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Towards a Contaminated History of the Present: Contributions from the Latin American Neo-Baroque

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Abstract

This essay examines the Latin American Baroque and neo-Baroque as critical frameworks for engaging with Michel Foucault's concept of the history of the present. Divided into two main sections, it first questions the Eurocentric mold of Foucault's modern critical ethos and then explores how the Baroque ethos—marked by excess, simulacra, and heterogeneity—offers a "contaminated" perspective for rethinking the ontology of the present. Through the works of Sarduy, Echeverría, and others, the text highlights the Baroque's potential to interrogate and reframe foundational assumptions about critique and modernity.

Keywords: Latin American Baroque, Neo-Baroque, History of the Present

We want historians to confirm our belief that the present rests upon profound intentions and immutable necessities. But the true historical sense confirms our existence among countless lost events, without a landmark or a point of reference.

(Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" 89)

Our existence? Whose? That is, in short synthesis, the main concern that inspires this text. A certain discomfort, which is not new, regarding how the Foucauldian project of history of the present has ended up, in many cases, in Eurocentric genealogies, which seem to assign for those of us who investigate from the *South*, the task of finding the specific coordinates to certain "receptions" or, at most, to "creative translations".

This essay is part of a wider project, aimed at building "contaminated genealogies," as a perspective for a sociology of problematizations from the South. This entails, not so much illuminating the specificities of the emergence or reception of social problems in the peripheries, but insisting on how the latter are also interwoven in the history of the emergence of devices, problematization, concepts, and diagnoses that are usually presented as "self-produced" from the North.

The following pages are organized into two main sections. In the first one, I return to the link that Michel Foucault establishes between the history of the present and the configuration of

a modern critical *ethos*, to formulate questions and underlying tensions around its Eurocentric mold. In the second section, based on Latin-American Baroque and neo-Baroque, I propose a *contaminated* approach to the history of the present. In this exercise, I return to different elements of the Latin American critical perspectives, particularly the contributions of Severo Sarduy, since they combine nodal aspects of the "tradition" (especially Cuban) around this issue – in which the figure of José Lezama Lima is central – with the poststructuralist concerns that circulated in the group associated with the French literary magazine *Tel Quel*.

This text is not intended to contribute to the extensive and profuse field of studies on the Baroque, nor is it a contribution to the study of Latin American Baroque. The proposed approach aligns more with Valentín Díaz's approach, a prominent expert in the field of Latin-American Baroque studies. Díaz conceptualizes the Neo/Baroque as a "reading machine," emphasizing its intricate relationship with error. For us, the Neo/Baroque may be conceived as a (perhaps excessive) detour that enables a return to the Foucauldian project of the history of the present. This return is not merely an exegetical interest; rather, it is a necessity to intervene in a field. This field concerns the reflections on the processes of modernization and development in Latin America that have been won in recent decades by a strong critique of Eurocentrism. This approach (in short, the decolonial turn) has been prone to throw the baby with the bath water, which has resulted in the exclusion of crucial elements of the Latin American tradition.¹ It is within this context that we believe it is essential to revisit the complex and nuanced questions that underpin this article's exploration of the relationship between critique, modernity, and history.

The ontology of the present as a critical project

Foucault articulated his intellectual project as an "ontology of the present," with archaeology as a method and genealogy as a strategic orientation. In two texts dedicated to rethinking Enlightenment and critical thought, he inscribed his historical-philosophical adventure in the Kantian trail, not that of the questions about the transcendental subject or the absolute limits of Reason, but rather in the one that traces the philosophy's question about the conditions of its present. This "*ethos*" defines the "modern attitude":

The critical ontology of ourselves has to be considered not, certainly, as a theory, a doctrine, nor even as a permanent body of knowledge that is accumulating; it has to be conceived as an attitude, an *ethos*, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them. (Foucault, "What Is Enlightenment?" 50)

In what follows, I rely on the double valence of *ethos* as “orientation of conduct” and as “character.” In this second sense, it has been a fundamental element of classical rhetoric, and, more recently, it has been the object of reflection in the materialist analysis of discourses. Dominique Maingueneau theorized about this subjective instance that is projected in and through enunciation and that cannot be reduced to the sociological or communicational analysis of status or role. He is interested in investigating the textual forms of producing (saying/writing or showing) a certain authority/legitimacy of the one who enunciates and how they resonate with previous scenes where the new enunciation is legitimated and sustained.

As Michel Pêcheux had indicated, the fundamental condition for the formulation and interpretation of a discursive sequence cannot be reduced to the individual sphere of the psychological subject, since it resides in the existence of a socio-historical body of discursive traces, both independent and prior to the existence of a given sequence, to the extent that this materiality intervenes in its formation (Pêcheux, “Leitura e memória” 145-46). In the text by Dominique Maingueneau to which we are referring, the concept of scenography works, precisely, as a link between the *ethos* projected/produced in any sequence and the inter-discourse, that is, the allusion to previous scenes silently quoted that hold the key to performativity. The scene of enunciation (always inscribed in the memory of previous ones, which support it) is the area of projection of representations regarding the sender (“Who am I to speak like this?”), as well as the addressee (“Who is he/she that I talk to him like that?”), of the relationships with the objects of discourse (“Who am I to talk like that about this?”), and of the expectations regarding the representations of others. A game of images and reflections (Pêcheux, “Automatic” 82-85).

Now, Let us return to Foucault's question about "modern ethos" and the "we" that it projects to make it play in the coordinates we outlined in the previous paragraphs. Foucault's texts are usually quite explicit: in the First person in the plural, he usually refers to the “West” and occasionally to “Europe.” The ontology/history of the present is stated, then, *from* that standpoint. The thread of prior scenes that it takes up (or, better, that it recognizes to take up) is inscribed in that space and those traditions. Such are the limits, he clarifies, of *his* critical project. Two questions arise. Firstly: (1) can the project of the history of the present be *critical* within those limits? And, secondly, (2) what kind of limits are those?

I begin with this second question. As Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe remind us, to ask ourselves about the limit or the border is to inquire about what remains on the other side, its exterior or otherness, and the type of relationship between both sides of the limit. Following a little more this perspective, we could think of such a relationship as opposition or, better, antagonism. The non-Western would be, then, of *a different nature*, something *else*. The next question would be whether, in the face of this essential diversity, the West should be accepted as a normative

ideal, a universal arriving point, which would lead us to the classic narrative of “lags” and “asynchrony,” or if, on the contrary, we should reject this alleged superiority, denounce the coloniality (economic, cultural, epistemological) exercised by the Global North, and abandon all of their theories. This second line of argument pushes towards disconnection while assuming that the essential disparity between one world and the other makes them, eventually, incommensurable.

Eduardo Grüner has called these alternatives, respectively, the perspective of the full subject--a Western subject that projects itself as universal--and that of the fragmentary subject, that is to say, a postmodern response of multiplying alternative subjects and modernities, as a way of abolishing the question of universality given a logic in which the various ways of being/doing are juxtaposed with more or less “dialogue,” but remain separate. In both drifts, “the West” (the “we” of Foucault’s critique of the present) remains untouched. In this regard, Timothy Mitchel also warns us:

Modernity presents itself as the West and each account of the modern and the postmodern reproduces this *staging*. We have argued that this is only a particular representation, produced from an imperial past and present, which hides the role of the non-Western in the production of the West and ignores the constant displacements involved in staging the difference between both. (26)

Many “counter-narratives” that try to relocate history as “told from the South” do not solve, but rather exacerbate this problem. Even more so when this gesture is intended as foundational or as restitution of an essential and unspotted truth that would have been violently evicted by the Conquest of America as a political, economic, cultural, and social device. These positions usually start from a critique of epistemic racism that has validated a European point of view as if it were universal and that has thrown a whole series of experiences and reasons into the zone of “not being.” Following this hypothesis, in terms of Ramón Grosfoguel, the conclusion is that:

La zona del ser y no-ser no es un lugar geográfico específico, sino una posición en las relaciones raciales de poder que ocurren a escala global entre centros y periferias, pero que también ocurren a escala nacional y local contra diversos grupos racialmente inferiorizados.

Existen zonas del ser y no-ser a escala global entre centros occidentalizados y periferias no-occidentales (colonialidad global), pero también existen zonas del ser y zonas del no-ser tanto en los centros metropolitanos como también en las periferias (colonialismo interno). La zona del no-ser dentro de un país sería la zona del colonialismo interno. (95)

This Parmenidean vocabulary (inspired by Franz Fanon's criticism), despite the incidental references to "heterogeneity," tends to constitute and consolidate two ontologically distinct entities that remain *pure* (Cortés 2). The normative flipside of this type of analysis implies a sort of reversion back to that uncontaminated and original space. This is, as Cortés suggests, extremely attractive, like any position that is intended "outside ideology." Thus, in the face of the universal and homogenizing account of the narrative of modernity, it would be necessary to produce *pluriversal alternatives*, based on the founding epistemological gesture of *disengaging*. Paradoxically, "to the extent that this critique is completed by opposing a new ontology, this time of original knowledge", it persists in the very same terms as the problem, even reinforcing its metaphors" (Cortés 6).

These positions themselves reproduce and project an image of modernity as something homogeneous, without dislocating its *enunciation* (to return to what was explained above). As different authors linked to the materialist analysis of discourses have exposed, this instance, as a scene of imaginary (and specular) projections, has evident resonances with how Louis Althusser (2014) conceptualized the ideological rituals in which recognition is offered and given to the subject/subject: the *illusion of speech* according to which the "I" is master of its words. However, as Pêcheux reminds us in the quote I put forward above, the conditions of discourse production exceed the limits of this scene; they involve something that goes through and beyond them. To put it into a synthetic formula: Europe *cannot* be Eurocentric (the West cannot be Western-centric). Although it *presents itself enunciatively* in this way -- and claims our recognition -- even the most "self-produced" of discourses (including Foucault's critical ontology of the present) is always-already spoken by the inter-discourse, which is prior, exterior, and contaminated by the more varied subalternities.

Returning to the terms of the first question that I left pending above (1), the argument of this essay is precisely the inverse of the Parmenidean positions, since it starts from recognizing that the borders between the zones of being and non-being simply *cannot be traced*. The point is that the Northern perspective was *neither universal nor self-contained*, but rather always-already heterogeneous. The invitation here is not to oppose another reason (Indian, feminine, Black) to cartesian cogito but to dismantle it in its multiple and contaminated sources. A genealogy, then, will not be critical if it is not *de-centered* or contaminated. A history of the present that postulates that it is possible to destabilize the evidence that today governs the "West" without going beyond its borders fails, from the start, in the objective that it contours.

The path that I am interested in is, then, not associated with the metaphors of stages, nor with the claim/denouncement of "exoticism," but with the work on heterogeneity. At this point, the perspective of Eduardo Grüner is particularly inspiring, since he insists, from a study on the Haitian Revolution, on the constitutively dislocated character of a modernity that is always-already

traversed by the fracture of the traumatic encounter with otherness. Even when these figures are denied or even more so, precisely because of it. Thus, Grüner's quest is to find traces of the first revolutionary movement in Latin America in Hegel's dialectic of the master and slave, disregarding the issue of whether this discourse is or not willing to recognize that phantasmatic presence. From this perspective, Black memories hybridize, rarefy also what appears as simply European and, consequently, Eurocentric, but which is always already inhabited by otherness.

In a similar vein, Timothy Mitchel carefully collects a variety of historical works that show that devices, knowledge, and discourses that Foucault associated with the "West" can be the subject of contaminated *genealogies* that, by moving away from Europe, make non-Western traces visible. The rationalization of work in the Caribbean plantations rather than in Manchester; the Panopticon *in nuce* developed earlier by Samuel Bentham in the Russian colonization of Ottoman territory than by his brother Jeremy; the Lancastrian system of education in Bengal rather than in Europe; the question about the population before in the colonies than in the agenda of the European Physiocrats; English literature as a unit that is configured for/in the socialization of the children of India; and a long list of etcetera.

Now, to account for these contaminations, it is essential to shatter the ideological illusions of a linear time; a fantasy that, otherwise, could quickly solve the problem. Such could be the case, for example, of metaphors such as "precocity" or "anticipation" of the Caribbean in certain developments (Mitchel). These figures reinforce the temporality of the center/Europe/West as the "base time" against which there are advances, delays, asynchronies, and simultaneities.

To contribute other elements to the destabilization of this image of Western modern *ethos*, in the following section, we return to some dimensions associated with the thematization of Latin American Baroque and its links with modernity, since we understand that they bring insights related to the perspective of Grüner and Mitchel that we wanted to highlight.

Baroque as a critical project

"We" are governed by the cannibalism of miscegenation, by unprecedented mixture, our cities, our languages, our clothes. All things considered, this is the "rule" for any "context," but the peripheries as a structural position have forced us time and time again, in our specific research projects (regarding a social program, a development proposal, a sociological text produced in Argentina) to face very early the question: "where has this come from?" That "where" implies a question about geographical coordinates and time, but our peripheral objects are also marked by voices from the center, they refer to a French innovation, to an Austrian author, and they are validated in those networks. They also tend to combine what has remained "separate" in the center. We produce bizarre translations that also allow us to see the paradoxical (and parodic) aspects of

what is presented as the “classic” version. The “we” (of a certain “community” of readers, scientists, and scholars) is never clearly demarcated. This structural placement enables us to grasp the singularities of the part (*our* workfare program), of the whole (the neoliberal workfare rationale), and of the relationship that unites them (just North-South translation?).

This singularity does not place us outside of modernity. Modern, yes, but modern Baroque, as I would like to discuss in what follows. From this perspective, the Baroque functions as a “foundational” mark of the Conquest, as an inescapable trace and “constitutive moment” (Zavaleta 180) that is updated in various ways. Also, as art and as a language of the *counter*-Conquest: I will not be interested in working on any Baroque modulation in particular, but rather the one that is combined with the names of José Lezama Lima, Alejo Carpentier, Severo Sarduy, or Bolívar Echeverría. It is a certain way of being in ambivalence, in a suspended transition that pierces the fantasies of linear and progressive time, a way of experiencing the unusual, the extraordinary that has become part of everyday life.

A reference to Bolívar Echeverría allows for the swift establishment of the link between the initial presentation of the issue and what follows. He perceives the Baroque modern *ethos* as a means of resisting the inherent tensions of capitalism, which ultimately results in an allegorical interpretation of reality. It is a method of circumventing the tragic options that modernity presents by using dissimulation or hypocrisy. In the typology proposed by the Ecuadorian Mexican author, the “realistic” *ethos* is so preoccupied with “The American Dream” that it becomes indifferent to the fate of those who will not find their place in this order and who are perceived as a threat to social stability. The “romantic” *ethos*, on the other hand, is driven by a desire for sacrifice in pursuit of a utopian vision that promises redemption and transcendence from the present circumstances. The “classical” *ethos*, despite recognizing the inherent tensions of modernity, seeks to mitigate its adverse effects through the implementation of diverse social technologies.

In contrast to the aforementioned typologies, the Baroque *ethos* facilitates the emergence of a parallel informal order that appears to be normative, yet is in fact provisional. Therefore, it destabilizes the alleged formal neutrality that the Protestant ethic takes so seriously, to show the shallow mask behind bureaucratic reason. In doing so, the belief and obedience of abstract norms – the foundation of legitimacy, as Weber had taught us – becomes seriously undermined.

The Baroque understood as a way of life and as a way of relating to the truth, allows, as I will try to show, a new detour around the questions of the history of the present, capable of decentralizing its Eurocentric matrix, not only as a result of “including” usually ignored peripheral experiences, but also by encouraging us to renew how we interrogate stabilized forms of knowledge. Guided by these intuitions, in the following section, I investigate the ways of working with archives, a reflection around how we deal, describe, and organize our *corpora*, taking into

account their specific materiality (textual, visual, sound) and their density as objects that exist in (and are traversed by) time.

The Neo/Ultra/Baroque is an anachronistic reading machine

The discussions around the Baroque and neo-Baroque have a unique way of combining content and form: it is not only an *object* of reflection but also a *grammar* and a *programmatic* issue. More precisely, following the analysis of Valentín Díaz, it is a reading machine or, in terms of Guadalupe Silva, a critical paradigm. Although already in Lezama we find a series of orientations for a way of reading in which freedom of *poetic analogy* seems more pertinent than the dissection of analysis (Chiampi 20), it was probably Sarduy who has contributed the most to this construction of a *method*.

This method severely destabilizes the illusions of historicism. Faced with the consecrated chronologies of nationalisms that traced independence as the starting point of history, Lezama already proposed some alternative and complex genealogies in which he linked Baroque America to the Mediterranean and the Christian East, as well as to Hinduism. Thus, he described an "intertextual fable" in which associations are organized by "gravitation" rather than causality, weaving a mestizo history that creates retrospective links (Chiampi 60): The myths of the Mayan *Popol Vuh*, intertwined with others from the Bible and from India.

The Baroque is understood here as a form of culture, even a (particularly Latin American, as we shall see) way of life, but also as a way of exercising curiosity that neither explains nor describes nor analyzes: it accumulates and sets in tension inspired by aesthetics rather than by logic (Chiampi 15). In this same vein, we can inscribe Sarduy's contributions around the *retombée* (relapse, repercussion), which, in a poetic definition, he characterizes as "non-contiguous isomorphy," or also, as "consequence of something that has not yet been produced, similar to something that does not yet exist" (Sarduy 144). Later, in his book *Nueva inestabilidad*, the Cuban elaborates:

Llamé *retombeé*, a falta de un mejor término en castellano, a toda *causalidad acrónica*. La causa y la consecuencia de un fenómeno dado pueden no sucederse en el tiempo, sino coexistir; la consecuencia, incluso, puede preceder a la causa; ambas pueden barajarse como en un juego de naipes. Retombeé es también una similaridad o un *parecido en lo discontinuo*: dos objetos distantes y *sin comunicación o interferencia* pueden revelarse análogos; uno puede funcionar como el doble —la palabra también tomada en el sentido teatral del término— del otro: no hay ninguna jerarquía de valores entre el modelo y la copia (Sarduy 35; my emphasis).

Like the Foucauldian serialization and the Benajminian constellation, the *retombée* defies the continuity and succession of time as an unavoidable and accurate criterion to gather objects (texts, images, events). In his book *Baroque*, Sarduy investigates certain scientific and cosmological models,

certain images of the world, and their analogy with aesthetic languages. He relates the irruption of Kepler's ellipse in the configuration of the universe proposed by Galileo with the Baroque revolution and Hubble's *Big Bang* with the new instability of the neo-Baroque of which he was a contemporary. These are resonances without contiguity or necessity, a non-historicist and non-causal method of contemporaneity in which something of the Foucauldian discursive formation resonates: immanent regularities that historicism reduces and hides with categories such as those of "epoch," "influence" or "author," all of them ways of eluding what needs to be understood.²

In this sense, Sarduy proposes, from his *retombée*, a form of knowledge, which Valentín Díaz (48) puts in relation to Giorgio Agamben's definition of "paradigm," a method that is neither inductive nor deductive, but *analogical*; it moves from case to case, from singularity to singularity. It is a new archaeology of the modern that, like the one promoted by Foucault, is not interested in the *truth* of the past, but, unlike the French philosopher, nor is it interested in the past of truths. Indeed, at this point, we are probably facing a *dislocation* regarding the Foucauldian project, since it is not the destabilization of truth that we find there, but an interest in scrutinizing *simulacrum*.³ This is a quest that, as Díaz argues, includes an important ethical component that strongly relates with this article's inquiry into the modern *ethos* and its ambivalences. I will return to this point later on.

As pointed out in the preceding paragraph, all these perspectives play with forms of association that challenge the historicist logic of succession or progression. According to Sarduy "el eco *precede a la voz*. (...) Historia caduca leída al revés, relato sin fechas: dispersión de la historia sancionada" (141). Thus, how his methodology (re)composes series (of events, of images) does not respect the prefixed chronologies. Even its reading of the Baroque as an aesthetic movement or style, appears to be, as Ignacio Iriarte shows, traversed by the tension of anachronism:

El Barroco no se puede tomar bajo ningún concepto como un período revolucionario. Es sin duda un período caótico, atravesado por una crisis descomunal, pero (...) una respuesta desde el poder, a las rupturas que se venían desarrollando desde las centurias anteriores, y que tendían a la secularización y a lo que Michel Foucault (1995) denomina el nacimiento de la crítica

(...) *Sarduy propone una interpretación anacrónica del siglo XVII*. Es decir, en su ensayo se ocupa menos de describir lo que sucedió que en *convertir el Barroco en un lenguaje que permita pensar la actualidad*. Al respecto, vale la pena recordar que, en *Ante el tiempo*, George Didi-Huberman (2011) demostró que este tipo de abordajes no sólo es intelectualmente válido, sino que además demuestra la verdad de la historia, porque, al fin y al cabo, *la historia no es otra cosa que un diálogo del presente con los documentos del pasado*. Por otra parte, hay que destacar que el anacronismo tiene una

larga trayectoria en las interpretaciones sobre el Barroco (“El Barroco anacrónico de Severo” 6; my emphasis)

The Baroque that Sarduy conjures has its eyes on the present: he weaves an irreverent *patchwork* between heterogeneous times.

For its part, Foucault's archeo-genealogical project also involves a departure from the logic of "the source" as genesis, to deal with the multiple origins of what has come to be in a certain way. The aim is to rarify what seems already given as the result of a homogeneous *becoming*, in order to think of it, on the contrary, as an assemblage of different elements that erupt at a given moment (always in a field of forces and confrontations) and that entail heterogeneous temporalities:

The world we know is not this ultimately simple configuration where events are reduced to accentuate their essential traits, their final meaning, or their initial and final value. On the contrary, it is a profusion of entangled events. If it appears as a "marvelous motley, profound and totally meaningful," this is because it began and continues its secret existence through a "host of errors and phantasms." (Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History” 156)

In this sense, genealogy is necessarily polychronic: it puts divergent historicities in series, breaking with linear preconceptions of the notion of "context." Despite the weight of the narrative, which, as we will insist, seems to recompose linear stories as if they were mercury, this exercise claims the dispersion of continuous time to arrange alternative series (of events, images, utterances, etc.). However, this polychrony is not necessarily anachronism, at least not in the same sense that this term has in the aforementioned Didi-Huberman, in whom it also operates as a *method*, as a form of montage that produces a revealing effect. Since the objects (of art, in this case) are overdetermined by heterogeneous times, the way to work on them is not to reunite them with an "epoch" of which they would be contemporaries, but to throw them violently, without any pretension of naturalism, on other temporalities. The less "natural" the cut, the deeper the heuristic effect of destabilization (Glozman). The imperative is, then, to tear the veil of euchrony, to play thoroughly the *clash of times*. Anachronisms works as a fecund way of interrogating. We are, here, in the field of the iconological method of Aby Warburg and his panels, a way of working on historicity that eludes new relapses into linearity.

Foucault does not go that far, nor, probably, did he intend to. Beyond his ineluctable intentions, it is more important to underline that the results of the genealogical exercise can have the paradoxical effect of producing a sort of counter-narrative, which, although “alternative,” reinforces the (alleged) self-evidence of certain processes. Where it was intended to "make cuts", the fabric of history manages to reconstitute itself to erase the irruption of time.

Perhaps the studies on governmentality are the field in which this effect of "re-narrativization" has been produced the most, by which, in some of its drifts, I could almost glimpse the deployment in history of something like the Liberal Reason (*see* Grondona and Haidar and Brady).⁴

At this point, the Baroque (as a program) seems more akin to the Warburgian drift. The conjugation between "form" and "content" to which we alluded above, probably contributes in this sense. Thus, a certain abyss brought about by the Baroque way of reflection on the Baroque operates as an infinite displacement of meaning (metaphorical or metonymic) that leads to hermeticism and impracticable exegesis, in a language saturated with communicative function, "que se vuelve pura superficie, espesa e irrisada" (Perlongher 95). These flirtations with poetic language seem to protect us better from the traps of "reassembling narration" and configure the Latin American Baroque as a more potent *critical machine*. We go into this hypothesis in the next section.

Baroque: eccentricity and waste. Reconfiguring critique.

A few paragraphs earlier, in a textual quotation from Iriarte, we returned to Foucault's reflection on the Kantian project of critique and, with it, to the broader problem of the relationship between Baroque and Enlightenment. Contrary to Iriarte's perspective, which seems to be on the side of historicism when contrasting both movements, according to Lezama Lima:

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 ... el conocimiento del *Ars Magna*, de Kircheiro (...) todo ello lleva a su barroquismo a un *afán de conocimiento universal, científico, que la acerca a la Ilustración*. ... No solamente en esa cercanía a la Ilustración, el barroco nuestro se particularizó con eficacia, si no en los intentos de falansterio, de paraíso, hecho por los jesuitas en el Paraguay. (84-85; my emphasis)

There is another derivation of this discussion that I am interested in examining in greater detail: the one that finds in the *singularity* (anomaly? monstrosity?) of Baroque (in general, but Latin American in particular) a critical position with its specificity. And, in this sense, it is even more subversive than the one promised by Enlightenment (and by Kant), since, as we indicated above, its interest is not centered on truth, but on the functioning of parody and *simulacrum*. *It is* an issue that corrodes not only this or that mode of representation of the world, but also the logics of representation itself. It is no coincidence that one of the key elements of Baroque and neo-Baroque poetics is the reflection, or better, the play of reflections, multiplying and alluding to a space outside

of representation that is simultaneously present and always already lost. In Baroque aesthetics every image has an opaque double that calls for an impossible decipherment: “La obra en la obra, es verdad, pero -como en El Quijote y en Las Meninas- para subrayar su alteridad, obra no traducida, virada al revés, para siempre ilegible” (Sarduy 196). This reproduction does not occur without something being lost, without something slipping, from the exposed center to the black/second Keplerian center.

Returning to what we analyzed in the first section, this Baroque game of mirrors that questions representation and (as we shall see) the relationship between original and copy has a destabilizing effect on "liberal" approaches of discursive *ethos*. The former builds on the fantasy of a subject who is the master of his or her sayings, and who can recognize himself or herself in a certain image. The Baroque, on the contrary, challenges the possibility of these happy coincidences and its guaranteed identity.

Another founding element of the Baroque, as mentioned above, is the ellipse, which also implies a form of decentering (even distorting, as in the deformation of mirrors) that, according to the argument of this article, might help us to reframe the Eurocentric critique. The Baroque is constitutively *eccentric*. Precisely in this regard, according to Sarduy's analogical interpretations, Kepler's cosmology becomes fundamental, since in it the figure of the ellipse challenges the authoritarian normativity of the Renaissance circle. On the one hand, there is a center that unfolds, there will now be *two*, this is to say, a derivation is inaugurated, which makes the second center *exorbitant*, but also obscure, elided. This second center is linked to an alternative point of view (anamorphisms),⁵ which is somewhere between sinister and suspicious, surely heretic, associated with the occult sciences, the hermetic and magic (Sarduy 67). This is a perspective that, as one experiences when looking from below (or with a mirror) at the painting *The Ambassadors* of Hans Holbein the Younger, it is more than a marginal message. It is a baroque invitation to read, in which the energy of conversion, the perceptiveness of deciphering the reverse, the impulse of *simulacrum* (Sarduy 66) is of more interest than the discovery of “truth” (the skull that the frontal observation conceals from us). The mechanism is of more interest than the contingency of the singular finding.⁶ In this, as in other points, Sarduy builds bridges with psychoanalytic theory to compare anamorphisms with the discourse of the analysand as a way of working on what is hidden from the subject and only revealed to him when he changes position. Once again, he eludes the Cartesian libretto: we are not faced with the liberal-individual of enunciation referred to in the first section, nor with the subject of Kantian critique, but with a heterogeneous, fractured, tragic subject, involved in the reading of a spectacle in which he is never fully the protagonist, trying to decipher a discourse that he cannot immediately hear or see, precisely because it concerns him directly as a subject.

In broader terms --which encompass, but exceed, anamorphisms-- Sarduy underlines the effects of *artificialization* or *destabilization* of what seems to be given beforehand. The successive involvement of Baroque writing or imagery operates this artificialization from a game of substitution, proliferation, and condensation of signifiers without end, radial, and nonsensical, which annihilates the illusion of an ultimate literality. The intra and intertextual reminiscences organize a game of stereoscopic mirrors and a polyphonic concert governed by the logic of waste and excess. Sarduy thus refers to a *carnivalization* of language and literature, to the intrusion of another discourse that does not hide behind the curtain of the transparency of a meaning governed by the "I" of enunciation. On the contrary, it operates an over-coding and a periphrasis that reveals the thread, the abyss of the Baroque scene, which, as we have said, is at the same time saturated and incapable of closure, of stitching, of complete totality. The Baroque, then, as a delirious discourse in which the signifiers seem to reflect themselves, to show themselves as "empty signs," as pure rhetoric. More elements that oppose the baroque subject of the imaginary fantasy of the individual master of his own speech:

En la medida en que el sujeto circula bajo la cadena, en la medida en que brilla en el trazado de la órbita como su centro supuesto, parece ajeno al centro oscuro, pero cuando un significante de más o de menos viene a marcar la carencia -- detectable en el representante de la representación--, entonces la cadena deja caer al sujeto de su lugar único, *lo desorbita, y este viene a situarse, como un reverso de su brillo, en la noche del centro segundo.* (Sarduy 194)

This subject is far from the utilitarian *homo faber* and thus from the Weberian individual governed by the ascetic *ethos*, that condemned subject that suffers from the impossibility of deciphering divine signs. The Baroque turns out to be a hyperbolic game of waste, delirium, and eroticism. An empty language that does not designate (nor pretends to designate) anything. This subject position could hardly be recognized in the call of Kantian critique, undoubtedly addressed to the Lutheran *ethos*. The contra-figure of Mr. Baroque --to which Lezama Lima mythically alluded-- unfolds, then "from within" Western philosophy, from the other side of the mirror, and presents the whole world as a mere phantom and pastiche.

Simulacrum, subalternity, and Latin America as a point of view

La mariposa convertida en hoja, el hombre convertido en mujer, pero también la anamorfosis y el *trompe-l'oeil*, no copian, no se definen y justifican a partir de las proporciones verdaderas, sino que *producen*, utilizando la posición del observador, incluyéndolo en la impostura, *la verosimilitud del modelo*, se incorporan, como en un acto de depredación, su apariencia, *lo simulan.* (Sarduy 60)

The preceding quotation shows Sarduy's interest in anamorphisms is combined with other questions, on which we have not dwelled, such as the baroque mechanism of *trompe-l'oeil* --a new destabilization of transparency, in which sight must renounce in the name of touch to elude the spell that makes the nonexistent visible. What he discovers through the study of these mechanisms is the centrality of simulation and, with it, the degradation of the dictatorship of the "model" and its centrality. Indeed, as Díaz points out, if simulation puts the model and its copies under scrutiny, it does not do so from the outside, "rather it ruins them insofar as it drags them down with it (Barthes) and, in the intimacy of the fall, renders them unrecognizable" ("Severo Sarduy" 54). Sarduy's neo-Baroque consists of overprinting the world with *its own simulated image*. In an analogous sense, Echeverría refers to an "absolute *mise-en-scene*" that makes the legality of the real world a questionable legality (Echeverría "El *Ethos*" 8).

Hence the indignant moral reaction that the neo-Baroque usually generates, is assimilable, in its own way --according to the analogy proposed by Sarduy -- to that produced by the transvestite. The transvestite "does not imitate the woman," but emphasizes that "*at the limit, there is no woman* --and perhaps, paradoxically, he is the only one to know it-, that she is an appearance, that her kingdom and the strength of her fetish conceal a defect" or, we would say, what is lacking (Sarduy 55). This camouflage (according to the same approach) is as intimidating and disturbing as for Plato were the sophists and their twisting of the truth and their drive to appear to be other.

Incidentally, as we announced above, the Baroque here resonates with early concerns of Foucauldian reflection, especially those of "Nietzsche, genealogy, history" of 1971. The historical sense, as opposed to historicism, entailed three uses that contrasted, term by term, the three Platonic modalities of history: (1) the use of *parody*, which is opposed to the theme of history as reminiscence or recognition; (2) the *dissociative* use that confronts continuity and tradition; (3) the *sacrificial* and truth-destroying use that clashes with history as knowledge. We are interested in underlining the first of these anti-platonic uses, to which Foucault referred in very suggestive terms concerning Sarduy's conceptualizations:

The historian offers this confused and anonymous European, who no longer knows him- self or what name he should adopt, the possibility of alternative identities, more individualized and substantial than his own. But the man with historical sense will see that this substitution is simply a disguise. Historians supplied the Revolution with Roman prototypes, romanticism with knight's armor, and the Wagnerian era was given the sword of a German hero ephemeral props that point to our own unreality (...) The new historian, *the genealogist, will know what to make of this masquerade*. He will not be too serious to enjoy it; on the contrary, *he will push the masquerade to its limit and prepare the great carnival of time where masks are*

constantly reappearing. No longer the identification of our faint individuality with the solid identities of the past, *but our "unrealization" through the excessive choice of identities*-Frederick of Hohenstaufen, Caesar, Jesus, Dionysus, and possibly Zarathustra. Taking up these masks, *revitalizing the buffoonery of history*, we adopt an identity whose unreality surpasses that of God, who started the charade. (Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" 94-95; my emphasis)

The proposal of unrealizing ourselves, to recognize that there is no ultimate identity behind the disguise, leads us to critique the very architecture of Western thought. Precisely, in line with this same invitation to "invert Platonism," Deleuze proposes a sizzling vindication of the subversive role of *simulacrum*, as opposed to the placid (and Platonic) logic of "the copy" or, in our terms, of "reception" or "circulation" (of discourses, problematizations, devices, etc.). In this regard, he proposes an analogy between copies as well-founded pretenders, sustained by the guarantee of similarity, as opposed to *simulacra*, understood in this analogy, as "false pretenders," built on an essential dissimilarity, perversion and deviation (Deleuze 257). In this framework, the Platonic motivation had been to ensure the triumph of copies over *simulacra*, to reject the former, to keep them chained to the background, to prevent them from ascending to the surface and insinuating themselves everywhere (Deleuze 257): "on the one hand, the copy-icons, on the other the *simulacra*-ghosts" (Deleuze 257). Conjuring the phantoms that subvert against the reign of the Idea and the Law, denouncing the demonic, external, *unessential* character (so different from the divine "in the image and likeness") of the *simulacrum* is, then, the task of science. From this perspective, the danger of the *simulacrum* as a mechanism resides, precisely, in the fact that it puts the world itself as a phantom:

There is always a productive operation in the good copy and, corresponding to this operation, a right opinion, if not knowledge. We see, then, that imitation is destined to take on a pejorative sense to the extent that it is now only a simulation, that is applies to the *simulacrum* and designates only the external and nonproductive effect of resemblance, that is, an effect obtained by ruse or subversion. There is no longer even right opinion, but rather a sort of ironic encounter which takes the place of a mode of knowledge, an art of encounter that is outside knowledge and opinion . . . This *simulacrum* includes the differential point of view; and the observer becomes a part of the *simulacrum* itself, which is transformed and deformed by his point of view. (Deleuze 258)

The affinities between this approach and the Baroque abyss are quite clear, even when it comes to suspending the question of truth-knowledge in order to dwell on the mechanisms that, at the limit, make it impossible. In this same vein, Deleuze points out, as a programmatic direction,

that inverting Platonism (and we would add historicism) means showing the *simulacra*, claiming their rights not under the logic of the "degraded copy," but by their positive power that, precisely, denies the original, the copy, the model and the reproduction. As a critical effect of this exercise, the French philosopher adds, *there is no longer a privileged point of view* or a common object to all points of view.

If the Deleuzian argument introduced in these last paragraphs reinforces our own, this last statement undoubtedly puts it in tension, since, I am interested in presenting the Latin American point of view (in particular, the Latin American baroque), as a privileged place for a history of the present in the light of what appeared as "contaminated genealogies." In this regard, I understand that the alternative of simply multiplying and juxtaposing points of view resembles what, as we pointed out above, Grüner calls the path of the "fragmentary subject," as a postmodern response that seeks to abolish the question of universality and runs the serious risk of eluding the fractured character of modernity and its subject. On the other hand, the denial of the existence of a privileged point of view has been, precisely, the classic mechanism for its perpetuation. In the face of this, I deem it more pertinent, at least in the trace of the Althusserian invitation to "bend the stick," to privilege the marginal, subaltern, subjected point of view as the one that allows us to better describe the mechanisms of reproduction, for there is where the West stumbles into a thousand ridiculous parodies that give new vigor to the statement according to which modernity is defined by the power of its *simulacrum*. This is, as I see it, one of the main contributions of Latin American reflection on the Baroque as a way of being in modernity: *refusing to let mere juxtaposition prevail over decentering*. While the former maintains the appearance of critique, only the latter forces us to ask the question about the *relationship* between the "center" that has been historically and Eurocentrically presented as "totality" and its accursed "part." The exercise of defunding the metaphysics of Western thought without privileging the question of its constitutive tensions and, in Grüner's words, its dark and battered side, runs the risk of reinstating a new (ideological fantasy) of the full (neo)liberal subject, this time under the coordinates of pluralism and dialogue (e.g., of knowledge).

In this regard, Sarduy sustained, taking up the discussion we presented above, that, since the Platonic dialogues, the West has canceled the question of the drive to disguise through answers that are "too immediate, assertive, *assuring of presence*" (Sarduy 60, my emphasis). On the contrary, the Cuban argues that in the East "knowledge itself is a *state of the body*, that is to say, a composite being, *a simulation of being --of being that knowledge--*, which does nothing more than to recall the character of simulation of all being -by manifesting itself as that being" (Sarduy 60). From this, knowledge should not be taken as something that is conquered but is received by a calm body from a "germinating emptiness whose metaphor and *simulation is the visible reality*" (Sarduy 60).

In these passages, there is a reconfiguration of the philosophical question that abandons the terrain of truth/simulation contraposition and disrupts the evidence of *presence* as identity. However, we cannot but wonder about the effects of lodging these arguments --with remarkable Derridean resonances-- within the framework of a project of the history of the *present*: What kind of exercise does historicizing this presence imply? Is it enough to go through the trajectories of its contingency to destabilize it? For the time being, from what has been exposed in the previous paragraphs, it is clear that this destabilization requires a movement of decentering of the West and its "assertive answers assuring presence:"

Quizás no sea un azar si partí de la ilusión universal, de la realidad como *bluff* enfático de la nada, tal y como la insinúa el *budismo* y concluyo con la dominación de lo vivo por lo inanimado y la repetición. Más allá del placer de lo que pone en escena, como fiestas familiares y consabidas, la *simulación enuncia el vacío y la muerte*. (Sarduy 84; my emphasis)

This movement is also akin to Lezama Lima's interest in linking the (always fantastic) genealogy of the Baroque with the great myths of the Orient and making the Mediterranean (and its heterogeneous intertwining) the space of emergence of legitimate modernity: an already-hybridized modernity, like Jewish and Moorish Spain. In another way, in these last sentences of Sarduy, we also find echoes of the hermeneutics of the subject and self-care proposed by the late Foucault, as well as that which, to describe the singular assemblage of the modern State, must inquire into the Semitic technologies of pastoral power. The question arises, then, as to what would remain of the gesture of inscription of the history of the present in the Kantian project of (Western) critique if we follow the trace of those inquiries that seem more conducive to decentering. Beyond these concerns, which would open another line of inquiry, in the plot proposed by Sarduy (who in this as in other matters agrees with Lezama Lima, but also with Alejo Carpentier and Bolívar Echeverría), Latin America also appears as a privileged point of view. Sarduy stresses that the procedures that the European Baroque technique had codified, remained, in the Latin American peripheries, divorced of any functional pretext, expelled from the representative logic, *excluded from any simulacrum of truth* (Sarduy 102). Thus, for example, if had functioned in the European Baroque to codify a supplement of information, often some moral message disclosed as some form of allegory or *vanitas*, in South American Baroque, on the other hand, it appeared reduced to its "*pure critical artifice*," "outside all didactic pretensions" (102). As a purely rhetorical artifice that the slightest misalignment defocuses, reduces to a strabismic mask, preventing it from meaning (Sarduy 103).

In this regard, Néstor Perlongher also stressed that, although the eccentric disposition was already present in the European Baroque, as a "poetics of deterritorialization," it truly unfolded in

its Latin American intrusion. Stripped of a homogeneous literary ground on which to assemble the interweaving of new metaphors, the neo-Baroque turns out to be an infinite operation of assemblage on a previous style, a perversion that can flourish anywhere. The carnivalization and parasitizing of already parasitized styles: Gaucho Baroque, Social Realism Baroque, Soap Opera Baroque. In these latitudes, the Baroque fulfills its desire to ally itself and enter into an endless number of bastard mixtures.

Perhaps the most radical version of this vindictory argument is that of Bolívar Echeverría, who stresses that rather than the realization of a "creative copy" of European art or an enriching importation of what was imported,

lo barroco se *gestó y desarrolló* inicialmente, en América, en la construcción de un ethos social propio de las clases bajas y marginales de las ciudades mestizas del siglo XVII y XVIII. Lo barroco se desarrolló en América en medio de una vida cotidiana *cuya legalidad efectiva implicaba una transgresión de la legalidad consagrada por las coronas ibéricas*, una curiosa *transgresión* que, siendo radical, no pretendía una impugnación de la misma. (Echeverría, "El *Ethos*" 8)

According to this point of view, the Baroque had resulted in America, at least in principle, as a survival strategy, "a method of life spontaneously invented" (8) by the small portion of the indigenous population that managed to survive the extermination of the 16th century and had not been expelled to inhospitable areas. Precisely *that* part of the population undertook a reconstruction of civilized life in America based on the practice of cultural miscegenation, allowing "the language of the Europeans to establish itself on their original languages, their own way of making the unspeakable decipherable of giving name and meaning to the elements of the cosmos" (9). The most relevant and surprising aspect of this process, according to Echeverría, had been that those same Indians assumed the *agency* or *subjectivity* of the setting in motion of the process of creolization/cultural miscegenation so that the reconstruction that was taking place would turn out to be something completely different from the "model" it was intended to reconstruct. A creative parody that ends up contaminating everything.

The introduction of these issues leads to discussions regarding the subject of Baroque critique. At this point, analyses such as that of Mabel Moraña are pertinent and suggestive, since she finds in the Baroque of the Indies the recognition of an agency of the *colonial subject*, a form in which the subaltern manages and does not manage to speak. According to her analysis:

La preferencia por "las formas exóticas y novedosas, un gusto por lo insólito, lo original y lo sorprendente" ... no sólo caracteriza al Barroco como producto estético-ideológico orgánico de la monarquía absoluta española y como una de las *matrices más prominentes de la hegemonía cultural del occidentalismo* (racionalista, burgués y

cristiano), sino que abre el dique por el que se filtran, en los imaginarios dominantes, *subjetividades subalternas* pero en constante estado de resistencia y diferenciación.

... la historia que narra la producción barroca americana no es sólo la de la colonización y la transculturación, sino también la de interacciones recíprocas que dan lugar a la expresión de otras epistemologías que fuerzan su entrada en el sólido sistema simbólico de la dominación colonialista, hibridizando su unicidad dogmática (88; my emphasis).

Thus, Latin American Baroque questions hegemonic models of representation and subjectivation. Once again, as Iriarte pointed out in another quotation above, Baroque is presented as a belligerent machine, a disruptive and vindicating disposition capable of staging the disjunction/tension of modern consciousness. It enhances the performance of *border subjectivities* that operate as a "parodic *exposé*" (Moraña 81-82), bringing into light denied positions, invisible to narratives of modernity (Moraña 61).

In Echeverría's systematization, taken up by Moraña, the baroque appears as (1) a sort of codephagy (codigofagia), theatricalization of a new, always-parodic identity, (2) a way of resisting the logic of exchange value that takes refuge in use value (always exceeded by the dynamics of waste and proliferation, to which we referred above) and, finally, (3) as an *ethos* or alternative way of life. According to the author's definition, the Baroque *ethos* would function as a utopian proposal oriented toward forgotten traditions, subaltern experiences, the margins, and the perspective of those oppressed. This *ethos* finds in Latin America a chosen place to unfold, not as a function of transhistorical essentialisms (against which we have repeatedly expressed our objections) but on the contrary, by virtue of the place that historical contingencies have designated for us:

Las culturas que emergen de los procesos colonizadores implementados a partir de centros coloniales débiles como lo fueron, en su momento, España y Portugal, existen, sobre todo, desde el comienzo, como *culturas de frontera, jánicas, in-between*, y se caracterizan por la fluidez, intercambios y *contaminaciones* entre diversos paradigmas culturales, proyectos sociales y modelos epistemológicos, o sea por la hibridez y sobrecarga de contenidos y formalizaciones representacionales que entran en colisión y se negocian en el plano de las prácticas sociales y los imaginarios culturales. (Moraña 84-85)

In this author's characterization, the baroque *ethos* pushes the colonizing and neocolonial project to its own limits, exposes the processes of cultural appropriation and cannibalization on which national cultures are founded, and shakes the solidity of strong epistemologies "working from the residual and ruinous, from the vestige, from the difference, from loss and mourning,

from pastiche and *simulacrum*, in a disjunctive and disruptive direction with respect to the principles and legacies of modernity" (Moraña 84-85). Thus, if *epistemicide* is one of part of the aftermath of colonial and postcolonial history, baroque codephagy referred to by Echeverría opens another direction for the study of the forms of social consciousness and cultural practices in the subcontinent and its migrant imaginaries (Moraña 84-85).

Here, the (neo/ultra) Baroque program echoes primordial aspects of the genealogical project that the narrative around governmentality seemed to have forgotten, since, as William Walters argues, "the denaturalization of practices of government has tended to be detached from accounts of struggles and domination" (137). On the contrary, the concern for those defeated, that emerged in Foucault's most Nietzschean reflections on genealogy, was presented as a struggle to break subjugated knowledge and liberate it from the coercion of a unitary, formal, and scientific theoretical discourse. As a reactivation of subjugated pieces of knowledge against the hierarchies of scientific knowledge and its power effects.

To underline this confrontational aspect is vital to avoid the metaphysics of presence, which could misread genealogy as a way of completing history with "overlooked" chapters. The history of the present does not seek to include absent fragments, but to work on history as a *mechanism for absenting*. Returning to the argument I developed above, it would seem that, looking into the parodic and "out of place" (Schwartz) is an interesting way to understand the mechanism that, when detached from the solemnity given by historicism is exposed as contingent and fragile.

Conclusion

Throughout this essay, I put in tension the *ethos* of critique that Foucault proposed for his intellectual project of the history of the present, with the Baroque *ethos*, as delimited in a myriad of Latin American texts and reflections. I believe that its productivity applies to other latitudes. Especially regarding the history of the present as a critical project that, this is my point, should become constitutively *contaminated*.

However, some clarifications or warnings should be made at this point. In particular, I would like to take up again Moraña's voice when she underlines the ambivalence of the Baroque (whether we take it as a cultural matrix or as a mechanism of production/deconstruction of discourses or as a method or interpreting machine). Bolívar Echeverría's indications are also key in this regard: the Baroque, as a way of dealing with the tensions of modernity, implies a rupture with the fantasies of the linear time of "transition" of which historicism convinces us, in different ways. Echeverría refers to a transition "in suspense", of a variegated and dense temporality in which an alternative informal order is established. However, the anti-systemic character of this

alternative order should not be presupposed. For example, the neoliberal celebration of the informal economy as a creative sphere of an over-regulated economy is a clear example of the risk at stake.

The Baroque does not function, nor can it function, then, as an uncontaminated zero point, nor the reconstitution of some new form of complete subject. Fundamentally, it can help us avoid the traps of asking about the forms of consolidation of certain truths and knowledge, by interrogating *simulacra* and parody. A type of approach that is perhaps better prepared to resist the temptations of re-narrativization and “cookie cutter” descriptions that, unintendedly, have followed, for example, the very promising and inspiring perspective of governmentality studies. Conversely, however, this approach aims to preclude the “disconnection” gesture, which, in a contradictory manner, purports to extricate itself from Eurocentrism but, in fact, serves only to reinforce it.

Notes

¹ "This period of debate on development-underdevelopment was thus generally practiced within the Eurocentric pattern of knowledge, which since the 18th century has been one of the main instruments of the world pattern of capitalist power" (Quijano 6). This sentence is a good example of the referred risk, since it leads to the abandonment of a strong tradition of Latin American critical thought and to the submission of this tradition to an omnipresent "Eurocentrism" without any fissures.

² Both Díaz ("El error neobarroco") and Iriarte ("Severo Sarduy, El Neobarroco y Las Políticas De La Literatura") have proved the affinity between the proposals of the Cuban writer and that of the French philosopher.

³ Paradoxically, as I will insist in another section, in this movement we can read an affinity with the first characterizations of the genealogical project.

⁴ For example, Michelle Brady has stated that "Foucault's distinctive interpretation of neoliberalism (and advanced liberalism) initially enabled scholars to produce novel analyses of neoliberal social change, but over time this literature has fallen into the trap of tending to identify liberalism or neoliberalism as the only significant form of power, and producing "cookie cutter" descriptions of neoliberal rationalities" (14)

⁵ According to the definition proposed by Wikipedia, which I prefer to others, an anamorphisms is "a reversible deformation of an image produced by an optical procedure (as, for example, using a curved mirror), or through a mathematical procedure. It is a perspectival effect used in art to force the observer to a certain pre-established or privileged point of view, from which the element takes on a proportionate and clear form" (see <https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anamorfosis>).

⁶ The warnings of ideological analysis in the style of Althusser or Pêcheux resound here: the critique of this or that ideological "content" is always banal, the work on the mechanisms (preconstructed, interpellation) that are inscribed in the very logic of discourse and the relationship with our material conditions of existence and subjectivation is both crucial and disturbing.

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