

**Stony Brook University
The Graduate School**

Doctoral Defense Announcement

Abstract

The Baroque Gaze: The Survival of the Baroque and the Derangement of Modernity in Contemporary Peru.

By

José Gabriel Chueca

In their attempts to explain the dysfunctions of modernity in Latin America, theorists see it as a failed project (Néstor García-Canclini), a chronic deferral of the modern (Aníbal Quijano), or blame residual colonial practices (Walter Mignolo). Rather than continuing this obsessive search for causes and failures, this dissertation proposes the existence of a baroque modernity. Studying the case of Perú as paradigmatic, I document and analyze the continuities of the baroque culture in the present. Since the early 19th century, the baroque has been considered a surpassed aesthetics, ended when modern national projects overturned the colonial order. I contend, however, that the baroque was never canceled but rather fiercely repressed. In Perú, the baroque *ethos*, as Bolívar Echeverría describes it, has survived within what Terry Eagleton calls the “social unconscious.”

Employing Aby Warburg’s notion of “survival” (*Nachleben*), the anachronistic, symptomatic and unexpected manifestations from the past that haunt the present, I analyze a group of visual, museographic, and literary works. These include: the photo exhibition *Yuyanapaq. In Order to Remember. Visual Account of the Intern Conflict in Peru 1980-2000*, organized by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Peru (National Museum, 2003-present); the most emblematic photograph in this exhibition showing the hands of an indigenous peasant woman holding a small picture of a disappeared loved one (Vera Lentz, 1984); the work of novelist José María Arguedas; and finally the paintings of contemporary artists Alfredo Márquez and Ángel Valdez. I contextualize all these artistic works within the political and social history of violent confrontation in Perú to show how each of them radically links information, ethics, and aesthetics, fields that modernity strives to keep separated. And they do so through a unique reinterpretation of the baroque rhetoric as a means to achieve modernity through citizenship, memory and justice. Furthermore they activate social empathy by emphasizing the relation between the baroque *ethos* and the sacred. In this way this dissertation shows how the baroque *ethos* is not only pivotal for the disruption of modernizing projects in contemporary Peruvian society, but also contains the potential for the articulation of a vernacular modernity.

Date: January 29, 2020

Time: 11:30 a.m.

Place: (Humanities Building

Room # 1051)

Program: Hispanic Languages and Literature

Dissertation Advisor: Adrián Pérez-Melgosa