

Castizo *versus* Mestizo: A Historiographical Debate

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RESUMEN Este artículo propone una exploración de las ideas estéticas subyacentes en textos sobre arte colonial aparecidos en Colombia entre 1861 y 1975, a partir del concepto de barbarie de Walter Benjamin en relación con posturas racistas y eurocéntricas detrás de la articulación histórica. En dicho período, transcurrido entre las guerras civiles del siglo XIX y la violencia política del siglo XX, se mantuvo una confrontación entre los conceptos de lo mestizo y lo castizo, entre la mezcla impura y la pureza mediocre. Tal paradoja lleva a una reflexión a partir del pensamiento del filósofo español Miguel de Unamuno (1864-1936), quien distingue entre la Historia de los grandes acontecimientos y lo que denomina Intra-historia, en alusión a la vida histórica en períodos temporales extensos.

PALABRAS-CLAVE Historiografía del arte colonial, Colombia, Castizo, Mestizo.



Fig. 1: Luis García Hevia. San Agustín Church, after the taking of the town in 1862. Daguerrotype, *El Gráfico*. February 25, 1911. Location unknown.



Fig. 2: Manuel Doroteo Carvajal (1819-1972). San Agustín. View of the interior of the ruined chapel, taken from the south side and in the same spot where was the effigy of Jesus the Nazarene. *Álbum de dibujos y acuarelas de Manuel D. Carvajal*, March 11, 1862. Watercolor. Museo del Siglo XIX- Fondo Cultural Cafetero, reg. 976 (folio 134). Photo: Museo Nacional de Colombia / Samuel Monsalve Parra.



Fig. 3: Manuel Doroteo Carvajal (1819-1972). San Agustín. Februar 25 and 26, 1862. Door and part of the interior of the Jesus the Nazarene chapel, ruined by the troops of the Canal Leonardo. *Álbum de dibujos y acuarelas de Manuel D. Carvajal*, March 11, 1862. Watercolor. Museo del Siglo XIX- Fondo Cultural Cafetero, reg. 976 (folio 134). Photo: Museo Nacional de Colombia / Samuel Monsalve Parra.



Fig. 4: On the left, detail of fig. 3; on the right, attributed to Gregorio Vázquez de Arce y Ceballos (1628-1711), *Martyrdom of Saint Stephen*, ca. 1700, oil on canvas, 223.5 x 148.5. cm, Museo Nacional de Colombia, reg. 2093. Photo: Museo Nacional de Colombia / Samuel Monsalve Parra.

Bogota, February 1862. After nearly a year of war the Liberal Party took the government and limited the Catholic Church influence by its subordination to the State, with the disamortization of mortmain lands and the exercise of inspection over public worship. Within the confusion and combats between the political parties the conservative guerrilla of Guasca, small town nearby Bogota, enters by surprise to the capital and takes the Mint before attacking San Agustín convent –by the moment a liberal place of refuge. The ruined convent – photographed by Colombian artist Luis García Hevia (Fig. 1) – exposed their treasures as can be seen in Manuel Doroteo Carvajal drawings. Behind the fallen roof in the Jesus the Nazarene chapel (Fig. 2) draws attention the sketch of a painting (Fig. 3). It is the *Martyrdom of Saint Stephen* that survived from the combat ravages, the grapeshot and the fire ignited by the conflict and, thanks to the painter Ramón Torres Méndez, arrived to National Museum of Colombia collection where nowadays we can see it (Fig.4).

This short story is the metaphor of an era when they tried to outrun the Hispanic influence to establish a new order. Garcia Hevia photography, Carvajal drawing and the rescue by Torres Mendez involves different views of colonial patrimony. The photography shows a convents wing demolished in 20th century as well as the strengthening of the photographic image production process – Garcia Hevia himself was a painter –; in the other hand the drawing belongs to the 19th century political struggle iconography while evidences a witnessing practice by the *costumbrista* draftsmen in the moment; finally the religious colonial painting took out of context on a museum’s exhibition room is a *work of art* for 20th century eyes which refers to the time of its execution – late 7th century – and therefore to a devotional practice. In this way, three different time frames emerges to articulate history in relationship to Nueva Granada art: first the construction of a photographic images repertoire which over time would established part of a historical discourse; on second place the experience of the *Nueva Granada* architectural heritage – the convent – and its remains – the painting – as stage of historical development in the Republic of Colombia and finally the conversion of Hispanic period artistic productions in National Heritage. The link that binds the three documents (drawing, photography and painting) and their time frame recalls Walter Benjamin’s *Theses on the Philosophy of History*. We just seize hold “...of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger”, we are flying to the future with our face turned toward the past as the angel of history inspired by the *Angelus Novus* of Klee, only to make us sure that in the process to articulate the past historically – as defined by Walter Benjamin – “There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism” (Benjamin, 1969: 256-257). In the case we are dealing with, which is the barbarism behind the documents quoted? Besides the civil war, at the moment we are talking about in Colombia they were discussing different visions of the Colonial era in an attempt to understand the present. As in the civil war historians were divided into two sides: the ones that took side in favor of the Colony –the conservative ones- and against them, the liberals. The first one and the latter produced a history that suited their political interests and which found in *race* a variable that responded to the confrontation of the moment. In 1861 the liberal José María Samper published in Paris his *Ensayo sobre las revoluciones políticas y la condición social de las repúblicas colombianas* (Thunot Press) [Essay on the political revolutions and the social condition of Colombian republics]. Samper condemns Spanish actions in America because “While the Conquest destroyed or brutalized completely the fertile and accessible Colombian races, by excluding them of any personality and any mixture with Iberian (peninsular) races...” the conquerors were founding “...a vicious society, profoundly perverted by the habit of violence, which had all the defects without any of the European civil virtues”¹ (Samper, 1861: 23). In 1868 Sergio Arboleda –a conservative historian- published *La república en la América española* [The Republic in Hispanic America]

¹ The original quote in Spanish is as follows: “...mientras la conquista destruía o embrutecía completamente a las razas fecundas y accesibles de Colombia, excluyéndolas de toda personalidad y todo cruzamiento con las razas peninsulares...” los conquistadores fundaban “...una sociedad viciosa, profundamente pervertida por el hábito de la violencia, y que tenía todos los defectos sin ninguna de las virtudes civiles del mundo europeo”. Translation of the author.

book in which he argues that Hispanic religiousness had a positive influence in the “temper, character and history of our race”² (Arboleda, [1869] 1951: 58). While Samper condemns the *Latin race*³ character Arboleda, on the contrary, highlights the *Spanishness* [*hispanidad*] and so the things that represents the mistakes of catholic fanaticism for the first one, to the latter represents the virtues in which the Colombian culture is based. The conservative would be the dominant among those two postures. On the first essay on Nueva Granada Art, a biography of 17th century painter Gregorio Vasquez de Arce – the actual author of the *Saint Stephan’s Martyrdom* mentioned- José Manuel Groot explains that Catholic Church tended to the progress of the arts. To prove this assertion he quoted a Guido Reni biography to conclude that pious works of art are destined to a “perennial exhibition” [“exposición perenne”] because to comission sacred art is like “to claim from God a brush miracle” [“reclamar para Dios un milagro del pincel”] which actually happened during colonial era when “the artists had faith” [“los artistas tenían fe”] (Groot, 1859: 6). Instead modern 19th century painters do not succeed with theirs sacred subjects because they substituted the necessary spiritualism by materialism, which means they cared just for plastic values (Groot, 1859: 6-7). So a necessary condition to be a good artist is to be pious, to have *unction* in the words of Groot. But it appears to be another condition. Groot quotes on his text a conversation with English Consul Edward Walhouse Mark to whom it was difficult to believe “...that those paintings were not brought from Europe or that Vasquez was not European, because otherwise it was impossible that without going out of the country he would have had so fair ideas on art”⁴ (Groot, 1859: 24). Thus fine art is linked to Europe and in consequence is impossible to think than an American produced such paintings. Groot endorses it by saying that Vasquez painted “on a society without taste or ideas and just by the force of his genius he could reach the perfection degree admired on his first class paintings”⁵ (Groot, 1859: 24). So artistic genius is what explains artist capability to have a European like production. As we can see Groot’s view is on the same path than Arboleda’s and for both Colombian culture is founded on Catholic civilization. Instead Samper blamed Europeans for looking down upon America, when its culture was produced by European Conquest. For this reason he talked of a Hispanic-Colombia Republic. But this approach didn’t have as much strength as the Conservative, because Samper as the rest of liberal thinkers fell into disfavor by the end of 19th century when the Conservative Party – by then on the power- re-established an alliance with Catholic Church.

Those debates passed to 20th century, but not only because of the reissue of Arboleda’s work (Ministerio de Educación, 1951) and Samper’s (Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 1969) or by a

² In spanish: “el “genio, carácter e historia de nuestra raza” Translation by the author.

³ Denomination french in origin.

⁴ “...que estas pinturas no fueran traídas de Europa o que Vásquez no hubiera sido europeo, porque de otro modo era imposible, que sin salir del país, hubiera tenido ideas tan justas de las artes...”

⁵ “...en una sociedad sin gusto ni ideas, i solo en fuerza de su genio pudo llegar al grado de perfección que admiramos en sus obras de primer orden...” The original spelling is repected.

renewed interest on Nueva Granada Art, and therefore, on his first researcher José Manuel Groot. Those authors reflect a deeper discussion. It is the tension between “castizo” and “mestizo”,⁶ taken as analytical categories that exceeds artistic historiography. By *castizo* should be understood a Hispanic Heritage, as opposite to *mestizo* that recall American productions. In 19th century – and even in 20th *castizo* takes as to a past regrettably lost and the “tranquility” derived from Catholic religion. Meanwhile *mestizo* stands for the result of the crossbreed between Spaniards and Native Americans and in a lesser extent with Afrodescendant. But also *mestizo* is problematic for 19th century thought because implies a value decrease from the mixed races.

In *Historia de Colombia para la enseñanza secundaria* [History of Colombia for High School] ([1911] 1920) the most important Colombian history manual in the first half of 20th century, their authors Jesús María Henao and Gerardo Arrubla encourages the idea of culture on racial thought; on one hand appears the “religious” tranquil Colony in contrast with the politically disturbed Republic:

Our elders had deeply rooted the religious feeling; they cared about the pageantry of external worship mixing on it the profane and the spiritual. Some of their holidays were so ostentatious and its remembrance endured marking a milestone in the Colony. It would not be ventured to assure that they pointed out the years for the public solemnities that provided a quiet delight: their descendants points out the time recalling fratricidal strife ⁷ (Henao y Arrubla, [1911] 1920: 209).

Now let's see the case of *mestizo* in artistic productions. On the same history manual it is told that philologist Rufino José Cuervo –resident in Paris during second half of 19th century- had the idea of taking Vasquez paintings to France to show the superiority of an artist that in Colombia was compared to Italian and Sevillian masters. But the negative critics received by the work of the artist changes the idea Cuervo had, which made Henao and Arrubla write that “Vasquez should not receive more glory that he deserves” and continues with the story of Cuervo:

Unfortunately the opinion we have on Vasquez is extremely exaggerated. Our painter's merit is relative: big for us within the time and his background, but little, insignificant, compared to the immortal masters... Vasquez paintings are of high importance for us and necessary for the History of Art of our land, and should be preserved as a monument, but never as finished works, because if should be admired Vasquez talent and fruitfulness, should be

⁶ *Castizo* comes from Castilla, one of the kingdoms of Spain. In Spanish that word also denotes something pure – as in race as in culture – in opposition with the word *Mestizo* which means mixture of races, a crossbreed, and furthermore impurity and in consequence was less valuable than castizo during colonial era.

⁷ Nuestros mayores tenían muy arraigado el sentimiento religioso; cuidaban de la pompa del culto externo, y mezclaban en él lo profano con lo espiritual. Algunas de sus fiestas eran muy aparatosas y su recuerdo perduraba formando época en la colonia. No sería aventurado decir que señalaban los años por las solemnidades públicas que les daban tranquilo deleite: sus descendientes marcan el tiempo con el recuerdo de las contiendas fratricidas.

deplored also defects that doesn't fit with the idea of an excellent painter⁸ (Henaó y Arrubla, [1911] 1920: 184-185).

Since then Nueva Granada art values are called into question, because if on one side it was recognized Spain civilizing efforts, on the other the precariousness of Nueva Granada became paradigm: “the value of our painters is relative, given the backwardness in which lived the Colony” and follows “the background in which painting is developed requires opulent civilization and the sons of Santa Fe [Bogotá] could not have high ideas on beauty”⁹ (Henaó y Arrubla, [1911] 1920: 184). In fact this view explains the transformations that suffered Nueva Granada architecture and the loss of many artworks by sale or direct destruction. This is the case of Tunja cathedral frenchified on its interior and with its façade covered on stone plaques as denounced by Colombian architecture historian Carlos Arbeláez Camacho.

Three decades after Gabriel Giraldo Jaramillo on his book “La pintura en Colombia” (1948), welcomes the mediocrity paradigm assuring the impossibility, given the precariousness of the material medium: “that could blossom a high artistic culture” because from a perspective that mixed Hegel with Hippolyte Taine “everything was opposed to the higher development of spirit” whereby “the emergency of a high intellectual value would be nonsense” and afterwards sentences: “mediocre was the ambiance and mediocre all the demonstrations of the ones who lived on it”¹⁰ (Giraldo Jaramillo [1948] 1980: 73).

To sum the only redeemable thing from Nuevo Reino of Granada had to do with Catholic Civilization; but material poverty of the territory, first as a part of Viceroyalty of Peru and then as a viceroyalty itself, was against the artistic and cultural development, following the aforementioned authors. This can be explained by the admiration paid in Colombia to England and France, since mid-19th century. As a consequence *castizo* values were relativized in the arts giving in exchange greater splendor to language and religion. On his book Giraldo Jaramillo makes the first deep historic study on Nueva Granada painting written in 20th century, but in many ways is close to 19th: first of all on his analysis establishes an evolutionist view under which 15th and 16th centuries artists represented the

⁸ Desgraciadamente la opinión que tenemos de él [Vásquez] es en extremo exagerada. El mérito de nuestro pintor es relativo: grande para nosotros si se ve la época y el teatro en que trabajó, pero pequeño, insignificante, al lado de los maestros inmortales... Las pinturas de Vásquez son para nosotros de suma importancia y necesarias para la historia del arte en nuestro suelo, y deben conservarse como monumento, pero nunca como obras acabadas, pues si en Vásquez se deben admirar el talento y la fecundidad, también se deben deplorar defectos que no cuadran con la idea que se tiene de un pintor excelente.

⁹ “El medio en que se desarrolla la pintura exige opulenta civilización, y los hijos de Santa Fe [Bogotá] no podían tener ideas muy elevadas de lo que es la belleza.”

¹⁰ “todo se oponía al desarrollo superior del espíritu” por lo cual “la aparición de un gran valor intelectual hubiera sido un contrasentido” después de lo cual sentencia: “mediocre fue el ambiente y mediocres todas las manifestaciones de quienes en él vivieron.”

“babbling if a child” [balbuces de un niño] that gave place to the 17th century *primitive masters*, to which Vasquez belongs (Giraldo Jaramillo [1948] 1980). Now how can be at the same time master and primitive? The Nueva Granada Painter work is explained by “the genius of a race that crystallized on his select spirit” subject in which adds later: “We have said that Vasquez embodies the complete life of colonial rule in various aspects: nonetheless he was not just the faithful and eloquent interpreter of his era and race, but as every true artist he was an advanced one that went ahead of his contemporaries” (Giraldo Jaramillo [1948] 1980).

Opposed to what might be expected this view didn’t change on the following decades, but was strengthened among a political war that confronted again Liberals against Conservatives. On April 9, 1948, the political leader Jorge Eliecer Gaitán was assassinated in Bogotá and again the city was destroyed. Again the Conservative Party consolidated an alliance with Catholic Church. In this process disappeared many colonial buildings, because there was no reason to preserve the mediocrity. Unlike 19th century the conservatives didn’t protect the colonial productions which added to the liberal defense for the modernization produced a remarkable carelessness of cultural heritage. That is why it was not a surprise that liberal historian and politic Germán Arciniegas, while being Minister of Education (1942-1946), defended the demolition of Santo Domingo cloister pronouncing a phrase that made history: “cloisters, those of Spain” [para claustros los de España]. Curiously on this moment the Museum of Colonial Art of Bogotá was founded. The political confrontations escalated and it was not until the 1960’s that the systematic study of Colonial Art History was re-started.

For the sake of briefness, to finish our analysis we will concentrate on a series of writings in which the dichotomy *castizo/mestizo* appears again. Fifteen years after the pioneer book from Giraldo Jaramillo the Spanish historian Francisco Gil Tovar – arrived in Colombia in the 1950’s – writes in 1963 the newspaper article “For a history of Colombian art. The poor foundations of our humble colonial art” [Para una historia del arte en Colombia. Los pobres cimientos de nuestro humilde arte colonial]. Gil Tovar explains that the Nuevo Reino de Granada didn’t have the fortunes of Nueva España and Peru viceroyalties, note even the one of the audience of Quito. The Nueva Granada inferiority – says Gil Tovar- have no comparison even with the case of Buenos Aires. The author speculates that this happened because “Spain did not found in the Nuevo Reino a strong race and a native culture that deserved the honor of being a contestant” (Gil Tovar, 1963). This “competition” between cultures was an aspect the author care especially for and about this then adds “the native that formed the population base – except for the goldsmith- did not show high artistic work abilities”.¹¹ Because for Gil Tovar there were no big myths among the Nueva Granada natives in comparison with the settlers from other territories, to the point that Spaniards did not have to construct on the natives

¹¹ España no halló en esta tierra [el Nuevo Reino] una raza fuerte y una cultura indígena que mereciera el honor de competir con ella” “...el indio que formó la población básica – exceptuando en lo que tenía de orfebre – no mostró capacidades de trabajo artístico de altura”.

ruined buildings for they had none architectonic ambition. Just temples made of straw and mud. In addition to that “the powerful Spaniard families didn’t send to this territory from which they received little news as to encourage them” Instead – following the author – “just penniless second order people” from which concludes “Colonial art in Colombia developed humble and enterprisingly within those conditions and thus produced what could be awaited and maybe more”¹² (Gil Tovar, 1963).

Shortly after another Spanish historian – Santiago Sebastián – seems to answer with his article “Problems in Nueva Granada architecture. Colonial art authenticity and value” [Problemática de la arquitectura neogranadina. Autenticidad y valor del arte colonial] (1963). Sebastián arrived in Colombia to finish his Ph.D., and recalls in his writing the course on Hispanic American Art gave by the Argentinean architect Mario Buschiazzo, which together with Enrique Marco Dorta and Diego Angulo Iníiguez visited Cali and Popayan in the 1960’s (AA. VV., 2006: 28). The momentous of Sebastian’s perspective is that he suggests not worrying about “pure beauty” but in what he calls “impure, historic and particular beauties on Nueva Granada architecture” (Sebastián, 1963). Instead of Gil Tovar’s speculations on race, Sebastian quotes a 1550 Royal Decree [real cédula] in which Spanish Crown suggests that in the Nuevo Reino de Granada “the houses should be humble and without superfluous things”, that was reinforced by another decree in 1788 that order for San Francisco Temple at Popayan not to be ornamented with extraordinary figures that would obscure the whole (Sebastián, 1963). The historian conclusions target the Spanish Crown interference in Nueva Granada aesthetics. In the rest of his text seeks to demonstrate the aforementioned architecture specificities as well as defend them from the 19th century analyst’s misunderstandings, referring to German, English, French and North American, so distant and critic with Colonial aesthetics.

In Sebastian’s later writings, such as “Problems in Nueva Granada aesthetics. The French influence on our colonial art” (1964), and “Artistic relationship between Mexico and Nueva Granada. Forms and elements in our colonial art”¹³ (1965), the author continues his analysis avoiding the problem of *artistic mestizaje* or *mestizo styles*, to focus on the active artists in Hispanic America and the diverse sources taken and adapted on their work. The clearest conclusion on the subject appears in a little Nueva Granada art guide entitled “Artistic Itineraries of Nueva Granada”, issued in 1965, where explains:

I think the term of mestizo art is not that accurate for it may lead to confuse aesthetics with ethnics, because it has too much present biological process, and in the same way it is desired to explain the artistic. Where there is a mestizo form one thinks immediately in an Indian or

¹² “Las familias poderosas españolas no enviaron a sus miembros a este territorio de que recibían [...] escasas noticias poco capaces de mover a entusiasmo” “solo segundones sin fortuna” de lo que concluye “el arte colonial en Colombia desarrolló se, humilde y esforzadamente, dentro de este cuadro y dentro de él [...] produjo lo que podía esperarse y quizá algo más.”

¹³ “Problemas de la estética neogranadina. La influencia francesa en nuestro arte colonial” (1964) y “Relaciones artísticas entre México y la Nueva Granada. Formas y elementos en nuestro arte colonial” (1965).

Creole artist. We should not forget that a style is determined by its characteristics not by its maker. The first *mestizos* were not the children of White and Indian, but Spaniards that felt bewitched by American soil. Also hear it was repeated shyly – let’s say – Horace’s *Graecia capta*, and the conquerors were conquest (AA. VV., 2006: 67).

This clearly formalist view, Wölfflin like, is a history of art without artists – as we know Colonial Art has a few known names – which apparently would finish with the *mestizo/castizo* discussion. But some lines ahead Sebastian explains that there was a strong cultural fusion in Nueva Granada in which European Culture prevailed over Indian because it was best structured (AA. VV., 2006: 67).

Gil Tovar in turn, redraft his ideas and radicalized them. For the *Congreso Eucarístico Internacional* in 1968, Francisco Gil Tovar and Carlos Arbeláez Camacho published *El arte colonial en Colombia*. On the introduction Gil Tovar explains that *mestizaje* and artistic Nueva Granada creole [criollismo] emerged from a double mediocrity: the inexistence in Nueva Granada of a “brilliant tradition” as Aztec or Inca and the lack of “High coat of arms that feared the blood impurity” in the Spaniards that conquered and inhabited it. The result was a “mediocre people, suited for give an art at his measure” (Gil Tovar, 1968: 11) with a weak *will form* and therefore so distant from Mexican and Peruvian cases (Gil Tovar, 1968: 12-13), in sum a “mestizaje without mestizaje” author of an unskillfulness art assimilable to *castes*. In his article “*Artistic Mestizaje*” for Salvat Encyclopedia of Colombian Art, issued in 1975, Gil Tovar explains that active artists in Colombia suited and went away from Spanish model simultaneous and unconsciousness by accepting “Hispanic solutions and purposes never fully understood” over which they made variations; for Gil Tovar Colonial Art came from a hybridization in which *White* dominate *Indian* and *African*, that’s to say “biologically and anthropologically it has to be the hybrid son from different race parents” from which derived a taxonomic classification of Hispanic-Indian and Portuguese-Indian Art and on a minor degree Indo-African, Afro-Indian, Euro-Indian, Indo-European, Hispanic-Indo-African, Afro-Hispanic and Indo-Afro-Hispanic; in conclusion a system of *aesthetic castes*, where the dominant “expressive form” determined which prefix came first. In Nueva Granada, says Gil Tovar the “Hispanic-Indian *mestizaje*” produced the “arch-headband” [arco-diadema] which from a European perspective would be a “poorly done semi-circular arch and decorated with questionable taste” but for the research “historic-artistic based on anthropology and semiology” results a “singular sign of *mestizaje*, no matter whether it likes or not or if it would have some aesthetic significance”.

As a conclusion to this exploration of texts issued between 1861 and 1975, we could think that the barbarism behind the historic articulation of Colonial Art –following Benjamin- ranged between utter racism and Euro centrism. Among 19th century Civil War or 20th century political violence, there was a no less noisy confrontation of *mestizo* versus *castizo*, between the impure mix and the mediocre

purity. This paradox recalls the thought of Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno (1864-1936), often quoted by Sebastian, which differentiates between the big events *History* in brief time lapses of change, and what he calls *Intra-History* alluding the historic life on long period of time; *History* is the political befall of big changes narrates by the press, whereas *Intra-History* is tradition understood as the sedimentation of centuries, his legacy brought to us by the silent transmission of “men with no history” (Unamuno, [1895] 1916: 38-40). These two temporal dimensions recalls Braudel’s *longue durée* concept, even though Unamuno anticipates the French historian by half a century. The dialectic between History and Intra-History appeared on the essay “The eternal tradition” [la tradición eterna] that belong to the book “On Casticism” [En torno al casticismo] (1895). On this essay Unamuno reflects about the problem of cultural purity facing renovation and change understood as two faces of the same coin: “the sun of the future draws the shadow of past” (Unamuno, [1895] 1916: 26). The *pure*, that’s to say the *castizo* – says the philosopher – is not the “original” or the proper of a nation, but the “things that comes from the origin” or the common to all the human experience.¹⁴ For that reason is more important the humble in daily life than the artistic depiction grandiloquence: “we prefer art to life, when the darkest life worth infinitely more than the greatest work of art”¹⁵ (Unamuno, [1895] 1916: 40). Thus paraphrasing both Benjamin and Unamuno, as the *angel of history* looking backwards what is destroyed, we are building historiographic views upon which we project our more present questions, as the sun of future draws our shadow on the past.

¹⁴ Is a wordplay in Spanish, because “Originario” is a word close to “original” but the first means the things that come from the origin, while the former denotes mainly something *unique*.

¹⁵ “Preferimos el arte a la vida, cuando la vida más oscura y humilde vale infinitamente más que la más grande obra de arte.”