, the Latin American man is entitled *hombre-nuestro* (80), the Latin American continent entitled "*continente nuestro*" (82), the marvellous-real is entitled "*maravilloso nuestro*" (130), Latin American nature is entitled "*nuestra naturaleza*" (132), Latin American scholars are entitled as "*nuestros maestros*" (134), Latin American history is entitled "*nuestra historia contemporánea*" (135), and Latin American maturity is entitled "*nuestra madurez*" (135). Carpentier clearly reveals the project of Latin American identity to exist under an inclusive structure that imitates the writings of Martí.

Referencing back to Martí's words in *La Edad de Oro y otros relatos*, "[u]n hombre solo no vale nunca más que un pueblo entero" (87), we can see that Carpentier endows the ontological project of twentieth-century Latin America with a similar nature. For Carpentier, unity is the essence of Latin American identity; inclusivity and integration are revealed as the path laid out by Martí to guide the individual *hombre* to a freedom found within the context of community. It is a freedom that Carpentier believed was being accomplished in the era of his time—an era which he depicts in his essay "Un camino de medio siglo" to foreshadow "la lucha de las transformaciones, de las mutaciones, de las revoluciones" (110). It was an era of change. These changes, which represent the shift from individual solitude to cultural solidarity, would require a common denominator

throughout history that would support and justify the similitude and unity within Latin American culture. It is here in which Carpentier reaches out to the Baroque to symbolize the needed constancy of a Latin American culture still trying to find balance from an unstable and wavering history.

## 2. Baroque Constancy

Constancy creates solidarity. This seems to be the central theme of Carpentier's essay "Lo barroco y lo real maravilloso". Here the Baroque is implied as the constancy that solidifies American unity: the Baroque being the constancy, *Nuestra América mestiza* being the unity. Carpentier borrows from the perspective of Eugenio d'Ors who describes the Baroque to be a continual eon and a human constant that contains "factores recesivos" (66), represents "la corriente de vida" and reveals "la serie infinita de espacios posibles de dimensiones infinitas" (87). Following in the steps of d'Ors, Carpentier describes the Baroque as a "spirit" that returns cyclically throughout time. He writes,

Eugenio d'Ors, que no siempre me convence enteramente con sus teorías artísticas, pero que indudablemente en algunos ensayos es de una penetración extraordinaria, nos dice en un ensayo famoso que en realidad lo que hay que ver en el barroco es una suerte de pulsión creadora, que vuelve cíclicamente a través de toda la historia en las manifestaciones del arte, tanto literarias como plásticas, arquitectónicas o musicales; y nos da una imagen muy acertada cuando dice que existe un espíritu barroco, como existe un espíritu imperial. Este se aplica igualmente a Alejandro, Carlomagno o Napoleón, saltando por encima de los siglos. Hay un eterno retorno de un espíritu imperial en la historia, como hay un eterno retorno del barroquismo a través de los tiempos en las manifestaciones del arte; y ese barroquismo, lejos de significar decadencia, ha marcado a veces la culminación, la máxima expresión, el momento de mayor riqueza, de una civilización determinada. (113-114)

As is revealed in the citation above, for Carpentier, the Baroque is relayed throughout history like a creative "impulse" that returns in the manifestations of art. He argues against considering the Baroque as decadent and against the use of historical categories. By eliminating historical

categories, the Baroque is able to return in the same manner in which an empire returns throughout history. We can turn to Irlemar Chiampi's study *Barroco y modernidad* to see practical examples of where the Baroque has returned, or as Chiampi explains "inserted" itself into literary modernity. According to Chiampi, the Baroque returns in a cyclical fashion, recycling itself throughout modernity in various artists and literary styles in the twentieth-century. "El barroco," explains Chiampi, "reaparece para atestiguar la crisis/fin de la modernidad y la condición misma de un continente que no pudo incorporar el proyecto del Iluminismo" (17). Firstly, she explains a Baroque reappearance in the modernist poetry of Rubén Darío. She goes as far as titling Darío as a Baroque "avatar":

Cierta preciosismo verbal y cierta verificación excesiva del mundo externo (al gongorino modo) podrían constituir, en la poesía de Darío, el primer avatar de la legibilidad estética del barroco, pero la mezcla (y pugna) de americanismo, galofilia e hispanismo en el poeta nicaragüense resultó en una versión del barroco coherente con el proyecto modernista de alinear nuestra literatura con el parnasismo y el simbolismo. (19)

The second insertion of the Baroque is recognized in the Avant-guard poets such as Jorge Luis Borges and José Lezama Lima. She explains that this insertion of the Baroque was made possible through the appropriation of pre-modern aesthetics. In particular it is the appearance of the Baroque "metaphor" in these poets work that draws Chiampi to this conclusion: "[L]a metáfora barroca es un modelo poético y una referencia crítica en sus búsquedas de innovación, contra el sencillismo de cierta poesía acomodada en la expresión directa y banal" (20). Lastly, the third insertion of the Baroque is realized when Baroque forms are conjoined with American content. Chiampi refers to this as a process of historical legitimization: "La legitimación histórica de lo barroco es un giro sustantivo de la reapropiación que requiere una dialéctica: la de convertir lo universal en particular y, al revés, lo particular en universal. Estos pasos decisivos son tomados por el propio Lezama Lima, en los años cincuenta, y por Alejo Carpentier, en los sesenta" (21).

As Chiampi cleverly points out, the concept of historical legitimization is defined by the dialectic between the universal and the particular. This dialectic is clearly formulated in the writings of Carpentier who balances between the role of the individual *hombre* (the universal) and the national *americano* (the particular). Carpentier most clearly reveals this dialectical struggle at the end of his essay "Un camino de medio siglo":

Cuando un pueblo en que se ha nacido, decía José Martí, no está al nivel de la época en que vive, es preciso ser a la vez el hombre de la época y el de su pueblo. Y ya que el pueblo al que pertenezco se ha puesto repentinamente al nivel de la época en que vive, época del socialismo, en el seno de ese pueblo y en función de ese pueblo, trataré de realizar las tareas que aún me quedan por cumplir como escritor en el reino de este mundo. (111)

Carpentier endows the individual with the project of being a man of the time and of his people, that is a man of both universal and national significance. He further exemplifies the present conditions of Cuba under socialism, and recognizes himself as a writer of the people in the "kingdom of this world". It is both the people and the world that are reflected in Carpentier's motivations, implying both a project of universal inclusion and individual evaluation. For Carpentier, the individual is always subject to a greater universal role. This takes shape in his theories of the Baroque that connect the inclusive structures of Latin American *mestizaje* with the hybrid and symbiotic nature of the Baroque. Carpentier actually considers the whole cosmogony of America to be situated within the Baroque:

América, continente de simbiosis, de mutaciones, de vibraciones, de mestizajes, fue barroca desde siempre: ahí está el Popol Vuh, ahí están los libros de Chilam Balam, ahí está todo lo que se ha descubierto, todo lo que se ha estudiado recientemente a través de los trabajos de Ángel Garibay, de Adrián Recinos, con todos los ciclos del tiempo delimitados por la aparición de los ciclos de los cinco soles. . . . Todo lo que se refiere a cosmogonía americana –siempre es grande América– está dentro de lo barroco. (123)

Here he lists various artists to reveal the vastness of the Baroque influence in literature, similar to what Lezama Lima did with his Baroque banquet. According to Carpentier, all the cycles of

time, which are represented by different artists, tend to point to the Baroque. Therefore, the greatness of America is not found in historical periods, but rather in the culmination of Baroque expression.

### 3. Baroque Innovation

By viewing the Baroque as a "spirit" that can reappear, Carpentier is clearly implying its reappearance in the form of the New World Baroque. He is advocating for a Baroque that *reappears*, however does not *re-enact*. The key here is the distinction between innovation and mimesis. He is driven to define the differences between the two, fearing that the common definitions of the Baroque (he lists a couple near the beginning of his essay) do not do justice in capturing its meaning. Therefore, Carpentier distinguishes between mimetic and innovative expressions by clarifying the difference between the Baroque spirit and the Baroque understood as a specific historical style. He writes, "el espíritu barroco puede renacer en cualquier momento y renace en muchas creaciones de los arquitectos más modernos de hoy. Porque es *un espíritu* y no un *estilo histórico*" (119). Carpentier goes on to explain that the Romanesque and the Gothic represent historical styles while the Baroque represents the spirit. He justifies this by highlighting d'Ors observation that "'no existe un estilo gótico en la literatura.' En cambio, en literatura sí existe un estilo barroco" (119). On the other hand, he describes that romanticism, because it opposes classicism, can be thought of as Baroque rather than a historical style. He advocates for romanticism saying, "el hombre del romanticismo fue acción y fue pulsión y fue movimiento y fue voluntad y fue manifiesto y fue violencia" (121). In particular it is the opposition between romanticism and classicism that justifies Carpentier's conclusion that the Romantic is Baroque. He is jumping on board with a common debate of his time that argued the distinctions between

classicism and the Baroque. Like his contemporary Lezama Lima who tackled generalizations stating that "[l]a tierra era clásica y el mar barroco" (302), Carpentier is aware of the dynamics between the two. He believes classicism to oppose the Baroque. In fact, he goes so far as to call classicism the enemy of innovation: "la palabra clasicismo no tiene sentido ni peso ninguno. Y yo diría que si toda imitación es académica, toda academia se rige por reglas, normas, leyes. Luego lo clásico es lo académico, y todo lo académico es conservador, observante, obediente de reglas; luego enemigo de toda innovación, de todo lo que rompe con las reglas y normas" (115). Similarly d'Ors, like other earlier critics such as Heinrich Wölfflin and Oswald Spengler believed the Baroque to alternate with classical types.<sup>22</sup> Carpentier however decontextualizes d'Ors theory in reference to the New World Baroque. Zamora and Kaup explain:

D'Ors's relation to Carpentier is seminal and yet also surprising, since the American Baroque never crossed d'Ors's mind, and his metropolitan context is far indeed from Carpentier's postcolonial Caribbean. And yet both theorists understood the Baroque as a style, a spirit, a human constant, rather than a particular historical period. For both, Baroque temporality overarches discontinuities, and Baroque space is labyrinthine, an ambit in which forking paths diverge, cross, and conjoin. (10)

Nonetheless, Carpentier seems more inclined to connect d'Ors and his New World Baroque theory based on the general concept of constancy rather than focus on the scholars distinction of Baroque contexts. His intention is to redirect the assumptions that the Baroque is a decadent or mimetic form that takes after classicism. The Baroque, as Carpentier implies, must be approached with a greater regard for its ability to transcend temporal limitations.

In her essay "Becoming-Baroque: Folding European Forms into the New World Baroque with Alejo Carpentier," Monika Kaup summarizes Carpentier's formulations of the Baroque, emphasizing the distinctions between mimesis and creativity:

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<sup>22</sup> See Zamora and Kaup, 242-243.

Carpentier and other theorists of the New World Baroque seize on it not as a mimetic mode of representation, but rather as a device for the creation of new worlds, new collective identities, and new forms of expression. The New World Baroque is neither primarily nor exclusively about signification (such as post-Tridentine Catholic iconography and its symbolic conventions), but rather a means of producing things, a blueprint or mechanism for (and result of) the transformation of social, linguistic, and political structures. (111)

Kaup's main objective is to highlight Carpentier's New World Baroque as a form of creativity, an innovating tool that was destined to stretch the limits of American expression and formulate new methods and styles in art. However, we are still left with the question of why the New World? Why Latin America? Narrowing this question further, why Cuba? Answering this question in many ways echoes the historical and cultural connections between the Baroque and Cuba that were discussed in Chapter one. Kaup reaffirms that the key here is found in the concept of *mestizaje*. It is Cuba's history of hybridity that designates it as a strong location for the New World Baroque. It is for this reason that in "Un camino de medio siglo" Carpentier acknowledges the importance of the term *criollo* saying "la verdad es que la palabra 'criollo' es un elemento vital para el entendimiento de nuestra América, de esta América, madre América, América mestiza, que es nuestro continente" (103). In "Lo barroco y lo real maravilloso" Carpentier connects the significance of creole with the mandate of the Baroque spirit. Simply put, his intentions are to reveal that Latin America is Baroque because it engenders a culture of symbiosis and *mestizaje*, the same principles that form the foundation of American *barroquismo*. Carpentier writes,

¿Y por qué es América Latina la tierra de elección del barroco? Porque toda simbiosis, todo mestizaje, engendra un barroquismo. El barroquismo americano se acrece con la criollidad, con el sentido del criollo, con la conciencia que cobra el hombre americano, sea hijo de indio nacido en el continente –la conciencia 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. (126)

Kaup digs a bit further into the question of the New World Baroque by sourcing the work of Caribbean theorist Michael Dash. She alludes to the fact that Cuba in particular exhibits hybridity based on its historical depopulation of its indigenous peoples. She explains,

Unlike on the mainland, in the Caribbean none of the indigenous languages and peoples survived: Arawak and Taino speakers had almost completely been exterminated in the first half-century after contact and conquest. This is why—as Caribbean theorists such as Michael Dash routinely observe—in the Americas, the Caribbean is the epitome of hybridity: there are no 'pure' indigenous origins to refer back to. The origin of Caribbean cultures is hybrid, in the confluence of races, in the mixing of immigrant peoples in plantation society composed of white masters and black slaves that dominated in the Caribbean. Here is one reason why Cuban writers would come up with a decolonizing theory of becoming-Baroque: given the lack of a pre-Columbian architectural heritage and languages, postcolonial thought had no alternative to work from *within* the colonizer's forms and language, folding the master's tools into minor cultural uses. (137)

The key here is found in Kaup's explanation that postcolonial thought had to work *within* the colonizer's forms and languages. By this, Kaup means to exploit the European tendency to rely on American input to create Baroque forms. In this same essay, Kaup argues that the insertion of American style in European forms represents what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari describe as a minor form of language. In Deleuze's and Guattari's work *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* they clarify the origins of a minor literature saying that "[a] minor literature doesn't come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language" (16).

Furthermore, they explain that the term "minor" is used to designate a revolutionary condition of literature rather than specific examples:

We might as well say that minor no longer designates specific literatures but the revolutionary conditions for every literature within the heart of what is called great (or established) literature. Even he who has the misfortune of being born in the country of a great literature must write in its language, just as a Czech Jew writes in German, or an Ouzbekian writes in Russian. Writing like a dog digging a hole, a rat digging its burrow. And to do that, finding his own point of underdevelopment, his own *patois*, his own third world, his own desert. (18)

In these terms, we can therefore understand the Baroque as a minor language to be constructed within the major, that being European. The New World Baroque is revealed like America's aesthetic *patois*, a third world, and its own desert, seeking its own form of expression. According to Kaup, understanding the Baroque as a minor form of language explains the innovative tendencies for it to hold the purpose of creating new forms of identity. Kaup explains that "[b]ecause [*mestizos*] could not appeal to a social place or identity of their own, these 'new people' born of the union of colonizer and colonized had to actively invent themselves as a group and create a voice of their own, by a transformative appropriation of the 'major' social structure which oppressed them" (127). The minor language thus indicates the efforts of American expression to survive under the oversight of the "major" European structure. It implies the innovation of American forms within an imposing European framework. Kaup clarifies: "It is therefore not a return to habits of passive imitation that the minoritizing operation proposes in the ingestion of hegemonic European culture, but active re-creation and reinvention" (129). She emphasizes this further by saying "the impulse to deform, to metamorphose, to assimilate the 'alien' in the absence of 'proper' being and thereby produce new identities and styles—signals this: the mestizo New World Baroque is *not about product, but process*" (128; Italics in original). And here we come to the heart of the issue. Kaup argues that the Baroque is less about the product it creates, and more about the process of its creativity. For this reason, Kaup reaches out to Deleuze's and Guattari's work and emphasizes their verdict that "metamorphosis is the contrary of metaphor" (126). Whereas metaphor would indicate a created product of language, metamorphosis indicates the creative process. Deleuze and Guattari explain, "Kafka deliberately kills all metaphor, all symbolism, all signification, no less than all designation. Metamorphosis is the contrary of metaphor. There is no longer any proper sense or figurative sense, but only a

distribution of states that is part of the range of the word" (22). Here, Deleuze and Guattari are reflecting on Franz Kafka's book *The Metamorphosis* where the protagonist Gregor Samsa turns into a beetle-like vermin. Concerning *The Metamorphosis* Kaup explains, "Gregor's becoming-animal is not allegorical; it is rather an opening towards new styles of being that help Gregor escape the bureaucratic world of power" (126). Kaup's purpose here is to connect the metamorphosis initiated by a minor language to the conditions of the New World Baroque. Like Gregor, the New World Baroque, a minor form of expression, undergoes a metamorphosis in order to assimilate into its New World environment. Connecting Carpentier's theories of the Baroque to the minor theories Deleuze and Guattari she explains,

Carpentier's becoming-Baroque and becoming-*criollo* are about metamorphosis, not metaphor: like Deleuze and Guattari's Kafka, Carpentier's New World Baroque produces 'a people to come,' provisional cultural identities and perceptions that are still in the process of formation. It is this *production* of decolonizing difference and of new, rebellious worlds, identities, and expressions from hegemonic European forms—on the part of strangers living within its reach—that Carpentier is trying to express. (128)

Whether we choose to accept Kaup's connection between Carpentier and Deleuze and Guattari or not, there remains no doubt that Carpentier advocates for a Baroque that is constantly on the edge of "becoming," that is, a Baroque with strong inclinations to metamorphose. Carpentier paints a picture of a Baroque that always was in America and thus an America that was always progressing towards novel forms of expression. The Baroque thus reappears in the New World in favour of progress and during a time for which American identity required a referent that could be assimilated within the duality of European and American contexts— between colonial modernity and the post-colonial present.

#### 4. The Marvellous-real and American Nature

In 1943, Carpentier took a trip to Haiti and while observing the culture and conditions of the country he was inspired to theorize what he would term to be the marvellous-real (*lo real maravilloso*). In Carpentier's own words, he describes his initial observations in "Un camino de medio siglo":

En el año 1943 voy a Haití, casualmente, en compañía del actor Louis Jouvet y me hallo ahí ante los prodigios de un mundo mágico, de un mundo sincrético, de un mundo donde hallaba al estado vivo, al estado bruto, ya hecho, preparado, mostrado, todo aquello que los surrealistas, hay que decirlo, fabricaban demasiado a menudo a base de artificio . . . Surge en mí esa percepción de algo que desde entonces no me ha abandonado, que es la percepción de lo que yo llamo 'lo real maravilloso', que difiere del realismo mágico, y del surrealismo en sí. (102)

Carpentier further expands the marvellous-real in the prologue to his novel *El reino de este mundo*. Explaining his trip to Haiti, he describes his encounter with the marvellous-real as a "quotidian contact," implying it to be found within the routine elements of life: "Esto se me hizo particularmente evidente durante mi permanencia en Haití, al hallarme en contacto cotidiano con algo que podríamos llamar lo real maravilloso" (5). Carpentier creates a rather ironic dialectic between the marvellous—that is wonder, awe, curiosity, the incredible—and the quotidian—that is normal, routine, casual, credible. However, according to Carpentier, this would prove less of a dialectic if we were to understand the true significance of the word "marvellous". In "Lo barroco y lo real maravilloso" he seeks to revise the definition of marvellous in the same manner he attempted to do in the beginning of the essay with the terms classicism and Baroque. He concludes: "debemos establecer una definición de lo maravilloso que no entrañe esta noción de que lo maravilloso es lo admirable porque es bello. Lo feo, lo deforme, lo terrible, también puede ser maravilloso. Todo lo insólito es maravilloso" (128). The quotidian is thus seen in the unusual

(*insólito*) circumstances of life and recognized as "marvellous". Carpentier saw this in Haiti, but attributes it to all of America:

A cada paso hallaba lo real maravilloso. Pero pensaba, además que esa presencia y vigencia de lo real maravilloso no era privilegio único de Haití, sino patrimonio de la América entera, donde todavía no se ha terminado de establecer, por ejemplo, un recuento de cosmogonías. Lo real maravilloso se encuentra a cada paso en las vidas de hombres que inscribieron fechas en la historia del Continente. (*El reino* 5-6)

Furthermore, Carpentier believes it necessary to distinguish what is meant by the marvellous-real in comparison to previous referents such as magical realism and surrealism. He describes the German artist Franz Roth as coining the term magical realism sometime between 1924 and 1925. Carpentier explains, "lo que [Franz Roth] llamaba *realismo mágico* era sencillamente una pintura donde se combinan formas reales de una manera no conforme a la realidad cotidiana" (129; italics in original). We can see then that the difference between magical realism and the marvellous-real is seen in its attempt to focus on the quotidian reality rather than unreality. Concerning surrealism, Carpentier distinguishes it from the marvellous-real in two ways. Firstly, he recognizes the tendency of the surrealist artist André Breton to consider that "sólo lo maravilloso es bello" (129). He argues that surrealist artists such as Breton never considered the reality that perhaps the marvellous was admirable not because of its beauty, but rather because it was unusual (*insólito*). Secondly, he argues that there is a lack of reality revealed in surrealism: "Ahora bien, si el surrealismo perseguía lo maravilloso, hay que decir que el surrealismo muy rara vez lo buscaba en la realidad" (130). On the other hand, the marvellous-real focuses specifically on the circumstances of reality. Carpentier concludes the status of the marvellous emphasizing its quotidian nature: "Lo real maravilloso, en cambio, que yo defiendo, y es lo real maravilloso nuestro, es el que encontramos en estado bruto, latente, omnipresente en todo lo latinoamericano. Aquí lo insólito es cotidiano, siempre fue cotidiano" (130).

Carpentier utilizes the marvellous-real as a comparative quality between America and Europe. This can be seen in his prologue to *El reino de este mundo* where he explains that "todo resulta maravilloso en una historia imposible de situar en Europa, y que es tan real, sin embargo, como cualquier suceso ejemplar de los consignados, para pedagógica edificación, en los manuales escolares" (8). As he explains, the marvellous-real is situated in America, but not in Europe. This is significant since it provides a comparative referent between Europe and America that is valuable in connecting the marvellous-real with the New World Baroque. In particular this comparison between America and Europe falls on the discussion of American nature. For Carpentier the essence of the marvellous-real is found not in stylistic or created elements of American culture, but rather within its natural environment. In "Lo Barroco y lo real maravilloso" he explains that "nuestra naturaleza es indómita, como nuestra historia, que es historia de lo real maravilloso y de lo insólito en América" (132). The emphasis on nature is a theme relayed in the novels of Carpentier as well, in particular the environment of the Amazonian jungle in *Los pasos perdidos*. In this novel, the natural, indigenous contexts are projected against structures of "civilization" and its modernizing dispositions. In reference to this novel, Cecile Leclercq recognizes an overarching dialectic formed between American nature and European culture:

Por otra parte, [en Carpentier] se revela el aspecto indómito de la naturaleza contra la cual lucha el hombre; presenta el cliché de la devoradora naturaleza americana, reactivando la 'novela selvática' o 'amazónica' de las primeras décadas del siglo XX, no con el tono positivista sino esplengleriano: pues la exaltación de la fuerza telúrica de la naturaleza americana se contraponen a los engaños de la civilización occidental. Si por una parte corresponde la novela a la antítesis naturaleza/América vs. cultura/Europa, por otra expresa la confrontación de culturas, el intento de superación del eurocentrismo, tanto de parte del protagonista como del propio autor, para optar (por lo menos mentalmente) por las raíces latinoamericanas. (227)

Carpentier's intentions are to connect the natural environments of America with its races. He paints us a picture of geography with anthropology, landscape with mankind. However, these contrapositions fall upon a theory that is less concrete and simple than Carpentier makes out. His theory of the marvellous-real in many ways requires a faith or belief in its application to America. His examples appear more random than they are convincing. In "Lo barroco y lo real maravilloso" he eclectically jumps between examples of historical events to literature, from kings to authors, from periods of slavery to twentieth-century literary movements. He exemplifies the marvellous-real in Haiti by referring to the fortress constructed by Henri Christophe (King Henri I of Haiti) to guard the island from enemy attacks, thus permitting a period of independence. He mentions the return of Mackandal in Haiti that transformed the destiny of millions of slaves. He gives other examples, some of which include Benito Juárez, a five-term president of Mexico in the latter half of the nineteenth-century who ran his presidential office from a carriage travelling throughout the nation; the Bolivian guerrilla military leader Juana de Azurduy de Padilla whom he attributes as the precursor to the war of independence in Cuba all the while being a mother of two children to whom she gave birth to in a cave in the Andes mountains; and the founder of the doctrine of positivism, the French philosopher Isidore Auguste Marie François Xavier Comte who till this day is worshiped in temples throughout Brazil. He calls the poetry of Ruben Darío "una poesía sumamente barroca" (134), and describes the work of José Martí as "un artífice maravilloso de la prosa barroca, y en su ensayo fundamental, *Nuestra América*, donde se definen todos los problemas de América en pocas páginas, es un maravilloso ejemplo de estilo barroco" (134). He exemplifies the novel *Canaima* from the author Rómulo Gallegos, describing it to be the most Baroque of his works. Furthermore, he discusses the influence of the Guatemalan corpus of myth-historical narratives

*Popol Vuh*, and other indigenous mythological works *Chilam Balam*, and *Anales de los Cakchiqueles* in writings in Asturias. Lastly he mentions the twentieth-century writers of the "[la] nueva novela" (135) whose novels are collaborated under the title of the Latin American "boom" and considers the entirety of their work to be Baroque (132-135). All in all we are left with an eclectic variety of examples to support a theory defined primarily by how it compares with previous theories of magical realism and surrealism. Leclercq is right when she explains that "[l]a sensación de lo maravillo supone entonces una fe en lo maravilloso, así como los esclavos creyeron en los poderes licantrópicos de Mackandal: para definir lo americano, escoge el elemento irracional que se opone a la razón, rasgo 'específicamente' europeo." (228). The marvellous-real in many ways is constructed more on sensation than on reason. It is proved not by the logic of the examples mentioned above, but rather in the "marvellous" quality of the culture that is represented. It is this very quality that separates it from European culture. Leclercq recognizes this by positioning the emotional status imposed by the marvellous-real in America against the rational status of Europe: "Carpentier utiliza más bien la antítesis emoción (no subconsciente) vs. razón, retomando el viejo cliché antagónico europeo razón/Europa vs. emoción-intuición/América Latina" (228). Once again a distinction can be made against surrealism here. Surrealism, according to Leclercq, attempts to create a rupture of reality by breaking through the barrier between the human being and its subconscious, but as a result it advocates for a lack of control that is in reality exercised by reason. Thus, Leclercq explains that the surrealist André Breton "es prisionero de las convenciones de la razón y del utilitarismo" (228). This is not the intention of Carpentier, who does not seek to break with reality, but rather utilizes reality as an antithesis to the emotional/intuitive dynamics of America.

Both the contrapositions of Europe and America as mentioned by Leclercq – Nature/America vs. Culture/Europe; reason/Europe vs. emotion-intuition/ Latin America– set up the marvellous-real to be Baroque. Like the marvellous-real, the New World Baroque works within the same European/American contrapositions and is most characterized by its natural environments. Leclercq describes the Baroque's involvement in America:

Lo real maravilloso carpentiano se vuelve 'patrimonio' de América Latina signo de diferenciación y de oposición: tanto su naturaleza, como su historia, sus cosmogonías, su folklore musical y danzario, y la presencia del fecundo mestizaje son tan maravillosos como barrocos. Lo real maravilloso y lo barroco, elementos imbricados, intervienen en la caracterización del medio y de arte latinoamericanos. (229)

Leclercq clarifies the connection between the Baroque and the marvellous-real by emphasizing that the Baroque conditions of culture are likewise marvellous, both representing the natural environment and the art of Latin America. Likewise, Carpentier's use of the neologism *barroquismo* is utilized to represent the tropical landscape of American nature. Carpentier explains, "[t]engo que lograr con mis palabras un barroquismo paralelo al barroquismo del paisaje del trópico templado. Y nos encontramos con que eso conduce lógicamente a un barroquismo que se produce espontáneamente en nuestra literatura" (133). Carpentier therefore advocates for a Baroque culture connected to the tropical nature of Latin America. He exemplifies American literature to reveal such connections, indicating a literature that is both Baroque and marvellous. Leclercq explains this connection as a method to decenter America from European culture: "El barroquismo llega de esta forma a ser un estilo 'natural': de esta forma la naturaleza se vuelve cultura. Es una teoría que aspira a 'deseurocentralizar' la cultura y el estilo literario latinoamericanos, centrándolos en la naturaleza americana" (231). Referring back to the first theme of Baroque constancy that I mentioned, we can see how this theme of constancy fits well with Carpentier's project of connecting the Baroque with nature. Nature acts

as the perfect constancy for Baroque expression. As American nature is and has always been constantly present, so too does the Baroque, the expression of nature, find its constancy in America. Carpentier, therefore matches the constancy of expression with that of nature, which can be said to be an all around marvellous connection.

## 5. The Urban Baroque

For Carpentier, the Baroque is above all an urban entity that is realized in architecture. In "Lo barroco y lo real maravilloso" he exclaims, "Nuestro mundo es barroco por la arquitectura – eso no hay ni que demostrarlo–, por el enrevesamiento y la complejidad de su naturaleza y su vegetación, por la policromía de cuanto nos circunda, por la pulsión telúrica de los fenómenos a que estamos todavía sometidos" (131). Similarly to Lezama Lima, Carpentier sees the symbolism of nature in architecture. In particular, Carpentier finds the symbolism of nature within the constructs of concrete. Amongst the concrete of Baroque cathedrals and Havana columns Carpentier envisions an American Baroque decorated with the symbolism of America's natural environment. As he did with his theory on the marvellous-real, he uses Baroque architecture in the New World to create a contrast between America and Europe. This is evident at the beginning of his essay "Conciencia e identidad de América":

Mientras el hombre de Europa nacía, crecía, maduraba, entre piedras seculares, edificaciones viejas, apenas acrecidas o anacronizadas por alguna tímida innovación arquitectónica, el latinoamericano nacido en los albores de este siglo de prodigiosos inventos, mutaciones, revoluciones, abría los ojos en el ámbito de ciudades que, casi totalmente inmovilizadas desde los siglos XVII o XVIII, con un lentísimo aumento de población, empezaban a agigantarse, a extenderse, a alargarse, a elevarse, al ritmo de las mezcladoras de concreto. (79)

Carpentier artistically compares the older architectural forms of Europe to the emergence of new architectural forms in Latin America during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Europe's

innovation is seen as timid, while America's extends, enlarges, and elevates to the rhythm of concrete mixers— an artistic metaphor that implies a rhythm-like progression in America.

American innovation is thus contrasted with European tradition. Carpentier in fact alludes to a progressive-like "style" in New World Baroque architecture. In particular, this progressive style is revealed in the abundant utilization of space, which finds a central axis within its linearity that Carpentier titles in "Lo barroco y lo real maravilloso" as "núcleos proliferantes" (117). These proliferating centers are artistic designs that are utilized to take up the central space of the construct and specifically redirect the attention of the artwork from the inside out. Carpentier explains the centers as such:

[Los núcleos proliferantes son] elementos decorativos que llenan totalmente el espacio ocupado por la construcción, las paredes, todo el espacio disponible arquitectónicamente, con motivos que están dotados de una expansión propia y lanzan, proyectan las formas con una fuerza expansiva hacia afuera. Es decir, es un arte en movimiento, un arte de pulsión, un arte que va de un centro hacia afuera y va rompiendo, en cierto modo, sus propios márgenes. (117)

The Havana Cathedral proves to be a tangible example of these proliferating centers. Here, the main doors are positioned higher and to the center of the smaller side doors. The central doors draw attention to the central "axis" of the Cathedral, which is located in a perfectly vertical direction above the doors leading to a large clover-shaped stain glass window. From this centralized window, the architecture proliferates upwards to highest point where lies the figure of the cross. Likewise, the central window reaches out to each side where the towers stand, and downwards to the cathedral steps that extend towards the vast opening of the plaza. In this particular case, the axis of the cathedral in fact acts as the central focal point of the entire plaza. For Carpentier, Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome, the cathedral of Toledo in Spain, Saint Basil's Cathedral in Moscow, Charles Bridge and the Saint Clementine church in Prague all exhibit this proliferating nature of the Baroque (118). In each case, the objective of Carpentier is to reveal an

architectural style that "fears" empty space and "flees" from its geometrical boundaries. As the Baroque flees from its center caressing the prolific detail of the architectural walls, progression thus takes shape both metaphorically and metaphysically: the Baroque becomes movement.

In his essay "La ciudad de las columnas" Carpentier discusses the urban Baroque of Havana. His objective is to highlight the *mestizo* quality of Cuban architecture by identifying the excess of architectural columns represented in the city. The columns prove imperative in understanding the urban environment of the city. While reflecting on the positioning of columns throughout Havana, Carpentier in fact argues that the architectural layout of the city is designed around the absence of light, hence he labels Havana as the "ciudad de sombras" (62). This is another example of how natural environments are integrated into the Baroque. The natural context of light becomes the foundation for the Baroque form of Havana. Natural conditions thus guide urban development. Furthermore, he compares the hybrid quality of *mestizaje* with the superposition of column styles in Havana. He thus labels Havana as a style without a style, that is to say, an eclectic assortment of forms without a singular referent. He explains:

La Habana ese estilo sin estilo que a la larga, por proceso de simbiosis, de amalgama, se erige en un barroquismo peculiar que hace las veces de estilo, inscribiéndose en la historia de los comportamientos urbanísticos. Porque, poco a poco, de lo abigarrado, de lo entremezclado, de lo encajado entre realidades distintas, han ido surgiendo las constantes de un empaque general que distingue a La Habana de otras ciudades del continente. (63)

Here Carpentier, goes further than merely distinguishing between European and American forms, advocating for the exclusivity of the Baroque form found in Cuba. Kaup believes that in this particular essay Carpentier turns the mainland/Caribbean displacement into a main subject of discussion since "the New World Baroque emerged from a sociohistory of *mestizaje* in a mainland—not a Caribbean—context" (136). He compares Cuba to mainland American countries such as México, Ecuador, and Perú and describes the atmosphere of Havana to

represent a distinct expression of American *barroquismo*. According to Carpentier, Cuban *barroquismo* is particularly evident in the eclectic display of column styles represented in Havana. He explains:

Cuba no es barroca como México, como Quito, como Lima. La Habana está más cerca, arquitectónicamente, de Segovia y de Cádiz, que de la prodigiosa policromía de San Francisco Ecatepec de Cholula. . . Cuba no llegó a propiciar un barroquismo válido en la talla, la imagen o la edificación. Pero, Cuba, por suerte, fue mestiza –como México o el Alto Perú. Y como todo mestizaje, por proceso de simbiosis, de adición, de mezcla, engendra un barroquismo, el barroquismo cubano consistió en acumular, coleccionar, multiplicar, columnas y columnatas en tal demasía de dóricos y de corintios, de jónicos y de compuestos, que acabó el transeúnte por olvidar que vivía entre columnas, que era acompañado por columnas, era vigilado por columnas que le medían el tranco y lo protegían del sol y de la lluvia, y hasta que era velado por columnas en las noches de sus sueños. (73)

Here, Carpentier identifies Cuban style under three verbs: accumulate, collect, and multiply,—all verbs that give a sense of "addition" which implies once again a style of progression.

In an interesting allusion, Carpentier associates the extensive display of columns in the city to be like a "jungle". With any other writer, this may not allude to much, however with Carpentier we as readers are immediately drawn to his use of the "jungle" as a Baroque metaphor. This is seen in his novel *Los pasos perdidos* where the jungle is used to imply distinctions between European modernity and American nature. Carpentier describes that "la increíble profusión de columnas, en una ciudad que es emporio de columnas, selva de columnas, columnata infinita, última urbe en tener columnas en tal demasía; columnas que, por lo demás, al haber salido de los patios originales, han ido trazando una historia de la decadencia de la columna a través de las edades" (65). He seems to use the extension of columns as an addition to the metaphorical significance of the jungle. The jungle, the location of traditional indigenous populations is thrown in conjunction with the modernizing cultures outside of it. Carpentier, redirects this metaphor as he did with the "núcleos proliferantes" of architecture, that is, he

creates a progression from the inner centrality outwards. Here, the jungle is seen as the inner axis of culture expanding outwards to its foreign contexts. Therefore, rather than looking from the outside into the inner "jungle" of columns, Carpentier directs the attention of culture from the inner jungle outwards. Hence, the columns are described as an "emporio", "selva", and "infinita" which give a sense of endless progression. He even attributes the columns as the "elemento de decoración interior" (64), comparable to the interior axis of "núcleos proliferantes" in architecture. One may then say that in Havana *the columns are the city's proliferating center*. The progression here is accomplished not by extending the natural contexts towards the "inner" urban concrete, but rather from the "inner" urban concrete to the natural "outside" jungles, thus implying an extension of the city. Carpentier clarifies saying, "todos los estilos de la columna aparecen representados, conjugados o mestizados hasta el infinito. Columnas de medio cuerpo dórico y medio cuerpo corintio; jónicos, enanos, cariátides de cemento, tímidas ilustraciones o degeneraciones de un Viñola compulsado por cuanto maestro de obra contribuyera a extender la ciudad" (65). The implication made by Carpentier is that where the city extends, so too does the Baroque. Since the Baroque is by nature a progressive form, expanding from its inner nucleus outward, so too must the city expand in a similar manner. As I had mentioned in the last chapter when discussing the urban theories of Lezama Lima, a concept like this demands an acknowledgement of Maravall's belief that the Baroque and the city go hand in hand. By acknowledging the connection between the city and the Baroque, we can observe that while the city expands, which Carpentier describes it to do in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, so too does the Baroque. And as the Baroque expands it brings with it the novel task of assimilating within the culture of its time. Hence, Carpentier makes note of the Baroque's project of

transculturation, tasking it with the role of transcending temporal and cultural discontinuities. He attributes this to the role of the Baroque spirit:

Espíritu barroco, legítimamente antillano mestizo en cuanto se transculturizó en estas islas del Mediterráneo americano, que se tradujo en un irreverente y desacompasado rejuego de entablamentos clásicos, para crear ciudades aparentemente ordenadas y serenas donde los vientos de ciclones estaban siempre al acecho del mucho orden para desordenar el orden apenas los veranos, pasados a octubre, empezaran a bajar sus nubes sobre las azoteas y tejados. (74)

Cleverly, contrasting the Baroque tension between order and disorder through the metaphor of cyclones and wind, Carpentier labels the Baroque as a form fighting against the colonial order through the tools of architecture. Trans-cultured, the Baroque arrives in the New World with a different project, one of postcolonial disorder, of wind, cyclones, transformation, mutation, and innovation— an overall voracity to progress.

## Chapter Four

### Severo Sarduy and the Neobaroque:

#### The Artificialization of Language and Culture

Severo Sarduy, the third of the Cuban triumvirate alongside José Lezama Lima and Alejo Carpentier articulates the twentieth-century Baroque in a different manner than his two fellow contemporaries. Sarduy takes on the challenging task of incorporating theories of science within the arts— a task unique to the Baroque perspectives of his time. Various factors play a role in his perspectives on the Baroque. Firstly, Sarduy elaborates his Baroque theory from outside the borders of Cuba. Unlike Carpentier who joined the Castro government, and Lezama Lima who opted to remain in Cuba despite his doubts about the revolution, Sarduy chose to live in France. In 1960, on a Cuban grant to study art at the École du Louvre, he travelled to Paris; he would remain there and redevelop the American Baroque through his writings during the nineteen-seventies and nineteen-eighties (Zamora and Kaup 265). His experiences and education in France would shape his theoretical intuitions regarding the Baroque in a way that proved unique to those developed within Latin American circles. In particular, his academic experiences were highlighted by his affiliation with the *Tel Quel* group and poststructuralist circles, which included relationships with scholars such as Roland Barthes and Julia Kristeva amongst others. As Zamora and Kaup point out, these intellectual associations "gave him a distinct theoretical vantage point from which to reread Carpentier and Lezama and their theories of the New World Baroque" (265). It is also no doubt due to his international experiences that we see so few Latin American examples represented in Sarduy's writings. In *Barroco*, for example, we see the majority of his examples falling in European categories of science (Galileo, Kepler), painting

(Caravaggio, El Greco, Rubens, Velázquez), architecture (Borromini), and poetry (Góngora). His work "El barroco y el neobarroco" (1972) would be the exception to this, for here, he appropriates the Neobaroque as a manner to reread Latin American literature. He exemplifies various literary devices in novels such as Lezama Lima's *Paradiso*, Carpentier's *El siglo de las luces*, Guillermo Cabrera Infante's *Tres tristes tigres*, and Gabriel García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad*. Among the few Latin American examples in his theoretical works, Sarduy seems inclined to reference his Cuban contemporaries such as Lezama Lima, Carpentier, and Cabrera Infante. Although his theories may have developed on European soil, his Cuban roots never seemed to be far from his mind.

Sarduy articulates the Baroque through a variety of theoretical essays: *Escrito sobre un cuerpo* (1968); "El Barroco y el neobarroco" (1972); *Barroco* (1974); *Big Bang* (1974); *La simulación* (1982); and *Nueva inestabilidad* (1987). The difficulty of reading these theoretical texts is augmented by the eclectic display of academic theories that Sarduy utilizes. Rolando Pérez comments on Sarduy's intellectual diversity in *Severo Sarduy and the Neo-Baroque Image of Thought in the Visual Arts*:

[Sarduy] remains what is often referred to as a 'writer's writer,' albeit one who, by that same token, has not been ignored by the academic world. Contributing to this interest is the fact that even his literary writing displays a vast amount of knowledge of history, philosophy, psychoanalysis, astronomy, Eastern religions, literary criticism, and art, in ways that blur the common divide between theory and literature. The ideal reading of a novel like *De dónde son los cantantes* (1967) would require knowledge of Cuban history, Heideggerian philosophy, Lacanian psychoanalysis, and of course, Sarduy's favorite topic: art. (1)

Sarduy is not overly explanative in his connections between academic disciplines. Rather, the relationship between science and the Baroque is discussed, but not well defined in most of his works. Like Lezama Lima, Sarduy writes abstractly, like a poet, expanding theories with metaphors, extensive vocabulary, and descriptions that leave the reader to interpret the

connections between fields of knowledge rather than have them defined in concrete terms. He tends to qualify the Baroque on four different levels (cosmological, cultural, linguistic, and psychological), and as Gregg Lambert explains, "[these levels] correspond to the primary metaphor of the baroque" (121), that being the cosmological figure of the ellipse which as we will see holds important significance concerning Baroque structure. Sarduy's works can be particularly difficult for readers confronting them without any background in Galilean and Keplerian cosmology, Lacanian psychoanalysis, literary criticism of Barthes, poetry of Góngora, or works of Baroque art and architecture by Caravaggio, Velázquez, Rubens, and Borromini. Nonetheless, Sarduy's eclectic theories on the Baroque have proven to be integrative in twentieth-century literary and visual arts. Pérez explains that "Sarduy reads not only science but also religion and nature, in literary/visual terms" (5). Furthermore, the integration of scientific fields such as cosmology with the Baroque is utilized by Sarduy to direct the attention of the reader towards literary and visual arts in a manner that finds history constructed solely through language. Thus, Sarduy tends to describe the Baroque according to literary devices. This is most evident in his essay "El barroco y el neobarroco" where he examines the Baroque according to literary structures of artifice (substitution, proliferation, and condensation), parody, inter- and intra-textuality, and eroticism amongst others. The Neobaroque is thus developed more as a structure of literary analysis rather than as a cultural referent. For this reason, Zamora and Kaup describe Sarduy "[to take] language on a journey into itself and away from the social and historical world" (265). This brings the perspective of the Neobaroque under a different light than that of Sarduy's contemporaries Lezama Lima and Carpentier. While comparing the perspective of Sarduy to that of Lezama Lima and Carpentier, Zamora and Kaup explain:

If Lezama located the Baroque in Latin American time and space, and Carpentier found Baroque elements in all culture and periods, the third in the Cuban triumvirate of

Baroque theorists, Severo Sarduy, dismissed both views, focusing not on cultural self-definition but on the uses of seventeenth-century Baroque rhetorical devices in contemporary literature that he calls Neobaroque. (10)

For Sarduy, the Neobaroque is a term that is more rhetorical than it is cultural; it is a structural blueprint more than it is a conceptual ideology. Valentín Díaz, in fact, describes Sarduy's Neobaroque as a type of reading system: "[E]l Neobarroco es antes una máquina lectora que una poética; es antes un modo de releer el arte moderno que una forma específica de ese arte. Sólo circunscripto a la obra completa de Sarduy el Neobarroco será, también, una poética: *el Neobarroco es Sarduy*" (52; Italics in original). Therefore, when analyzing the NeoBaroque according to Sarduy, it is critical to do so through the lens of linguistic values. Language, as Sarduy seems to imply, is a Baroque system, a structure of Baroque coordinates and guidelines—language is the Neobaroque. As Armando Romero summarizes, "Sarduy está creando un sistema de coordenadas en el cual podemos inscribir el barroco" (569).

Sarduy connects culture and language through his concept of literary artificialization, which as stipulated in "El barroco y el neobarroco" represents "[un] proceso de enmascaramiento, de envolvimiento progresivo, de irrisión" (8). Fashioned after Jacques Derrida's *différance*, Sarduy describes the concept of artificialization according to three categories that are each described in a manner for which the content of the sign (signifier and signified) is deconstructed. Firstly he mentions the mechanism of substitution; the signified of a word is replaced with a different signified (9). Hence, as Sarduy explains, the word "papaya" (the fruit) becomes substituted with a different signified (the Cuban slang referring to the female sex) (10). Secondly he discusses the mechanism of proliferation; the signifier is destroyed by the signified thus creating a chain of various signifiers (11). The various signifiers develop yet remain absent from the signified. Sarduy describes this as an "orbit," of absent signifiers, which

no doubt exemplifies his tendency to relate structures of language to cosmological figures such as he does with the figure of the ellipse in the book *Barroco*. Lastly, he describes the Baroque practice of condensation, which through the processes of permutation, mirroring, and fusion interchange the signifiers with the signified. The changes create a chain of signifiers that are then condensed into one (15). Otherwise explained, two signifiers are formed and then develop a tension that leads to a unifying (condensation) of a new signifier.

Overall the connection of language and culture is revealed more in Sarduy's novels than it is in his criticism.<sup>23</sup> For example, in his novel *Cobra* (1972), the concept of artificialization in language is personalized in the character of the transvestite named Cobra, the star of the lyrical theatre who has an obsession to transform his/her body. The personal identity of the protagonist, Cobra, like the linguistic sign, becomes deconstructed, in this case through transvestism that creates a separation between masculine and feminine roles. Artificiality thus becomes corporeal inasmuch as it does linguistic. The signifier (the human body) is left without any particular signified (sexual orientation). Sarduy uses this body/language connection to create an allusion to Latin American culture. Here, history and culture become represented in the struggle for human identity. As Lambert explains, "[w]hat *Cobra* recovers (*se recobra*) is the initial cut of language from which both history and culture originate. The principle of 'artificiality' already occupies the beginning, and the image nature itself, like the missing phallus of the character of Cobra, is only the effect of an original absence that sets the process of writing and culture in motion" (124). Furthermore, Sarduy represents the tension of Latin American identity within the character of Cobra. The novel *Cobra* exhibits a theme of "recovery," that is a search for original identity— an

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<sup>23</sup> The Neobaroque criticism of Sarduy tends to borrow from the terminology of psychoanalysis, linguistics and Derridean philosophy, whereas his novels engage more with the cultural and linguistic resources of Cuban and Latin American materials. See Lambert, 127.

allusion to the rediscovery of an original Latin American identity, realized in the Neobaroque of the twentieth-century. In fact, Sarduy represents particular aspects of Cuban identity through the artificiality of the two main characters of the novel, the transvestite Cobra who seeks to recover "her" true identity and the *Señora* who seeks to find a drug to shrink her over-sized feet which are perceived to be a masculine attribute. According to Lambert, each character is linked by their artificial identity and their tendency to exhibit exaggerated traits of *machismo*, which he describes as "a product of colonial history that is embodied in the Cuban psyche" (124). Quoting Roberto González Echevarría, Lambert reveals that the novel *Cobra* "does not denounce *machismo* but exposes its artificiality, its being founded on the transvestism inherent in language" (124). Therefore, the artificiality of language is used to critique the artificial aspects of Cuban culture. This is an example of how Sarduy uses language like a "blue-print," or as Díaz describes, "una máquina lectora" (52) that guides his analysis and criticism of cultural identity.

Sarduy's use of artificialization contrasts with the New World Baroque theory of Carpentier. Whereas Sarduy sees the Baroque structured according to "artificial" elements of language, Carpentier sees the Baroque guided by the marvellous-real, as something that represents the "marvellous" qualities of culture and nature. In fact, Sarduy's concept of artificialization seems to dispute Carpentier's connection between the Baroque and nature by implying that all linguistic structures are relevant only as artifice. Thus the Baroque is perceived as the mockery of nature: "la apoteosis del artificio, la ironía e irrisión de la naturaleza" ("El barroco" 8). His opposition to Carpentier is revealed in his negative evaluation of d'Ors. According to Zamora and Kaup, the concept of artifice can appear as an attack on d'Ors' notion of the Baroque as a return to primordial nature, but his real target is the realism central to Carpentier's theories. Zamora and Kaup explain:

Sarduy's argument with Carpentier occurs over the definition of Baroque dynamism, heterogeneity, and transgression. Both writers identify these Baroque characteristics, but Carpentier grounds them in the cultures and histories of Latin America, whereas Sarduy understands them in purely linguistic terms. For Sarduy, the Baroque sign is conventional and without any direct link to extralinguistic referents. For Carpentier, on the contrary, the relations of analogy and resemblance that underlie the realism of *his* Baroque perform the task of naming New World realities. (265)

As Zamora and Kaup reveal here, for Sarduy, the term Neobaroque deals more with the concept of linguistic structure than it does with geographical location; it is the place of language before that of culture. In this sense, the Neobaroque becomes the reappearance of forms inherent in the Historical Baroque. Sarduy sees the Baroque as a product of the sixteenth and the seventeenth century, whereas Carpentier, as stipulated in his essay "Lo barroco y lo real maravilloso" believes that "América, continente de simbiosis, de mutaciones, de vibraciones, de mestizajes, fue barroca desde siempre" (123).<sup>24</sup> This difference, however, does not mean that Sarduy avoids the topic of culture, but rather that culture is addressed first and foremost according to linguistic principles of artificialization. Sarduy, in fact, sees artificiality as a quality of culture as well. Culture thus tends to deconstruct or fragment in a similar manner as the artificiality of language. Hence we can see the theme of transvestism represented in his works, which implies a deconstructive process of the corporeal nature of sexual identity. In particular, Sarduy utilizes the deconstructive tendency of artificialization to help design his theories of cultural displacement. This creates a unique similarity between Sarduy's theory of the Neobaroque and that of his mentor Lezama Lima. Sarduy's tendency to describe the Baroque primarily as a process of "fragmentation" or "deconstruction" can be compared to Lezama Lima's plutonic quality of the Baroque, "fuego originario que rompe los fragmentos y los unifica" (303). Both Lezama Lima and Sarduy see the Baroque as a process in which forms are "broken apart" and eventually

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<sup>24</sup> For further comparison between Carpentier and Sarduy see Marie-Pierrette Malcuzyński, 298.

unified into novel expressions. Sarduy relates this process to the Baroque by appropriating a cosmological view of both language and culture. To do so, he borrows from the scientific theory of "The Big Bang." If Lezama Lima saw the Baroque realized under a process similar to plutonism in which fragmented sedimentary rock is melded into new continents, then Sarduy sees the Baroque realized under a larger scaled cosmological process—the "Big Bang"—in which fragments of subatomic particles are expanded into the formation of the universe. In *Barroco*, Sarduy establishes a dialectic between the theory of the Big Bang (universal expansion) and the theory of Steady State (continuity and stability). He contrasts these theories metaphorically in a manner to express a common Baroque polemic often associated with the debate between the Classical and the Romantic—a dialectic between order and disorder, stability and movement. As Lambert puts it, "[t]he Baroque, then, would signify in the sphere of culture what the intuition of the 'Big Bang' brings to cosmological theories of the universe" (120). Lambert also reveals to us that Sarduy's metaphor of the Big Bang is partly an allusion to Carpentier's novel *Explosion in the Cathedral* which portrays an eschatological image of Cuban-American culture that was created from an explosion and then a fusion of different traditions and origins (Greek, African, Indian, and Spanish) (120). The Big Bang then takes on a metaphorical representation of the initiation and formation of Latin American *mestizaje*. This, then, without doubt summons the mention of José Martí's mestizo-project. In particular, the connection between Martí and Sarduy is based on the debate of originality. As the Big Bang sees the universe to be created from a state of expansion without influence of any specific origin or "creator," Martí, like Lezama Lima, rejected cultural theories that base the origin of American identity on indigenous and primitive origins. As Lambert acknowledges, Martí avoided discussions of origin in culture since "it seemed in complete contradiction to the variety and complexity of the virulent regionalism in

American cultures" (121). In this sense, Martí's vision of *mestizaje* does not go unnoticed for Sarduy. In a manner of speaking, the Neobaroque of Sarduy is hybrid, but rather than hybridized within the context of race and culture as was the case with Martí, it is hybridized within the context of literary and artistic categories that are appropriated in the metaphors of cosmological theories. From this perspective, then, there is a commonality between Martí and Sarduy, but not within specific contexts of cultural production and aesthetics, which can be seen more evidently in the works Carpentier. Furthermore, we may consider the hybridity of Latin America – accomplished through the process of transculturation– to be comparable to what Sarduy describes as the literary process of intertextuality: "la incorporación de un texto extranjero al texto, su *collage* o superposición a la superficie del mismo, forma elemental del diálogo, sin que por ello ninguno de sus elementos se modifique" ("El barroco" 23). Lambert explains: "As it was also true for Martí and Lezama –though in decidedly non 'structuralist' terms in their case– Sarduy describes this process of grafting and cultural translation in terms of a certain intertextuality common to baroque compositions, which multiply levels of narration through citation, allusion, repetition, pastiche and parody" (121). In other words, Sarduy uses literary devices to appropriate the mestizo-project of Martí. This is a common method for Sarduy, which sees Latin American culture orientated from the perspective of linguistic structures. This is also the case with his use of the theories of the Big Bang and Steady State, in which their cultural implications are realized in the metaphor of language. The structure of language –in particular artificialization– is in fact used by Sarduy to represent principles of the Baroque such as the process of transculturation. European culture becomes displaced like the deconstruction of the sign, and the New World progresses like the expansion of the universe according to the Big Bang theory. Lambert explains:

Barroco, then, describes the process of displacement, as the movement in which Europe is caught up in a general transmigration initiated by the discovery of the new world (i.e. the 'Big Bang'), and the process of cultural assimilation as the confrontation and creative disfigurement by which European culture is grafted onto the American, like the piling of surfaces in the baroque structure. (121)

The Baroque is trans-cultured in the New World and unified in the principles of *mestizaje*. It is a process of dispersion towards unity, deconstruction towards reconstruction, artificiality towards reality. For Sarduy, this process depends heavily on the use of metaphor realized in scientific oppositions between the seventeenth century cosmological theories of the figures of the circle and the ellipse, and the modern theories of the Big Bang and Steady State. The connections of such oppositions with Baroque forms depend heavily on Sarduy's theoretical tool called *retombée*, which we will now turn to for discussion.

Sarduy begins his work *Barroco* with a poetically inscribed epigraph defining the term *retombée* —"causalidad acrónica,/ isomorfía no contigua,/ o,/ consecuencia de algo que aún no se ha producido,/ parecido con algo que aún no existe" (9). He "coins" this term in order to guide his theoretical exploits of the Baroque and its connection with cosmology. According to Pérez, Sarduy's notion of *retombée* is an untranslatable term: "[I]n Spanish [it] would mean 'recaída' and in English, something like 'double fall,' non-sensical, in either case. And yet it is the underlying principle that guides Sarduy's theory of Baroque and Neo-Baroque literature, painting, architecture, and science" (54). Pérez explains the term to be important to Sarduy's theoretical approach of the Baroque, "[allowing] him to read history, and particularly the history of art and literature, in a non-linear, non-chronological fashion" (5). It is therefore a term charged with transcultural and trans-historical properties –Baroque elements in themselves– that provide Sarduy a theoretical referent to leap over temporal and historical categories in art and literature. In a manner of speaking, this term transcends theoretical disunity in a similar fashion to Lezama

Lima's *señor barroco*. For Sarduy however, it is used to establish relevancy between cosmological and artistic structures –between science and art– whereas Lezama Lima's *señor barroco* made connections primarily within the fields of literature and architecture. Zamora and Kaup have summarized *retombée* as "the similarity of rhetorical and astronomical structures —a similarity that exists in both the seventeenth and twentieth centuries" (267). These similarities are centered on scientific oppositions. The first opposition is seen in the distinction of seventeenth century cosmological forms of the circle of Galileo Galilei and the ellipse of Johannes Kepler. The second, as we have discussed, is seen in the origin theories of the Big Bang and Steady State. Both these scientific oppositions, Galileo/Kepler, Big Bang/Steady State then find relativity with the structural dynamics of Baroque art and literature that Sarduy exposes through the means of *retombée*. Sarduy, in fact defines the term according to these oppositions: "Para elucidar el campo simbólico del barroco, la 'retombée' se define como oposición de dos formas —el círculo de Galileo y la elipse de Kepler—, y sumariamente, como marca de otra oposición —la de dos teorías cosmológicas actuales: el *Big Bang* y el *Steady State*—, en unas pocas obras de hoy" (13). In *Barroco y modernidad* Irlemar Chiampi sees a connection between the two scientific oppositions that is based on Sarduy's definition of *retombée* as *isomorfía*. She explains:

En el campo epistemológico Sarduy asume el desafío de explicar la relación entre la ciencia y el arte del siglo XVII y del XX, mediante el concepto de la recaída (*retombée*), o sea 'una causalidad acrónica' o 'isomorfía no contigua'. Así, la oposición del círculo de Galileo y la elipse de Kepler —en la revolución cosmológica del siglo XVII— sería isomórfica a la oposición de las teorías cosmológicas recientes, el *steady state* (el estado continuo) y el *Big Bang* (la expansión); isomórficas serían también las figuras de la ciencia y el arte, en el interior de una misma episteme: en el siglo XVII lo son la elipse kepleriana y la elipsis en la retórica barroca; correlativamente, en el siglo XX, la expansión galáctica 'recae' en obras no centradas (en expansión significante), así como el estado continuo (del hidrógeno) 'recae' en textos 'con materia fonética sin sustentación semántica ('pura entropía acrónica'). (39)

We may then understand Sarduy's theory as a series of oppositions: science/art, circle/ellipse, centrality/decentered, and Big Bang/Steady State. These oppositions form the foundations for explaining the theoretical changes of science and the arts in the seventeenth century that would give rise to the expression of Baroque and the Neobaroque form. However, Sarduy's opposition between theories such as the Big Bang and Steady State runs into an issue of scientific relevancy, since the Steady State theory was discredited by late seventies with the discovery of cosmic background radiation as predicted by the Big Bang theory. Nonetheless, it is important to note here that the accreditation of scientific theory appears to be less the intention of Sarduy. Rather, he was more concerned with how the opposition of such scientific theories could be appropriated into the dialectical nature of the Baroque. As Sarduy says, "la antítesis es la figura central del barroco" (*Barroco* 22). This is particularly evident in the opposition between the circle of Galileo and the ellipse of Kepler. On one side is Galileo's heliocentrism that theorized circular orbits of the planets around the sun. This theory in turn came to represent the ideological and structural perfection of the circle. On the other side is Kepler's latter theory of the ellipse in which he replaced Galileo's circle with the theory that the orbits of planets formed the shape of an ellipse when travelling around the sun. According to Kepler's elliptical theory, an ellipse displaces any central signifier found in a circle. A circle with one point of reference (the center) is divided into two centers or foci that are positioned in the ellipse: one being the sun, and one being an invisible mathematical point of reference. The ellipse therefore displaces the central point of the circle. As Zamora and Kaup put it, "Sarduy makes Kepler's ellipse a metaphor for Neobaroque decentering, and he makes the seventeenth-century scientist a figure for *twentieth-century* destabilization" (10). It is no doubt for this reason that the ellipse comes to be a perfect metaphor for Sarduy's concept of artificialization. The artificiality of language depends on the

deconstruction of the sign. In the same way we find the ellipse representing the deconstruction of the circle. Furthermore, as is seen in the mechanisms of artificiality (substitution, proliferation, and condensation), the sign is deconstructed in a manner for which the signified and signifier relationship is not well defined. In that sense, neither are the points of the ellipse. The ellipse itself is a deconstructed sign: one point is defined as the sun, while the other point is an invisible, undeclared point of reference. For this reason, Sarduy sees the object of Baroque forms to imitate the points of an ellipse. The Baroque is given two points of reference, balancing between the image of reality and an unseen "ghostly" image. As he explains, "entre la obra barroca visible y la saturación sin límite, la proliferación ahogante, el horror vacui, preside el espacio barroco" (*Barroco* 100). The Neobaroque, as Sarduy seems to indicate, is as artificial as the ellipse. It thrives on artificiality: the sign loses its signified, as the circle loses its center; the ellipse displaces the circle as the Big Bang expands the universe. The Neobaroque, as Sarduy describes, becomes "desequilibrio, reflejo estructural de un deseo que no puede alcanzar su objeto" (103).

Sarduy's use of *retombée* depends on his ability to read history in a manner that connects seventeenth and twentieth century through the similarity of cosmological and rhetorical structures. This connection depends on Sarduy's concept of "causalidad acrónica". According to Sarduy, for scientific theory to correspond with art, a structural connection is required beyond temporal or historical similitude. Sarduy recognizes the importance of reading into the Baroque "achronically" rather than chronically. He writes at the beginning of *Barroco*: "Las notas que siguen intentan señalar la 'retombée' de ciertos modelos científicos (cosmológicos) en la producción simbólica no científica, contemporánea o no. La resonancia de esos modelos se escucha sin noción de contigüidad ni de causalidad: en esta cámara, a veces el eco precede la voz" (13). Achronically, "the echo precedes the voice" as Sarduy states. This metaphor

symbolizes a reversal of common comparative structures that in this case find unity less in scientific relations or causality and more in imaginative and almost poetic assertions. Sarduy uses another metaphor, that of a "boomerang," to symbolize the return of the "echo" to the chamber or crevice (*cámara*) from which it was first spoken. He describes the boomerang as "el mapa de la repercusión, ciertos modelos, cuya 'retombée' se detecta, mostrarán su reverso: ni esquema puro, operante, sin base, ni unidad científica mínima" (13). Rather than a pure structure with a solid and unified base, Sarduy presents us with a *retombée*, the "núcleo imaginario, marca teológica" (13). Here, the echo comes first; the flight path of the boomerang is reversed. Keeping with an "achronic" format, Sarduy divides history into *la historia sancionada* (scientific history regarding the scientific practice) and *la historia caduca* (the history of non-scientific intervention in the scientific practice). He draws us as readers into *la historia caduca*, which he describes to be read backwards like a story without dates: a dispersion of *la historia sancionada* (13). It is there, within *la historia caduca*, that his project of *retombée* takes action, mixing the sciences and non-sciences without fear of being challenged chronically or scientifically.

Sarduy also uses *retombée* to represent spatial categories of the Baroque. In particular, Sarduy mentions three spatial categories in his work *Barroco*: geometrics, figuration, and rhetoric. Each of these spaces are challenged by the oppositions that the ellipse promotes by "decentering" the circle (a metaphor of artificialization). Sarduy defines these oppositions according to the circular/non-circular dialectic accomplished between the circle and the ellipse.

He explains:

La fidelidad —el empecinamiento— de Galileo a la tradición aristotélica, puede resumirse en la persistencia que atraviesa todo su discurso, de la noción de *natural* confundida con la de *racional*; el barroco será extravagancia y artificio, perversión de un orden natural y equilibrado: moral. A la dicotomía aristotélica natural/violento, que se aplica al movimiento, la rutina represiva que comienza con la interpretación moralizante del texto galileano, irá substituyendo progresivamente la oposición natural/artificial. (44)

Therefore, the circle/non-circle dialectic comes to represent the oppositions of natural/artificial, and natural/violent, each affecting the spatial categories of the Baroque. As an example, Sarduy utilizes the *retombée* of the ellipse to represent the rhetorical space that reveals "la coherencia del logos que, como diferencia, genera las dos versiones de la *figura*" (58)— the two figures obviously being that of the circle and that of the ellipse. Sarduy discusses the rhetorical space in the Baroque when analyzing the figure of the ellipse in the poetry of Góngora. He explains that "[l]a elipsis, en la retórica barroca, se identifica con la mecánica del oscurecimiento, repudio de un significante que se expulsa del universo simbólico" (70). As there exists one visible focus of the ellipse, so too does there exist an invisible focus. Sarduy sees Baroque art as exemplifying invisibility in order to create a structure of hidden and revealed meaning that is exemplified in the poetics of Góngora. In particular this is seen the corrections realized between the first and final writings of Góngora's *Soledades*, where Sarduy exemplifies an "elision" with metaphors of animals.

Sarduy's theory of visible/invisible meaning is also informed by his fascination with Lacanian psychoanalysis, in particular with the concepts of repression and projection. Zamora and Kaup explain that "as always in Sarduy, the historical Baroque exists on a substratum of twentieth-century (Lacanian) psychology: Baroque ellipsis suggests repression and projection, and anamorphosis reflects the distortions of the unconscious mind, as does the 'delirium' of Baroque language, both visual and verbal" (11). Sarduy is thus able to find a rhetorical connection between Keplerian cosmology and Lacanian psychology as way of deconstructing the components of poetic metaphor. Language then becomes a structure of signifiers and signified inasmuch as it is a structure of conscious and unconscious operations. In all, for Sarduy the debate of finite or infinite space comes down to a question of visibility. For Sarduy, space is

seen. Baroque art then finds a connection between spatial limitations and visibility. The connections between science and art become above all a spatial connection, highlighted by opposing figures of the circle and the ellipse. As Pérez describes, "it is not surprising, when one considers the inseparable relation that existed between science and art from the High Renaissance to the seventeenth century. It is in this sense that we refer to the supposed epistemic 'schism' between Galileo's circle and Kepler's ellipse, as an instance of 'opposing' pictorial schemas, with all the metaphysical and moral baggage, which is entailed" (25).

Furthermore, the same dynamics of space are described by Sarduy to exist in the urban environment of the city. Similar to Lezama Lima and Carpentier, Sarduy exposes the importance of the city in regard to Baroque expression. Like the opposition of the circle and the ellipse, we are presented with a decentering process within the urban environment: "El espacio urbano barroco, frase del descentramiento como repetición y ruptura" (63). Like Sarduy is prone to do, he connects language to Baroque categories. Thus, the urban Baroque space "es también semántico, pero de manera negativa" (63). As a negative semantic, Sarduy describes the urban Baroque as a symbolic inscription that is contrary to monotonous structures such as the single-centered circle. The Baroque then is described as an absence of order that promotes disunity and dispossession (63). Baroque space then becomes the rhetoric of disorder, a rebellious place that displaces its central unity in favour of movement and progression. As Sarduy defines, the Baroque becomes "[el] espacio de viaje, travesía de la repetición" (62).

Beyond the works of Góngora, Sarduy connects the figure of the ellipse with other works of European art and architecture, particularly of Doménikos Theotokópoulos, otherwise known as El Greco, Peter Paul Rubens, Francesco Borromini, and Diego Velázquez. He uncovers an elliptical design in each of their work –that is to say a presence of artificiality– that promotes a

structure of decentering by finding two points of references, centers, or "foci". The figure of the ellipse is presented with each artist in a different manner. With El Greco, for example, Sarduy points out a double focalization in his art that draws attention to two virtual centers, one presented and one reflected. This is accomplished through a reflected "S" shape that often forms the structural base of El Greco's paintings. For example in the painting *La comida de Simón*<sup>25</sup>, there is an S-shaped reflection in the bottom of the tunics of Simon and his spouse that are seated at the circular table across from Christ dressed in a crimson tunic. The S-shaped reflection of the tunics leads to a similar shaped reflection of white light that is centered on the side of the circular table. This enlightened table becomes the central focus of the painting, a focus that is balanced between the S-shaped reflection of the tunics that separate the painting in two halves: Simon's spouse on the left and Simon on the right. At the other end of the table, Christ is then positioned at the center with Simon and his Spouse on either side. Such a use of reflection creates a dialectic in El Greco's art that Sarduy describes as "[un] doble focalización especular y negativa" (63), that is, a representation of what is revealed (the spectacle image) and what is reflected (the negative image). Together the two images create a symmetrical space. In this case the two points of the ellipse are associated with the artistic structure of double-representation and reflective practices in art. Sarduy goes a step further in the art of Rubens by exemplifying the painting *El intercambio de las princesas de Francia y España* in which he describes there to be "dos centros reales" (65). Whereas Sarduy saw a "negative" double focalization in the work of El Greco, Sarduy explains Rubens' work as "el momento de doble focalización positiva" (64). A positive focalization implies two centers that are not only visual, but also allegorical. Thus with Rubens, the first allegorical reference represents the interchanging princesses as the countries of Spain

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<sup>25</sup> Lezama uses the title *La comida de Simón*, however the painting is better known under the title of *La fiesta en la casa de Simón*.

and France. Sarduy then points out a second allegorical space in the painting that reveals a dialectic between *el cielo* (sky/heaven), represented by the angels in the painting, and the earth, represented by the princesses (Spain and France). Therefore the painting reveals two centers coinciding with the figures in the painting: an ellipse of the earth and an ellipse of heaven. Sarduy describes this as "[l]a organización del cielo astronómico real" (65) and explains Kepler's orbit to be reflected in the allegorical earth and the symbolic heaven. As Sarduy represents in this painting of Rubens, the two points of Kepler's ellipse can therefore be represented in art through structures of allegory and symbolism.

The ellipse takes on more physical dimensions in the architectural work of Borromini. Here, Sarduy exemplifies Borromini's graphic floor plans of the Church of Saint Charles at the Four Fountains (*San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane*) in Rome (1638-1641). He displays the initial design of the cross, its mutation into the oval, and then later its transformation into the ellipse—a constructed process he defines as "la anamorfosis del círculo" (66). As Pérez points out, Sarduy is inclined to see the ellipse not as an opposition of the circle, but rather—like in the design of Borromini—as a progression of the circle. Pérez goes as far as to describe the relationship between the circle and the ellipse as a counterpoint similar to that theorized by Fernando Ortiz: "Clearly again, Sarduy did not see 'el círculo' and 'la elipse' as binary oppositions, but rather as nonexclusive gendered signs in a 'contrapunteo' that took the place of Fernando Ortiz's historically, aesthetically, and culturally constituted sugar and tobacco" (29). Sarduy also exemplifies Kepler's ellipse in Velázquez's painting *Las meninas*. In this work, the double centered ellipse is reflected in the duality of the subject. Sarduy explains that "el sujeto (tema) aquí elidido es también el sujeto" (79). In a manner of speaking, the "subject" or theme of "painting" becomes the actual subject *in* the painting. Sarduy, following Lacan's discussions of

visual representation develops this example as a visual metaphor of the ellipse. The dual significance of the subject becomes the foci of the painting, a decentered process finding two reference points similar to Kepler's ellipse, one in the subject *of* painting (*Las Meninas* painted by Velázquez), and the other in the subject *within* the painting (Velázquez painting in *Las Meninas*).

We can see then how the scientific episteme of the ellipse is incorporated into the structure of various art forms. At times it is related to the practice of reflection, thematic focuses such as allegory and symbolism, and double subjects in painting. In other cases it is connected with the physical designs of architecture, or as seen in the work of Góngora, with a connection between psychoanalysis and poetics. Sarduy then goes further with the episteme of Kepler's ellipse by describing how it relates not only to the structure of Baroque art, but how it relates to the theory and characteristics of the Baroque as a form of cultural expression. Near the end of *Barroco* Sarduy relates the figure of the ellipse with four aspects of Baroque expression: economy, eroticism, mirroring (reflection), and revolution.<sup>26</sup> Here, the developments of the Neobaroque are related to the scientific episteme of the seventeenth-century. The episteme that gave form to the historical Baroque does so as well to the Neobaroque. Sarduy is keen on alluding to the current projects of the Baroque, seen for example in his analysis of its economic significance: "[S]er barroco hoy significa amenazar, juzgar y parodiar la economía burguesa, basada en la administración tacaña de los bienes, en su centro y fundamento mismo: el espacio de los signos, el lenguaje, soporte simbólico de la sociedad, garantía de su funcionamiento, de su comunicación" (99). The Neobaroque takes on an economical project that threatens economic stability and the "natural" order that imitates Galileo's circle. Neobaroque economy becomes an

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<sup>26</sup> Three of the four discussions of these topics (eroticism, mirroring, and revolution) can also be found more or less word for word in Sarduy's earlier essay "El barroco y el neobarroco" (1972).

ellipse, a critique of economic structures that seeks to re-order the system away from the moral and natural "center" of bourgeois control. Sarduy does not indulge much here on the economic connections with the ellipse, however the economic implications of disorder, decentering, and destabilization are without doubt a broad study in itself.

Secondly, he alludes to the quality of eroticism in the Baroque. According to Sarduy eroticism is summarized by residual overabundance, that is, the utilization of pleasure manifested in culture artificially and rhetorically through a perversion of metaphor and other rhetorical figures. Describing the rhetorical use of eroticism he writes that "el erotismo se presenta en tanto que ruptura total del nivel denotativo, directo y 'natural' del lenguaje —somático—, como la perversión que implica toda metáfora, toda figura" (101). The object of eroticism is thrown between the visible limits of the Baroque (the visible focus of the ellipse) and the residual "space" of the Baroque (the invisible focus of the ellipse). Sarduy describes this as the "juego de oposición" (101), a phrase which he then uses to characterize the theme of eroticism in the Baroque: "Juego, pérdida, desperdicio y placer: es decir, erotismo en tanto que actividad puramente lúdica, que parodia de la función de reproducción, transgresión de lo útil, del diálogo 'natural' de los cuerpos" (101). Once again, an opposition is made against the concept of the natural. Eroticism is contrasted against the natural context of sexual reproduction. Sex, rather than having the purpose of reproduction, has the purpose of pleasure. Eroticism in art therefore becomes a parody of sexual reproduction and a metaphorical perversion.

The third aspect of the Baroque mentioned by Sarduy is *espejo* (mirror), which as the object implies, is a metaphor for the effects of reflection. Similar to the use of reflective tendencies in art that Sarduy exemplifies with the painting of El Greco, the concept of reflection—a visual division—is identified according to the double-centered ellipse. In this case however,

reflection refers to the division of the historical Baroque itself: a duality between the European Baroque and the first Latin American Baroque of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Sarduy explains: "[A]sí el barroco europeo y el primer barroco latinoamericano se dan como imágenes de un universo móvil y descentrado, pero aún armónico; se constituyen como portadores de una consonancia" (102). Sarduy describes the similarity between the European and American Baroque according to the relationship developed by the epistemes of the seventeenth century. Sarduy describes the seventeenth century to be characterized by the equilibrium of two Baroque epistemes: God, "el verbo de potencia infinita," and king, "[la] metáfora terrestre" (103). This equilibrium was then opposed by the Baroque figure of the ellipse, which supposedly displaces God and king as central figures in the same manner for which the ellipse decenters the sun from the central point of the circle. Similarly, the Neobaroque is described according to its oppositional disposition to such equilibriums. Sarduy describes the Neobaroque as the unbalanced and off-centered "reflection" of the original epistemic unity that was challenged by Kepler's ellipse in the seventeenth-century. The Neobaroque is the resistance of the original image, or as Sarduy describes, "algo [que] le resiste, le opone su opacidad, le niega su imagen" (102). Whereas *el espejo* captures the image of language and the organization of the universe, the Neobaroque deconstructs this image. The Neobaroque image is defined by its artificiality in which the sign is ruptured; signification is doubled, reflected, and decentered. Sarduy in fact goes as far as calling the Neobaroque a reflection that "pulverizes" the sign— a "destruction" of sorts. He leaves us with this definition of the Neobaroque: "[R]eflejo necesariamente pulverizado de un saber que sabe que ya no está apaciblemente cerrado sobre sí mismo" (103). Likewise we may understand Latin American identity under a similar process of reflection. Rather than an "image" or "reflection" of European history, Latin American identity is "pulverized" like the

Neobaroque. Latin America is left not with clear-cut pieces of identity, but rather with a ruptured and pulverized state of *mestizaje*. Identity like the Baroque becomes an artificial reflection in which its signified (its reflected state) is lost in its diversity.

This definition of *espejo* then leads to Sarduy's last description of the Baroque as an art of "revolution". The opposition of Kepler's ellipse dictates a revolutionary status against the natural conditions of Galileo's circle. The epistemic balance of God and king, heaven and earth, and planets and sun are displaced. God is judged, heaven is disbanded, the sun is displaced, and the laws of earth are disputed. As Sarduy exclaims, we are left with a Baroque "que recusa toda instauración, que metaforiza al orden discutido, al dios juzgado, a la ley transgredida. Barroco de la Revolución" (104). The concept of revolution is word that Sarduy's time held significant value. Sarduy's description of the aesthetically charged Baroque revolution immediately ignites allusions to the politically charged Cuban revolution. As Díaz comments, "[d]ecir "Revolución", en América Latina, a comienzos de los años 70 equivale, inequívocamente, a decir Revolución cubana. Esa experiencia política es el nudo en torno al cual se organizan todos los debates, no sólo políticos, también culturales y artísticos, de los años 60 y 70" (70). We are therefore left to question whether it is merely a coincidence that the Neobaroque of the twentieth century is given a "revolutionary" status at the same time in which Cuba politically takes on a similar status, or whether it is a manner for Sarduy to inscribe a political project camouflaged in the Neobaroque. Sarduy, however, seems to separate the intellectual from the political in his life. His decision to leave Cuba was perhaps prompted by personal rather than political motivations (Díaz 69), and he maintained a rather neutral perspective on the Cuban revolution throughout his lifetime. This was no in doubt supported by the distance between his academic life in France and the politically active environment in Cuba. One way to confront Sarduy's reference to revolution is as a status

of change rather than as a direct political allusion. The revolutionary character of the Neobaroque could be seen as inspired by the revolutionary events in Cuba, but with intentions beyond the political. Díaz, for example, tackles Sarduy's use of the term revolution, seeing it as a manner to expand revolutionary principles beyond the historical implications of the time. He writes:

La grieta que Sarduy intenta abrir, lejos de lo que podría pensarse, es interior a la propia Revolución cubana. Por lo tanto, de lo que se trata, es de plantear una disputa en relación con los modos de imaginarla, es decir, discutir en qué Universo inscribirla. El Neobarroco, en este sentido, no deja de ser un producto de la Revolución, pero un producto deforme, inesperado, que intentó hacer otra cosa de esa experiencia histórica. (71)

We are left then exactly where we began: at the origin of expansion. The Baroque becomes a term charged with revolutionary ideology, that is a disposition for progress: revolutionizing like culture, expanding like the Big Bang, fracturing like plutonic sediment, deconstructing like the sign, displacing like the ellipse.

## **Conclusion**

### **Cuba Re-originated**

Cuban identity and the Neobaroque are not contextually far apart. The writings of the Cuban triumvirate all point to the Neobaroque as an integrative operation in the development of cultural identity. Whether we apply Lezama Lima's "counter-conquest" as a manner to understand European significance within Latin American independence, or Carpentier's "Baroque spirit" as a manner to evaluate the constancy of Latin American history, or Sarduy's "artificialization" to reveal the artificial and deconstructive components of culture, we arrive at a point of intersection between fields of aesthetics, history, ideology, and culture. In that sense, the Neobaroque is like a study of cultural puzzle-piecing: pieces of aesthetics become integrative in applications of cultural identity; architecture becomes associated with culture; style becomes associated with ideology. This flexibility of associations gave Cuba the freedom to develop a post-colonial conscience around the concept of the Baroque. The Baroque is re-structured as the Neobaroque in the twentieth century in a manner that differentiates Latin American forms from European models –whether artistic, political, or ideological– while at the same time recognizing the historical value of Europe's role in Latin American culture. As such, the Baroque, becomes a post-colonial instrument for Latin America to identify with a history wrought in modernizations. It is a cultural phenomenon that overarches temporal and geographical categories in which ideology takes prevalence over history and location is transcended in favour of cultural inclusivity. This phenomenon can be explained according to two terms we have discussed: reorigination and cultural refraction. The reorigination or refraction of culture provides an answer to why the Neobaroque, both as aesthetics and ideology, was used in twentieth-century Latin

America as a means of establishing a post-colonial identity. That a culture re-originates implies that the significance of this concept lies in the origins of a culture. When we examine the Cuban context, cultural origination is a topic that is rather obscure, considering that much of the indigenous population was wiped out due to colonization. Add to the mix African populations arriving due to the slave-trade and various European settlers throughout Cuba's history and its culture becomes difficult to define by its origins. Hence Martí's *mestizo* project found such a dominance in the stipulations of Cuban culture and identity. *Mestizaje*, to repeat Cornejo Polar's words from chapter one, "is the most powerful and widespread conceptual device with which Latin America has interpreted itself" (116). *Mestizaje* was without doubt the motivating principle guiding the Cuban triumvirate's appropriations of the Neobaroque, connecting the diversity of Baroque style to the diversity of Cuban culture. Cuba's disposition to identify with a diversity of races and cultures then draws the nation to the lime-light of Neobaroque application. And as Lezama Lima reveals, the strong point of this connection is found in the urban environment of Cuba's capital city Havana—the heart of Cuba's Neobaroque. Carpentier's description of Havana as "La ciudad de las columnas" then inspires a connection between expansive tendencies of urban culture and Baroque forms. Similarly, Sarduy takes the expansive tendency of the city and compares it to the deconstructive tendency of language, calling it the place of "repetition" and "rupture" (*Barroco* 63).

We ought to keep in mind that the crossover of culture and aesthetics implied in the Neobaroque is oriented around its structure as a "concept" rather than a period or movement. Reflecting on Moser's discussion of the Baroque as a concept, we can recognize that it becomes adaptive both culturally and ideologically. As such it is open to carry with it new meanings that were not implied in the historical Baroque. Moser explains:

Concepts are also mobile entities. They can travel, change places, disappear in one spot and reappear elsewhere. They might even have double lives in different locations, although not without undergoing changes. Those changes may be quite important because concepts must respond and adapt to different contexts and conditions. As a result, they assume new functions and receive new meanings. (12)

To confront the Neobaroque as an ideology that is integrative in Cuban identity, it must be approached as a concept. The adaptability of the concept to different contexts and conditions, as Moser describes, is key for Neobaroque positioning in post-colonial contexts. Furthermore, Cuban identity is dependent upon adaptable referents. Adaptability proves important in Cuban identity primarily because of Cuba's cultural disposition for oppositional inclusivity—in itself a Baroque condition. *Mestizaje* and transculturation are proof of this. Cultural diversity is accepted and promoted through transcultural movements throughout Cuba's history. The manner for which Cuban identity is centered around cultural and racial inclusivity relates well with the Neobaroque's disposition to center around ideologies of opposition, differentiation, and dialectics. Cuba's reorigination thus becomes orientated around the Neobaroque's ability to relate with oppositional categories. As we have seen, Lezama Lima encounters this through his theory of counter-conquest, using it as a manner to surpass European distinctions in favour of integrating colonial history as part of the Latin American identity. Carpentier deals with this a little more forcefully by highlighting the distinctions between European and Latin American history. Hence in his depiction of the marvellous-real, two particular contrapositions are established: nature/America vs. culture/Europe; reason/Europe vs. emotion-intuition/ Latin America. Of the triumvirate, Sarduy is the greatest advocate of oppositional categories. His artificialization of language that highlights linguistic deconstructions of the sign is centered on the oppositional categories of language. The Big Bang metaphor, an allusion to Baroque deconstruction and expansion (similar to Lezama's metaphor of plutonism) represents an

oppositional category when dealt against the Steady State theory. With Sarduy, similar to the Baroque itself, we have to jump across fields of study, from linguistics to science, and from science to culture. Thus the artificiality of the linguistic sign finds relevance in Kepler's ellipse which then finds relevance in Baroque decentering operations which furthermore can be said to find relevance in political projects of "revolution"— a process from linguistics to science to Baroque art to politics. It is such realities that make the Neobaroque a study of cultural hopscotch: one must jump around a lot. This makes it difficult to find comparative qualities between categories if we are to "deconceptualize" the Neobaroque by seeking mimetic functions or reflective tendencies between them. The Neobaroque for example cannot be defined solely by its relation with (how it reflects or mimes) the Baroque, just as Baroque forms in science cannot be explained solely by their relation with Baroque forms in art. This is because, as Carpentier describes, the Baroque is conditioned to appear where there are transformations, mutations, and revolution (*La novela* 123). Transformations trump the reflective or mimetic functions of Baroque categories. Thus the Neobaroque, as I mention, is best understood as a concept based upon a process of cultural refraction in which forms are assimilated, but then transformed and projected into novel expressions. Saying that Baroque forms are merely "assimilated" requires careful consideration. For that reason, I emphasize the "refraction" of forms, which implies transformation and novelty. This is because, as Ortiz points out in *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azúcar*, cultural progression in Cuba implies more than merely assimilation into a culture, but rather a transformative process in which cultures are "trans-cultured". Ortiz's theory of transculturation in Cuba is without doubt applicable to the Neobaroque as a concept that also transcends categories.

Considering that Sarduy was the last of the triumvirate to pass away in 1993, we are now left with the question of Neobaroque applicability in the present. How far does the "Neo" of the Baroque extend? Is it limited to twentieth-century concepts surrounding the Baroque or open to novel applications— a Baroque tendency nonetheless. Cuba is a strange context nowadays to reflect on the Baroque. While much of the Neobaroque discourse of the twentieth century evolved around concepts of expansion, development, and progression, such words carry mixed emotions in Cuban society of today— particularly in the context of the urban environments. The Baroque architecture is visible, but aging; Havana's columns are proliferating but the quality is declining; urban developments are historically profound but presently waning. Urban expansion is no longer the centripetal force of Cuban society and the lack of spatial expansion is a common societal complaint amongst Cubans. Carpentier's observation that Latin American nations "empezaban a agigantarse, a extenderse, a alargarse, a elevarse , al ritmo de las mezcladoras de concreto" (*La novela* 79) does not carry the same significance in Cuba today. For such reasons it tends to make less sense to search for Neobaroque applicability within current urban developments. Instead, studies of the Neobaroque nowadays tend to fade further away from Latin American contexts and have become more pertinent to areas such as film and media entertainment. The Neobaroque, as the Cuban triumvirate implies, is a category charged with applicable potential; it is transformative, mutative, and innovative. As film and media technology tends to be a progressive force in current culture, there is no surprise to see the Neobaroque finding a home there. As it tends to do, the Baroque reoriginates along with cultural expressions and lying within this reality lives the Neobaroque.

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