

Reflected Images: approaches to Colonial Art in Portuguese America in 20th century Brazilian historiography¹

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Resumen

Los viajeros europeos fueron los primeros en escribir sobre arte en la América Portuguesa. Las narrativas -en las cuales trataban de analizar lo que veían con los parámetros adquiridos a través de sus propias culturas- están impregnadas de admiración y extrañeza. Quizás por herencia de aquellos primeros cronistas europeos, los estudios del arte colonial en la historiografía brasileña mantuvieron, durante gran parte del siglo XX, una mirada "de afuera". Esta tendencia hizo que el arte colonial fuese constantemente "adaptado" a modelos originalmente observados en tendencias artísticas europeas y a métodos creados para aplicárselos. Solo recientemente, a partir de las dos últimas décadas del siglo XX, la historiografía brasileña empieza a buscar una "lógica interna" en el arte colonial de la América Portuguesa.

Aun hoy existen muchas divergencias sobre este tema. Historiadores e historiadores del arte brasileño parecen estar divididos en dos grupos: aquellos que creen que es posible encontrar una "lógica interna" y otros que creen que la perspectiva europea sea la única posible. Para muchos intelectuales brasileños la constatación de que no somos europeos y de que no formamos parte de Europa parece ser extremadamente doloroso y, por lo tanto, a esta realidad se la evita, siempre que se puede.

Abstract

The first comments on Brazilian religious art and architecture of the Colonial period were written by European travellers. Their notes reveal a lot to historians these days as in their combination of bafflement and astonishment they left extremely detailed records. Nevertheless, when it came to interpreting another culture, their own culture was ever strongly present. Today, Latin America still fascinates foreign commentators, and the twentieth century observers

¹ This paper is an updated version of the second chapter of my PhD Thesis. The latter was originally submitted at the Department of Art history and Theory, University of Essex (UK), under the supervision of Professor Valerie Fraser with the title: Source, Reflection and Innovation in the Woodcarving of Portuguese America. I chose to present the text here in English not merely to keep it as close as possible to the original text, but also to make it accessible to a wider public.

are equipped with more tools to bridge the cultural gap. They use a technical knowledge in an attempt to transcend cultural barriers in their own fields: History, Art History, Anthropology, Sociology and combining all this technical knowledge they try to surpass the cultural frontiers. Sometimes they succeed; sometimes they do not.

1-Twentieth Century "Travellers": the so Called Brazilianists

The term Brazilianist is used in Brazil specifically to identify foreign specialists who dedicate themselves to the study of some aspect of Brazilian culture. Brazilian historians do not receive this designation since they are 'expected' to focus on Brazilian issues, for Brazilian observers they would be the rule and foreigners willing to do the same would be the exception, hence the application of the term.

The works of European and North American specialists concerning Brazilian Colonial art can be classified in two major groups: a) works dedicated to the art and architecture of Spain and Portugal -or sometimes only Portugal- that include Brazil as part of their colonial dominions; b) works that are specially dedicated to Brazilian Colonial art.

In the first group can be included classics such as Kubler and Soria's *Art and Architecture in Spain and Portugal and their American Dominions* (1st ed. 1959), Robert Smith's *A Talha em Portugal* (1962) and *The Art of Portugal* (1968), and the more recent *Historia del Arte Iberoamericano* (1988) by Leopoldo Castedo.²

Kubler and Soria's work dedicates some quite short chapters to Brazilian Colonial painting, sculpture and architecture. It does what it sets out to do: supply the reader with basic information about the subject. As a reference book it is comprehensive, although subjects tend to be approached in a relatively superficial manner and individual topics lack depth of enquiry. It appears that most of the data about Brazil was not taken from primary sources which inevitably led to some mistakes and misinterpretations.

Robert Smith's works are of a quite different nature. As a specialist in Portuguese sculpture and architecture he presents in his works a considerable amount of information and substantial depth in his analysis. In his books about Portuguese art and architecture, Colonial Brazil is given very small space, although the author has published many articles and essays on different aspects of Brazilian architecture and woodcarving.³

Although also a reference book, *Historia del Arte Iberoamericano* presents some interesting points concerning Latin American art and architecture with special emphasis on inter-cultural exchanges.⁴ Castedo not only escapes from the common approach of interpreting Latin American art as a poor version of the European production, but even criticises the approach. The author is very well informed about Brazilian Colonial Art considering the present state of this field of study.

² George Kubler & Martin Soria, *Art and Architecture in Spain and Portugal and their American Dominions - 1500-1800*, London, Penguin, 1959. Robert Chester Smith, *The Art of Portugal - 1500-1800*, London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1968. Robert Chester Smith, *A Talha em Portugal*, Lisboa, Horizonte, 1962. Leopoldo Castedo, *Historia del Arte Iberoamericano*, Madrid, Alianza, 1988.

³ Robert Chester Smith. 'Nossa Senhora da Conceição da Praia and the Joanine Style in Brazil', *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, V. XV, n. 3, October, 1956, Robert Chester Smith, *Robert Chester Smith, Congonhas do Campo, Rio de Janeiro, Agir*, 1973. Robert Chester Smith, *Igrejas, Casas e Móveis - Aspectos da Arte Colonial Brasileira*, Recife, UFPE, 1979.

⁴ Leopoldo Castedo, *Historia del Arte Iberoamericano*, Madrid, Alianza, 1988.

Nevertheless, the work appears to be centred in Spanish America. The chapters about *mestizaje*, for example, focus only on the Native Indian influence within the limits of Spanish America-Brazil and its African influence, although mentioned in the introduction, were forgotten in the chapters on *mestizaje*.⁵ Furthermore Castedo seems to make incoherent divisions and hierarchical classifications comparing Central Europe, Spain, Brasil and Spanish America.

The second group includes those works that deal exclusively with Brazilian Colonial art such as John Bury's *Arquitetura e Arte no Brasil Colonial* (1991) and Germain Bazin's *L'Architecture Religieuse Baroque au Brésil* (1956-8).⁶

Arquitetura e Arte no Brasil Colonial, as the title suggests, consists of a collection of essays on Brazilian art and architecture written between 1949 and 1989. From the ten essays that compose the book, four are specifically on "O Alejadinho", the Brazilian sculptor also known as Antonio Francisco Lisboa, who has become a sort of 'myth', distorted and magnified either by the Minas Gerais locals or by chroniclers from the nineteenth century to the present. The myth has grown so much that there is no church in Minas Gerais lacking a work by the artist -or so say the locals! Bury does not present anything new in his articles, and includes some mistakes and misinterpretations. The fact that some of the essays were written decades before they were published in Brazil has to be taken into account but does not explain all the problems found in the book. For instance, in one of his essays Bury suggests that Antonio Francisco Lisboa's statues in the Santuario de Congonhas do Campo in Minas Gerais were as static as Renaissance statues and therefore should be analysed following the same principles, which may lead one to question not only the depth of his knowledge of Brazilian Colonial art, but his sense of aesthetic observation.⁷

The most important and complete work on Brazilian Colonial art and architecture up to the present day was written by Germain Bazin between 1945 and 1955: *L'Architecture Religieuse Baroque au Brésil*.⁸ It presents some interpretative mistakes and aesthetic 'judgements' which strongly 'date' the work, nevertheless, it remains the most complete and daring book on the theme.

In the first volume, Bazin unfolds his ideas regarding the subject, usually based on transcriptions of documents, reports of chroniclers and visits to the churches. In the second volume he presents illustrations and basic historical data about the most important churches, classifying them by region. He obtained most of the information from the archives of the *Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional*, information that had never previously been brought together in a book. A though during the last forty years many mistakes have been identified in the work nothing more complete and with this scope has been done since. Bazin's work remains the basic reference for anyone studying Brazilian Colonial art and architecture.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 361-444.

⁶ John Bury, *Arquitetura e Arte no Brasil Colonial*, org. Myriam Andrade Ribeiro de Oliveira, São Paulo, Nobel, 1991. Leopoldo Castedo, *The Baroque Prevalence in Brazilian Art.*, New York, Charles Frank, 1964. Germain Bazin, *L'architecture religieuse baroque au Brésil*, Paris, Plon, 1956-8.

⁷ John Bury, *Arquitetura e Arte no Brasil Colonial*, org. Myriam Andrade Ribeiro de Oliveira. São Paulo: Nobel, 1991, p. 41. The sense of drama and movement found in these statues can hardly be compared to the serenity and poise present in most sculptural religious representations of the Italian Renaissance. Most of the statues of the prophets in the church's atrium in Congonhas do Campo seem to be in movement and the figures of the Stations of the Cross, also part of the ensemble, are extremely dramatic and contorted, rather resembling Spanish religious representations of the seventeenth century.

⁸ Germain Bazin, *L'architecture religieuse baroque au Brésil*, Paris, Plon, 1956-8.

The work of Brazilianists and Latin Americanists undoubtedly helps to fill a gap still existing in the studies concerning Brazilian art and architecture, occasionally raising very interesting questions to be answered by future art historians. Sometimes, as is the case of Bazin's *L'Architecture Religieuse Baroque au Brésil*, their work provides basic and essential information for future researchers.

The relevance of the contribution of foreign specialists in Brazil and Latin American art and architecture must be recognised. Nevertheless, the challenge of interpreting alien cultures can bring the danger of misinterpretations and mistakes that are often present in their works. The problem is particularly present in the case of such intricate cultures as the one that emerged in the Brazilian Colonial society, a treacherous complexity that has also frequently victimised Brazilian specialists.

2- The Pioneers

In the twentieth century, in so far as art and architecture are concerned, Brazilian specialists also became interested in their own Colonial past. A native look? Not necessarily. Brazilian culture is so complex and varied -in the present and/or in Colonial times- that it is quite possible for Brazilians to be foreigners in their own country.

Interest in Colonial heritage in terms of art and architecture emerged during the 1920's with artists and intellectuals like Mario de Andrade, Tarsila do Amaral and Oswald de Andrade who created the *Movimento Modernista* (Modernist Movement) in Sao Paulo. At that time, the national *Escola de Belas Artes* (Fine Arts School) in Rio de Janeiro was still preaching and teaching under an academicist approach, which at that time meant Neo-classical and Romantic tendencies. Colonial art and architecture were seen as something foul, unpleasant to the senses and unworthy as artistic expression.

Mario de Andrade, who was a mixture of writer, historian, anthropologist and musicologist, was the first Brazilian intellectual to approach Colonial art in a positive way. In 1928, he published an article about Antonio Francisco Lisboa, also known as 'O Aleijadinho', in which he emphasises the significance of Colonial artistic production.⁹

In 1937, Rodrigo de Melo Franco de Andrade founded the *Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional*, an institution created with the aim of preserving and protecting buildings and art objects of artistic and historical relevance. According to Bazin, seven hundred and six monuments were classified, along with twenty-eight architectural ensembles and twelve urban ensembles. All these monuments were identified, listed, photographed and preliminary studies about them began.¹⁰ Parish and conventual archives were rediscovered and huge volumes of relevant documents concerning the Colonial artistic past were transcribed, classified and studied by specialists such as Nair Batista, Judith Martins and Rodrigo de Melo Franco de Andrade. They were pioneers -like the first *bandeirantes*-¹¹ who crossed the Country in search of old and scattered records rediscovering Brazilian Colonial roots

⁹ Mário de Andrade, 'O Aleijadinho', *Aspectos das Artes Plásticas no Brasil*, São Paulo, Martins, 1928, p. 13-46.

¹⁰ Germain Bazin, *Histoire de l'Art - de Vasari à nos Jours*, Paris, Albin Michel, 1986, p. 460.

¹¹ The word *Bandeirantes*, designates men, who in Brazilian Colonial times, were part of expeditions that became known as *Entradas e Bandeiras*. These expeditions occurred mainly between the second half of the 16th century and beginning of the 18th with the aim of capturing or recapturing slaves and finding mines. They generally departed from some point close to the coast, especially from São Vicente (presently São Paulo) towards the inner and unexplored parts of the land. The *Entradas e Bandeiras* had a very important role in the territorial expansion of the Colony contributing greatly to define the borders that Brazil has in the present day.

through art and architecture. Still in the same year 1937 a journal, the *Revista do IPHAN*, was created to publish and divulge the results of this hard work.

Since then much has been done; and much is yet to be done. The institution has had many different names and acronyms - IPHAN, DPHAN, SPHAN-¹² nevertheless, its aims have remained always the same. During the last twenty years there has been a decrease in the production of the institution's publications probably because of a lack of political interest in cultural issues in general.

Nevertheless, the seeds of a concern regarding the Colonial cultural heritage have been sown and much has been achieved. Protective laws have been created as well as a structure of control and maintenance regarding Brazilian monuments and art objects. The 'pioneers' have done their work, creating a basic structure out of nothing and leaving to future generations the responsibility of continuing to direct efforts towards the protection and conservation of this important legacy.

3- Specialisation vs Interdisciplinary Approach

Although the artistic achievements of the Colonial period have encouraged many Brazilian intellectuals to deepen their studies in the area, few of them had degrees in Art History. Up to the 1970's they were mainly lawyers, architects, and historians: people who had their academic education in other fields and came to Art History led by their own curiosity. It has been only in the last twenty years that professionals have started being prepared in the field, going somewhere abroad to study Art History at post-graduate level. During the 1980's some post-graduate programmes were created in the Country which equated to MA and MPhil levels and the first Ph D courses were created in the year 2000. But the problem remains at undergraduate level -inexplicably, a BA in Art History has yet to be introduced in Brazil. This means that Brazilian art historians almost always come from other fields of study such as Law, History, Philosophy, Literature, Art and, especially, Architecture. Perhaps the predominance of architects working on art historical issues that was always, and still is, so common in Brazil, led to an unbalanced number of articles and books dedicated to Colonial architecture in comparison to the amount one is able to find concerning painting or sculpture. In fact these subjects sometimes appear in Brazilian publications being approached as accessories to architecture, receiving a secondary place that is far from what they deserve as autonomous means of expression in the Colonial society.

4- Classification: the Search for Styles and Period Divisions

Since Art History was first introduced as a discipline, labelling and categorising art works have been among the main concerns of art historians. Certainly, Brazilian specialists are not an exception to this rule. From the beginning the efforts towards the comprehension of the Colonial artistic production have presented a clear attempt to 'create' periods to sectionalise it. This partitioning was pursued according to historical events that occurred in the Colony or in Portugal, European trends in general or local artistic influences.

The most common approach classified almost the whole Colonial period -the exception would be the ye-

¹² IPHAN - Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional; DPHAN - Departamento do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional; S P H A N - Serviço do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional.

ars after the arrival of the Portuguese court in the Vice-Royalty, between 1808 and 1822- as Baroque, with Mannerism and Rococo as sections of it. According to Lúcio Costa, a Brazilian architect widely known for his work in Brasília's project and completion: *deve-se (...) entender por barrocas, dentro do critério histórico habitual, a maior parte das manifestações compreendidas entre a última fase do Renascimento e o novo surto Classicista de fins do século XVIII e, no Brasil, princípios do XIX.*¹³

Within this concept of an overextended Baroque, Brazilian specialists and Brazilianists created a series of sub-sections according to trends they believed relevant in a broader context.

Lucio Costa was himself one of the first to suggest some subdivisions to this broad category. In his essay of 1941 on the Jesuit achievements in art and architecture in the Colony he proposed a division into four periods: 1 °) *fins do século XVI e primeira metade do século XVII*; 2°) *meados e segunda metade do século XVII e princípios do século XVIII*; 3 °) *primeira metade e meados do século XVIII*; 4°) *segunda metade do século XVIII e princípios do século XIX.*¹⁴

His proposition agrees in general terms with the Colonial artistic production itself, with cultural changes that can be detected in Colonial society as a whole and, this way, has the advantage of being supported by historical events.

Paulo Santos, in his work on Colonial architecture, created divisions for the colonial period dividing it sometimes in 3, sometimes in 4 stages in the same book. These stages also received varied names in different parts of the book. Let us take for example the terms he used to identify what he called Brazilian Baroque in 4 stages: *barroco-jesuítico, barroco-seiscentista, barroco- setecentista* and *barroco-rococó.*¹⁵ The inadequacy and incoherence of these terms is immediately apparent. Santos combined stylistic and historical categories in a way that simply does not make sense, either for the use of outdated terminology or for redundancy or incompatibility. For example, according to Santos the term *barroco-jesuítico* would refer to an early period of the process of colonisation in which the Jesuits started establishing themselves in different provinces and erecting buildings that usually combined the functions of church, school and residence at the same time. However, Santos seems to have partially borrowed the idea from a term used by Lucio Costa in the 1940's: *estilo jesuítico* (Jesuit Style). Costa stated that he borrowed the term from European art historians whose names he does not reveal, though in Europe the possibility of existence of a Jesuit Style had been discredited since the 1910s.¹⁶ Although Costa was very cautious in his use of the term, including under its umbrella only what was really produced by the Jesuits, his essay seems to have been misinterpreted.

It seems that Paulo Santos understood that Lucio Costa perceived a pattern in the architecture produced by the Jesuits during the first two centuries of colonisation and realised that they had many things in common with the rest of the production of the same period which was not directly linked to the Jesuits. Costa occasionally states this, but he never included non-Jesuit production under the term. Paulo

¹³ "should be understood as baroque, according to the usual historical criterion, most of the manifestations comprehended between the last phase of Renaissance and the new Classicist outbreak at the end of the 18th century and, in Brazil, beginning of the 19th." Translation by the author. Lúcio Costa, 'Arquitetura dos Jesuítas no Brasil' *Revista do IPHAN*, v. 5, Rio de Janeiro: MEC, 1941, p.12.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 47, "1st, end of the 16th century and first half of the 17th; 2nd, middle and second half of the 17th century and beginning of the 18th century; 3rd, first half and middle of the 18th century; 4th, second half of the 18th century and beginning of the 19th."

¹⁵ Paulo Santos, *O Barroco e o Jesuítico na Arquitetura do Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro: Kosmos, 1951.

¹⁶ According to Rudolf Wittkower the possibility of existence of a Jesuit Style has been eliminated in works by authors such as Joseph Braum and Louis Serbat produced as early as the first decade of the 20th century. See Rudolf Wittkower, *Baroque Art: The Jesuit Contribution*, New York, Fordham University Press, 1972, p. 2.

Santos decided to group all the buildings of the period under the term, classifying them all as belonging to what he calls *Estilo Jesuítico*. No one is convinced of the applicability of the term for that purpose, not even Paulo Santos, as he recognises in his book. However he justifies its use with the *lack of a more adequate term*.¹⁷ As a matter of fact, it seems that Robert Smith has found a more fitting, or at least acceptable, term for the production of the period: *Estilo Missionário* (Missionary Style)¹⁸. And, after all, this period is part of the seventeenth century - so why did Paulo Santos not include it in the *Barroco-seicentista* category?

The same sort of problem can be found in the *Barroco-rococó* period. Assuming that Rococo was a sub-division of Baroque - which we all know it was not - would it not be reasonable to include it in the partition named *Barroco-setecentista*, since it also occurred in the eighteenth century?

To add to the confusion Paulo Santos produced in the same book with another division for the architecture of the Colonial period: *Jesuítico, Barroco* and *Rococo*. Now, at least, the meaning of one of the terms is clearer. He is connecting the term *Jesuítico* with what is also known as the mannerist period, but the chronological limits of all these groups are still unclear. Later, when analysing retables, he decided to use the 4 stages division again but substituted *Jesuítico* or *Maneirista* for *Proto-barroco*, yet another term. Later on in the same book he returned to the 3 stages division classifying retables in the periods: *Jesuítico, Franciscano* and *século XVIII autenticamente barroco* (eighteenth century authentically baroque). This division presents more problems: Why should the second stage be called Franciscan? Or why should the production of the eighteenth century be called or understood as "authentically baroque"? These terminological problems are not of much help when the reader is trying to understand the basics of Colonial art and architecture. The classification in categories, which should be meant to help study the period, ends up causing more confusion than enlightenment.

In his work *L'Architecture Religieuse Baroque au Bresil* Bazin used the traditional division Mannerism/Baroque/Rococo to group the colonial buildings. In addition, he introduced a very detailed and elaborate division to analyse retables based on what he calls the stages of 'evolution' in woodcarving works: 1) *Type plateresque: XVI^e siècle*. 2) *Type bordure: XVI^e siècle*. 3) *Type de la Contre-Réforme: fin XVI-debut XVII siècle*. 4) *Type "maniériste": vers 1600 - vers 1670*. 5) *Type "classique": vers 1620 - vers 1650*. Ce type peut être subdivisé en deux: -5A. *Type altar- mór*; -5B. *Type autel latéral (découle du type 2)*. 6) *Type baroque, dit "roman pariétal": fin XVII - premier tiers du XVIII siècle*. 7) *Type baroque, dit "roman a voussures ": fin XVII - premier tiers du XVIII siècle*. 8) *Type baroque frontal: fin XVII - debut XVIII siècle*. 9) *Type Joao V, a baldaquin: deuxième quart de XVIII siècle*. 10) *Type baldaquin à rocaille: vers 1750 - vers 1775*. 11) *Type architectural: vers 1760 - vers 1775*, 12) *Type baldaquin néo-classique*.¹⁹

All these "stages" are illustrated with visual examples, which make them, at least, partly accessible to the reader. His intentions are clear: to cover all varieties of retables by grouping them according to their structural or ornamental characteristics. In this he succeeds; nevertheless, the possibilities of grouping Brazilian colonial retables adequately in these categories are uncertain. There is such a variety in the combination of many of the elements he uses to identify these "types" that I am sure the most skilled art

¹⁷ Paulo Santos. *O Barroco e o Jesuítico na Arquitetura do Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro, Kosmos, 1951, p. 89.

¹⁸ Robert Smith, *Arquitetura Colonial*, Salvador, Progresso, 1955.

¹⁹ Germain Bazin, *Histoire de l'Art - de Vassari à nos Jour*, Paris, Albin Michel, 1986, p. 230-1. Only the types from four onwards apply to Brazil.¹⁵ Paulo Santos, *O Barroco e o Jesuítico na Arquitetura do Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro: Kosmos, 1951.

historian would have problems trying to place all retables in those groups.

In a more recent work Myriam Andrade Ribeiro de Oliveira managed to escape from the idea of an overextended Baroque.²⁰ Her work is exclusively dedicated to what she called the "Rococo" production in Minas Gerais. In her work she covered architecture, woodcarving and painting in separate chapters and introduced other divisions to be applied to what she called the "Rococo" period: 1° período 1770-1800 and 2° período 1800-1830 for painting. For architecture there is a different division: 1° período 1700-1730; 2° período 1730-1760 and 3° período 1760-1800. As there is no division for woodcarving should one assume that it is included -following the Brazilian art historical tradition- in the architectural division? And here the problems crystallise.

First of all, her first stage for architecture starts in 1700 and the corresponding one for painting starts in 1770, which presents a gap of 70 years between two types of production which should be in accordance with each other chronologically. In the case of architecture, the author is obviously linking "rococo" with the eighteenth century, which does not necessarily work for Brazilian Colonial art and architecture. The classification of the production that took place between 1700 and 1730 as "Rococo", for example, is questionable as is the limit in 1800 for the end of the "Rococo" period in the Colony. The limit for painting seems reasonable and probably should be extended to architecture; but why does the author think that "Rococo" trends started only around 1770 for painting?

Myriam Ribeiro's work belongs to a more recent approach to Colonial art and presents for the first time an attempt to balance the relevance of painting, sculpture and architecture within the work. It consists more of an assemblage of information that was scattered in different publications, documents and archives - which is really useful for the study of the period taking into account the present state of the field in Brazil. Nevertheless, there are still some problems of approach such as the opposition between educated and popular artistic production and an 'evolutionist theory' that permeates the whole work.

Sandra Alvim, Brazilian specialist in colonial Architecture was responsible for what was expected to be the most important work since Germain Bazin's *L'Architecture Religieuse Baroque au Bresil*. Leading a group of researchers that combined architects, historians and art historians she developed a comprehensive and in depth research on Rio de Janeiro's Colonial religious architecture. During the process two catalogues were published with basic information on architecture, painting, sculpture and history concerning Rio de Janeiro's main churches.²¹ In 1997, the first volume showing part of the final result of her research was published. It deals with wall coverings, retables and woodcarving. In 1999 the second and last volume was published concentrating on architecture and urban surroundings.²²

Alvim proposed yet other chronological divisions for the art of the Colonial period, concentrating on Rio de Janeiro. She suggests specific divisions for retables (chronological), wall covering woodcarving (in terms of chronology and distribution on surfaces) and architecture(chronological). It is

²⁰ Myriam Andrade Ribeiro de Oliverira, *O rococó religioso no Brasil e seus antecedentes europeus*, São Paulo, Cosac & Naify, 2003. Based on the thesis by the same author *O Rococó Religioso em Minas Gerais e seus Antecedentes Europeus*, PhD thesis, Louvain la Neuve, Université Catholique de Louvain, 1989-90, unpublished.

²¹ Sandra Alvim, *Inventário Arquitetônico: Arquitetura Religiosa do Século XVII*, Rio de Janeiro, FAU-UFRJ, 1984, and *Inventário Arquitetônico: Arquitetura Religiosa do Século XVIII*, Rio de Janeiro, FAU-UFRJ, 1984.

²² Sandra Alvim, *Arquitetura Religiosa Colonial no Rio de Janeiro*, vol 1, Revestimentos, Retábulos e Talhas, Rio de Janeiro, Editora da UFRJ/IPHAN/Prefeitura da Cidade do Rio de Janeiro, 1997.

important to stress that Alvim seemed more concerned with questions dealing with the composition and organisation of space and mass both inside and outside the churches than with stylistic issues. The chronological divisions are there merely as a support which allows her to demonstrate what she calls the 'evolution' of form in religious architecture in Rio de Janeiro.

Alvim's work is exactly the sort of basic and comprehensive work that Brazilian historians and art historians desperately need for each region of Brazil. It maps out the vast majority of the colonial religious artistic production in Rio de Janeiro. In this sense it can represent a starting point for present and future generations of art historians. The work is lavishly illustrated and Alvim's formal analysis is quite detailed. Nevertheless formal analysis is considered by some art historians such as Francastel and Panofsky as a stage in the study of art objects, and in this sense Alvim's work leaves the reader with a feeling that the work was never finished: the data was not examined in relation to the socio-cultural context.

Some characteristics are common to most of these works written by Brazilian art historians:

a) There is clearly an obstinate concern with what I would call an attempt to find schools or styles in different regions and periods. Most of the time they are simply not there. Frequently, these 'styles' or 'schools' contain the production of only one or two artists as in the case of the *Estilo Brito* or the *Estilo Aleijadinho*, both mentioned in some articles and books.²³ Would this desire originate in a need to find or 'create' an absent tradition? Or perhaps an attempt to find it through the nourishment of the links with Europe, which in this case would symbolise exactly the intended cultural background?

b) All these works are based on the idea of evolution that presupposes the notion of improvement, which seems, for obvious reasons, not suitable for historical or art history issues.

c) The wolfflinianesque opposition baroque-classicism also seems to be ever present.

d) The dilemma between recognising the emergence of a Brazilian cultural identity and preserving the links with the European culture.

5-Wolfflin, Burckhardt and Brazilian Art

Wolfflin's ideas seem to have had a tremendous impact on Brazilian art historians, so much so that the latter still seem to find it difficult to let go of this theoretical support. In 1941 Hannah Levy published an essay under the title *A Proposito de Tres Teorias do Barroco* (Regarding Three Theories on the Baroque) in which she addressed the idea of Baroque as introduced by Heinrich Wolfflin, Max Dvorak and Leo Balet and its applicability to the analysis of Brazilian art. According to Levy the Swiss Wolfflin considered the history of art as a history of forms supporting the idea of an immanent history of styles, the Czech Dvorak was the creator and main representative of the 'history of art as history of the spirit' and the Dutch Balet was one of the first authors to study 'a whole period' of history with all its artistic manifestations from the point of view of the 'modern sociology of art'.²⁴ From her footnotes it is possible to notice that Levy could read German and therefore had access to the texts long before they

²³ Myriam Andrade Ribeiro de Oliveira, *O rococó religioso no Brasil e seus antecedentes europeus*, São Paulo, Cosac & Naify, 2003. Based on the PhD thesis by the same author *O Rococo Religioso em Minas Gerais e seus Antecedentes Europeus*, Louvain la Neuve, Université Catholique de Louvain, 1989-90, unpublished.

²⁴ Hannah Levy, 'A Proposito de Três Teorias do Barroco', *Revista do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional*, Rio de Janeiro, Ministério da Educação e Saúde, 1941, p. 260.

were translated to Portuguese and published in Brazil.²⁵ These authors and their theories were probably still unknown to the vast majority of Brazilian specialists when Levy published the essay in 1941 and maybe for this reason it seems to have had a profound impact on all the works published after that.

Some parts of Levy's analysis seem to have touched particularly important points for Brazilian art historians at the time and as a result they were taken as a Gospel and have been used to exhaustion to the present. Levy's statement concerning Wölfflin's proclamation of the absolute autonomy of art history became a favourite amongst Brazilian art historians and so did Dvorak's theory regarding the Italian Jesuit church Il *Gesú* as a landmark of the Christian architectural tradition, in which occurred the first conscious rupture with the Renaissance. Curiously Levy's comments on Dvorak's refusal in interpreting Il *Gesú*, and other churches built along the same lines in terms of architecture, as a manifestation of the Jesuit style and his refusal to use the term, which he considered as part of a mistaken classification, were ignored by most readers. And so was Levy's preference for Balet's approach, in which social circumstances are taken into account to explain stylistic changes. She did not think Wölfflin's theories were applicable to Brazilian art.

E evidente que a teoria imanente de Wölfflin não poderia alcançar, neste caso, grandes resultados, pois as formas do barroco brasileiro não podem ser explicadas, evidentemente, como consequência de formas brasileiras da Renascença. Objetar-se-á que as formas barrocas foram trazidas ao Brasil através da arte portuguesa ou, de um modo geral, que eram formas importadas e que o barroco português europeu se explica perfeitamente pela teoria de Wölfflin. Mas como explicar então o aspecto diferente que oferece, muitas vezes, o barroco português comparado com o barroco brasileiro? Desde o momento, porém, em que se recorre a explicação de que as formas barrocas europeias foram adaptadas as necessidades do Brasil, ou que se fala na influência das formas já existentes aqui sobre as formas importadas, -desde esse momento já se transgride a imanência da evolução estilística proclamada por Wölfflin.²⁶

Despite all the arguments Levy offered against the use of Wölfflin's theories to analyse Brazilian art his ideas somehow appealed to Brazilian art historians, even if their introduction occurred second hand. Levy's essay was filtered and when Wölfflin's integral text finally became known in Brazil, Brazilian art historians had already selected the main ideas that interested them and disregarded the rest.

Wölfflin was a student of Jacob Burckhardt, a Swiss historian who was one of the founders of art history as an academic discipline. Burckhardt was also the first one to apply terms such as baroque and

²⁵ Paulo Santos includes a Spanish translation of Wölfflin's *Principles of Art History...* published in 1945 in his bibliography for *O Barroco e o Jesuíco na Arquitetura do Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro, Kosmos, 1951, p. 237.

²⁶ Hannah Levy, 'A Proposito de Três Teorias do Barroco', *Revista do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional*, Rio de Janeiro, Ministério da Educação e Saúde, 1941, p. 283. "It is evident that Wölfflin's immanent theory could not reach in this case great results since the forms of Brazilian baroque cannot be explained, evidently, as a consequence of the forms of the Brazilian Renaissance. One might protest by saying that the baroque forms were brought to Brazil through Portuguese art or, in general terms, that they were imported forms and that the European Portuguese baroque is perfectly explained by Wölfflin's theory. But how to explain then the different appearance which the Portuguese baroque often presents if compared to the Brazilian baroque? Nevertheless from the moment one resorts to the explanation that the European baroque forms were adapted to the Brazilian needs, or one speaks about the influence of forms which already existed here on the imported forms, - from this moment the immanence of the stylistic evolution proclaimed by Wölfflin is transgressed." Translated by the author.

rococo in the context of art history. In his book *Der Cicerone* first published in 1855 Burckhardt places himself as a Renaissance devotee, interpreting most of the artistic works of the seventeenth century as a decadent result of it.²⁷

Wolfflin's first works can be regarded as a continuation of Burckhardt's work. In the beginning of his career he shared with his former master an admiration for the Renaissance and a dislike of the Baroque. Wolfflin's first published work concerning the theme appeared in 1905 with the title *Renaissance and Baroque*.²⁸ In this book Wolfflin classified as baroque all the works of art produced between the end of the Renaissance and the beginning of Neo-classicism, which he called the 'new classicism'.²⁹ Wolfflin shared with his former master several ideas, including the approach to Baroque as a decadent consequence of Renaissance, and as his master, he also focused his studies on Italian art.

Ten years after the publication of that book Wolfflin was to change his mind in many points. In his work *Principles of Art History: The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art*, published for the first time in 1915, the author developed theories about ways of 'technically' distinguishing Classic from Baroque art.³⁰ This book seems to have been the first effort to define Baroque and Wolfflin's very careful approach tried to hide any traces of prejudice against the works of art he classified as part of the Baroque period or the society in which they were produced. It seems to be a first attempt to reach impartiality. In both works Wolfflin tried to find a definition for Baroque as a style through its opposition to Classicism.

It took more than twenty five years for some of the ideas Wolfflin explored in *Principles of Art History* to arrive in Brazil, passing through more than one filter: Levy's interpretation and the interpretation of those who read her essay. When it was finally published in the Portuguese language Brazilians had their ideas already settled regarding Wolfflin's theories. These theories offered several elements they probably had been longing for: the idea of art as an independent field, the possibility of interpreting Brazilian art and European art with the same tools and a 'scientific' methodology which identified what was and was not baroque. If art was not influenced by exterior circumstances then it was possible to have a Brazilian colonial art which was a mere extension of its Portuguese counterpart. As Levy observed, any influences from Native Indian, African or any other non-European art could invalidate the use of Wolfflin's theory, so it is possible that Brazilian art historians opted at some point to leave non-European influences outside the equation. Overlooking those influences gave Brazilian art historians not only an operational method as a starting point, but also the possibility of a closer connection with the European culture.

6- Cultural Identity vs European Heritage

A particularly significant aspect of Brazilian art history about which Brazilian art historians are not very sure is the dilemma between a Brazilian cultural identity -or, in the case of the Colonial period, its embryo- and the cherished connection with the European heritage.

²⁷ Jacob Burckhardt, *Il Cicerone. Guida al Godimento dell'Arte in Italia*, Firenze, Sansoni, 1952.

²⁸ Heinrich Wölfflin, *Renaissance and Baroque*, Great Britain, Fontana, 1964, 1905.

²⁹ Idem, p. 16. The style division Wölfflin adopted in this work may give a clue as to how Brazilian art historians decided to classify the cultural production of the whole Brazilian colonial period as Baroque: they probably adopted Wölfflin's division.

³⁰ Heinrich Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History*, New York, Dover, 19 __, 1915.

Mário de Andrade seems to have been the first to realise the importance of the contribution of African components in shaping Brazilian culture. In 1928 he published an article on the subject.³¹ In the fields of History and Social Sciences, a few years later, prominent authors like Sérgio Buarque de Holanda and Gilberto Freyre would point out the paramount influence of Indigenous and African cultures together with that of the Iberian Peninsula.³² It was the realisation that Brazilian culture was the result of a process of *Mestiçagem*, i. e., the mixture of different cultures interwoven in a very complex way.³³

Nevertheless, in the field of Art History Brazilian authors are still reticent to accept these theories. They seem to be constantly fluctuating between two different attitudes: a) acknowledging that Brazilian art indeed presents specificities in relation to European art, particularly Portuguese; b) trying to adapt European analytical or methodological parameters to Brazilian art and attributing contrasts to a lack of information on the part of Brazilian artists.

In a conference presented in 1961 Lourival Gomes Machado proposed three stages in the process of colonization:

[em um primeiro momento] *clara é a impossibilidade material de realizar-se o padrão europeu, embora se apresente viva e exigente a necessidade espiritual; o segundo momento, será aquele em que a possibilidade material já se instalou e a necessidade espiritual como tal permanece; no terceiro momento, continuando a não haver entraves materiais, já não há mais como necessidade a estrutura espiritual trazida da Europa e, contudo, permanecemos consciente e voluntariamente na mesma trilha.*³⁴

Although I agree with the first stage of Gomes Machado's division, I believe the second and third stages probably unfolded somewhat differently. Leopoldo Castedo presented another division for the colonial period in his work *Historia del Arte Iberoamericano*. His division seems more feasible and addresses the formation of an identity in three stages: 1) the conqueror, missing his own Country, tries to somehow transplant the European culture to America; 2) the first generation born in the Colony, without direct links with the European culture, begins to form a Colonial identity; 3) the affirmation of a Colonial -and future national- identity.³⁵

Dentro de la misma classe social dirigente, constituída al principio por españoles y Portugueses, y a poco andar, por peninsulares y criollos, sus descendientes, se produjo a partir del siglo XVII una diferenciación de gustos y apetitos. El peninsular asentado en el Nuevo Mun-

³¹ Mário de Andrade, 'O Aleijadinho', *Aspectos das Artes Plásticas no Brasil*, São Paulo, Martins, 1928, p. 13-46.

³² See classic works of both authors such as Gilberto Freyre, *Casa-grande e Senzala*, 4th ed., Rio de Janeiro, José Olympio, 1943, 1st ed. 1933. and Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, *Raízes do Brasil*, 22nd ed., Rio de Janeiro, José Olympio, 1991, 1st ed. 1936.

³³ It is important to bear in mind that until 1888 most of the components of the African, or what we could call Afro-Brazilian population, were employed as slave workers in the whole country, i. e., about 40/45 years before these works were produced.

³⁴ Lourival Gomes Machado, Conference presented in the School of Law of the Universidade de São Paulo (USP), in 30.08.61. [In a first moment] "the material impossibility of accomplishing the European standard is clear, although the spiritual need presents itself alive and demanding; the second moment will be the one in which the material possibility is already installed and the spiritual need remains as such; in the third moment, still without material obstacles, there is no need anymore for the spiritual structure brought from Europe and, nevertheless, we remain consciously and voluntarily in the same trek."

³⁵ Leopoldo Castedo, *Historia del Arte Iberoamericano*, Madrid, Alianza, 1988, p. 193-5.

*do aspiraba, como es lógico, a revitalizar en su recuerdo el paisaje urbano de la tierra de origen. (...) Pero las nuevas generaciones de criollos enriquecidos pensaban de otra manera. Para ellos no había "saudades" visuales. (...) Con el andar del tiempo (...) se recreó un arte que por su factura y por su representación es más americano que europeo. (...) Consciente o inconsciente, la afirmación de una voluntad de independencia artística fue en la América hispano-portuguesa muy anterior a los primeros conatos de independencia política.*³⁶

Maybe at some point there was a conscious decision to follow the way indicated by "Mother Iberia", but to what extent was it really followed? To what extent were these options offered and taken consciously? Perhaps Colonial men trying to follow the steps of the colonisers ended up building something new, that was not expected or planned, something that just happened. Nevertheless in general terms Brazilian art historians do not seem to have made up their minds in that respect.

Benedito de Lima Toledo for example, in an essay on Brazilian colonial art in Zanini's *Historia Geral da Arte no Brasil* quoted Gomes Machado's three stages theory agreeing with it.³⁷ Some pages later, Toledo defended the existence of a cultural circularity between Metropolis and Colony.³⁸ The idea of circularity presupposes the possibility of an exchange between different cultural contexts, making inoperable the idea of a Colonial culture that is merely an unskilled copy of the European mother country. The idea of exchange presupposes the existence of something new, something which led to a final product that was different from the European equivalent. It presupposes a certain degree of independence. So, maybe despite the "voluntary and conscious efforts" to maintain Colonial life as European as possible, something else happened in the process and things did not work quite as expected. Or maybe, those people simply had no expectations about it...³⁹

What seems to be evident is that this oscillation of opinion concerning Brazilian Colonial art reflects to a certain extent the present state of the field: with plenty of points still unclear and a lack of depth in crucial issues which prevent it from going ahead.

³⁶ Idem. "After the 17th century, a differentiation concerning tastes and appetites was produced inside the same ruling social class, constituted in the beginning by Spanish and Portuguese men, and in a short while, by Peninsulars and *criollos*, their descendants. The Peninsular, settled in the New World aspired, logically, to revitalise in his memory the urban landscape of his homeland. (...) But the new generations of enriched *criollos* had other ideas. There were no visual homesicknesses for them. (...) As time passed (...) an art was re-created that is more American than European for its production and its representation. (...) Consciously or unconsciously, the affirmation of an artistic independence wish was in the Hispano-Portuguese America quite earlier than the first desires for political independence."

³⁷ Benedito de Lima Toledo, 'Do Século XVI ao Início do XIX : Maneirismo, Barroco e Rococó', Walter Zanini, *História Geral da Arte no Brasil*, São Paulo, Instituto Walther Moreira Salles, 1983, p. 97.

³⁸ About the idea of circularity see Mikhail Bakhtin, *L'Oeuvre de François Rabelais et la Culture Populaire au Moyen Age et sous la Renaissance*, Paris, Gallimard, 1970.

³⁹ In recent conferences and publications I have been exploring these issues in more detail. Please see the following for further reference: Marcia Bonnet, 'Retábulo do Nacional Português no Reino e no Além-mar: relações entre forma e identidade' *Anais do XXII Colóquio Brasileiro de História da Arte*, Porto Alegre, PUCRS, 2003; 'A Talha Filipina em Madeira na Colônia: influências e mutações' *Anais do IV Colóquio Luso Brasileiro de História da Arte*, Rio de Janeiro, UFRJ, 2004; 'Cultural Crossroads: the case of the church of Santa Efigênia' Valerie Fraser, *Illegitimate Images*, Nashville, Valderbilt University Press, forthcoming, and 'A Forma em Trânsito: um estudo de caso envolvendo metamorfose e representação' *Caesura - Dossie Poética e Representação*, Canoas, ULBRA, forthcoming.

7-Approaches and Historical Factors

In 1964 Arnold Hauser wrote in his work on Mannerism:

*When the variety of factors concerned is taken into account, the baroque, or the 'Quattrocento', or even the concept of gothic or of romanticism, seem just as inconsistent and hard to reduce to a common denominator as mannerism. Nevertheless, it can hardly be doubted that it is sensible and useful to apply these concepts in connection with the artistic phenomena to which they refer.*⁴⁰

If at that moment in time Hauser would not doubt the applicability of such terms -although for some reason he felt the need to ponder the legitimacy of their use- I, in my turn, very comfortably would. As Hauser states it seems *sensible* and *useful* to apply these terms *in connection with the artistic phenomena to which they refer*. However, the way this terminology has been applied can hardly be described like that. Terms created for and/or originally applied to very specific contexts ended up being used for a wide range of art forms created outside that original context. Specific circumstances gained then a universal aura, causing a split between the original phenomenon and its more general counterpart.

The methods art historians have found or chosen with which to approach these subjects reveal varied ways of regarding art, history and culture. It became very difficult to separate the idea of style, for instance, from the evolutionist attitude of art historians like Burckhardt, Wolfflin and Focillon.⁴¹ If the aim was grouping and classifying to improve knowledge in terms of the artistic production, the result led to generalisations and value judgements. The contribution made by these art historians has to be recognised by its paramount importance in the shaping of art history as a discipline. Nevertheless, it is also worth considering that the old conventional sequence of universal styles does not fit some of the current needs of the field.

Terms such as 'civilisation' and 'culture', when applied to denote the spirit of a period as in 'rococo civilisation' or 'baroque culture', are merely other guises for the same formula: label the cultural ambience of a certain period with terms which tend to universalise trends and styles. Behind the idea of a succession of styles there is a whole corpus of socio-political occurrences, which combined with specific cultural circumstances, catalysed the transformations and continuities which were taking place during the period covered by this study. Many factors took part in the interwoven cultural structure of the period, such as: a) the adventurous period of Exploration occurred in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; b) the occupation and colonisation of America; c) the expansion of religious orders such as the Jesuits and the Franciscans catechising and spreading their doctrines to expand the Christian frontiers; d) the Reformation, followed by the Council of Trent and the Catholic reaction; e) the establishment of absolute monarchies in their various versions and the extremely hierarchical societies brought by them.

In my work as an art historian I have been opting for a more historic-cultural approach instead of

⁴⁰ Arnold Hauser, *Mannerism. The Crisis of Renaissance and the Origin of Modern Art*, London, Routledge, 1965, 1964, p. 19.

⁴¹ See Henri Focillon, *The Life of Forms in Art*, New York, George Wittenborn, 1948.

unfolding ideas and findings based on a sequence of styles presenting a multitude of chronic problems. In order to maintain an idea of chronology I prefer using specific terms connected to the Portuguese *Antigo Regime*, which follow more closely cultural and social changes occurring in Portugal and its colonies. I have observed in recent conferences that the same tendency has been followed by other art historians of my generation who work on the colonial period. Thus the colonial period is divided according to reigns or historic-cultural events of paramount importance in that context⁴² using the following terms:

Manuelino or *Manueline* (1495-1580) - Called the Golden Era of Portuguese History. Period of the reign of Dom Manuel I (1469-1521) and his successors: Dom Joao III, Dom Sebastião and Dom Henrique. With the death of the latter, came to an end the Dynasty of Aviz.

Filipino or *Philippine* (1580-1640) - Period of the occupation of Portugal by Spain. Reign of the three Felipes: Felipe III of Spain and I of Portugal (1580-98), Felipe III of Spain and II of Portugal (1598-1621) and Felipe IV of Spain and III of Portugal (1621-40).

Nacional Português or simply *Estilo Nacional* (1640-c.1720) - Period of the Portuguese Restoration when Dom João IV (d. 1656), the first of the House of Bragança, was proclaimed king. He was succeeded by Pedro II of Portugal.

Joanino or *Joanine* - (c. 1720-c. 1760) - Reign of Dom João V (1706-1750), the Portuguese equivalent to the French *Roi Soleil*.

Vice-Reinado or *Vice-Royalty* - (c. 1760-1822) Covering Dom José (Pombaline), Dona Maria I and D João VI periods. In terms of woodcarving the division between the three reigns is blurred, hence the choice of the term *Vice-Royalty* which covers the whole period between the Joanine period and independence.

Pombalino or *Pombaline* (also know as Dom José) - (1750-1777) Reign of D. Jose I, when the decisions were made by the Prime Minister Sebastião Jose de Carvalho Melo, the Marques de Pombal (1699-1782). Pombal played a decisive role in introducing the *Enlightenment* in Portugal. He banished the Jesuits from Portugal and its colonies (1759) and created secular schools to replace the religious institutions. Pombal's influence ceased with the ascent of Dona Maria I to the throne.

Dona Maria I - (1777-1816) Reign of Dona Maria I. She effectively reigned from 1777 until 1792 when she became insane. From then on her son D. João VI ruled in her place until her death.

Dom João VI - (1792, as regent, 1816-1822) Reign of Dom João VI. In 1808 Dom João VI, then Prince Regent, moved to Brazil with the Royal Family and the whole court fleeing from Napoleon's invasion of the Iberian Peninsula. After his arrival in Brazil he carried out a series of transformations in the Colony which would ultimately lead to Independence. He returned to Portugal in 1821 leaving his son, the future Dom Pedro I of Brazil ruling the still *Vice-Royalty* of Brazil.

The above division also presents problems. The idea of a sequence of styles where the new one replaces the old one, as in a magic spell, is so introjected in the general concept of Art History that it creates expectations. In the present case the end of one period and the start of another does not necessarily mean abrupt transformations in art and architecture. Each one of these periods has its particular cultural am-

⁴² I am not creating any terms or sections for the period, only opting for terms that already exist and are currently in use by some Brazilianists as well as Portuguese and Brazilian historians and art historians. Most of this terms are presently used by specialists in Portuguese and Colonial furniture. See Paulo Pereira, *História da Arte Portuguesa*, Lisboa, Temas e Debates, 1995. And Robert Chester Smith, *The Art of Portugal: 1500-1800*, London, Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1968.

bience, its particular circumstances and, it could be said, its own 'personality'. But that does not mean that the transition from one to another happened in a neat and defined way. Characteristics were always overlapping from one period to another, some motifs were kept in use while others disappeared or shape-shifted into something else. Changes were a constant, so constant that they bring back Otavio Paz's dilemma regarding the tradition of rupture -when rupture becomes a tradition, and therefore expected to happen, how much of a rupture will it be after all?⁴³ We are dealing here with a sequence of transitions, a continuous cycle of changes.

Taking the concept of culture as perceived by Clifford Geertz it is possible to approach the artistic production as an outcome of a specific cultural system. Geertz recognises culture as a web formed by interlaced systems of interpretable signs; a context in which social events, behaviours, institutions and processes can be described in an intelligible way. According to him art can be interpreted as a symbolic dimension of the social action.⁴⁴ Although terms like *Joanino* and *Manuelino* also function as labels they have the advantage of relating directly to a specific Luso- Brazilian context. As they relate to the cultural environment of the period they tend to walk side- by-side with the stylistic and cultural changes. This option reflects a concern with cultural issues, which need their conjuncture to be fully understood.

The acknowledgement of the relation art-culture seems to justify the option for the mentioned division, as the more 'local' the approach, the better the chances of successfully understanding and analysing this artistic production -approaching these objects not only as mere artefacts, in their formal aspect, but considering all the meanings and implications involved in their production and use, hidden signs and intentions that so far remain unsolved.

8 - Unfolding?

After the launching of Bazin's work very few books have been published on Brazilian Colonial art and/or architecture as a whole. None of these have added anything concerning terminology. Affonso Avila produced a glossary of architecture and ornamentation specific to what he calls Barroco Mineiro⁴⁵ and Walter Zanini included in the first volume of his *História Geral da Arte no Brasil* three chapters on Colonial art and architecture.⁴⁶ The latter, that was designed to be a sort of handbook on Brazilian Art History, ended up becoming a basic reference due to the lack of major works in the field. Myriam Andrade Ribeiro de Oliveira organised a collection of essays by John Bury on various issues concerning Brazilian art and architecture⁴⁷ and recently published an updated version of her PhD thesis on the eighteenth century religious art in the Colony.⁴⁸ Janice Theodoro published some of her essays about Baroque in Latin America⁴⁹ and Sandra Alvim published her work on Rio de Janeiro's religious archi-

⁴³ Otavio Paz, *Los Hijos del Limo - del Romanticismo a la Vanguardia*, Barcelona, Seix Barral, 1974.

⁴⁴ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: selected essays*, London, Fontana Press, 1993.

⁴⁵ Affonso Ávila, *Barroco Mineiro: Glossário de Arquitetura e Ornamentação*, São Paulo, Fundação João Pinheiro, 1980.

⁴⁶ Walter Zanini, *História Geral da Arte no Brasil*, São Paulo, Instituto Walther Moreira Salles, 1983.

⁴⁷ John Bury, *Arquitetura e Arte no Brasil Colonial*, org. Myriam Andrade Ribeiro de Oliveira, São Paulo, Nobel, 1991.

⁴⁸ Myriam Andrade Ribeiro de Oliveria, *O Rococó Religioso no Brasil e seus antecedentes europeus*, São Paulo, Cosa & Naify, 2003. Based on the PhD thesis by he same author *O Rococó Religioso em Minas Gerais e seus Antecedentes Europeus*, Louvain la Neuve, Université Catholique de Louvain, 1989-90, unpublished.

⁴⁹ Janice Theodoro, *América Barroca: Tema e Variações*, São Paulo, E D U S P , 1992.

ecture.⁵⁰

The publication of the *Revista do Patrimônio*, so important until the 1960's, is not as regular as it used to be. A few other journals were created such as *Parroco* and *Revista do IAC* in Minas Gerais and *Cavea* in Rio de Janeiro, the two former publishing results of current researches on Colonial art and architecture and the latter dedicated to Art History and Theory in general.

During the Colonial period almost everything that was written about Brazil was by foreign hands. As a consequence, it seems that Brazilian art history got used to seeing itself through the eyes of the other, which is even trickier than being seen through the looking glass. Perhaps something like seeing itself through a mirror that reflects an image reflected in another mirror... the reflection of the reflection.

Recent conferences gathering specialists of the field have revealed that young Brazilian scholars are opting for a more cultural and local approach. The young generation of Brazilian art historians is giving what may be interpreted as the first steps out of the "looking glass game". For the first time in Brazilian historiography, Brazilian art historians are being able to see Brazilian Colonial art through its own perspective, trying to understand it from inside. From now on, leaving the mirrors out of the way, it maybe possible to approach Colonial art without having to classify it through foreign standards, get deeply immersed in it, and finally understand it a bit better.

⁵⁰ Sandra Alvim, *Arquitetura Religiosa Colonial no Rio de Janeiro*, Rio de Janeiro, Editora da UFRJ/IPHAN/Prefeitura da Cidade do Rio de Janeiro, 1997.