

MEMORIES OF A FUTURE: LOOKING AT PEDRO MANRIQUE
FIGUEROA, PRECURSOR OF COLLAGE
IN COLOMBIA

Julian Serna

158 Pages

August 2012

Through the case of study, this thesis explores how our neoliberal present articulates the experiences of the 1970s cultural militancy through the concepts of mourning and cultural memory.

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Through the figure of Pedro Manrique Figueroa—Precursor of Collage in Colombia—is studied the way our neoliberal present remembers the experiences of the 1970s communist cultural militancy. This paper focuses on the experiences and hopes of cultural agents such as the Social Realist artists in order to explore how their cultural production is presently articulated. A special emphasis is done over the inherent nostalgia for the future that those ruins of Marxism bring to us today. Following the logic of Marxism, the socialist regimes saw themselves as the vanguards of history. In this sense, the advocates of Socialism adjudicate to themselves a commitment to a future for humanity that—as recent history has shown—was never fully realized. At least for this century, the evolutionary notion of history proposed by Marxism has ended for us. In that sense, Figueroa's figure is an expression of grief for an alternative future that today seems impossible. Although, Neoliberalism has come to be the dominant social discourse worldwide, the ghost of Manrique Figueroa is a figure that refuses to be archived as a fossil of the cultural products of human society. His haunting presence represents a past that resists a symbolic closure. The figure of Manrique is a heteronym constructed by an interdisciplinary group of contemporary artists led by Lucas Ospina. The specter of

Figueroa is an uncanny presence of an artist still talking about social justice, making the familiar (yet suppressed) discourse of Marxism come back to question our present conditions of existence.

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JULIAN SERNA

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Finally, I would like to thank you—the specter from the future—for your wiliness to dance with me for a while.

J.S.

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CHAPTER I

DANCING WITH GHOST

As an investigation group we decided to face the challenge of reconstructing the forgotten story of the place inhabited by Judith Marquez as an artist, editor and arts manager. To do this, we executed an extensive search for primary sources from which we were able to situate the footprints left by the artist throughout her career. As a complement of this search, we were also got interviews of some of her friends and relatives who shared with us their memories and opinions which gave us the necessary hints to reconstruct the image of Marquez and the whereabouts of some of her works. [...] We hope that this book will contribute with new perspectives that could illuminate some circumstances that have determined our history of art; a history where there are still some many narrations in oblivion waiting to be dusted off.

En un Lugar de la Plástica (Carmen María Jaramillo, Nicolás Gómez, Felipe González, Jorge Jaramillo, Natalia Paillié and Julián Serna)

It has been a while since I last read these words. These lines are taken from the introduction of the first investigation project in which I worked as an art historian. In the last semesters of my undergraduate experience, I had the chance to get involved in a research group on modern Colombian art history led by Carmen Maria Jaramillo. As suggested in the introduction, the group was formed through our common interest in examining and complementing the few books that have constructed the memory of Colombian art. From that perspective, the goal of the group was to salvage the work of particular artists who played a significant role in the

consolidation of Modern Art in the country but for some reason were forgotten in the construction of the literature of Colombian art history. The first visible product of our work as a group was a book¹ and anthological exhibition about the work of Judith Marquez between 1954 and 1960.

Judith Marquez (1925-1994) worked during the 1950s as one of the pioneers in Colombian modern art, being the first female abstract painter and the editor of the first specialized art magazine in the country: *Plástica*. At the time we started our research, there was not really much information available about her. We knew about Marquez through the remanding copies of her magazine that also contained some black and white reproductions of her paintings. There was also a photograph of one of her abstract paintings accompanied with a small review of her work in the encyclopedia of Colombian art, and one of her paintings preserved in a public art collection. Nothing more. In the construction of an archive about the artist's life and work, we spent almost two years digging through newspaper libraries, compendia of art catalogues and private art collections. With the sum of all that information, it was later possible to gather the remains of her work and articulate an image of the artist through which she could be remembered by the art institution of the present.

The exhibition in the Gilberto Alzate Avendaño Foundation (*Figure 1*) opened on the night of August 16, 2007. I still remember it as if it were yesterday. All the members of the group were suited up with an accessory of the same color as the first issue of the magazine. The space was packed with visitors; members of the contemporary artistic field, our friends, colleagues, and relatives of the Marquez family came to join in the commemoration of the artist. Looking at it from a distance, I can now see myself walking through the galleries in my magenta tie greeting

¹ Jaramillo, Camen Maria, Nicolás Gómez, Felipe González, Jorge Jaramillo, Natalia Paillié and Julián Serna. *Plástica dieciocho* (Bogotá: Fundación Gilberto Alzate Avendaño and Ediciones Uniandes, 2007).

everyone in a type of memorial service hosted by us. Somehow, this tribute to Marquez was a mortuary ritual where all the assistants to the show gathered over the remains of the artist's work to acknowledge her departure from Colombian art and honor the importance that she had for the inheritors of the artistic field of the present.

In this retrospective reading of my practice as an art historian, the words of Clifford Geertz come to mind. Regarding these kinds of rituals, the anthropologist explained that funeral rites and mourning practices are meant to “maintain the continuity of human life.”² This is a prevailing social process among cultures, wherein the survivors congregate over the deceased to express their respects and affection as they collectively yield the impulse to follow the corpse into his grave. Following Geertz's interpretation, these practices “focus around this paradoxical desire both to maintain the tie in the face of death and to break the bond immediately and utterly, and to insure the domination of the will to live over the tendency to despair.”³ In this view of mourning as a social process, the experiences around the extinct subject are articulated by the living as memories that logically connect the past with the present.

Following this thesis, we can go on to elaborate upon Freud's work on the subject. It is commonly understood that Freud's idea of mourning focused on the individual response to loss. In my limited knowledge of psychoanalysis, I find the description provided by Freud to be indisputably true. But at the same time, I think that Freud's assertion that mourning is an individual response to loss could be extended in order to explain the relevance of the concept for a collective. In my approach to Freud's paper, I think that the understanding of mourning could be shifted from an individual response to loss to a process that describes how mourners

² Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 162.

³ Ibid.

engage with the lost object as well as with the society that is still here. Taking it a little further, this relationship could be understood as the dialogue that exists between the lost object and the present society in which the mourner acts as the catalyzer of this social process. Keeping this in mind, allow me to proceed with a brief close reading of Freud's *Mourning and Melancholia*.

In the introduction to his essay, the psychoanalyst describes mourning as “the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction [...] it is also well worth notice that [...] mourning involves grave departures from the normal attitude to life.”⁴ In this sense, mourning could be understood as a relationship between the lost object, the individual who reacts to its loss, *and* the society from which the mourner distances himself. A page later, the author clarifies the manner in which the mourner disconnects from his immediate surroundings through the “loss of interest in the outside world—in so far as it does not recall him [the lost object]—the [...incapacity] to adopt any new object of love [...and the] turning away from any activity that is not connected with thoughts of him.”⁵ During this process of self-withdrawal from the present, the mourner psychically extends the life of the lost objects through memory work until he is “met by the verdict of reality that the object no longer exists; and the ego, [is] confronted as it were with the question whether it shall share this fate.”⁶ Complementing this reading, Dominick LaCapra further explains that (once the individual decides to let go of his attachment to the object) mourning “brings the possibility of engaging trauma and achieving a reinvestment in, or recathexis of, life that allows one to begin again.”⁷

In the act of engaging with the past in which the object existed and in the

⁴ Freud, Sigmund. “Mourning and Melancholia.” In: *Freud-Complete Works* (Ivan Smith Edition, 2011), 3041.

⁵ Ibid, 3042.

⁶ Ibid, 3051.

⁷ LaCapra, Dominick. *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore, London: John Hopkins University Press, 2001), 66.

present of a community, the mourner could be addressed as a social agent in charge of articulating the relationship between what was and what is. This reading of Freud's ideas describes a process in which individuals—as well as entire communities—can engage with the losses of the past to gain distance from them. Precisely for this kind of reading of psychoanalysis, these concepts have gained strength in the field of History and particularly in Trauma Studies. In this area of inquiry, scholars such as LaCapra have expanded the ideas of Freud to map this process onto the social. About the social application of the idea of mourning, the historian suggests a conception of grief as a kind of homeopathic socialization process that involves the articulation of the past as memories in order to confront traumatic events. This allows the subject to gain critical distance from the experience of loss in order to “distinguish between past and present and to recognize something as having happened to one (or one's people) back then that is related to, but not identical with, here and now.”⁸

In this way of conceptualizing the continuity of time through mourning, there is a conception of time that differs from the modern narrative of history as progress. This could be directly connected to the ideas of the *Angel of History* proposed by Walter Benjamin. In this conception, history is an angel that is caught by the storm of progress with his face turned back to the past. As the wind is so strong, the angel is unable to close his wings as he is pushed “irresistibly into the future.”⁹ Meanwhile, he is only able to see “one single catastrophe, which unceasingly piles rubble on top of rubble and hurls it before his feet.”¹⁰ In that sense, we can understand the unfolding of history as a series of irremediable losses within a society. Through the process of mourning, life can continue its course by differentiating the moment when a

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Benjamin, Walter. *On the Concept of History*. Trans, Dennis Redmond, 2005 (Zodiac Slorg Gamma), http://www.efn.org/~dredmond/Theses_on_History.html. (accessed March 17, 2012)

¹⁰ Ibid.

particular catastrophe occurred and the present time. As mentioned earlier, seeing mourning as a social process, the mourner could be understood as the catalyzer of the dialogue between what was a past catastrophe and what is present in the storm of progress.

Viewing mourning as a form of articulation of past experiences into memories that logically connect the past with the present, there are authors such as LaCapra or Ernst Van Alphen¹¹ who, consistent with Freud, see this process as a necessary reaction to loss. Contrary to an interminable grief or melancholia—which Freud addresses as the pathological forms of the life/death relationship—mourning is conceived as a way of putting the dead to rest. It is a psychic attempt to ontologize the remains of the lost object, to identify its dead body, and to localize the place it occupies in the present.¹²

Returning to our work as art historians, it is interesting how these ideas were manifested in the section of the introduction quoted in the first page of this chapter. At the time we wrote that document, most of us did not have the theoretical background to understand the structures in which our work was operating. However, I still see that there was an intuitive awareness of those processes manifested in the insistence on highlighting the use of primary sources to give an identity to the remaining works of Marquez in order to determine the place she occupies now. Furthermore, we can see this attempt to recall a life from the past as a form of mourning, taking in account the process of self-retrieval described by Freud. According to psychoanalysis, this is a stage where each memory of the lost object is

¹¹ Van Alphen, Ernst. “Symptoms of Discursivity: Experience Memory and Trauma.” In: *Acts of Memory, Cultural Recall in the Present*, ed Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe and Leo Spitzer (Hanover, London: Dartmouth College, 1999).

¹² Derrida, Jacques. *Specters of Marx: the State of Debt, the Work of Mourning & the New International* (New York, London: Routledge, 1994), 9.

brought back in a kind of “hallucinatory wishful psychosis.”¹³ Through this stage, “reality-testing has shown that the loved object no longer exists, and it proceeds to demand that all libido shall be withdrawn from its attachments to that object.”¹⁴ In this sense, I can venture to suggest that art historians are professional mourners of the losses of the art world, keeping in mind that most of the works available in the field correspond to past accounts of a single artist or period.

This suggestion is aligned with the work of Whitney Davis in his essay *Winckelmann Divided: Mourning the Death of Art History*. In this essay, Davis explores the work of one of the founders of the discipline from a psychoanalytical perspective. In his paper, the contemporary art historian points out that since the time of Winckelmann, till the 1990s, the practice of art history has regularly been presented as an objective historicist account of artistic practices. Since the 1760s, the paradigm of the discipline was based on the claim of objectivity founded on the “suppression of the subjective reality of the historians own place and taste; and its claim to comprehend history through chronological and causal analysis.”¹⁵ Through the reading of one of Winckelmann’s works on the discipline, Davis contradicts these assumptions. He points out that the discipline conceived by the German intellectual “is invented as division and what we might call an endless acknowledgement of loss, an interminable mourning.”¹⁶ This assertion is made to recognize the ever-present subjective intervention of scholars in the manner they construct their subjects of study as manifestations of something that has been lost for the time in which the historian is writing.

Davis further explains that art history is “the history of what has been lost in,

¹³ Freud. “Mourning and Melancholia,” 3042.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Davis, Whitney. “Winckelmann Divided: Mourning the Death of Art History ” In: *The Art of Art History, A Critical Anthology*, ed. Donald Preziosi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 36.

¹⁶ Ibid, 38. Original emphasis.

and to, history. But one does not beguine an art history unless what has been lost was once not unredeemably lost in an irreducibly past history one precisely did not witness.”¹⁷ In this sense, the writing of art history starts from an excess of meaning wherein for the scholar “the loss must be one’s own history to be ‘witnessed’ there. It is only there that it is being seen to being lost.”¹⁸ From this perspective, the art historian is writing as an observer of the loss of something in the present that went extinct in the departing of the subjects of their study. Therefore, “as an historian one writes about the loss as having taken place in history outside and before oneself, a loss for art; the subjective loss of the object becomes the objective Loss of the object.”¹⁹ In other words, art history is a kind of wishful psychosis where all the memories of a particular object are brought to the present in order for us to acknowledge the importance of its corpse as we let it go. In the words of Davis:

As Winckelmann’s practice implies, the life of art history is the mourning of the loss of the history of art. Therefore the *death* of art history would be the loss of its life-in-mourning. But art history could not be due to loss alone. Art history requires not only the loss of its objects but also, and much more important, its witnessing of that loss—that is, our witnessing not of the loss it self, since it took place long ago, but of the fact that what has been lost is, in fact, being-lost for us. The history of art is lost, but art history is still with us; and although art history often attempts to bring the object back to life, finally it is our means of laying it to rest, of putting it in its history and taking it out of our own, where we have witnessed its departure.²⁰

The work of Jacques Derrida about the relationship between mourning and history comes as a great complement to the ideas of the art historian. Following the philosopher, we can further explain how the idea of mourning is directly related to the notion of inheritance. According to the French author, “all the questions on the

¹⁷ Ibid, 40.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid, 43. Original emphasis.

subject of being or of what is to be (or not to be) are questions of inherence.”²¹

Through the practice of laying the past to rest, one is able to come to terms with those ghosts in order to determine how the present is closely related to what they did but also different from the moment that they existed. In this regard, “inheritance is never a given, it is always a task.”²² We live in an inherited world, which means that we inhabit a quilt of borrowed languages, ideas, names and material elaborations.²³ It is our responsibility to determine the ghosts that we want to share our present with, in order to localize their remains and give them their proper place in our time. In this sense, to claim the right of inheritance is to answer the pledge that the past has left for its future in the form of the archive.²⁴

Continuing with the ideas of the philosopher, the archive is a physical place where the past was saved from its decomposition as it ensures the possibility of its memorization and its repetition in another time.²⁵ In the next chapter, I will expand on the relationship between cultural memory and the archive. But for now, this mention of the storage of relevant memories in a single corpus is meant to talk about the relationship that it has with the future. As mentioned, in the conception of time we are following here, the archive is always linked to the future. It is the place where the present mummifies the corpses that it considers important for someone to remember it by. In the words of Derrida, this place is where resides “the question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow. The archive: if we want to know what this will have meant, we will only know in the times to come.”²⁶

²¹ Derrida. “Specters of Marx,” 67.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid, 136.

²⁴ Derrida, Jacques. “Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression.” *Diacritics*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (Summer, 1995): 18.

²⁵ Ibid, 14.

²⁶ Ibid, 27.

In this sense, the art historian, as someone with the competence to interpret the archive, is one who will respond to the ghosts that we stored for him in the present. It is that future historian who will—perhaps—call us to his presence in order to invite us to dance with him. This conjuration of our present made by the future might be done for two completely opposite reasons. On the one hand, this incarnation of our voice could be done as an invitation for us to keep on dialoguing with the future. This is an actualization of our voice in the archive where we could still have a place in the historian's time.²⁷ On the other hand, our mourning could be done as a form of exorcism where our spirits will be convoked to put them to sleep, eradicating them from the historian's present.²⁸ Only the archive gives us this possibility to interact with the future. But as Derrida claims, only in the future will we know what the things that we have stored for it (the future) have meant, probably "not tomorrow but in the times to come, later on or perhaps never."²⁹

Following this line of thought, it is worth invoking the words of Walter Benjamin in his thesis on history again. In the manner that the present rewrites its history as a claim for the inheritance of a glorious past, Benjamin states that the historian tends to only empathize with the victorious ghost. In keeping with this, he points out that "all rulers are the heirs of those who conquered before them."³⁰ This is to say that in the narrative of a hegemonic history, all those who have "emerged victorious participates to this day in the triumphal procession in which the present rulers step over those who are lying prostrate."³¹ Cultural history is inclined to dance only with a particular kind of ghost. Benjamin criticizes this tendency as something lacking of a dialectical understanding of the past that could provide any reparation for the injustices performed by the rulers in their path to victory. In this sense, "there

²⁷ Derrida. "Specters of Marx," 49-50.

²⁸ Ibid, 58.

²⁹ Derrida. "Archive fever," 28.

³⁰ Benjamin. "On the concept of History."

³¹ Ibid.

is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism.”³²

As a possible way of retribution for the violations of history that are preserved in the transmission from one inheritor to an other, Benjamin proposes a radicalization of the dialectical logic of historical materialism.³³ As conceptualized by the author in 1940, an ethical engagement with the past would imply “to brush history against the grain.”³⁴ This means, to perform a reflection on the borders of the established narrative of cultural history that the ghosts oppressed by it inhabit. Benjamin argues for a conscious distancing from a hegemonic history in order to attend to the voices of the subjugated by an official account of the past. He is thus asking the historians of the future to quit being accomplices to the violations made during the edification of history.

1.2.

Scholars working in fields such as Gender or Post-colonial studies responded to this call several decades later. Among the several examples that can be referenced, the works of authors such as Edward Said,³⁵ Griselda Pollock³⁶ or the collective Modernidad/Colonialidad come to mind.³⁷ In the last couple of decades, this kind of

³² Ibid.

³³ Caygill, Howard. “Walter Benjamin’s Concept of Cultural History” In: *The Cambridge Companion to Walter Benjamin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), http://cco.cambridge.org/extract?id=ccolo521793297_CCOLo521793297A006 (accessed June 1, 2012).

³⁴ Benjamin. “On the concept of History.”

³⁵ In “Orientalism” (1978), the literary scholar explores the romanticized images of Asia and the Middle East created by Europe as justification for its imperial ambitions.

³⁶ In “Vision and Difference” (1988), the art historian explores the sexual politics involved in the formation of modern culture and modern art in the turn of the 20th century.

³⁷ This collective (composed, among other Latin American scholars, by Anibal Quijano, Edgardo Lander, Walter Mignolo, Arturo Escobar and Santiago Castro-Gomez) made the most decisive contribution to Postcolonial studies from a Latin American perspective. Their work is usually linked with the notion of decolonialism.

writing against the grain of history has become a common practice in academia.

Even the work we constructed around Judith Marquez could be seen as a modest attempt to attend to Benjamin's call. But, as the experience of inviting Marquez to the present showed, this is a particularly difficult task. Even though she was a fairly well-known artist in her time (not very long ago), a group of seven people spent a little longer than two years in order to localize her remains in small reviews of her work dispersed during the six years she was actively working as an editor and artist.

Like Marquez, there are thousands of intellectuals whose work never made it into an archive from where we can hear their voices in the present. They are invisible ghosts as the structure of the archive itself determined in advance what are the meanings that the past can provide for the future. Following the tradition of a hegemonic history, a conventional archive is a vision of the present constructed by its rulers for their inheritors in the future. About this situation, Roberto Franzosi confesses that this is one of the main problems in the construction of historical knowledge. Therefore, the truth claims of these historical narratives are based on data created by others for purposes that are not aligned with their intentions. Hence, the logic of the materials stored in the archives is often forced in order to build a narrative of the past. In the words of the historical sociologist:

The study of subordinate groups posed serious historiographical and methodological challenges for social historians. The culture of these groups has historically been largely oral, and, therefore, lost. What written records remain —upon which the historian must depend— were written in general by individuals who were more or less openly

The central thesis of the group is that European colonialism form a central role in the process of modernization worldwide. Through the European expansion, the emergence of modern institutions (such as art, science of capitalism) is explained throughout the 16th and 19th century history.

attached to the dominant culture.³⁸

Those ghosts of the past who did not become part of the culture that controlled the archives at the time, remain for us as virtual heroes. This was not necessarily because they lacked the qualities or deeds to keep on dancing with us in the present, but because the environment in which they lived, denied them the possibility of an afterlife. In this regard, the subject of study in this thesis may be understood as a form of grief for those thousands of artists (and aesthetic practices) who never made it to the archives of art history from which they could some day be professionally mourned. In the catalogue of the first exhibition of Pedro Manrique Figueroa, its curator Lucas Ospina states:

This event would serve as a form of recognition to all of those persons that with the vocation for creation have found themselves isolated from their potential. A tribute to the possible artists that through the day-to-day elusive circumstances are driven to paths of misfortune.³⁹

This public exposure of Manrique opened on April 11, 1996 in the Santa Fé Gallery (Bogota). The title of the show was *Homenaje a Pedro Manrique Figueroa: Precursor del Collage en Colombia* [Tribute to PMF: Precursor of Collage in Colombia]. As the title asserts, the exhibition was a commemoration to the unknown father of collage in Colombia. For the show, Ospina gathered all the archival materials necessary to construct an image of the artist, assembled a group of Manrique's collages, and invited a significant number of contemporary artists to participate with one of their works in this tribute. Following the logic of Figueroa's life, the evidence of his first solo exhibition is limited and imprecise. There is not a single photographic record about the events that took place in 1996. What remain for us in the present are the blurry memories of its participants accompanied by a small

³⁸ Franzosi, Roberto. "Historical Knowledge and Evidence." In: *Handbook of Contextual political analysis*, ed. Robert Goodin and Chales Tilly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 442.

³⁹ Ospina, Lucas. *Homenaje a Pedro Manrique Figueroa: Precursor del Collage en Colombia*. (Bogota: Exhibition catalogue of Galeria Santa Fé, April 1996).

catalogue that exclusively provides fragments of the information regarding the life and work of Manrique. From the historicist short-sighted perspective of truth claims based on the archival material, it is almost as if this exhibition never happened.

In a later account, a witness of the exhibition—Victor Manuel Rodríguez—wrote a couple of documents that may function as the memory of the event reconstructed from his experience. According to Rodríguez, the exhibition made “gala of the display of signs and proof of the real, typical of archivalist discipline and the logic of the historical narrative.”⁴⁰ In concordance with the later shows that have explored Manrique’s life, I imagine this first exhibition in a similar manner. I imagine there was an overwhelming display of documents (maybe even some of Manrique’s personal souvenirs) accompanied by a few small pieces attributed to the artist. In the catalogue, there are merely seven reproductions of the artist’s work that was probably the only pieces of Manrique showed in one of the largest exhibition spaces in the country. This is probably the reason why Rodríguez claims that none of the works of Pedro Manrique Figueroa was present in the exhibition. As he remembers, the display only “showed artworks based on his [PMF] collages as well as objects and historical documents about his life and the intellectual atmosphere that surrounded him.”⁴¹

Twenty artists decided to respond to Ospina’s invitation to do a piece in response to the work of the unknown figure of Manrique. As the curator of the show later explained, this space for involvement of different voices in the project is a mechanism to open the readings of Figueroa’s exhibition as a “tribute to collage, its

⁴⁰ Rodríguez, Víctor Manuel. “Introducción a los Evangelios de Manrique, según Francisco, según Lucas y según Eduardo.” *Valdez*, No. 2 (c. 1996): 28.

⁴¹ Rodríguez, Víctor Manuel. “Cold War Legacies Otherwise: Latin American Art and Art History in Colonial Times” (Rochester, NY: PhD diss., University of Rochester, 2009), 1.

precursor and a collective notion of history.”⁴² In the list of names, recognized figures of Colombian art like Maripaz Jaramillo, Jaime Cerón, Wilson Diaz and Álvaro Barrios stand out.⁴³ According to Rodríguez, most of the artists’ responses coincided in the desire to highlight the injustices of the selective recollection of history, the discriminatory institutional blindness, and a parody of the unreliable human memory.⁴⁴ In one of the few press commentaries about the exhibition, art critic Eduardo Serrano made the assertion that Manrique was an invention of Ospina. In the same review, he states that the participation of the other artists merely “contributed to give credibility to this incisive parody.”⁴⁵ About this reductive approach to the exhibition, Rodríguez responded in the introduction of his PhD thesis:

Almost everyone knew this. However, for those who knew it, the homage was a collaborative project that mimicked the rhetoric of Latin American art history, bringing to light its obsessive emphasis on connoisseurship, authorship, and authenticity and its links to modernist discourse. Latin American art history persistently insisted on linking Latin American art to national identity and culture, turning art practices into forms of social and textual affiliation that attempted to anchor them to the linear time of modernity.⁴⁶

Without disagreeing with the insightful reading of Rodríguez, I see the project of Ospina as the tomb of an unknown soldier. The gesture of the curator is like the mausoleums without recognizable bodies that have been constructed all around the world to pay tribute to the unidentified soldiers who disappeared in combat. The exhibition is therefore assembled to acknowledge the impossibility for the present to find the corpses of the ghosts that had been stepped over by the triumphant

⁴² Thomann, Georg Paul (Lucas Ospina). “El Secreto Mejor Guardado del Arte Colombiano.” In: *Supplementary material DVD Un Tigre de Papel* (Bogotá: Congo Films, 2007), 4.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Rodríguez. “Introducción a los Evangelios,” 29.

⁴⁵ Serrano, Eduardo. “Un artista que a pesar de ser una ficción ha ejercido considerablemente influencia en el arte nacional” *Semana*, May 27, 1996.

⁴⁶ Rodríguez. “Cold War Legacies Otherwise,” 6-7.

procession of the inheritors of a hegemonic history. Or, to recall the last words of the exhibition catalogue, this event is made to pay tribute to the possible artists that were driven by paths of misfortune. As the complementary contribution of the other artists demonstrated, the exhibition of Manrique is offered to its participants as a place where the present can articulate its grief when a missing body makes the wish to mourn those elusive ghosts.

Since this first exhibition, the narration of Figueroa has been expanded in the form of a collaborative project. This project consists of a series of art exhibitions, collages, texts, conferences and documentary films about the life, ideas and works of a fictitious social realist artist. The structure of the project follows the logic of the literary concept of the heteronym. It is an imaginary author invented by the contemporary Colombian artists Lucas Ospina and Bernardo Ortiz, in which the narrative construction works as a figure to explore the recent history of Colombia. As a heteronym, a series of works have been created on Figueroa's behalf, supported by all the characteristic rhetorical strategies of art history to mark Figueroa's distinct trades as an artist. This was done in order to position him in dialogue with the past experiences of the country. Since the first exhibition, the project has proposed a conversation between the present and the unidentified ghosts of the past. In this conversation, the legacies of the virtual heroes are conjured into our present in order to question our current conditions of existence.

The project of Manrique Figueroa operates mainly as a rumor. It is constantly enlarged by voices of different viewers through which an oral tradition about the recent history of Colombia is created. This space of the interaction of personal memories with some archival support and the presence of this phantasmagorical author is a strategy to make its viewers articulate the experiences of an untold part of the country's cultural history. As we will explore in the next chapter, through the

focus of Manrique's personal story the experiences of a generation of left-wing intellectuals could be saved from oblivion. The invocation of this imaginary subject provides a lens through which the present-day viewer can perform an act of memory about the events of recent history and the dreams of a socialist future in 1970.

1.3.

Juanito Laguna, a child growing in the slums of the 1960s Buenos Aires.⁴⁷ Dr. Peter Ameisenhaufen, German biologist who ruined his academic reputation by pursuing his research in the field of cryptozoology and documenting the genetic mishaps of animals from all over the world.⁴⁸ Baldwin Antinous Stein, an undeclared 120-year old gay man from the San Francisco Bay Area.⁴⁹ Ramona Montiel, an early 20th century European immigrant who became a prostitute in her new home in Buenos Aires.⁵⁰ Fae Richards, the Watermelon Woman, an African American lesbian and 1930s Hollywood film actress.⁵¹ Ivan Istochnikov, a cosmonaut who was systematically erased from the official records of Soviet history to avoid government

⁴⁷ Collage project of the painter Antonio Berni. Throughout the decade of the 1960s the Argentinean artist made a series of painting made of rubbish that describes the experiences and points of view of both his fictional characters. Laguna and Ramona Montiel.

⁴⁸ Exhibition project of the photographer Joan Fontcuberta and the writer Pere Formiguera. This heteronym was constructed to present the photographic exhibition "Fauna" (1987). The exhibit showed all the photographic archive and personal notes of Ameisenhaufen work that was supposedly discovered by the Spanish authors.

⁴⁹ Protagonist of the installation of the North American artist Fred Wilson (1993). In a Victorian-era home of the United States the artist recreated in detail the life of the previous inhabitant of that house. All the rooms mapped the history of the character that became a world traveler, a professional portrait photographer and personal friend of Eadweard Muybridge, Marcel Proust and Alfred Stieglitz.

⁵⁰ Project of Berni made in tandem with the images of Laguna.

⁵¹ Main Character of the project of the photographer Zoe Leonard and the filmmaker Cheryl Dunye. The original exhibition of the photographic collection of Richards life was exhibit in the Witney Bialal of 1997 of the project made between 1993 and 1996. In it, was showed Richards photographs as an actress and her personal mementos. As a conclusion of the project the US filmmaker, made a movie about herself in the attempt to construct a documentary that portrayed Richard's life as an icon for the African American lesbians in the cinema industry.

implication in his mysterious disappearance during a routine spacewalk.⁵² Jusep Torres Campalans, a Catalan painter who, with Picasso and Braque developed Cubism, in 1914 became disenchanted with the avant-garde utopias and decided to spend the rest of his days with the Chamula tribe in Mexico.⁵³ Along with Pedro Manrique Figueroa, these are the names that compose a list of the heteronyms that have come to life with the direct contact with visual arts.

Surely the list of these bodiless subjects could be expanded, especially, if one takes into account the heteronyms existing in the fields of literature, music and film. But the reason it is necessary to do this brief overview of the projects that inhabit the realm of the art institution is to point out a distinctive character of these practices that sets them apart from the original literary proposition of Fernando Pessoa. As Nuno Filipe Ribeiro explains, a characteristic of Pessoa's work is that he developed several contemporary authors who were engaged in an ongoing literary discussion. By doing so, the literary critic explains that Pessoa constructed a "new image of the literary space. The literary space is no longer conceived as a homogeneous space [...] each literary character produces a fracture in the dramatic form, that is, a fragmentation of the drama."⁵⁴

During his life, Pessoa gave birth to more than 80 different authors among his semi-heteronyms, sub-heteronyms and heteronyms. According to the Portuguese writer, this rhetorical strategy is used as a way to write outside the restrictions of his own personality. Hence, "I have always found myself, consciously or unconsciously,

⁵² Main character of Joan Fontcuberta's exhibition "Sputnik" (1997). The exhibition showed the personal souvenirs of the cosmonaut and the original photographs in contraposition to the official images of the Soviet space exploration history in which the astronaut was erased.

⁵³ Project of the Spanish writer Max Aub for a book named after the heteronym (1958). In it, there is a compilation of documents about the artist, a short narration of Campalans' life, an interview to the artist made in Mexico and a reproduction of the artist's work.

⁵⁴ Ribeiro, Nuno Filipe. "Pessoa, the plural writing and the sensationalist movement." *Hyperion*, Volume V, issue 2 (November 2010): 78-79.

assuming the character of someone who does not exist, and through whose imagined agency I write.”⁵⁵ From this lead, the notion of the heteronym has been defined as a character with his own worldviews, ideas, forms of writing and their own works published under a distinctive literary style.⁵⁶ Following this logic the Portuguese writer produced multiple texts written in different styles and attributed to specific imaginary subjects.

As an example of the multiple works produced by Pessoa, we can reference famous works such as the *Keeper of Sheep* by Alberto Carreiro or the *Book of Odes* by Ricardo Reis. Different from a heteronym, a semi-heteronym only differs from the original author in his way of thinking or feeling but not in his writing style.⁵⁷ The third category of this literary construction is the sub-heteronym, whose exclusive role is to ensure the circulation of the works of the other literary characters by doing translations of their work or writing essays about them.⁵⁸ From the collection of personalities, Pessoa also created literary and philosophical movements such as the Neo-paganism, Dynamism and Sensationalism among others. By placing his characters within these movements, each one gained a position to interact with the other heteronyms. As they developed their work in concordance to the principles of a particular congregation, they also came into conflict with the opinions and forms of working of the other heteronyms.⁵⁹

Different from the work of the Portuguese writer, what is common to the use of the heteronym as an artistic practice is that these projects work with the life and worldviews of a single character. Most of these projects gather a tremendous number

⁵⁵ Fernando Pessoa quoted by Gray de Castro, Mariana. “Fernando Pessoa and the ‘Shakespeare problem.’” *Journal of Romance Studies*, Vol 9, issue 2 (summer, 2009): 19.

⁵⁶ Ribero. “Pessoa, the Plural Writing,” 75.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 76.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 79.

of documents that demand the viewer's engagement as the witness who constructs the mental image of an absent subject. A second characteristic of these artistic projects is that they use their heteronyms as representative examples of the lives of people who have been culturally rendered invisible. As Jennifer Gonzalez explains in the case of the 120-year old man, "Stein stands in for the lives of all men across the span of 120 years whose freedom is yet uncelebrated. As in Cheryl Dunye's film *The Watermelon Woman* (1996), Wilson created a fictional character to tell the story of actual lives."⁶⁰

Somehow, the heteronym as an art form could be addressed as a strategy to invite the ghosts inhabiting the margins of the social body to dance with us in the present. In the case of Manrique Figueroa, there is a text that can be directly attributed to Ospina, in which he synthetizes the nature of the project. In his words, "one of the lessons that the life and work of Pedro Manrique Figueroa leave us today is the revelation of the unnamable; of the injustice of history to the ones that manifested a spirit of sacrifice, passion and dedication to a revolutionary ideology."⁶¹ The experience of Figueroa is a fictional story constructed to make present the experiences of a tormented ghost in our contemporary reality. His figure stands for the lives of thousands left-wing artist and intellectuals of the second half of the 20th century who suffered from symbolic death through the collapse of communism. As their position as subjects was removed from the symbolical landscape, they came to be a manifestation of the living dead.

According to the conceptual constructions of psychoanalysis, the image of Manrique Figueroa can be addressed as a manifestation of the living dead (or an errant ghost). According to Slavoj Žižek, this phenomenon is the most recurrent fantasy of contemporary mass culture, where the corpses do not "want to stay dead

⁶⁰ González, Jennifer A. *Subject to Display* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008), 105.

⁶¹ Thomann (Ospina). "El secreto mejor guardado."

but return again and again to pose a threat to the living.”⁶² Following the logic of Marxism, the socialist regimes saw themselves as the vanguards of history. In this sense, the advocates of socialism adjudicate to themselves a commitment to a future for humanity that—as recent history has shown—was never fully realized. At least for this century, the Marxist notion of history has ended for us. In concordance with this line of thought, Figueroa’s work is the visible manifestation of the errant ghost of an alternative future that today seems impossible (*Figure 2*).

Neoliberalism has come to be the dominant social discourse worldwide since in the last decades of the 20th century. Under the ethos of neoliberalism, the political system has been constructed over private property in which the notion of the individual has been privileged over that of the community. David Harvey describes this economic doctrine as “the financialization of everything.”⁶³ In a world where everything has a price, all social existence has been organized within the functioning of the market. In this logic, every human being has a basic capital composed of his or her labor power. Thus, as the entrepreneurs of himself or herself, individuals are the only ones in charge of their well being.⁶⁴ Although this has become the dominant logic of the present symbolic landscape, Figueroa is a kind of dinosaur that refuses to be buried as a fossil of the cultural products of human society.

Manrique Figueroa represents a past that resists symbolic closure. Pedro is the errant ghost of an artist still talking about social justice, making the familiar (yet suppressed) discourse of Marxism come back to question our present conditions of existence. He is not the only manifestation of this specter; in this same mind frame, we can also understand social expression such as *Occupy Wall Street* and other

⁶² Žizek, Slavoj. *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000), 16.

⁶³ Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 33.

⁶⁴ See: Foucault, Michel. *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the College de France 1978-1979*. (New York: Plagrave Macmillan, 2008).

claims for social justice in which the ghosts of Marxist revolutions come back with different names to haunt the present. These incarnations are signs of a symbolic disturbance—manifestations of the dead coming back to collect unpaid debts. This is due to a failure in the present to perform the necessary rituals to come to terms with that past. Continuing with Žižek's elucidations:

It is precisely for this reason that the funeral rite exemplifies symbolization at its purest: through it, the dead are inscribed in the text of symbolic tradition, they are assured that, in spite of their death, they will 'continue to live' in the memory of the community. The 'return of the living dead' is, on the other hand, the reverse of the proper funeral rite. While the latter implies a certain reconciliation, an acceptance of loss, the return of the dead signifies that they cannot find their proper place in the text of tradition.⁶⁵

Pedro Manrique Figueroa is an endless grief for a death that the present will never be able to compensate for. Like a monument for an unknown soldier, in which a government acknowledges its incapacity to compensate for the pain of the families whose relatives vanished in defense of the country. For example, in Colombia, following the logic of these memorials spread around the world, the *Monumento a los Soldados Caídos en Acción* [Monument to the Soldiers Fell in Action] states: "Colombia is thankful with its heroes of all times, fell in defense of the country's land, liberty and law. Only God knows the names of those braves."⁶⁶ In both cases, what the present can do is to construct a visible marker to pay tribute to the ghosts that we are unable to find a place for in the dance of the present. In the case of Manrique, we could further say that he is a ghost that refuses to rest. He is a living dead that, through the insistent work of the participants in the project, returns again and again to question the present. As I will argue in the conclusion of this thesis, Pedro is a manifestation of a never-ending grief for the loss of a socialist future. It is the

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ *Monumento a los Héroes Caídos en Acción* (Bogotá: Centro administrativo Nacional, 2006).

affirmation of an absence, the affirmation that some of the ideas his ghost represents are lacking in the contemporary social order.

1.4.

Eduardo Serrano pointed out one of Manrique's main trades in his brief review about the story of his life. The critic highlights that the architects behind Manrique have "given to its character an attitude and appeal that condense the aspirations of much of the artists of his time."⁶⁷ As previously stated, the project could be seen as a rhetorical strategy to explore the recent history of Colombia through a figure that focuses the experiences of previous generations. In this regard, the project can also be seen as a manifestation of the delirium of the art historian—an expression of the discipline's desire to see the past through contemporary eyes. But more than this, what Serrano highlights is interesting to address taking into account that the project is aimed at integrating an oral tradition about the untold past of the country. Walter Ong complements this assertion by arguing that, "colorless personalities cannot survive oral mnemonics."⁶⁸

Following Ong's explanation, in the tradition of oral storytelling and in the early literature, there is an insistence on fully recognizable characters and epic stories. According to the literary scholar, "oral memory works effectively with 'heavy' characters, persons whose deeds are monumental, memorable and commonly public."⁶⁹ This poetic process is meant to supply the needs of an oral culture where their traditions are preserved through time by the transmission of stories from one storyteller to another. "Thus the noetic economy of its nature generates outsized figures, that is, heroic figures, not for romantic reasons or reflectively didactic reason

⁶⁷ Serrano. "Un artista que a pesar de ser una ficción."

⁶⁸ Ong, Walter. *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (New York, London: Routledge, 2009), 69.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

but for much more basic reasons: to organize experience in some sort of permanently memorable form.”⁷⁰ In this sense, Pedro Manrique Figueroa is constructed as an epic narrative of failure in which his story of this unknown ghost could be orally transmitted beyond the visible carriers of the project. Within the name of Figueroa is synthesized the experiences, dreams and frustrations of a generation narrated in a grandiloquent form.

Continuing with the ideas of Ong, a main characteristic of the tradition of oral narrative is that there is no centralized residue of a written book. The stories are not locked in writing: “when an often-told oral story is not actually being told, all that exist of it is the potential in certain human beings to tell it.”⁷¹ Across the different manifestations of the project of Manrique, a reiterative poetic strategy is manifested in the way that the information of the artist is presented. Viewers are required to engage in the performance of reading multiple testimonies in an archive. Through this action, the potential viewer is the one who finally constructs the mental image of Manrique. In this sense, there is also the presence of the ghost of Pessoa in the disintegration of a unified literary space. Even in the most decisive attempts to organize Manrique’s story in a linear structure, it is up to the viewer to make meaning of it. For example, in the documentary *Un Tigre de Papel* [A Paper Tiger] by Luis Ospina, the viewer ends up acting as an art historian in his attempt to make sense of the bits of information dispersed in the multiple testimonies presented in the film. In order for the story to live, the active participation of the viewer is required as he is the one who articulates a narrative from those experiences. In the beginning of the above-mentioned film, it is stated about the story of Manrique’s life that:

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid, 11.

No one has written down Pedro Manrique Figueroa's life, and for a very good reason: it seems too much like an adventure novel, simultaneously incomplete and contradictory, constantly linked to the sparkling uncertainties of oral tradition.⁷²

Any attempt to narrate Pedro Manrique's story in a linear fashion would imply an identification of the artist's remains in order to determine his proper place in a tradition of the present. This would imply a successful mourning practice of the errant ghost of Manrique and the end point of his haunting return to the present. Instead, the reader of the project is put in a situation where he is constantly looking for the body of the precursor of collage in Colombia but the information available for this task always denies a conclusive search. As the commentaries about the documentary highlight, the project is sustained by the paradox that in the overwhelming amount of information displayed, there is "not a single recognizable image of the artist."⁷³ There is a presence without a fully identifiable body. In this sense, the project's life is due to the impossibility of providing a satisfactory conclusion from which the reader could corroborate that the object of this psychosis is a thing from the past. This uncertainty is an open wound without the possibility of healing, as there is no clear distinction between the past and the present provided by the process of mourning.⁷⁴

As suggested in previous pages, the project of Figueroa follows the logic of the pathological other to a process of mourning. Contrary to mourning, melancholia is a state of a never-ending grief in which the melancholic is unable to let go to the psychical attachments to the absent object. This means that the life of the lost object is indefinitely prolonged by the memory work of the melancholic as an absence that

⁷² Ospina, Luis. *Un Tigre de Papel*, DVD. Directed by Luis Ospina (Bogotá: Congo Films, 2007).

⁷³ Thomann (Ospina). "El secreto mejor guardado," 9.

⁷⁴ Rojas Urrego, Alejandro. "El campo santo de Juan Fernando Herrán ¿Lucha contra el olvido o imposibilidad del duelo?" *Campo Santo Juan Fernando Herrán* (Bogotá: Galería Al Cuadrado, 2009), 16.

denies any kind of reinvestment of the subject into a life without the lost object.⁷⁵ The absence of the object is affirmed—instead of an acceptance of loss—as a declaration that the past is not over as the missing object might come back at any time. This declaration dislocates the typical relationship between death and life; the negation of death subsequently negates the process of life. Through this denial, the door for the return of the ghost is kept open as a wound that will never heal.⁷⁶

A discussion of melancholia will be reserved for the conclusion of the third chapter of this thesis. But the mention of it at this point, is to explain that the life of the project depends on the impossibility of fully articulating the story of Manrique as a completely coherent narrative. This would imply the symbolic closure of the space that Pedro's ghost inhabits. This is the reason that for this particular manifestation of the ghost of Figueroa, I have chosen to trace a circular path around his presence. As the reader might have noticed by this point, the discussion has so far avoided addressing his narration directly and in detail to keep the door open for the returning of his ghost. Even though this thesis does not attempt to be the epitaph of Manrique's grave, at this point of the paper it is necessary to make an exception in order to provide my readers with a general idea of his life story. Toward this end, this paper offers a brief chronological overview of the main episodes that marked the distinct trades of this character without getting deeper into possible analysis of each particular episode.

According to one of the project's exhibitions, there is a document supposedly written by Carmen Ortega in her *Dictionary of Colombian Artists* (1965) that describes Manrique Figueroa. The publication is known for offering a brief review of the artists the country had produced. The curator of the exhibit claims that there is an entry that describes Manrique as: "Born in Choachi, Colombia, 1939. This artist

⁷⁵ Freud. "Mourning and Melancholia," 3041.

⁷⁶ Rojas Urrego. "El Campo Santo," 15.

has a special emphasis in the field of collage where he developed the theme of political protest.”⁷⁷ Presumably, this reference is one of the few historiographical testimonies that validate the existence of Figueroa in the narrative of Colombian Art history. Besides this, what is available to us for constructing Manrique’s image is a series of testimonies, collages and written works attributed to this ghost.

Even Manrique’s date of birth is shrouded in obscurity. Different versions of his story date his birth at different points in time. In later accounts, it is stated the he was born in 1939,⁷⁸ but Mariángela Méndez asserted that he was born in 1934,⁷⁹ and in the first exhibition Ospina declared that his birth certificate dates 1929.⁸⁰ What is clear is that during his life, Manrique was an obscure figure that did not show much of his work to anyone. No one in the art world seemed to know about him until the first public exposure of his work in the posthumous exhibit curated by Ospina in 1996.

As Rodríguez explains, this is due to the fact that Figueroa’s “career as an artist was persistently marked by failure and frustration.”⁸¹ His work was rejected several times by the Colombian National Artists’ Saloon. For example, in the 1972 Independent Saloon, the curatorial proposal showed the artist excluded from the official event;⁸² his proposal was also disregarded as a joke. It is said that as a reminder of his failures, Manrique used to keep a caricature that appeared in a national newspaper in his wallet. This drawing describes a woman with a slovenly appearance reproaching to a man with a similar look by saying, “you are a loser, you

⁷⁷ Ospina, Lucas. “The Museum of Poverty.” In: *Poesía, Museo, Filosofía [+arte degenerado]*. Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes, 2008.
<http://uniandes.academia.edu/LucasOspina/Books>. (accessed, November, 2 2011).

⁷⁸ Ospina, Luís. “Un Tigre de Papel.”

⁷⁹ Méndez, Mariángela. *In Other Words* (New York, NY: master’s thesis, Bard College, 2007).

⁸⁰ Ospina, Lucas. “Homenaje a Pedro Manrique Figueroa.”

⁸¹ Rodríguez. “Cold War Legacies Otherwise,” 3.

⁸² González, Felipe. “Ingeniería de la Participación” In: *Carlos Rojas, Una Visita a sus Mundos* (Bogotá: Museo Nacional de Colombia, 2008).

didn't even make it to the rejected saloon!" It was common that the artist ironically showed off this sketch while he said "this is me, I made it to the national news!"⁸³

As a child, Manrique grew up in the small farmers' town of Choachí (located 23 miles from the capital city of Colombia) working as the helper of the priest. This recurrent contact with Catholic images explains the persistent religious icons that appear in Figueroa's work.⁸⁴ Till 1946, there are records of the teenage Pedro looking for his destiny in Bogota. Some say that his parents sent him there to protect him from the country's increasing rural violence, while others affirm that he escaped from his house attracted by the metropolitan life. In the seminal investigation of Ospina, it is mentioned that Figueroa learned the techniques of collage working in the city's public transit posting and replacing the advertisements in the cable cars. He worked there until the riots of 1948, when all the cable cars were destroyed, leaving Manrique jobless.⁸⁵

Around 1950, Manrique established a small shop that sold religious stamps in the center of Bogota. In his free time, he started to alter those images through collages that he disguisedly sold among the original stamps of saints. To this period corresponds his first known collage titled *La Vaca Sagrada* [The sacred cow] (*Figure 3*). The only surviving work of this period is dated 1951 and, because of this, the curators claim that he possesses the title of "precursor of collage in Colombia." Before the discovery of Ospina, Carlos Rojas held this title with his cubist collages of 1957. In *Un Tigre de Papel* there is a description of this work: "the image shows direct amputations to the pages of the bible. These allegorical fragments symbolically play with the title as the sacred book shouldn't be touched [...]."⁸⁶ The year that he

⁸³ Thomann (Ospina). "El secreto mejor guardado," 8.

⁸⁴ Ospina, Lucas. "Homenaje a Pedro Manrique Figueroa," 3.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ospina, Luís. "Un Tigre de Papel."

made this collage, Figueroa's shop was burned down in an act of vandalism.⁸⁷ Nobody knows exactly who attacked Manrique or why he was targeted, but it is easy to imagine that it could be a retaliation of any unsatisfied ultraconservative costumer typical of the 1950s intolerant Colombian society.

With the suspicion that the attack could have been carried out by the Bogota police, Manrique harbored an increasing resentment to established authority. Moved by his apathy to authority, around 1954, he enlisted in the Colombian Communist Party. As a member of the collective, he began his cultural militancy as a professional agitator by infiltrating two of the biggest universities of the country. Although it seems that he never was a student of those institutions, his task was to penetrate diverse student groups to disseminate communist ideas and organize political manifestations.⁸⁸ There are also records that show that Figueroa was tangentially involved with the mythical figure of Camilo Torres and the edition of the priest newspaper *El Frente Unido* [The United Front].⁸⁹ As the years passed, Figueroa gained a position in the Party and in 1968, he was sent to do a tour through Eastern Europe and China (*Figure 4*). Presumably, in Romania exists the only living relative of the artist: the daughter that he conceived in an affair with a Romanian Party delegate (*Figure 5*).⁹⁰

In 1973, the Party extended an invitation to Manrique to work in the design of the poster for the national communist meeting in the city of Cucuta. For the congress, Manrique created an image that juxtaposed a swastika with a picture of the people attending a Communist Party meeting (*Figure 6*). When the Party leaders aggressively interrogated the artist about the interpretation of the image, in a rage

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ospina, Lucas. "Homenaje a Pedro Manrique Figueroa," 4.

⁸⁹ Ospina, Lucas. "Acercamientos a Pedro Manrique Figueroa" *Valdez*, No. 2 (c. 1996): 34.

⁹⁰ Ospina, Luís. "Un Tigre de Papel."

attack Figueroa responded: “sometimes in its control of the masses the political parties promote a fanaticism similar to the one generated by Nazism.”⁹¹ These words led to his immediate expulsion from the Party. This was a turning point in his life, as Rodriguez explains:

On lonely rambles through the streets, Manrique-Figueroa realized that his ‘trimmings’ [how he used to call his collages] were only causing him problems and did not relate to any ideology. Like a jealous lover, they were isolating him from his time, place, and friends. He was 44 years old and his sole possessions were a small group of cards, just papers that any wind could blow away. To avoid additional political problems and fit into the demands of art critics and historians, Manrique-Figueroa decided to become an artist.⁹²

From that point on, Figueroa’s life is marked by a series of interminable disillusion, as his declaration was not supported by the art institution of his time. In the multiple attempts to make his work public, Figueroa was confronted with an impenetrable wall of rejection. At the same time that he tried to make it as an artist, he unsuccessfully attempted to carry on his political militancy from the underground. With each failure, the artist got into a deeper depression that he tried to mitigate with the consumption of hard drugs that only made matters worse.

The events that followed are uncertain. What almost all versions of the story seem to agree on is that by 1980, Manrique disappeared. Some say that he simply went back to his rural origins to become an employee of a recreational ranch; others think that he could have been a victim of the government forced disappearance in its 1980s hostile anti-guerrilla campaigns.⁹³ But the most memorable of the stories of his disappearance is the episode related to the National Museum of Colombia. According to this account, after being robbed of all his earthly possessions and high on drugs, he decided to literally do something with his life. He decided to go to the

⁹¹ Ospina, Lucas. “Homenaje a Pedro Manrique Figueroa,” 6.

⁹² Rodríguez. “Cold War Legacies Otherwise,” 5.

⁹³ Ospina, Lucas. “Positivo Falso.” In: *Reedición Guía de Exposición Arte Degenerado* (Bogotá: Ministerio de Cultura, 2009), 33.

National Museum of Colombia to make a donation. At the entrance, the guard interrupted him as Manrique declared his intention. Suspicious about the appearance of the artist, the guard unsympathetically asks—“What work? Who are you?” In an arrogant tone, Figueroa responds—“I am Pedro Manrique Figueroa and I am my work.” Angered by this answer, the guard immediately expelled him from the Museum and he made it clear that the Museum did not have space for the precursor of collage in Colombia, and also threatened to call the police. This is supposedly the last time that anyone heard anything about the artist.⁹⁴ Before walking away from art and history, Figueroa left a handwritten note that manifested his profound disappointment with life. The note that Ospina keeps in his personal archives states:

Man is a monstrous animal. It's the enemy of all enemies. Is the most despicable creature that have ever walked on this planet. It can never be a good thing to live as a human being. I would rather bury myself or run in the wilderness to confront whatever destiny holds for me there. And if the wind blows, the rain falls, the cold comes and goes; is always better than to live in a human body.⁹⁵

There are many aspects of this narration where it is not entirely clear if the story forms part of the genre of history or fiction. As it is true that the main character of this story never had a human body. The entire context in which he lived, the dreams that mobilized him, and the crisis of nihilism form part of the Colombian experience of the last 70 years. About this interpretation of Pedro Manrique's story, it is interesting to read the reviews of the movie of Luis Ospina. This has been the most visible manifestation of the project; hence, these lines could be seen as indicator of how the entire project has been popularly understood. About it, Felipe Gómez Gutiérrez synthesizes the way that it has being consumed when he declares that “there are people who question the film for being part of the genre of *fake* documentaries, by affirming that it is a documentary in the rigorous sense of

⁹⁴ Thomann (Ospina). “El secreto mejor guardado,” 10.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 11.

the word, even if it is not about Pedro Manrique Figueroa.”⁹⁶ As the Hispanic Studies scholar further comments:

Although in its initial thesis, the movie of Ospina ends up opening the possibility to narrate and imagine again a crucial period in Colombian contemporary history. From the undeclared civil war that started in 1940s, passing through the guerrilla warfare and the first steps in the 1970s of the powerful drug cartel of the later decades.⁹⁷

Following this line of interpretation, Isleni Cruz comments that *Un Tigre de Papel* seems to be more truthful than any documentary about the Colombian history of the second half of the 20th century. She states that Figueroa is presented as a rumor in which the narrative of “the events are remembered according to the way that they were lived, felt or suffered by the interviewed subjects who, much of the time, could be seen as Manrique himself.”⁹⁸ Among the multiple reviews of the film, journalist Juan Ensuncho has the most colorful approach to the project. According to him, Pedro Manrique Figueroa could be addressed as the Colombian Forrest Gump. This is to say that both characters are used to narrate a national history through the eyes of a fictional witness who somehow was involved in the most significant events of a nation’s recent past.⁹⁹

1.5.

From the perspective of literary criticism, the life story of the precursor of collage in Colombia could be explained by the term Fantastic Historiography proposed by Frederic Jameson. This is a literary genre in which there is a “production

⁹⁶ Gómez Gutiérrez, Felipe. “Radiografía de una momia: el salto al vacío en Un tigre de papel de Luis Ospina” *Tiresias* (april, 2008): 115.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Cruz Carvajal, Isleni. “Un tigre de papel: Especialmente verdadero, necesariamente falso.” Luis Ospina Biblioteca, <http://www.luisospina.com/obra/reseñas/un-tigre-de-papel-especialmente-verdadero-necesariamente-falso-por-isleni-cruz-carvajal/> (accessed may 4, 2012).

⁹⁹ Ensuncho Bárcena, Juan. “¿Quién carajos es Pedro Manrique Figueroa? – Un tigre de papel” Entrada libre, www.entradalibre.org. (accessed may 4, 2012).

of imaginary people and events among whom from time to time real-life ones unexpectedly appear and disappear.”¹⁰⁰ This construction of postmodern historiographical narratives is crafted as a form of “wild imaginary genealogies and novels that shuffle historical figures and names like so many cards from a finite deck.”¹⁰¹ This reinterpretation of historical facts through the creative freedom of fiction, gives the possibility of directly questioning the authority of the official account of the past. This construction of an alternative reality has the potential to destabilize the strategies through which historians have been able to come to terms with the past in order to edify what is commonly acknowledged as history. About the use of these rhetorical assaults to the stitches of history, the North American theorist comments:

Fabulations—or if you prefer, mythomania and outright tall tales—is not doubt a symptom of social and historical impotence, of the blocking of possibilities that leaves little option but the imaginary. Yet its very invention and inventiveness endorses a creative freedom with respect to events it cannot control, by the sheer act of multiplying them; agency here steps out of the historical record itself into the process of devising it.¹⁰²

The potential for modifying historical records through a reinterpretation that alters any legitimate truth claim, is the reason why this literary genre has been strongly criticized by the field of Holocaust Studies. As Elisabeth Friedman explains, at a time where the direct witnesses of the Holocaust have been slowly disappearing, the transmission and preservation of a memory through visual and textual representations of the events has become a central area of concern.¹⁰³ These images are confronted with two apparently irreconcilable demands that require a delicate equilibrium. On the one hand, an artwork dealing with a traumatic past should have

¹⁰⁰ Jameson, Frederic. *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University press, 1991), 369.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 367.

¹⁰² Ibid, 369.

¹⁰³ Friedman, Elisabeth. “Aesthetics of Incommensurability: Artworks, Archives and the Dilemmas of Holocaust Representation” (York, Canada: PhD diss., University of York, 2007), 2.

the responsibility of preserving the emotional component of the experiences that an objective account of the archival material is unable to deliver. On the other, “history must protect the reality of the event from ‘corruption’ by the vagaries of memory, and from the inevitable misunderstandings and mis-uses of the past by those who did not experience it at first-hand.”¹⁰⁴

As the Visual Culture scholar synthesizes the discussion, it is clear that a significant number of scholars profoundly suspect the fantastic accounts of the Holocaust. Especially, the images produced in the contemporary historical transition to the indirect memory of the event. Following the discussion between Clifford Geertz and Lawrence Langer about this transition, Professor Friedman explains Holocaust Studies’ distrust of Fantastic Historiography. As she summarizes the academic discussion, the problem that the field has with this aesthetic practice is that if “factual reality of the Holocaust is not accurately represented and properly received, future generations may come to view it as akin to a legend, an historical fiction.”¹⁰⁵ Following this line of thought, we can see how the images that collectively represent the past carry a moral imperative. In this context, the words of Susan Sontag come to mind, when she states that the only ethical relation that we can have with the ghosts of the past is in the way that we interact with them in the present:

Remembering is an ethical act, has ethical value in and of itself. Memory is, achingly, the only relation we can have with the dead. So the belief that remembering is an ethical act is deep in our natures as humans, who know we are going to die, and who mourn those who in the normal course of things die before us—grandparents, parents, teachers, and older friends. Heartlessness and amnesia seem to go together.¹⁰⁶

Taking these remarks into consideration, it is necessary to state that an

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 5.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 6.

¹⁰⁶ Sontag, Susan. *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Picador Books, 2003), 115.

appropriate relationship with the ghosts of the past is completely circumstantial. It depends on the type of ghost that we choose to dance with and the way that those corpses have been mourned. In the case of the Holocaust, we are still talking about the hegemonic narrative of history. It is the biggest trauma that the European triumphal procession of history has suffered, but is still part of this glorious inheritance. As I will comment later, the successors of Europe have capitalized on this experience to construct their legitimacy as the protectors of Western civilization. In this sense, the problem with the Holocaust is over the preservation of the legacy of the millions who died by the hands of the Nazi regimen. But the ghost that Manrique stands for, requires a different engagement with the past.

The grief that the ghost that Manrique stands for, demands an undoing of the historical arrangements that are doing everything in their power to exorcise him from our present. I will fully explain this argument in the next chapter, but at this point of the thesis, it is worth mentioning that the same history of the victors that requires the safeguard of the victims of the Holocaust is standing on corpses of the losers of history in the second half of the 20th century. In the attempt to repair the pain of those errant ghosts, a desirable engagement with the past probably should not be limited by the specification and preservation of their experiences into an archive. A suitable mode of writing against the grain of history would imply a deconstruction of the structures that have recurrently subjugated the memory of those ghosts as they deny them any place in the text of tradition.

In this sense, the project of Figueroa fully embraces the aesthetic practice of Fantastic Historiography as a strategy to question the legitimacy of the narrative that has tormented the afterlife of communism following the fall of the Berlin Wall. As Jameson states, this area of intervention is a symptom of social impotence. Yet, its efficacy lays in the stepping out of the historical narrative to construct an alternative

version of it. Furthermore, in the public displays of this alternative historical narrative, the project of Figueroa becomes a radical questioning of the capitalist historic discourse as it is fuelled by another tactic that comes from a tradition of theater. Among most of the manifestations of Manrique's project, the ghost of Bertolt Brecht's epic theater is present in its display strategies.

When the reader engages in the performance of reading the dispersed information presented in an exhibition of Manrique, he is confronted with a series of contradictions that force him to take critical distance from the material presented. These intentional mistakes are asking the viewer to criticize the staging of this art-historical-truth-claims as it is made evident how this narrative is rhetorically crafted. In an interview, Lucas Ospina explained that since the first exhibition there is a constant intent to mock art history in order to show the fragility of this construction. About the 1996 exhibit, he explained:

If someone read through the entire exhibition the he would find all kinds of deliberate mistakes that contradicted the other pieces of archival information presented. This was made to break the authority figure of art history that is always attempting to unify and give coherence to its subject of study.¹⁰⁷

Among the multiple examples of these contradictions that give the necessary hints to suggest that Manrique is a non-existent subject, my personal favorite is one displayed in the exhibition of the *Museum of Poverty*. Within the multiple documents presented in the exhibit, there is a decontextualized copy of an article that stands out due to its title: *La Invención de un artista* [The invention of an artist]. This article of the 1960s, describes the work of the heteronym of Max Aub—Jusep Torres Campalans. As the reader carries on his investigation through this archive, he will find that one of the critical reviews of Manrique's work is signed by Torres Campalans. About the piece *Another Fucking Collage* (Figure 7), the Catalan

¹⁰⁷ Lucas Ospina, interview by Julian Serna, Bogota, Colombia, January, 12, 2012.

heteronym affirms that, quite a few art historians consider this work to be plagiarism, forgery, an apocryphal form of collage. [...] In any case, it is PMF's work, and if it isn't, time—and healthy negligence—will see that credit goes to whomever it is due¹⁰⁸

As mentioned earlier, this strategy to distance the viewer from an empathetic understanding of the discourse constructed by art history has significant debts with the acting technique of Brecht's alienation effect (or A-effect). According to the modern dramaturge, "the object of the A-effect is to alienate the social gest underlying every incident. By social gest is meant the mimetic and gestural expression of the social relationships between people in a given period."¹⁰⁹ This technique is meant to distance the audience from any emotional involvement with the play through a constant reminder of the artificiality of the theatrical performance. A common implementation of this technique is manifested in scenarios where the only visible background are the ropes and lights of the stage, or when the performer constantly steps out of character in stage. About this kind of productions, Walter Benjamin once wrote that this aesthetic practice consists of producing astonishment rather than empathy. In his words, "instead of identifying with the character, the audience should be educated to be astonished at the circumstances under which they function."¹¹⁰

This conscious renunciation of a fully finished vision of the world is meant to restore the spectator's agency by putting him in an equal plane as the performers. Differently from traditional (or what dramaturgy address as bourgeois) theater, in

¹⁰⁸ Ospina, Lucas. "Museum of Poverty."

¹⁰⁹ Brecht, Bertolt. "Short description of a New Technique in Acting Which Produces an Alienation Effect." In: *The Twentieth-Century Performance Reader*, ed. Michael Huxley and Nuel Witts (New York, London: Routledge, 2003), 96.

¹¹⁰ Benjamin, Walter. "What is Epic Theatre?" In: *The Twentieth-Century Performance Reader*, ed. Michael Huxley and Nuel Witts (New York, London: Routledge, 2003), 75.

this kind of poetics “the spectator does not delegate power to the characters to think in his place, although he continues to delegate power to them to act in his place.”¹¹¹ As Brecht himself reorganized, this technique is a response to fascism and other political forms of manipulation, which “today conjures up to the grandest scale emotions which for the most of the people who succumb to them are not determined by interest.”¹¹² With the same type of suspicion toward a complete and unquestionable vision of the world provided by art history, the display of Figueroa puts the viewer of the exhibit on the same plane as a professional mourner of art. In this sense, the witnesses of Manrique’s presence are encouraged by the artist/curator to reinterpret and modify the truth-claims that edify the authoritative discourse of history.

Through the techniques developed by Brecht, the display of art history made in exhibitions of Manrique make evident the social relationships mediated by this symbolic practice. Following Geertz, what is common between art, religion, ideology, and history, is that they are manifestations of a basic human drive to make sense of our experience. All these symbolic activities are rational efforts to impose form and order to our environment. According to the Geertz, this is one of our basic biological needs as it “attempts to provide orientation for an organism which cannot live in a world it is unable to understand.”¹¹³

In this same mind frame, history as mourning could be understood as a form of confronting the suffering implied in witnessing the losses of society. The use of a symbolic practice to confront suffering is, “paradoxically, not how to avoid suffering but how to suffer, how to make of physical pain, personal loss, worldly defeat, or the

¹¹¹ Boal Augusto “The theater as discourse” In: *The Twentieth-Century Performance Reader*, ed. Michael Huxley and Nuel Witts (New York, London: Routledge, 2003), 90.

¹¹² Brecht. “Short description,” 102.

¹¹³ Geertz. “The Interpretation of Cultures,” 141.

helpless contemplation of others' agony something bearable, supportable—something, as we say, sufferable.”¹¹⁴ History, as religion, is an attempt to make sense of a world and a life that we are unable to grasp. Mourning is a way to tell ourselves that we, as well as the ones who have been before us, have not lived and died in vain. In this sense, history is a cultural fabrication constructed through narrations that logically connect the different ghosts of the past to construct a comprehensive image of our present. However, as Benjamin has showed us, sometimes it is necessary to reimagine the past to give reparation for the violations of a victorious history in order to find a place for the thousands of errant ghosts that are waiting for a proper place in the present.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 104.

CHAPTER II

DEATH BY OBLIVION

Who controls the past controls the future:
who controls the present control the past.

George Orwell

The opening reference to this chapter comes from the 20th classic, *1984*. In the novel, published in 1949, Orwell describes a dystopian vision of the future. A totalitarian State has gained rigid control over its population as part of a never-ending war between the three remaining Super States on earth, after a global atomic war. The story focuses on the life in the State of Oceania and is narrated through the experience of Winston Smith in his attempt to pursue an intellectual revolution against the only political party in his country and its visible figure—Big Brother.

The lines quoted above, are one of the main party slogans through which the government rationalizes the omnipresent control over the lives and memories of its citizens. In Big Brother's governmental praxis, Orwell depicts multiple institutions that are in charge of constructing a reality where the legitimacy of the party leader is unquestionable. One of the main areas of the party intervention occurs in the way that its people interact with their past to construct a collective explanation of their present conditions of existence as they advance toward a future. This site of political struggle is controlled by the Ministry of Truth whose task is to bring the past up-to-date through

the alteration of historical records in order for them to coincide with the contemporary governmental discourse.¹

From the perspective of 2012, once time had allowed for a retrospective reading of novels like *1984*, it is astonishing the way that certain works classified into the genre of fiction were able to have a better comprehension of the structures of their symbolic reality better than any other form of narrative. Orwell's work can be understood as a cultural product closely related to what is commonly referred to as critical theory. In reading *1984*, the reader can perceive traces of the Marxist thoughts of the writer's contemporaries, especially of Antonio Gramsci in his understanding of the relationship between the state and its citizens. The reader can also identify the seeds of further developments of the theoretical considerations from which this chapter is being written. An echo of the words of Orwell can be heard in the work of Louis Althusser and the fields that French philosopher had influenced such as Museum Studies and Memory Studies.

Later, I will fully address the ideas of the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA) and their relation with the production of memory. But, as a starting point, I am interested in the resonances of this initial reference in the comprehension of the museum. Following the work of museologists like Carol Duncan and Eileen Hooper-Greenhill, it is easy to perceive how the description of the workings of the Ministry of Truth is not a mere product of an individual's imagination. Indeed, in its veiled version, it is the account of the principles from which the museum is working as the guardian of the past. As Hooper-Greenhill further explains, the "museums create master narratives through acting as both the constructor of a present-day 'reality' and through bringing into focus a

¹ Orwell, George. *1984*. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977).

memory of the past that (coincidentally) supports that present.”² In concordance to this lead, the pages that follow will assume the museum as a site of privilege for the construction and control of the accounts of the past in the present. Through the selection and exclusion of pieces contained in an archive, the museum articulates the events of the past into a narrative that supports what we collectively understand as the present. In this sense, the museum is the site in which an official memory is performed and administered.

In the first part of this chapter, I will make an opening reference to what I consider the quintessential post-Cold War Museum of the United States, as a means of contrast to my case of study—the Museum of Poverty of Pedro Manrique Figueroa. Later, I will make a parenthesis to focus on a close reading of a particular cultural product that is represented by a piece exhibited in the North American museum. This will be done to discuss the Cold War and how the conflict was performed in the cultural sphere. Finally, I will work over my case study to discuss how the memories of this conflict are articulated today. The argument I will present is that this figure of Manrique Figueroa can be read as a kind of ghost from the Cold War that, in its refusal to go away, is participating in the last battles of the Cold War that are currently being fought in the form of the things that we evoke and forget in our recall of the conflict.

2.2.

Before discussing these ideas at length, I focus my opening argument on a reading of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. This is one of the many Universal Survey Museums that exist in the principal cities of the United States. Following the model of

² Hooper-Greenhill, Eileen. *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 25.

the Louvre in France, this kind of museums are characterized by the display of the principal pieces of material cultural from all over the world consistent with the canonical evolutionary narrative of Western Art History. About the emergence of these institutions in the United States at the turn of the 19th century, Carol Duncan and Allan Wallach explain that with the consolidation of the country as “a modern nation-state, the Americans, talking in the shadow of the Louvre, felt the United States could now put in its claim to the heritage of Western civilization.”³ What distinguishes the Philadelphia Museum from the other ceremonial displays of the world’s treasures around the United States is its two principal pieces. Due to the dialogue existing between them, I want to study this particular museum as one of the most accurate depictions of the state of affairs in the world during the past twenty years.

The Philadelphia Museum is one of the biggest museums in the United States. It is known worldwide as the home of the largest collection of works of Marcel Duchamp and because its entrance functioned as the film set of the iconic scene of Rocky Balboa’s stair ascension. Visitors to the museum can find in the last gallery of the Modern and Contemporary Art (*Figure 8*), twenty-two of Duchamp’s works, including relics of contemporary art such as the reconstruction of *Fountain* (1950), *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (1915-23) or *Étant donnés* (1946-66). In contraposition to these pieces, at the entrance of the museum, the visitor is confronted by the impressive stairway known as the Rocky Steps and (to the north-east) a ten-foot bronze statue of Rocky Balboa holding his hands up high in a gesture of victory (*Figure 9*). So what is the relationship among these heterogeneous cultural products?

³ Duncan, Carol y Allan Wallach. “The Universal Survey Museum.” In: *Museum studies: An Anthology of Context*, ed. Bettina Messias Carbonell (Carbonell. Oxford: Backwell, 2004), 65.

It is a significant fact that this museum is a site of pilgrimage for both lovers of US popular film as well as of contemporary art. As I have suggested, this museum is the container of the narrative that validates the United States as the inheritor of Western civilization through a depiction of the world order according to the US. Following the tradition of the princely galleries, these kinds of public institutions are assembled in a way that symbolically places its host at the center of the cultural activity of the world. As Duncan explains, the existence of such exhibitions was to show off the magnificence of the sovereign. By doing so, it provided material proof of “the rightness or legitimacy of his rule.”⁴ In this depiction of map of the world order constructed by the US, the country has claimed as its own, most of the world’s mainstream cultural productions, from cheesy popular culture to the highest expressions of human intellect.

When I visited the museum to personally view Galleries 182 and 183 where Duchamp’s work is displayed, the first question that came to me was: why is this incredible treasure stored in this particular museum and not in the Louvre? At least for me, it is an evident question, given the fact that names such as Marcel Duchamp or Michel Foucault are the incarnation of the biggest intellectual patrimony of France during the 20th century. So, it seems natural that the home of this treasure of the contemporary art would be the National Museum of France, since this is the place from which France should conserve and promote its cultural contributions to mankind. But, as the story goes, this is not the case. When the artist migrated to New York, he became close friends with Louise and Walter Arensberg, who later became his patrons. In 1954, the couple donated their entire collection of art to the Philadelphia Museum of Art in

⁴ Duncan, Carol. “From the Princely Gallery to the Public Art Museum: The Louvre Museum and the National Gallery, London.” In: *Grasping the World: The Idea of the Museum*, ed. Donald Preziosi and Claire Farago (London: Ashgate, 2004), 251.

which there were forty-three works of the French artist.⁵ So the answer to my observation is that this is a common historical misfortune where these kinds of precious cultural artifacts come to rest in places where they do not necessarily belong. Such is the case with Duchamp and the Louvre, as well as the example of the Egyptian National Museum and the treasures of the country's glorious past that—for some reason—are now disseminated all over the England and the US.

To continue my argument about the different means of appropriation of the cultural values of the world by the United States, the way Duchamp is identified by the Museum in its reference cards is significant. The information provided to the visitor says for example: "*The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass)*. Made in United States 1915-23. Marcel Duchamp, American (born France), 1887 – 1968. [...]"⁶ I want to emphasize the fact that in the museum exhibit, twenty-two cards proclaim that Marcel Duchamp is "American (born France)." Is Duchamp American? As it is true that Duchamp migrated from France to find a home in New York (thanks to Peggy Guggenheim), he could be considered as an "American," as his friend André Breton, who in a very French manner, refused to learn English during his time in the US.⁷

⁵ Anderson, Susan K. "Marcel Duchamp: Sources for Research." Philadelphia Museum of Art, <http://www.philamuseum.org/exhibitions/370.html> (accessed, November, 30, 2011).

⁶ Philadelphia Museum of Art, <http://www.philamuseum.org/collections/permanent/54149.html> (accessed, November, 30, 2011).

⁷ "For the American artist who had worked together in WPA projects during the thirties, while impressed with the achievements of the Europeans now in their midst, did not take kindly to the snobbism they felt pervaded the émigré community. Breton, who refused to learn English, was particularly offensive. Among themselves, the Americans referred to him as 'Mr. God.'" Alshuler, Bruce. "Displacement of the Avant-Garde." In: *The Avant-Garde in exhibitions: New York Art in the 20th Century* (New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc, 1994.), 154.

But as it turns out, the cultural appropriation of Marcel Duchamp and the rest of the surrealists to construct a glorious past of the United States, is not a unique case. As a foreigner (or pseudo-American?) I have noticed that the rhetorical figure of the “American (born...)” is a common practice of museums across this country. Over this figure of a loose Americanization, you can find how important artists from all over the world suddenly become “American.” For example, at the Art Institute of Chicago, you can find the works of many “Americans” such as: Willem de Kooning (born Netherlands), Eva Hesse (born Germany), William B. Mundie (born Canada), Felix Gonzalez-Torres (born Cuba) or even (!!!), José Clemente Orozco (born Mexico).⁸ As far as I am concerned, this is a clear act of symbolic violence against the sovereignty of these countries and their right to claim their cultural production as their own. But, reading this act from the perspective of the US, this could be seen as the attempt of a young country to construct a tradition that gives it cultural legitimacy in relation to its European peers. Since the end of the Second World War, this phenomenon has sharply increased as the US positioned itself as a world power as it claimed its war trophies from the rest of the world.⁹

This led me again to the bronze guardian of the North American treasures—the statue of a victorious Rocky Balboa at the entrance of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. This memorial can be interpreted in two ways— as the symbolical guardian of the US who is celebrating its victory at the entry of one of its museums and, at the same time, a commemorative monument of one of the last big wars fought by the United States in the 20th century: the Cold War.

⁸ Art Institute of Chicago. *The Essential Guide*. Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 2009.

⁹ Alshuler. “Displacement of the Avant-Grade.”

At least for me (and probably for a significant number of people from my generation), images such as Rocky Balboa fighting Ivan Drago in the movie *Rocky IV*¹⁰ are among the most vivid experiences of the Cold War. I was born in 1983, and the Cold War officially ended in 1989 with the fall of the Berlin Wall. That means that the only direct contact that I had with the Cold War was as a child consuming US popular culture in the 1980s. I witnessed recurrent depictions of Russian subjects as arrogant and ruthless monsters. Besides this, my understanding of the war relied on the stories told (and, especially, the silences made) by my elders that shaped my understanding of the present in relation to recent history. Through the interaction among people who experienced the Cold War, there is a socialized memory of the events that still functions today as a background to understand the events that marked the experiences of my generation. Following Marianne Hirsch, I can further suggest that my generation, and the generations that have followed, are products of the postmemory of that conflict. As the scholar describes, this term is used to describe “the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are displaced by the stories of the previous generation, shaped by traumatic events that they can neither understand nor re-create.”¹¹

Now that I have had the chance to study the Cold War, I have been able to appreciate films like *Rocky IV* for what they are—a war intervention aimed at capturing people’s minds as part of the psychological warfare of this conflict. Through the export of popular culture, there was a battle in the attempt to modify the different countries’

¹⁰ Stallone, Sylvester. *Rocky IV*, DVD. Directed by Sylvester Stallone (Hollywood, CA: MGM, 1985).

¹¹ Hirsch, Marianne. “Projected memory: Holocaust Photographs in Personal and Public Fantasy.” In: *Acts of Memory, Cultural Recall in the Present*, ed. Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe and Leo Spitzer (Hanover and London: Dartmouth College, New England University Press, 1999), 8.

visions of the world in order for them to be aligned with particular political systems involved in this confrontation. The attempts to stimulate a particular political culture around the world occurred in multiple fronts of the Cold War such as a direct economic stimulus, the threat of violence, the import of popular culture, and the stimulus of particular sectors of High Culture.¹²

2.3.

From these considerations, I am going to take the most profitable film of the *Rocky* series as a metaphor for the Cold War and a premonition of its future outcome. The most vivid image of the Cold War in my mind is the conclusion of the 1985 movie—an image of a victorious Italian-American boxer wrapped in the U.S.A flag in a Moscow stadium celebrating in front of the astonished members of the Kremlin. After a bloody 15-round fight, the North American boxer gives a speech addressing the Soviet crowd which initially expressed its aversion to him, but during the course of his performance, they come to respect and admire him. In the concluding dialogue of the film, Rocky (impersonated by Sylvester Stallone) gives a discourse where he acknowledges the mutual disdain from which the athletic demonstration started and the way that those attitudes gradually changed to then say that an adjustment is better than an armed confrontation. As he finishes by saying that “everyone can change,” the Soviet General Secretary stands from his seat to passionately applaud him.

This celebration occurred as the conclusion of a fierce fight with a gigantic and well-disciplined Russian athlete for the title of the Heavy Weight Championship of the World. In the reviews of the movie, the fight is addressed as “World War III,” a

¹² See: Sunders Frances, Stonor. *The Cultural Cold war: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (New York: The new press. 2002).

confrontation that “instead of being fought with guns and Atom Bombs, is being fought with fists.”¹³ In the plot of the film, the Soviet athletic delegation comes to the United States to promote Ivan Drago (Dolph Lundgren) as the hallmark of Soviet superiority. In this campaign, the Russian boxer is challenged to an exhibition match by Rocky’s mentor and Ex-World Champion Apollo Creed (Carl Weathers). In this first match, the demonstrations of North American patriotism performed by Creed are silenced by the merciless punches of Drago who ends up killing Rocky’s friend in the ring.

In an attempt to avenge the death of his friend and colleague, Rocky agrees to put his title on the line and fight Drago in the heart of the Soviet Union. Following the logic of the 80s movies, the conflict becomes a personal cause and, from it, the athletic competition is transformed into a depiction of the Cold War in which Rocky Balboa is the incarnation of the United States fighting the Soviet Union. As Susan Buck-Morss later comments, the nature of the Cold War confrontation was a conflict between ontological enemies; an opponent that challenged the very notion of reality proposed by the other system. In words of the North American academic:

The analogy to the twentieth-century world is clear. For most of its duration, the models of mass-democratic sovereignty in East and West confronted each other as absolute enemies, because each political imaginary excluded the other’s fundamental claim to legitimacy. The *Cold War Enemies* were deployed on an ontological divide, and what Churchill named the Iron Curtain became its geophysical manifestation.¹⁴

As mentioned above, the narrative of the film follows a common rhetoric in North American productions that is especially recurrent in action movies. In the scene of

¹³ Total Rocky: the ultimate guide. “When East Meets West, the Champion Remains Standing. Rocky IV (1985),” <http://totalrocky.com/> (accessed, November, 30, 2011).

¹⁴ Buck-Morss, Susan. *Dreamworld and Catastrophe* (Cambridge: MIT press, 2002), 35. Original emphasis.

Creed's death, the director gives a special emphasis on the reaction of the Soviet contender who cruelly declares, "if he dies, he dies." This reaction later becomes the justification for Rocky's desire for vengeance. The insistence of the director to lead the viewer to understand the Russian counterpart as an enemy—not as a competitor with some sort of legitimate claim, but an enemy—is a strategy to construct the viewers as a collective whose interests are represented by the hero of the movie. By naming a common enemy, the collective is defined by the opposition.

As Buck-Morss further explains, this is the same logic through which sovereignty was constructed during the 20th century. In her words, "there is no collective until the 'democratic' sovereign—precisely in the act of naming the common enemy—calls that collective into being. Subsequently, any popular challenges to the sovereign's legitimacy can be defined as enemy acts."¹⁵ This is what the academic understands as an ontological enemy, the absolute other who calls the collective into existence. The other constitutes a threat to the legitimacy of the community and simultaneously defines the identity of the society by being the representation of everything that the group is not.

To mark a clear distinction between the political systems that both boxers represent, the largest portion of the film is a juxtaposition of the training methods used by both athletes accompanied with a continuous reinforcement of the reason why Rocky is fighting his enemy. The Russian is shown as a heartless fighting machine while the training of the North American fighter is displayed in a background of a persistent montage. This montage contained images of Rocky's mourning memories relating to Creed, which forces the viewer to empathize with his cause. In the depiction of the

¹⁵ Ibid, 9.

preparation for the fight, there is an insistence by the filmmaker to mark the difference in order to show both subjects as products of particular socio-political realities.

As Rocky decides to prepare his fight isolated in a small cabin in the snowy mountains of Russia, Drago trains in a state-of-the-art laboratory escorted by a team of doctors and trainers who monitor the performance and physical development of the athlete. In the Soviet gym, there is even a close-up depiction of an injection given to the athlete that suggests the use of anabolic steroids. This perception of the Soviet system could be read in the manner that Zygmunt Bauman understands the main characteristic of the Soviet system to be. As the sociologist explains, “communism was modernity in its most determined mood and most decisive posture; modernity streamlined, purified of the last shred of the chaotic, the irrational, the spontaneous, the unpredictable.”¹⁶ He further elaborates that modernity, among other things, was a gigantic exercise to abolish individual responsibility in the name of industrial progress led by instrumental rationality.

Following this logic, we can insinuate that this political system was modernity on steroids, in the sense that “communism promised (or threatened, depending on the eye of the beholder) to do what everyone else was doing, only faster.”¹⁷ This was a social system made to accomplish the hopes and promises of modernity. Although its potential for success, the largest complaint of communist detractors was the inhumane posture that the system assumed with its present circumstances in the pursuit of its goal. In this sense, Drago—who did not have time to pity the losses in his path to the World

¹⁶ Bauman, Zygmunt. *Intimations of postmodernity* (New York, London: Routledge, 1992), 167.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 168.

Championship title—could be seen as an accurate caricaturization of that system. As Bauman describes the motivations behind the boxer's actions:

Communism was made to the measure of modem hopes and promises. Socialism's younger, hotheaded and impatient brother, it wholeheartedly shared in the family trust in the wonderful promises and prospects of modernity [...] But unlike the elder brother, it did not trust history to find the way to the millennium. Neither was it prepared to wait till history proved this mistrust wrong. Its war cry was: 'Kingdom of Reason—now!'¹⁸

As mentioned earlier, in complete opposition to the approach taken by his Soviet contender, the film locates Rocky with his wife and a few members of his crew in the mountains of Russia. In preparation for the fight, we see images of the North American throwing heavy logs, chopping trees, pushing snow sleighs, jogging in snow, and climbing mountains in icy conditions. All these scenes reinforce the reason why the figure of Rocky has become an icon in the US imaginary, as he is constructed as the quintessential North American self-made man. A man that started at the bottom of the social pyramid and when given the chance to be a boxing star, stood up to the challenge. This Cinderella story is precisely the argument of the first movie and his work discipline displayed in the sequels is the reason that years later, Rocky became the North American representation in the defense of the title of the World's Heavyweight Champion.

In the first movie (1976), the Italian-American boxer is portrayed as an uneducated underdog living in the suburbs of Philadelphia.¹⁹ As he later lets the viewer know, he started boxing at an early age following his father's advise who told him that

¹⁸ Ibid, 166.

¹⁹ Stallone, Sylvester. *Rocky*, DVD. Directed by John G. Avildsen (Hollywood, CA: United Artist, 1976).

“he had no brains, so he might as well use his body.”²⁰ In the use of his raw labor power, he spends his days performing in a cheap boxer club and as a hired hand for a low rate criminal. In 1975, Rocky got the opportunity of a lifetime when he is asked to fight the World Champion Apollo Creed as a replacement for a contender who got injured during practice. The fight is seen by Creed as a joke and no one expected Rocky to last more than three rounds against the champion. But as we find out, even after the last round, the contender was still standing by virtue of his determination. Even though he did not get the belt in the first attempt, this first movie can be read as the depiction of the protestant version of the American Dream.

A central issue of the 1904 work of Max Weber is the notion of ‘Calling.’ In the moral justification to the endless accumulation of capital that is Weber’s *Protestant Work Ethic*, personal success is represented by economic wealth. This is seen as a sign of temperament and a just retribution that overcomes the obstacles that separate a person from following God’s Calling in this world.²¹ For Protestantism, work is a way to worship God because it is seen as a divine ordinance (or Calling) for the place that God has assigned to the individual in the world. His salvation is due to the fulfillment of his obligations in his particular Calling in the world.²² In this logic, the story of Rocky could be read as someone whose soul was chosen by the grace of God to fulfill an almost impossible task and who, only by the strength of his inner temperament, was able to go the distance in the pursuit of his Calling in the world. This renewal of the myth proposed by Weber, during the time of the Cold War gained particular strength with its blending

²⁰ Movies in depth. “Rocky Character Biography” <http://movies.deepthi.com/Rocky/rocky-character-biography.html> (accessed, june 19th, 2012).

²¹ Weber, Max. *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism with other writings on the rise of the West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

²² Furnham, Adrian. *The Protestant work ethic: the psychology of work-related beliefs and behaviours* (London, New York : Routledge, 1990).

with the Fordist economic model. This model is synthetized by Buck-Morss as the “principle of putting dollars into working classes in order to increase domestic demand.”²³ The sum of these ideas is the basis of the idealized notion of the America Dream in which the US was presented to the rest of the world as the land of opportunity where the individuals—such as Rocky—who posses the determination to pursue their Calling will find redemption and success through hard work.

Once in the Moscow ring, when the fighters finally encounter each other, we see them engaging in a battle of gazes as a preamble to the physical confrontation. Before the bell rings, there is a final sequence that physically compares the U.S.A and the U.S.S.R impersonations. In contrast to the body of Stallone, the Soviet has a clear advantage with an extra foot of height and a better-trained body. From a logical perspective—as long as the rules of the competition would not change during the course of the match—the outcome of the fight seemed obvious. This tension created by the director brings to mind one of the iconic images of the Cold War known as the *Kitchen Debate*.

Years earlier than Rocky’s appearance in front of the Soviet crowd, the path for US cultural demonstration in Russia was opened by a direct invitation by the Soviet Prime Minister Nikita Khrushchev to perform a reciprocal cultural exchange. In the summer of 1959, exhibitions in New York and Moscow were put on, showing to their respective citizens the scientific, technological and cultural advances of their adversaries. This was the first time that a massive demonstration of this nature was performed during the Cold War. This event was also of particular significance because of the encounter that took place between Khrushchev and the then vice-president of the United States, Richard

²³ Buck-Morss. “Dreamworld and Catastrophe,” 209.

Nixon during the inauguration of the Moscow exhibit. The recollections of the conversation that took place in front of a display of a modern US kitchen—for the purposes of this written piece—can be interpreted as the foundations of the implicit conversation that took place through the gazes of both boxers:

Khrushchev: [...] How long has America existed? Three hundred years?

Nixon: One hundred and fifty years.

Khrushchev: ‘One hundred and fifty years?’ Well then we will say America has been in existence for 150 years and this is the level she has reached. We have existed not quite forty-two years and in another seven we will be at the same level as America. When we catch up, in passing you by, we will wave to you. Then if you wish we can stop and say: please follow up. Plainly speaking, if you want capitalism you can live that way. That is your own affair and doesn’t concern us.

Nixon [pointing to American workmen]: With men like that we are strong. But these men—Soviet and American—work together well for peace, even as they worked together in building this exhibition. This is the way it should be. I can only say if this competition in which you plan to outstrip us is to the best for both of our peoples and for peoples everywhere, there must be exchange of ideas. After all, you don’t know everything.

Khrushchev: If I don’t know everything you don’t know anything about communism except fear of it.²⁴

The type of cultural demonstration in which Rocky—as well as the movie that describes this fictitious demonstration—was engaged in, at the high point of the political confrontation, became one of the central fronts of it (*Figure 10*). Since 1974, Eva Cockcroft was able to identify the involvement of the US intelligence agency in events such as the American exhibition in Moscow as well as in the sponsoring of experimental cultural demonstrations around the world. As the art historian sustains, the interest of the CIA in such exhibitions was not limited to espionage. The agency especially “wanted

²⁴ Khrushchev, Nikita and Richard Nixon. “The Kitchen Debate.” In: *Cold War Confrontations: U.S Exhibitions and their role in the Cultural Cold War*, ed. Jack Masey and Conway Lloyd Morgan. (Baden, Switzerland: Lars Müller Publishers, 2008), 202.

to influence the international intellectual community and present a strong propaganda of the US as a 'free' society in opposition to the 'regulated' Soviet Block."²⁵ Following this line of inquiry, Buck-Morss further explains that in the confrontation against an ontological enemy—whose disappearance would endanger the formation of the collective identity—the fundamental site of struggle occurs in the symbolic. In her words, "the name 'Cold War' refers precisely to the fact that by outlawing the enemy's interpretation of the world, the silencing violence was cultural even more than it was physical."²⁶

Following the path opened by Nixon 26 years earlier, the movie describes a US fighter who, against all odds, is willing to do anything necessary to prove his country's symbolic superiority in the heart of his enemy's homeland. As the fight starts, the Soviet contender immediately goes to the offensive to provide Rocky with a fierce beating. In the first round, the North American is unable to deliver a single hit as he struggles to stay on his feet. Just before the end of the second round, Balboa is able to silence the cheering crowd when he is finally able to land a right hook that visibly shakes Drago as it make him start to bleed below his left eye. At the end of the round, Rocky realizes that he will be able to defeat his contender while the Soviet starts to lose his confidence as he comments that the North American "is not human, he is a piece of iron." From that point on, the fight starts to turn as Rocky holds his ground during the next thirteen rounds. By the last round, both contenders are noticeably exhausted and it seems that the judges will decide the confrontation. But, in a sudden turn of events, Rocky regains his strength to literally knock his contender out of the boxing ring. Now, the North American is the only fighter in the ring as he joyfully proclaims his victory to the Soviet crowd as well as

²⁵ Cockcroft, Eva. "Abstract expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War." *Artforum*. vol. 15. No. 10. (1974): 39.

²⁶ Buck-Morss. "Dreamworld and Catasprophe," 5.

the rest of the world which was watching on television the events occurring in the Soviet block.

It is strange how this account of events resembles the events regarding the actual confrontation between the U.S.A and the U.S.S.R. Around the 1950s, the Soviets began to deliver significant hits to the North American supremacy through the support of communist revolutions all around the world. Among the most significant assaults, we can recall the war on Vietnam and the Cuban communist revolution. A revolution that took place 90 miles from the US and, the subsequent North American inability to contain it, was something that profoundly marked the international affairs during next couple of decades. For the second round of the conflict, we can recall as the most significant comeback the US involvement in the coup d'état against the socialist government of Salvador Allende (Chile) and the victory over the Soviet invasion to Afghanistan.

But even more interesting than this, is the premonitory quality of the film. At the time when the movie was released, both systems seem exhausted due to a change in the world's economic environment where "each political discourse found itself fundamentally challenged by material developments themselves."²⁷ Following this logic, it was expected that the outcome of the conflict was going to be a synthesis of both discourses as a form of adaptation to a new reality. But, as in the movie, a last hit was delivered and the Berlin Wall fell in a matter of days. From there, the entire socialist dream vanished from the political landscape, leaving the United States and its liberal democratic model as the solitary competitor for the political organization of reality during the next couple of decades.

²⁷ Ibid, 39.

2.4.

In some way, the monument to the fictitious boxer from Philadelphia at the Museum of Art commemorates the total disappearance of its Soviet counterpart in the fight for what we call reality. But as Bauman explains, more than the collapse of communism, this monument “celebrate[s] the end of modernity actually, because what collapsed was the most decisive attempt to make modernity work; and it failed. It failed as blatantly as the attempt was blatant.”²⁸ In this redefinition of the rules of the game, the 1990s confronted all the actors involved in the conflict with a series of delicate issues that demanded to be solved. Among the issues that needed to be discussed, were three main issues. First, was the question of the future possibilities for the global left once the war was over. Second, was the problem of the construction of identity in the redefinition of the world’s political borders. And third, was the subject of reinvention of a direction for the future of western civilization different from the ideal of progress proposed by modernity. This last issue will be fully addressed in the last chapter of this thesis, but for now, I am going to concentrate on the first two problems.

The aftermath of the Cold War was significantly difficult for the United States, in the sense that when the fighter has fulminated all his contenders, he is faced with the cruel reality that he is no longer necessary. As David Harvey explains, in the twilight of the conflict, the rest of the world started to break free from the domination of the US as it no longer looked for North American military protection. In words of the geographer, this lead to a situation where “the US has never been so isolated from the rest of the world politically, culturally and even militarily as now.”²⁹ But internally, the US had to face an even more disturbing reality as the construction of sovereignty over its social

²⁸ Bauman. “Intimations of Postmodernity,” 222.

²⁹ Harvey. “A Brief History of Neoliberalism,” 196.

body had to confront the loss of its demonized mirror image understood as its ontological enemy. Following Buck-Morss, this became a sensitive issue since “the disappearance of the enemy threatens to dissolve the collective itself.”³⁰ Recalling the ideas mentioned earlier, the act of naming a common enemy calls the collective into existence and through that strategy, it gives its leaders sovereign power over their community. Once an enemy able to match the size of the US disappeared from the political landscape, the superpower discourse was forced to reinvent itself in concordance with that absence.

The fifth film of the Rocky series, released in 1990, characterizes this situation.³¹ Once Rocky and his family return home from Russia, they find out that Balboa’s accountant (with the power of attorney that they gave him) has misspent all of Rocky’s fortune in bad business deals. To make matters worse, the fighter realizes that he has suffered significant brain damage during his confrontation with Drago and, because of that, he will no longer be able to fight without risking his health. In this situation, the Italian-American is forced to retire and leave his title vacant for the next generation to take over. Having no other choice, he sells of all his belongings as he moves back to his old working class neighborhood with his family to start their lives all over again. The film places them back where they started—Rocky becomes the trainer at his old boxing club and his wife gets her old job working at the pet store where they both met for the first time. It was as though nothing had happened in the past 15 years.

Following the understanding of the long nineties proposed by Phillip E. Wegner, the period between the collapse of Communism block and the fall of the Twin Towers

³⁰ Buck-Morss. “Dreamworld and Catastrophe,” 13.

³¹ Stallone, Sylvester. *Rocky V*, DVD. Directed by John G. Avildsen (Hollywood, CA: MGM, 1990).

could be understood as this strange phase. According to the scholar, only till the experience of the terrorist attack is where “the destruction of the symbolic universe of the Cold War is finally accomplished and a true new world order put into place.”³² During the lapse that separates the Real collapse of the Soviet contender and the symbolic closure of the fight, the interpretation of the events and their conjugation with a future-to-come were open to debate. In these circumstances, a “wave of the counter globalization ‘movement of movements’ begins to gather force, and in their own way try to think the utopia possibilities opened by this situation.”³³ While the US government reinvented itself, the academia gave birth to a trend of radical thinkers who freed from the weight of the political left’s “legacy of the twentieth century [...] opened up the space for a new kind of political and cultural experimentation.”³⁴ Among the list of thinkers that came to lead the academic discussion at this juncture are names like Slavoj Zizek, Giorgio Agamben, Gayatri Spivak, Judith Butler, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri.

This period was of a particular significance as the experience of the event that took place in Berlin was so unexpected that it was open to any number of interpretations and forms of historicization. Among the most optimistic were the voices of Hardt and Negri, who till today are declaring that the 20th century “began in 1917 [and], came to an end between Beijing and Berlin in 1989, that does not mean in any way that [...] communism ended but only that another century has begun.”³⁵ Other left-wing intellectuals did not have the same certainties. For example, Frederic Jameson wrote about the postmodern

³² Wegner, Phillip E. *Life between two Deaths, 1989-2001. U.S. Culture in the Long Nineties* (Durham, London: Duke University Press, 2009), 9.

³³ Ibid, 8.

³⁴ Ibid, 36.

³⁵ Negri Antonio and Michael Hardt. *Commonweath* (Cambridge, London: Harvad University press, 2009), 94.

revival of the 1950s' notion³⁶ of the *end of ideology*: "but ideology is now over, not because the class struggle has ended and on one has anything class ideological to fight about, but rather because the faith in ideology [...] has ceased to be functional in perpetuating and reproducing the system."³⁷ As I have already mentioned, Zygmunt Bauman observes the events as the end of modernity at large, but at the same time, he expresses his concerns about a "yet-unexplored world: a world without a collective utopia, without a conscious alternative to itself."³⁸ Sharing a generalized pessimism, Susan Buck-Morss also sees the collapse corresponding to the end of the century while she expresses her concern about "the possibility of difference is the prerequisite for critical thinking [...] it was this possibility that was that was threaten by the coming together of our worlds."³⁹ In his characteristic apocalyptic voice, Jean Baudrillard had similar concerns to Buck-Morss. According to the French author, these events in no way could be read as a "historical evolution, but an epidemic of consensus, an epidemic of democratic values"⁴⁰ when they spread so easily, it must mean that "then they must have liquefied, they must now be worthless."⁴¹

Among all theses interpretations—and the many others coming from all over the world from the humanities and social sciences—a particular voice became internationally famous for his cynicism as he openly came to celebrate what everybody else was grieving for. For this reason, the words of Francis Fukuyama came to be assumed as the equivalent of the voice of US neoconservative hegemonic pretentions. In

³⁶ In his 1960 book, *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties*, Daniel Bell suggest that by the 1950s the grand ideologies deriver from the humanism of the 19th and early 20th century where exhausted.

³⁷ Jameson, Frederic. "Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic," 398.

³⁸ Bauman. "Intimations of Postmodernity," XXV.

³⁹ Buck-Morss. "Dreamworld and Catastrophe," 239.

⁴⁰ Baudrillard, Jean. *The Illusion of the End* (Stanford: Stanford University press, 1994), 44.

⁴¹ Ibid.

some way, this work may be interpreted in the manner of the discourse that Rocky gave in front of the unconscious body of its Soviet contender. Following the interpretation of Wegner, these words came to be “one of the inaugural texts of the period of the 1990s. Fukuyama’s essay is significant, among other reasons, for signaling a return to the kinds of universal and global claims.”⁴² The main argument of the Japanese-American author is that the world “had reached the 'end of history': not that historical events would stop, but that History understood as the evolution of human societies through different forms of government had culminated in modern liberal democracy and market-oriented capitalism.”⁴³

Following the intellectual tradition of historical materialism and the modern interpreters of Hegel such as Alexandre Kojève and Daniel Bell, the argument of the political scientist has been developed in three different stages. Just as the Berlin Wall was falling in November of 1989, he published the article *The End of History?* in the summer edition of the journal *National Interest*. In this article, Fukuyama takes the ideas of Marx about how history tends to evolve in a linear progression as the social contradictions are solved in a movement toward an ideal form of socio-economic organization. This is done in order to read them against the faith of Marxist regimens. In this paper, he claimed that “the triumph of the West, of the Western idea, is evident first of all in the total exhaustion of viable systematic alternatives to Western liberalism.”⁴⁴ Subsequently, the author published a book version of this thesis in 1992. In this bestseller, he embraces Hegelian thought to talk about how liberal capitalism has been able to satisfy man’s desire for recognition at the point in which all material

⁴² Wegener. “Life Between Two Deaths,” 137-138.

⁴³ Fukuyama, Francis. “Has History Started Again?” *Policy*. Vol. 18 No. 2. (Winter, 2002): 3.

⁴⁴ Fukuyama, Francis. “The End of History?” *National Interest*, 16 (Summer, 1989): 3.

contradiction will be solved within the model of liberal democracy. Echoing the tone in which I am narrating these pages, Fukuyama synthesizes his argument by saying that “the twin crises of authoritarianism and socialism central planning have left only one competitor standing in the ring as an ideology of potential universal validity: liberal democracy, the doctrine of individual freedom and popular sovereignty.”⁴⁵

For the purposes of this narration, the retrospective reading of his own work does not really concern us. But, it is worth quickly acknowledging his interpretations of the current political situation. About the conflict with what he calls “Islamofascism” he asserts that it does not really affect the original thesis, because the opponent is not a long-term threat since the confrontation is not “between two equally viable cultural systems.”⁴⁶ What he sees as a menace to his vision, is the emergence of global forms of government in which a claim for democracy runs short⁴⁷ and the emergence of China as a possible alternative to his understanding of liberal capitalism.⁴⁸ Still, as I mentioned, this is the material of a story that someone will be able to narrate after the next couple of decades. My interest in Fukuyama is based on his work of the 1990s, because as Sunil Maghani asserts “the ‘End of History’, intimately bound up with the fall of the Berlin Wall, stakes out a very grand decline of the grand narratives. Whether we like it or not,

⁴⁵ Fukuyama, Francis. *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York, London, Toronto, Sydney: Free Press, 2006).

⁴⁶ Fukuyama. “Has History Started Again?,” 7.

⁴⁷ Fukuyama, Francis. “Afterword to the Second Paperback Edition of *The End of History and the Last Man*.” In: *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York, London, Toronto, Sydney: Free Press, 2006).

⁴⁸ Portland Aristotle. “*The Rise of China Refutes ‘End of History’ Theory, Francis Fukuyama Admits to a shocked Powell’s Books Audience.*” In: Oregon Live Blog, entry April 14, 2011, http://blog.oregonlive.com/myoregon/2011/04/the_rise_of_china_refutes_end.html (accessed May 15, 2012).

this 'End of History' becomes the overarching and overwhelming narrative of our times."⁴⁹

In 1993, Jacques Derrida provided one of the most incisive responses to the claims that Fukuyama presented in his series of lectures held at the University of California, Riverside. These words had been later printed in the book *Specters of Marx*. In this intervention, the philosopher holds that while the neoconservatives proclaim the realization of the liberal democracy ideal, "never have violence, inequality exclusion, famine, and thus economic oppression affected as many human beings in the history of earth and humanity."⁵⁰ In the celebratory tone of neo-conservatism, the French author sees an attempt "to hide, and first of all from themselves, the fact that this triumph has never been so critical, fragile, threatened, even in certain regards catastrophic."⁵¹ Furthermore, he suggests that from the beginning of the 1990s, the neoconservatives have been doing everything possible to execute a worldwide successful mourning process for the socialist regimes. This exorcism attempts to construct a consensus that Marxism is actually dead; it is something from the past that does not apply to the present or the future. In words of the philosopher:

Since such a conjuration today insists, in such a deafening consensus, that what is, it says, indeed dead, remain dead indeed, it arouses a suspicion. It awakens us where it would like to put us to sleep. Vigilance, therefore: the cadaver is perhaps not as dead, as simply dead as the conjuration tries to delude us into believing. [...] The conjuration has to make sure that the dead will not come back: quick, do whatever is needed to keep the cadaver localized, in a safe place, decomposing right where it

⁴⁹ Manghani, Sunil. *Image Critique & The Fall of the Berlin Wall* (Bristol, Chicago: Intellect, 2008), 103.

⁵⁰ Derrida. "Specters of Marx," 106.

⁵¹ Ibid, 85.

was inhumed, or even embalmed as they like to do in Moscow. Quick, a vault to which keeps the key!⁵²

It is particularly suspicious that just as the Wall started to fall, Fukuyama was publishing his essay in *National Interest*. It is almost as if Rocky would have started to give his victory speech even before the referee begun the final count to declare the knockout of Drago. Following Derrida, we can clarify that the act of mourning is a form of exorcism that “pretends to declare the death only in order to put them to death. As a coroner might do, it certifies the death but here it is in order to inflict it.”⁵³ In this sense, the end of the ten counts made by the referee of a boxing match is a performative act wherein the fight concludes as the contender is declared knocked out. In the rush to grab the microphone in order to persuade the witness of the fight that they can change by way of their acknowledgment of his victory, the fighter is manifesting a fear that Marxism may not be as dead as the Neoliberals would like us to believe.

During the past 20 years, we have been witnesses of the process through which a systemic claim for social justice has been displaced onto the margins of social reality. Since 2001, this process has increasingly sharpened, when the US was able to reinvent its sovereignty through the construction of an immaterial—hence immortal—ontological enemy. Through what is now known as the War on Terror, the neoconservatives were able to minimize the space for the possibilities opened in the 1990s as they effectively “interrupted the consolidation and maturation of the emergent oppositional movements and enabled the installation of a new hegemonic logic.”⁵⁴ But as Andreas Huyssen points out about this process, “the obsessive attempts to give utopia a bad name remain fundamentally ideological and locked in discursive battle with residual and emerging

⁵² Ibid, 120-121.

⁵³ Ibid, 59.

⁵⁴ Wegner. “Life Between Two Deaths,” 37.

utopian thinking in the here and now.”⁵⁵ In this sense, the attempt to purge society from radical thinking, years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, shows that the Cold War is still not completely over. The last battlefield of the Cold War is occurring in the way that the memories of it are being articulated in the present. It is also taking place in the methods through which we are collectively accepting the loss of the socialist regimes to recognize our present moment as something different from when they were able to exist.

2.5.

In this sense, the monument of Rocky Balboa standing in front of one of the princely galleries of the United States is something more than a vestige of the country’s glorious past. Through the commemoration of a particular interpretation of its previous experiences, the fighter keeps on defending the present that he took part in constructing. When talking about the recall of the past, we have to make the clarification that memory is a narrative depiction that comes after the events. In this regard, Huyssen states that “rather than leading us to some authentic origin or giving us verifiable access to the real, memory [...] is itself based on representation. The past is not simply there in memory, but it must be articulated to become memory.”⁵⁶ Memory is an act that occurs in the present through which we establish a relationship with the past according to a cultural mediation. It is a kind of performance in which the past is constantly reinterpreted as it is articulated from the experiences of the present. Taking this interpretation onto a social sphere, there are authors like Mieke Bal who further comment how “the interaction between the present and the past that is the stuff of Cultural Memory is,

⁵⁵ Huyssen, Andreas. *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (New York, London: Routledge, 1995), 86.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 2.

however, the product of collective agency rather than a result of psychic or historical accident.”⁵⁷

The recall of the past as a cultural phenomenon is subject to a constant negotiation between the official version of memory and the different subjectivities within a society. The product of this dialogue is a continual modification and re-description of the narrative that shapes the explanation of our present and the basis for thinking of a shared future. This is a collective performance of a functional memory that is “set up against the background of an archival memory. The active memory refers to what a society consciously selects and maintains as salient and vital items for common orientation and shared remembering.”⁵⁸ This interpretation of memory assumes that there is a correlation between what a community remembers and its identity as a collectivity. About the nature of this communal way of remembrance, Aleida Assmann explains that “institutions and larger social groups, such as nations, states, the church, or a firm do not ‘have’ a memory, they ‘make’ one of themselves.”⁵⁹ This construction is crafted by these entities through the selection and exclusion of events that are significant in the establishment of group values. This is done in order to determine a coherent narrative that connects the past, present, and future of the group.

This characterization of memory is different from what is experienced as socialized memory, where the understanding of postmemory can be located. This embodied form of memory is the site where we locate our personal experiences in relation to the shared

⁵⁷ Bal, Mieke. “Introduction.” In: *Acts of Memory, Cultural Recall in the Present*, ed. Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe and Leo Spitzer (Hanover and London: Dartmouth College, New England University Press, 1999), VII.

⁵⁸ Assmann, Aleida. “Memory, Individual and Collective.” In: *Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis*, ed. Robert Goodin and Chales Tilly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 220.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 216.

experiences of a generation through regular social interaction.⁶⁰ When speaking of memory from this point on, I am referring to the mediated forms of memory that are founded on a series of “more durable carriers of external symbols and material representations.”⁶¹ Following Edward Said, these forms of memory lead us to the core of the “issue of nationalism and national identity, of how memories of the past are shaped in accordance with a certain notion of what ‘we’ or, for that matter, ‘they’ really are.”⁶² Regarding this issue, the scholar additionally elucidates that the invention of a communal past is a practice broadly used by authorities as a form of connecting large numbers of people with each other. This construction of memory is made by “manipulating certain bits of the national past, suppressing others, and elevating still others in an entirely functional way. Thus memory is not necessarily authentic, but rather useful.”⁶³

Assmann develops the structure through which memory functions on a cultural level. According to her, communal remembrance works on a triadic construction. This means that besides the basic operation of remembering and forgetting, there is a third category that refers to the technical means of preserving vast amounts of information that exceed the capacities of human memory. In places like libraries, archives or museums, the information is stored in a way that is “neither actively remembered nor totally forgotten, because it remains materially accessible for possible use.”⁶⁴ What is characterized by the German author as Storage Memory, is a physical place that “contains what is unusable, obsolete, or dated; it has no vital ties to the present and no

⁶⁰ Ibid, 213.

⁶¹ Ibid, 215.

⁶² Said, Edward. “Invention, Memory and Place.” *Critical inquiry*, Vol 26 (winter, 2000): 177.

⁶³ Ibid, 179.

⁶⁴ Assmann. “Memory, Individual and Collective,” 220.

bearing on identity formation. We may also say that it holds in store a repertoire of missed opportunities, alternative options, and unused material.”⁶⁵ Complementing this notion, Derrida states that the archives themselves determine the structure of what is storable for the future.⁶⁶ The archive produces as much as it records events in a process that the philosopher calls the Archive Fever, where there is an internal contradiction between the drive to preserve and forget. In this sense, “there would indeed be no archive [or conservation] desire without the radical finitude, without the possibility of a forgetfulness [...] there is no archive fever without the threat of this death drive.”⁶⁷

That is to say, the way that we collectively relate to the past can be illustrated as a set of concentric circles of forgetting through which we construct what we remember in the present. In the moment of storage, the archivist sets the categories from which he is able to generate the material that will be saved as he discards the rest of the possible traces of the world as rubbish. In this first moment, the Storage Memory is produced through a “process [that] depends partly on social, political, and cultural interests, but it is determined as well by the prevailing media and technologies.”⁶⁸ Through that fissure between the past and the present opened by the storage systems, in a second moment, a set of different agents come to do their part in the construction of cultural memory through the process of retrieval, consignment, and selection from the archive. This is what Assmann refers to as Functional Memory, where a vital recollection of the past is constructed through a narrative structure that gives shape to the way that the community identifies itself. This construction is crafted by large social entities through the articulation of fragments of their past experience in a way that they are significant in

⁶⁵ Assmann, Aleida. *Cultural memory and Western Civilization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 2011), 127.

⁶⁶ Derrida, Jaques. “Archive Fever,” 17.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 19.

⁶⁸ Assmann. “Cultural Memory and Western Civilization,” 13.

the establishment of group values. Through this reading of the archive, the community of the present determines a coherent narrative that connects it to a version of the past and the future.

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, this theoretical work has considerable debts to the ideas of Antonio Gramsci and Louis Althusser. At this point, it is appropriate to refer to Althusser in order to explain how the acknowledgement of a particular interpretation of the past becomes the narrative that gathers a group of individuals as part of a social body. The interpretation that a shared memory is a narrative that gives coherence to the present of the collective, profoundly resonates with Althusser's most famous statement: "ideology is a representation of the imaginary relationship of the individuals to their real conditions of existence."⁶⁹ Continuing with the ideas of the French author, ideology only exists as a material reality. The ideas and representations that make up ideology only exist in the form of institutions, rituals, and practices as the realization of ideology in what he calls the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA). As he explains, the ISA are the institutions where this articulation of reality exists as a sustained performance that constructs ideology as common social practice. Among the list of ISA, the philosopher recognizes diverse areas of society such as religion, education, family, culture, and law, among others where individuals become subjects for the system. In such apparatuses, the individual is educated about the rules of the established social order that he must follow to be part of the system. "In other words, the school [...] teaches 'know-how', but in a form which ensure subjection to the ruling ideology or the mastery of its 'practice'."⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Althusser, Louis. *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001), 109.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 89.

This ongoing work of the ISA is what ensures the reproduction of the relations and the conditions of existence as a stable social reality. About the establishment of a dominant interpretation of reality, Althusser asserts, “it is by the installation of the ISAs in which this ideology is realized and realizes it self that it becomes the ruling ideology.”⁷¹ Following these ideas, we can further interpret the neoliberal obsessive attempt to declare the death of Marxism as an effort to archive these ideas as a curious part of the Storage Memory of the world. This is done to suppress these ideas from the collective conscious of a Functional Memory. In the endeavor to install a dominant interpretation of reality, the main version of the past emanating from the world’s ISA is viewed from the perspective of Rocky. Connecting these ideas with the notion that a collective identity is defined by what we remember and forget, Assman complements this statement by saying a “reconstruction of identity always entails a reconstruction of memory.”⁷² She further explains that this process takes place in the ISA, “through the rewriting of history books, the demolition of monuments, and the renaming of official buildings, streets, and squares.”⁷³

This is exactly the process that we have been witnessing in the last couple of decades since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Following Manghani, in the images available to remember the fall of the Wall and its immediate consequences “what has consistently been left out of the picture have been the voices of the East and the evident failure of an alternative socialism to take root, despite the optimism and the opportunity of its new beginning.”⁷⁴ Since the 1990s, the relationship between memory and identity has gained significant relevance as the cultural and political borders of the world have been

⁷¹ Ibid, 125.

⁷² Assmann. “Cultural Memory and Western Civilization,” 54.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Manghani. “Image Critique,” 159.

redesigned. For instance, in Europe, the erasure of the barriers between East and West “brought to an end an era of memories frozen under the ice of two rigidly opposed doctrines.”⁷⁵ In this situation, the collective self-consciousness of a remembered past became “a primary force for political mobilization. Instead of ‘emancipation,’ which linked the promise of future self-determination with a break from the past and from origins, the key word became ‘identity.’ ‘Who am I?’ was the leading question, and even more significantly, ‘who are we?’”⁷⁶

In this context, the Museum as a site that provides a stable reading of the past has gained cultural preponderance. Authors like Andreas Huyssen support this fact by acknowledging that these institutions have become a reference point in a community as they become a strategy to resist a possible disintegration of the social body. He then explains that, since the 1980s “ever more museums were planned and built as the practical corollary to the ‘end of everything’ discourse.”⁷⁷ Responding to an environment in need to solve the issues of a shared identity, the museum gains the epistemological function of a map as it “unifies and rationalizes, pictures and present relationships.”⁷⁸ In these institutions, an official version of memory is provided through the work of selection and exclusion of the items contained in their archives. This is done to publicly display the relationships among “people, nations, and ideas [that] are produced through the objects selected.”⁷⁹ In this sense, the museum gains importance as it depicts for a large audience how and what a society is going to collectively remember and forget.

Going back to the Museum guarded by the memorial of a lone warrior with his

⁷⁵ Assmann. “Cultural Memory and Western Civilization,” 53.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Huyssen. “Twilight Memories,” 14.

⁷⁸ Hooper-Greenhill. “Museums and the Interpretation,” 17.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

arms up high in a sign of victory, it worth recalling the words of Duncan and Wallach quoted in the first pages of this chapter. They assert that this kind of museum follow the tradition of the Renaissance Princely Galleries—the magnificent spaces that housed the royal collections and served as the official reception rooms for dignitaries. The iconographic program of such spaces celebrates the power and wisdom of the monarch in order to impress visitors with his richness and splendor. It was a display of material proofs that worked to validate the prince and his government. In accordance with this tradition, “in the museum, the wealth of the collection is still a display of national wealth and is still meant to impress. But now the state, as an abstract entity, replaces the king as host.”⁸⁰

Each major city in the United States has a museum similar to the one located in Philadelphia. The ideological function of these institutions, more than constructing a completely defined national identity, are meant to impress their visitors by showing this country as the guardian of the most respected values of western civilization. They are depictions of the map of the world according to this country. To construct a national memory, the US has relied on the edification of memorials all over the country. About these monuments, Susan Sontag gives one of the most incisive descriptions of the construction of national memory of this country. As she points out, there is an evident strategic lack of commemorative sites about the history of slavery in the US while there is an obsession with the memorials of the Holocaust and other genocides that took place in other locations from all over the world. This silence is made to show that the US is exempt of any major crime as they show that evil is manifested in the rest of the world. Within this context, these memorials manifest the “national consensus on American history as a history of progress is [also] a new setting for distressing photographs—one

⁸⁰ Duncan, and Wallach. “The Universal Survey Museum,” 58.

that focuses our attention on wrongs, both here and elsewhere, for which America sees itself as the solution or cure.”⁸¹

2.6.

Museums like the one in Philadelphia are truly impressive exhibitions of the North American victory over the world in the 20th century. They are monuments to the world’s lonely Super Power for the next couple of decades after this fight. These treasures give legitimacy to its authority and symbolically put this country in at the center of the cultural activity of the world as they show themselves as the redeemers of it. In what follows in this essay, I will discuss a case of the performance of a cultural memory that is not aligned with the official narrative of the victorious United States after the Cold War: the reconstruction of *The Museum of Poverty* of Pedro Manrique Figueroa. This is a kind of counter-memory of the official construction proposed by the US (*Figure 11*).

Continuing with my metaphor about the Balboa-Drigo fight, for the narrative of our present, this Museum may be seen as an attempt to keep alive a trace of blood left by the Soviet contender before disappearing from the boxing ring. Somehow, this could be seen as one of the few remaining signs that there actually was a contender to Rocky and the political reality that he represents. The purpose of this Museum is to characterize the experiences suppressed by the construction of the official political narrative of the United States in its victorious memories. As the name implies, *The Museum of Poverty* is the total opposite of a grandiloquent institution like the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The purpose of this portable museum is to remind its viewers of the social contradictions and injustices that still remain in the world despite Rocky’s auto-glorification (*Figure*

⁸¹ Sontag, “Regarding the Pain of Others,” 70.

12). In the exhibition (that is still itinerantly showing around the world), there is an unreferenced document that explains the mission of this institution. This anonymous quotation states that Manrique Figueroa:

told me that he had a dream of setting up a museum of poverty; a building where the children of the future would go and marvel at the phenomenon of poverty. They would ask questions which couldn't be answered: 'There was great wealth and prosperity and everyone was splurging, so why were others poor and dying?'⁸²

In the best manner of Socialist Realism, the images presented by the Museum of Poverty are "like a Byzantine painting, [or like] the effective Soviet poster [that] was meant to instruct. Yet it also meant to agitate, to spur and empathetic pang."⁸³ Conceptually, the project keeps working the tradition of Marxist thinking where the basic social contradictions of capitalism rely on the unequal distribution of wealth in the world. Hence, these inconsistencies are the basic motives to pursue an alternative economic system that structurally would be able to solve these social injustices. The uneasiness with the social system is precisely the question that the museum plants in the kids from the future. This could eventually lead to the drive to pursue an alternative social system which is a ghost that still haunts the neoliberal present (*Figure 13*). As Derrida explained in 1993, this specter of Marx is a presence without a present body that comes to disturb what is currently real. In this sense, the claim for social justice that comes from the Marxist past into a yet-to-come future is one of the most terrifying specters "on the condition that one can never distinguish between the future-to-come and the coming-back of the specter."⁸⁴ Like the time when Marx wrote the *Communist*

⁸² Ospina. "The Museum of Poverty," 7.

⁸³ Bird, Robert, Christopher P. Heuer and Matthew Jesse Jackson. *Vision and Communism* (New York, London: The new Press, 2011), 10.

⁸⁴ Derrida. "Specters of Marx," 46.

Manifesto, the purpose of this museum is to keep a space open for the specter's possibility of becoming an actual body.

This familiar monster for the United States is what Marx “had already [...] announce, with this name, some time ago, but it was not yet there.”⁸⁵ This communism-to-come is what authors like Francis Fukuyama are actively trying to exorcise at all expenses through the fervent declaration of the death of Marxism or of any other future that is different from liberal capitalism. Although the figure of Ivan Drago is extinguished from the political landscape, the basic social inequalities for which he was fighting still exist. Several authors have attempted to rhetorically eliminate social inequalities as a political issue by advocating a type of social Darwinism based on individual responsibility.⁸⁶ However, there are still millions of starving people in the world. Even though, Fukuyama eagerly overstates that capitalism is the only “road to great material abundance [...] and] the way to the completely non-material [satisfaction of the] end of recognition of our freedom,”⁸⁷ poverty still exists. Through his minuscule museum, Pedro Manrique Figueroa is determined not to let us forget about this issue.

According to the stories about Manrique's life, the museum is one of his last known attempts to openly militate in the communist cultural belligerency. This project was conceptualized around the most critical time of Figueroa's life. One year earlier, Manrique was officially expelled from the Colombian Communist Party due to a harsh

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Harvey synthesizes, Neoliberalism is politico-economic practice that proposes the economic well-being through promotion of individual entrepreneurial freedom. In this theoretical construction the “increasing social inequality within a territory was constructed as necessary to encourage the entrepreneurial risk and innovation that conferred competitive power and stimulated growth. [...] In a Darwinian neoliberal world, the argument went, only the fittest should and do survive.” Harvey. “A Brief History,” 157.

⁸⁷ Fukuyama. “The End of History and the Last Man,” 200.

argument with its leaders.⁸⁸ Freed from the Party guidance and regulations, the artist decided to go underground and radicalize his militancy through the effort of constructing the A.B.A. In English, this acronym translates to the Bolivarian Artists' Association. The idea of this association was to join efforts among the leftwing South American artists to use their "natural imagination to do a scientific and revolutionary art."⁸⁹ As far as anybody knows, there is no record of even a second member of his association although Figueroa spent 1973 in Venezuela trying to find members for his group. What he was able to organize during that time was an armed brigade whose aim was to form part of the resistance to the military coup against the socialist government of Salvador Allende.

As the filmmaker Juan José Venjarano recalls in an interview of the movie *Un Tigre de Papel*, Manrique nearly made it to Chile. Venjarano sustains that the last time he encountered Figueroa, the artist told him about his brigade and that he was preparing everything for his trip to join the armed forces loyal to Allende. Manrique also gave the filmmaker his Communist Party flag to safeguard, as he made clear that even though he officially was not a member of the Party, he was still a fervent communist. This encounter took place in Bogota on September 9, 1973—two days before the victory of Chile's military government. This means that Manrique never got to fight for Allende.⁹⁰ The contemporary curator of the Museum of Poverty complements this story. Regarding the birth of the Museum, Lucas Ospina explains: "after the events of September 11, 1973, Pedro Manrique Figueroa —Precursor of Collage in Colombia— decides, once again, to

⁸⁸ Ospina. "Homenaje a Pedro Manrique Figueroa."

⁸⁹ Ospina, Lucas. "Una Conferencia Sobre el Caso Pedro Manrique Figueroa." In: *Catalogo General X Salones Regionales de Artistas* (Bogota: Ministerio de Cultura, 2004), 158.

⁹⁰ Juan Jose Venjarano interview by Luis Ospina, "Un Tigre de Papel," 1:24:30.

take action. He starts the project Museum of poverty with the America in 1973 section.”⁹¹ As the story goes, the last militant gesture of Manrique Figueroa was the establishment of a collection composed of photographs and documents that described the social inequalities within the United States.

As mentioned earlier, the coup d'état done in Chile to the Socialist government of Salvador Allende, represented the first deadly blow to the dream of an international socialist future. With the intervention of the United States, this event gave rise to the first neoliberal state of the world led by general Augusto Pinochet.⁹² So, in the story of the failed trip to Chile, we can interpret that Figueroa got to realize the seriousness of the wound opened to the possibilities of a near communist future in continental America. In response to this epiphany, Manrique started to do what none of the Colombian militant artists did at the time—he built an archive that gathered all the ideas for what they were fighting for as a pledge for future generations to answer.⁹³ This awareness that what is not archived in a particular way will never be remembered by the future in the same way is precisely what the revolutionary artist of that moment lacked. About this fact, art historians Maria Sol Baron and Camilo Ordoñez, state that those movements were anchored in the present and in the urgency of immediate political intervention. Hence, none of the artists involved made an archive to “construct a ‘future past’ for the history of Colombian Art.”⁹⁴

By early 1970s, artists from all over Latin America consciously started to move away from a pretention of ‘universality’ proper to the version of Modern Art promoted

⁹¹ Ospina. “The Museum of Poverty,” 50.

⁹² Harvey. “A Brief History,” 39-63.

⁹³ Derrida. “Archive Fever,” 18.

⁹⁴ Barón María Sol and Camilo Ordoñez (Equipo Transhistoria). “Aún no sé en qué Consiste el Taller 4 Rojo.” (Paper presented in *Errata Colloquium, El lugar del arte en lo político*, Bogota, Luis Angel Arango Library, July 21, 2010).

by the United States (*Figure 14*). In the generation of Manrique, we saw the growth of artist movements that actively played a role in the cultural field of the Cold War through the resistance to the symbolical interventions of the US. The equivalence between the revolutionary fight and the struggle for the legitimacy of an aesthetic practice became a common statement among revolutionary artists. For example, the Colombian artist and art critic Clemencia Lucena proclaimed that “we are in an open fight situation among two radically opposed ideological currents [...] the aspiration to occupy a middle ground is completely illusory.”⁹⁵ As a counter-offensive to the US construction of an aesthetic consent, a generation of politically engaged artists began to attend to the regional realities to produce a kind of representation that would serve the social processes of their particular communities. The Colombo-Argentinean art critic Marta Traba addresses this phenomenon in her late critical work as the *Theory of the Resistance*. As she explains:

By using the term ‘regional’ I must then explain that [...] the artists language agrees with the comprehension codes of a community. Even though in the imperialist conception of the contemporary world, this definition of the regional is constantly altered and subverted. The empires demand to the regions an unconditional rendition in the matter of cultural affairs and the indiscriminate adoption of its language, even if it’s not suitable to the regional communities.⁹⁶

Between the years of 1970 and 1973, this kind of cultural resistance gained momentum due to the strengthening of a counter-cultural movement embodied in the partnership of *Casa de las Americas* in Cuba and the *Instituto de Arte Latinoamericano* in Chile. This bond was established through the triumph of the Socialist government of

⁹⁵ Lucena, Clemencia. *Anotaciones Políticas Sobre la Pintura en Colombia* (Bogota: Bandera Roja, 1975), 109.

⁹⁶ Traba, Marta. *Dos décadas vulnerables en las artes plásticas en América Latina, 1950-1970* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI editors, 2005 (Originally publishes by in Siglo XXI 1973)), 161.

Salvador Allende in the presidential election of Chile in September, 1970 and lasted till the fall of that government in September, 1973. This joint effort established, for this short period of time, a cultural network that promoted the nexus of the different revolutionary artists that existed in Latin America. About this alliance, the Art Historian Mariana Marchesi explains:

The central idea of this alliance was to articulate an artistic anti-imperialist front as a joint effort. Even though these initiatives were part of the cultural Zeitgeist, the new feature of this proposal was that in both countries these projects were presented as the official culture. This even served as a political project, because it existed a strong conviction on the concrete possibilities of collaboration of the cultural militia in the establishment of a revolutionary model.⁹⁷

With the fall of the socialist government in Chile, its major allies—Cuba and the Latin American revolutionary artists—entered in a state of complete isolation. Slowly and painfully, the dispersed artists around the continent, without a center or theoretical apparatus that validates their work, started to fade from the cultural landscape. Abruptly, claims like in “this time of social change from a decrepit order to a new one, the creators of beauty must use their best efforts to produce ideological works of art for the people”⁹⁸ became an issue from the past. After this hit to International Socialism, it was clear that in this continent (at least in the 20th century), Drago was going to lose the fight. By that moment, the logic of the social movements which saw themselves in the vanguards of history started to crumble as the future of humanity that they collectively envisioned was disappearing. The revolutionary artists, who saw themselves committed

⁹⁷ Marchesi, Mariana. “Las redes culturales latinoamericanas y los debates del arte revolucionario (1970-1973)” (Paper presented in *Transnational Latin American Art International Research Forum for Graduate Students and Emerging Scholars*, Austin, University of Texas at Austin, 2009).

⁹⁸ Ospina (“Asociación Bolivariana de Artistas A.B.A. A Declaration of Social, Political and Aesthetic Principles” (1971)), “Museum of Poverty,” 30.

to this future of humanity through the promotion of a socialist revolution, suddenly had to face a horizon where there was no place for them.

A particularly cruel incident that portrayed the new reality of the former social realist artists was the scene at the funeral of Clemencia Lucena in 1983. As mentioned, she was a well-known figure of the cultural scene of Colombia due to her work as the most enthusiastic promoter of the Maoist aesthetics in the country. She died when she was 37 years old in an accident in the city of Cali. As the only article that covered the news one month after her disappearance points out, the generalized silence of the cultural sphere and the press was particularly significant. Following the description provided by Nestor Gustavo Diaz, the memorial service of this public figure was exceptionally gloomy in the sense that only a few of her relatives and some of her political sympathizers went to mourn her. In the words published in a regional newspaper:

How notorious was the absence of the intellectuals and of the ones who claim ownership of Colombian high culture before the disappearance of a woman that without a doubt left an indelible mark in our times and in the country's art history with her work as a painter and as a writer. Probably I am not the most appropriate person to write this note, but I am terrified when a suspicious silence accompanies the dead.⁹⁹

The experience of Pedro Manrique Figueroa is a fictional story constructed as a way to characterize the lives and experiences of the Latin American left-wing artists and intellectuals of the second half of the 20th century. Those thousands of people—who as the experience of Lucena made clear—were condemned to symbolic death with the fading of the ideal future for which they were fighting. Following Lacan, we can say that

⁹⁹ Diaz, Nestor Gustavo. "Un Requiem Tardío por Clemencia Lucena." In: *Clemencia Lucena. La Revolución, El Arte, La Mujer* (Bogotá: Bandera Roja, 1984 (Originally Published in *La Patria*, August 9, 1983)), 114.

those individuals (outside academia) who were committed to a communist revolution in our neoliberal present inhabit the liminal space between life and death. In the sense that, although a significant number of them are not yet dead, they are “eliminated from the world of the living.”¹⁰⁰

2.7.

Contrarily from the rest of the social realist artists of the continent, the story of Manrique has been able to survive the social condemnation to oblivion given to the losers of history. The subsistence of this figure inside Colombian Cultural memory is due to the assertion of its curators that Figueroa possesses the title of the Precursor of Collage in Colombia. Besides the word of the curatorial group, there is not much archival evidence to sustain this open challenge to the official narrative of Colombian Art. The presence of the original works and the testimony of its discoverers is the only evidence we have as an audience to engage with an alternative version of the official account of the past. Although this is just a chimeric articulation of previous events, this bodiless subject could be addressed as a strategy to give voice to the subalterns of the twilight of the Cold War (*Figure 15*). As Gayatri Spivak describes, those individuals are the ones inhabiting the margins of the social body as they lack an epistemological place of enunciation to make themselves be heard as part of the community.¹⁰¹ In the breakdown of the communist project, the place of enunciation of these subjects vanished and consequently, they lost their position as subjects to become occupants of the margins of this new symbolical landscape. Once they lost their place, they were excluded from the

¹⁰⁰ Lacan, Jacques. “Antigone between two deaths.” In: *Ethics of Psychoanalysis. The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book, VII*. (New York, London: Routledge, 1992), 280.

¹⁰¹ Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. “Can the Subaltern Speak?” In: *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, ed. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (New York, London: Routledge, 2006).

symbolic order to be considered nonexistent as a contemporary political position for the other members of that society.

At this point of the essay, is necessary to directly address an idea that has been the foundation of the overarching argument of the chapter: what Sigmund Freud understands as repression. According to the Austrian theorist, “the essence of repression lies simply in turning something away, and keeping it at a distance, from the conscious.”¹⁰² He further explains that this is the most important psychical defense mechanism through which the appetites and desires that the subject considers unacceptable for the construction of his personality are pushed into the unconscious zones of the mind. The effectiveness of this process depends on a “a persistent expenditure of force, and if this were to cease the success of the repression would be jeopardized, so that a fresh act of repression would be necessary.”¹⁰³ Therefore, the psychic energy of the items suppressed are never fully annulled and are always struggling to manifest themselves in the forms of dreams, lapses, or any other demonstration. In the case of the Museum of Poverty, there are two manifestations of the repressed that are significant for understanding this project—the notion of Screen Memory and the Uncanny.

Before I address these manifestations, it is worth explaining how this psychical mechanism applies to the social construct. Those persons and ideas whose existence has been repressed from the realm of cultural memory are understood as the culturally *obscene*. As Ross Chambers explains, his understanding of the expression relates to the word ‘obscure’ in the sense that they are the things that are culturally known but not

¹⁰² Freud, Sigmund. “Repression” In: *Freud-Complete Works* (Ivan Smith Edition, 2011), 2978.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 2982.

acknowledged. In this conception, the obscene are the type of social issues that “would be [in] the ‘offstage’ or ‘backstage’ space that delimits, and is simultaneously inseparable from, a scene of activity on which attention is focused.”¹⁰⁴ As we have already seen in this paper, the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA) are the gatekeeper institutions of a society’s collective consciousness. Therefore, they are the ones that discriminate between what is appropriate to attend and issues that should be systematically excluded from public attention. In this sense, the obscene is what inhabits the cultural periphery of society as the repressed forces from the collective consciousness.

Following this logic, the Museum of Poverty could be seen in Freudian terms as a Screen Memory of the repressed dreams of a socialist revolution. The psychoanalyst describes this phenomenon as a false memory constructed as a product of the confrontation of two psychical forces. One that wants to remember the events and the other that struggles to repress them. These forces do not negate each other, but they reach an agreement where the original impression is maintained in the form of a mundane memory.¹⁰⁵ In this case, the exhibition of a project of an unknown self-taught Colombian artist, functions as a strategy to maintain the motives for the pursuit of social revolution. This takes place in an environment where common sense is displacing those hopes into the margins of society. As the curator of the Museum explained in an interview with Jeronimo Duarte, the essence of the project is “to create an smoke screen to talk about something, a historical screen to make something visible.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Chambers Ross. *Untimely Interventions. Aids Writing, Testimonial, & The Rhetoric of Haunting* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 23.

¹⁰⁵ Freud, Sigmund. “Screen Memories” In: *Freud-Complete Works* (Ivan Smith Edition, 2011), 490.

¹⁰⁶ Lucas Ospina, interview by Jeronimo Duarte, Bogota, Colombia, October 16, 2009.

The main emphasis of The Museum of Poverty is a series of cheaply reproduced documents and photographs that describe the misery of the lowest social classes of the United States in the 1970s. By doing this, the collection constructs a counter-image to the way the United States was self-portrayed internationally. Inside the Museum—a portable wooden structure of approximately 27 linear feet—visitors can find a compendium of more than 40 of these images from several states like Washington, Illinois or Alabama. Accompanying this display, there are three other complementing anthologies of objects: a set of caricatures of Uncle Sam that describes the relationship between North America and its neighbors of the south, texts about the life of Manrique Figueroa and three collages of Manrique (the only original pieces in the exhibition). In this entire display, there is a clear desire to recall all of the stories that have been narrated in this chapter—all the things that have been suppressed in the official version of our cultural memory; all the things that are obscene to talk about nowadays. Through the construction of a Screen Memory of those experiences, the display of the Museum of Poverty has been able to maintain a socially acceptable recall of the repressed part of our recent history.

Having reached this point, we are going to advance toward a conclusion of this chapter by focusing on the experience of looking at the Museum of Poverty from our present conditions of existence (*Figure 16*). In this experience, the degree to which the repression of Social Realism has been successful is manifested. Although this project is constructed as a socially acceptable fictitious recall of those practices, for the viewers it is still an uncomfortable experience to encounter this museum. A common reaction of the viewer of the project is an uncomfortable laughter as a response to the uncanny

experience of looking at the memories of an alternative future.¹⁰⁷ Continuing with Freud, the term Uncanny is understood as the frightening feeling of intellectual uncertainty (*das Unheimliche*) produced by the encounter of “nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression.”¹⁰⁸

With this in mind, we will discuss the experience of looking at the works of revolutionary artists that systematically have been suppressed from the official account of reality in institutions like the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Somehow, it is not a hard affirmation to sustain that for us (in 2012) it is really difficult to understand—or even look at—the other half of the Art History of the 20th century that Manrique Figueroa represents. Why is that?

As a way of getting into this issue, the ideas expressed by the curatorial team of the exhibition *Vision and Communism* (shown in the SMART Museum at the University of Chicago in 2011) are significant. This is the first North American exhibition of the works of the post-World War II Soviet propaganda artist Victor Koretsky. Despite the fact that there is a big geographical and conceptual distance between Lucas Ospina and the curatorial team of this show, there is a common denominator in the gesture of showing Social Realist works to present viewers. For the Chicago curators, their exhibition inhabits a strange limbo in the sense that the spectators:

Probably possess ready psychic access to the material it displays; that is, without much guidance other than a few translations, you can make sense of these objects [...] Yet, at the same time, the specific critiques and proposals that propel Koretsky are not simply unfamiliar; they exist

¹⁰⁷ Lucas Ospina, interview by Julian Serna.

¹⁰⁸ Sigmund Freud. “The Uncanny.” *New Literary History*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (Spring, 1976): 634.

outside the realm of serious contemplation in contemporary American Life.¹⁰⁹

What these kinds of gestures are proposing is a state of mind in which the potential viewer is asked to enter in dialogue with a conception of reality totally different from the one he inhabits. A potential viewer of these exhibitions would be—for example—someone like me: a spectator formed in the tradition of Western Art History in which he has had little or no contact with the socialist version of the art historical narrative. The tradition of Art History in which I have been formed as a scholar, till today, is strongly marked by the rhetoric of Modern Art. In this narrative, the accounts of significant artists are based on the criteria of innovation and rupture from traditional aesthetic practices.¹¹⁰ From this perspective, it is obvious that in a Social Realist exhibition, a question will arise about the status of objects as Art.

The source of the questioning (or even dismissal) of these images could be best explained by the conditions of interpretation and appropriation that we have toward this alternative type of cultural production. This socially constructed condition for appreciation of cultural goods is what Pierre Bourdieu understands as the *interpretative schemata*. From the identification of this concept, we can appreciate how the United States viewer is implicated in a totally different context where the definition of art significantly differs from the Revolutionary Aesthetics. There is a gap between the *public image* of the work of art that we have and the modes of perception necessary to fully appropriate these images as Art. In Bourdieu's words:

This shows that the public image of a work held by people of a certain era is, strictly speaking, the product of the instruments of perception,

¹⁰⁹ Bird, Heuer and Jackson. "Vision and Communism," 3.

¹¹⁰ See: Danto Arthur C. *Después del fin del Arte. El arte contemporáneo y el linde de la historia* (Buenos Aires: Phaidos, 2003).

historically constituted and therefore historically changing, which are provided by the society to which they belong [...] Thus, the history of the instruments of perception of a work of art is the essential complement of the history of the instruments of production of the work, inasmuch as the work of art is in a way created twice over, by the artist and by the spectator, or, rather, by the society to which the spectator belongs.¹¹¹

In the sense that the public image of a work of art is totally different in the case of a Western and Soviet interpretation schemata, the secondary creation of Social Realism is a conflicting experience in our present. It is incredible that only a few decades have been necessary to produce this kind of cultural blindness toward the images that Pedro Manrique Figueroa represents. Since the symbolic goods of a culture only exist for the ones who have the knowledge and disposition to appropriate them,¹¹² the Revolutionary Art is something that is slowly dying for us. The society in which we belong is determinedly suppressing the conditions for decoding these cultural products. Making them an un-existing production for us. It is something to be condemned to death by oblivion.

As discussed in this essay, there is a construction of consent over our collective understanding of the past in institutions like the one that is guarded by the ten-feet bronze statue of Rocky Balboa. There is a systematic exclusion of any vestiges of Ivan Drago to edify an unquestionable narrative of a victorious and self-authorized United States. In tandem with the Art academy, all the cultural circuits dominated by the United States are doing their part in the exorcism of communism from the Functional Memory that connects those episodes from our recent past into our collective understanding of the present. In this scenario, the work of the artists who were depicting an idealized vision of a communist future, in our neoliberal present have become invisible. The

¹¹¹ Bourdieu Pierre and Darbel Alain. *The Love of Art. The European Museum and Their Public* (Cambridge: Polity Press. 1991), 42.

¹¹² Ibid, 39.

lifework of thousands of revolutionary artists has been exiled from our realm of serious contemplation, as they have been buried like mere obscure episodes in the archives of our storage memories. One of the last remaining traces of this reality is the uncanny presence of Pedro Manrique Figueroa.

This familiar—yet repressed—memory refuses to go away. By resisting the process of oblivion, the presence of Manrique comes to question the logic of our present condition of existence by highlighting the claims of social justice that nobody has a satisfactory answer for. As mentioned earlier, unlike his living colleagues, the ghost of Pedro Manrique has been saved from extinction due to the fact that his curators have been able to insert him into the narrative of Western Art History. Figueroa's curators claim over and over again, in every any chance they have, that Figueroa is the Precursor of Collage in Colombia. This insistence is what saved this story from an art historical narrative obsessed with the evolutionary fables of progress and innovation. Surely—as any other precursor of anything in Colombia—this only claim would not be enough to place him as part of the international (European and US) modernist legacy. But, this discursive strategy it is enough to keep alive a Screen Memory of the social realist experience. But more than an empty claim to a title of nobility among artists, the importance of Pedro Manrique Figueroa is that his story is an apparatus to remember a past when there was an alternative future.

CHAPTER III

GRIEVING THE FUTURE

In any case, it is Pedro Manrique Figueroa's work, and if it isn't, time—and healthy negligence—will see that credit goes to whomever it is due.

Josep Torres Campalans

Among the body of known works attributed to Pedro Manrique Figueroa, there are several pieces that, for some reason or another, have been considered apocryphal collages. Besides *An Other Fucking Collage* (that was already mentioned in Chapter 1), in the exhibitions of Manrique's work, the curators also have showed *El Fin* [The End] as a work whose authorship is uncertain (Figure 17). There are also three other collages that Luis Ospina discovered in China during the shooting of *Un Tigre de Papel*. These works appeared in the movie during the interview of Hsu Ke-Uin (Figure 18) and, in a later account, the main curator of the project dismissed those images as a falsification.¹ Lucas Ospina also has in his personal archive, photographs of five other collages that he has been able to identify as forgeries. In total, there are ten collages that are considered falsifications within the corpus of Manrique's works composed of approximately fifty known pieces.

There is even a short documentary made by Jorge Vaca and Diego García that directly addressed this phenomenon. The opening argument of this film acknowledges that since the release of *Un Tigre de Papel*, Manrique's work has

¹ Lucas Ospina interview by Julian Serna.

gained increasing popularity. This renowned film has made everyone in the Colombian artistic field talk about the project. At one point, Vaca and García ask if it might be possible that Manrique's work is being falsified.² To explore this issue, the directors took a particular collage that is considered a forgery in the attempt to prove or dismiss its authenticity.

In this endeavor, Vaca and Garcia gathered a number of technical concepts in their interviews with scholars from diverse fields such as art history and chemistry. As a preliminary conclusion, the directors assert that chemically, the way to prove the authenticity of the work would be an analysis of the glue that bonds the different pieces of the collage. Hypothetically, this would be the easiest way to test the collage as the level of crystallization and the type of adhesive used could determine the age of the piece. In the case of art history, the search is inconclusive. The scholar Carmen Maria Jaramillo, explains that it might be imaginable that there could be people doing these kind of imitations given the expansion of the art market and the increasing international interest in Colombian modern and contemporary art. Even though this might be a possibility, she also declares the difficulty of being absolutely certain about the authorship of a collage since there is not an evident craft that permits a study of the techniques used in the construction of the piece.³

About the photographs collected by Lucas Ospina, anyone who has had some contact with a number of images attributed to the Precursor of Collage in Colombia could easily dismiss that group of collages. These images have nothing to do with the logic through which the works of Manrique have been assembled. For example, there is an image of a town square surrounded by public buildings in which there is a monument of a giant penis installed as an obelisk (Figure 19). The most obvious

² Vaca Jorge Luis and Diego García. *Otro Hijo puta* Documental (2007). Videoclip. Youtube video. Directed by Jorge Luis Vaca and Diego García.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_9mo6jZ8Nw4

³ Ibid.

reason to dismiss this group of collages as an original Manrique would be due to the understanding of the pictorial space. In this case, there is a preservation of the illusion of unitary space given by classical perspective, whereas Manrique renounces a mimetic representation of reality in order to offer a reading of the possible relations existing between different images and texts. A second problem with this piece is that the message constructed by this image is too obvious. It is crafted by a simple juxtaposition of two images, while a characteristic of Manrique's work is a complex dialogue among the material used in his collages. There are several small details that require a closer reading of the collage and, usually, some of them are deliberately misplaced to complicate an unequivocal reading of the collage.

The collages displayed in Luis Ospina's film, are a little harder to classify as fakes. Basically, it is harder to disqualify them as they are supported by a story directly linked to Manrique. In *Un Tigre de Papel*, Ke-Uin explains that Manrique directly gave those works to his father during the artist's visit to Beijing. He further comments that he remembers that he met Figueroa during his childhood, when the artist stayed in his house during his visit to the country as part of the Latin American communist delegation.⁴ Regarding these three collages, Lucas Ospina claims that they are too big to be original Manriques. These works could measure something like 14 x 10 inches, while the size of a regular Manrique could be something around 5 x 4 inches. Throughout his career, Figueroa consistently worked in a small rectangular format, which is a legacy of the artist's experience selling and modifying religious stamps.⁵ Here, I would also add two observations. In the first place, the use of pin-ups images in the collage would be quite rare as they would be the only examples present in the corpus of Manrique's works (Figure 20). The second thing is that those

⁴ Hsu Ke-Uin interview by Luis Ospina, "Un Tigre de Papel," 0:40:27.

⁵ Lucas Ospina interview by Julian Serna.

works are lacking the characteristic cardboard that functions as the support of the artist's paper assemblages.

In relation to the two collages that have been showed in an exhibition of Manrique Figueroa, I have serious doubts if they could be classified as forgeries. In both cases, the collages have been dismissed for the use of texts in English. According to Torres Campalans, the reason that many art historians have disregarded those pieces is their certainty that Manrique could never have learned to speak English due to his humble origins.⁶ However, I am not completely sure that Manrique did not speak—or at least read—English. There are several versions of his story that claim that at some point of his life, Manrique lived in the United States. Carolina Sanin claims that around 1952, Figueroa made a small fortune working as an extra in Hollywood films.⁷ There are other versions that declare that he lived in Jackson Heights working as a cook during the second half of the 1970s.⁸ During that period, he tried to militate inside the United States and this is probably when he assembled the collection of images of the Museum of Poverty. As a matter of fact, in a close inspection of the documents displayed in the Museum (see Figure 12) reveal several references written in English that would verify that Manrique had sufficient knowledge to read in this language. In the curatorial text that accompanied *The End*, the curator claims that:

The authenticity of this collage has been widely discussed. The main argument to negate the work has been the conjugation in English "Shows are over". Scholars said that for Manrique this sentence would be incomprehensible due to the intellectual level of the artist. It seems that the entire discussion responds to the elitist motives of some art critics who are still today establishing repulsive categories to classify modes of thought. I'm sure that such discussions would amuse the artist. As a good agitator, is in these kinds of discussions where he finds a motive of creation.

⁶ Jusep Torres Campalans quoted by Ospina, "Museum of Poverty."

⁷ Sanin, Carolina. "Años Cero." *Valdez*, No. 3 (c. 1997): 28.

⁸ Ospina, Luis. "Un Tigre de Papel."

Given the lost of interest in the liturgical spectacle, the saint are forced to appear on TV to reach a large audience. The apocalypse will be televised.⁹

About this collage, I would argue that this is a Pedro Manrique Figueroa.

Besides the objection about the use of English, the only possible complaint about its origin would be due to the way that the curators have dated this piece. The piece supposedly dates to 1980 and—posing as a connoisseur of Manrique's work—I think it is not well dated. Perhaps this would be the reason why scholars hesitate about its authenticity. Contrary to what Ospina claims, I have the hypothesis that this collage might have been done around 1971 or 1976. The reason why I think that this could be a 1971 piece is the fact that many of the contemporary works of the artist follow the same organization scheme as *The End*. Many works of this period are organized over a series of growing concentric rectangles. The most evident relation that *The End* has with another work of Manrique is with *La Lora* [The Parrot] of 1971 (Figure 21). Both pieces could be directly related, as both have their images organized over a central axis, which is broken by a horizontal monotone stripe that contains a small detail in its center. Furthermore, the vignette used in both collages apparently comes from the same source as they have an identical font and are printed over the same type of paper. Therefore, it is easy to imagine that the same person (around a similar period) made both the pieces.

About my second hypothesis, there are three reasons why I think that Manrique could have done this piece in the US after 1976. As previously suggested, it is probable that a magazine written in English could have been obtained during his time in New York. Perhaps, it was a document originally collected for his museum that later came to be used as a part of his work as an artist. The second reason why I suspect that it was done after 1976 is its thematic: the collage is closely related to the

⁹ Ospina, Lucas. "Curatorial text of the collage *El Fin*." Exhibition *Homenaje a Pedro Manrique Figueroa, Precursor del Collage en Colombia*, curator Lucas Ospina (Bogota: Gilberto Alzate Avendaño Foundation, 1999).

film *Network* (1976). The relation is so close that it can be suggested that the collage was inspired, or was made in response to this film. The third issue is that if we read this collage as an autobiographical account of the artist, the issues worked in it correspond to the last years of his life.

Allow me to carry on with a brief review of *Network*. Reading Paddy Chayefsky's work from a religious perspective, we can point to one of the main images of this film: a newscaster possessed by a spirit fills the screen with incendiary proclamations about the socioeconomic injustices of the US. Actually, there is a point in the film where Howard Beale (Peter Finch) references his metaphysical experience, which is further reinforced by the fact that after each television intervention, the medium collapses in an epileptic breakdown. In the description of the experience, the presenter explains that he asked the presence about the reason why he was chosen and the response was simply because he appears on TV. Indeed, because his apparition occurs on national television, the message of the contemporary prophet becomes widely accepted by the US audience. His messianic message reaches to the point where he is able to alter the emergent neoliberal corporate dynamics by inviting his viewers to force the US government to reverse the trade of a US corporation by a multinational conglomerate. The message transmitted by the fictional network UBS, could be synthesized by one of Beale's first public epiphanies:

I don't have to tell you things are bad. Everybody knows things are bad. [...] We sit in the house, and slowly the world we are living in is getting smaller, and all we say is: 'please, at least leave us alone in our living rooms. Let me have my toaster and my TV and my steel-belted radials and I won't say anything. Just leave us alone.' Well, I'm not gonna leave you alone. I want you to get mad! [...] You've got to say: I'M A HUMAN BEING, GOD DAMN IT! MY LIFE HAS VALUE! So I want you to get up now. I want all of you to get up out of your chairs. I want you to get up right now and go to the window. Open it, and stick your head out, and yell: I'M AS MAD AS HELL, AND I'M NOT GOING TO TAKE THIS ANYMORE!¹⁰

¹⁰ Chayefsky, Paddy. *Network*, DVD. Directed by Sidney Lumet (Hollywood: MGM and United Artists, 1976). Original emphasis.

Viewing these declarations through the eyes of a social realist artist, the reaction that the viewers of the show had would surely impress someone like Figueroa. Through the instructions delivered by the newscaster, millions of viewers simultaneously started to manifest the empathetic pang that an effective social realist poster should inspire. This massive appropriation of this sort of message would be the realization of a dream, as a social realist work would “ask viewer to incessantly place their immediate needs in the context of a philosophical totality.”¹¹ If Manrique watched the movie, the scenes of hundreds of people leaving their television sets to express their anger through their windows would surely impress him.

Assuming that he actually was present in the US during the release of the movie, surely a film-lover like Pedro would have seen a picture that was nominated for 10 Academy Awards. If so, there is a subtext in the film that would surely have shocked him—especially given the personal crisis that he was going through at the time. In the search for another television hit, the producers of UBS contact a North American urban guerrilla to realize a proto-reality-show about their revolutionary struggle. The leaders of the organization at first hesitate about the proposal, but they finally agree by considering the argument that only through this means they could bring their revolutionary message to millions of viewers. Paradoxically, as soon as the guerrilla starts to study the contract with the lawyers of the network, their revolutionary pretensions start to crumble. Through the discussion about their fees and their image reproduction rights, the guerrilla members are immediately transformed from revolutionaries to television divas.

Addressing these scenes as the containers of the film’s main argument on public agency, we can synthesize the message of this work in the paradox highlighted in the 1970s media landscape. As the film demonstrates, as soon as any ideal is touched by the television industry it is irremediably corrupted. But, at the same time,

¹¹ Bird, Heuer, Matthew, Jackson, Mosaka and Smith. “Vision and Communism,” 9.

only through this medium could any kind of messianic message be transferred onto a public discussion. As Jürgen Habermas later pointed out, in the contemporary world, television has become a privileged site of the public sphere. He understands it as the place where a series of shared referents are produced and distributed to construct a unitary notion of society. About this space, the German theorist highlights how television has become something completely privatized by a small oligopoly that controls the discourses pronounced in the public sphere. This implies a type of re-feudalization of the public space.¹² Keeping this in mind, we can now understand the dialogue existing between the religious references contained in Manrique's alleged collage as response to the paradox expressed in *Network*.

The text that functions as the background in the collage evidently makes a reference to the apocalypse. As previously stated, it proclaims that “shows are over” while in the article, we can see that it is due to economic reasons. The silhouette of the two figures gazing at the TV could be seen as a reference to the image of Adam and Eve surrounding the Tree of Knowledge (Figure 22). This is one of the most famous images of the Catholic tradition where the fathers of humanity are seduced to take a bite from the forbidden fruit that caused their expulsion from paradise. The image that is inserted into the television comes from a representation of the Holy Trinity closely related to Fridolin Leiber's work (Figure 23). This is a 19th century popular depiction of the Christian mystery of the consubstantial unity as a single subject of the Holy Spirit, Jesus, and his Father. In this case, this is the portrait of the Father—God himself—who appears on television. As the curatorial text points out, this appearance is due to the contemporary loss of interest in the liturgical ceremonies. The fourth—and most important—Catholic reference is the trimmed eye and ear that appears in the monotone stripe of the composition. This is a direct

¹² Habermas, Jürgen. *The structural transformation of the public sphere* (Cambridge: MIT press, 1991), 195.

allusion to the image of Saint Lucy of Syracuse (283-304). The gold stripe of the collage can be seen as the tray where the martyr offers her eyes to her fiancé in order to be able to dedicate her life to the worship of God (Figure 24).

The dialogue between the image of God on TV and the reference to Saint Lucy are the main visual references to keep in mind in order to understand the work of Manrique. Saint Lucy was a Christian martyr during the Diocletian persecution (303-313). She consecrated her virginity to God by refusing to marry a pagan betrothed. As retaliation for her rejection, her fiancé threatened to denounce her as a Christian, this causing her immediate execution by the Roman Empire. In an attempt to win her back, the groom told her that the thing that he loved about her was her eyes. In order to be able to dedicate her life to the worship of God, she tore them out and gave them to him as she said: "Now let me live to God."¹³ Keeping this in mind, we can interpret the collage as the paradox that God is forced to appear on TV to be heard but, at the same time, a contemporary martyr/prophet would be forced to get rid of his sense of hearing and sight in the pursuit of a life dedicated to God. This basic message of Manrique's work profoundly resonates with Beale's proclamations. For example:

Television is a circus—a carnival—a traveling troupe of acrobats, storytellers, dancers, singers, jugglers, side-show freaks, lion tamers, and football players. We're in the boredom-killing business! So if you want the truth... Go to God! Go to your gurus! Go to yourselves! Because that's the only place you're ever going to find any real truth.¹⁴

By the time that Manrique possibly did this collage, Guy Debord also published the translation of *The Society of the Spectacle*.¹⁵ There is no record that Manrique

¹³ Bridge, James. "St. Lucy." In: *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 9. (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910) Internet edition, 30 Jun. 2012 <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09414a.htm>>

¹⁴ Chayefsky, "Network."

¹⁵ Debord, Guy. *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans to English. Fredy Perlman and Jon Supak (First published in Kalamazoo, MI: Black & Red, 1970). Debord, Guy, *La Sociedad del Espectáculo*, trans to Spanish. Jorge Diamant (First published in Buenos Aires: Editorial La Flor, 1974).

had a direct contact with this kind of literature, but in the consumption of movies like this, a logical connection between French thought and the Colombian artist could be traced. As mentioned earlier, due to the other references in the collage it could be interpreted as an autobiographical account of the last years of Figueroa's life. The apocalyptic magazine fragment proclaims the end of the world due to economic reasons. This could be understood as the consciousness of the beginning of the end of communism that Manrique had by that time. The reference to Adam and Eve may be addressed as a response to his expulsion from the communist party—paradise according to him. In this same frame, the dialogue between Saint Lucy and the image of God could be seen as the artist's impotence to deliver the communist messianic message that was self-attributed as his life's task. As a conclusion to this melancholic statement, the vignette of the collage states: "But the painful memories persisted on haunting her. In the crystalline screen appeared the worshiped image of the love of her life."

In *Un Tigre de Papel*, there is an elaboration of Manrique's last years. There are several testimonies that talk about how Manrique was never able to overcome his expulsion from the communist party. Furthermore, the actress Vicky Hernandez sustains that around the same time of this event Omaira, the artist's sentimental partner, disappeared. Apparently, she was victim of the government's forced disappearances. According to the actress, the sum of these experiences is something that profoundly struck Manrique for the rest of his life. She remembers, that this experience turned him into a sadly well-known character: "all his thing always ended up being missed attempts; being illusion spread in the air and nothing more. He was unable to concretize things, he was unable to conclude anything."¹⁶

This description provided by Hernandez is important as it offers the possibility to fully identify many visible traces of melancholia in Manrique's behavior. As

¹⁶ Vicky Hernandez interview by Luis Ospina, "Un Tigre de Papel," 1:19:30.

mentioned in the first chapter of this thesis, Freud addresses this mental state as the pathological version of mourning. The main characteristics of this painful state are: the incapacity to adopt a new object of love, the loss of interest in a world that is not connected to the memories of the absent object, the inhibition of the individual social functions and, the diminishing of self-love.¹⁷ The firsts symptoms are also present in the state of mourning; what is a particular expression of a grief that will never end is the fading of self-love. This perturbation is translated into a constant self-reproach and accusations against himself. Continuing with Freud's interpretation, in the melancholic is observable the wish to communicate their own defects to the world and the tendency to gain a sense of satisfaction from their own public humiliation.¹⁸ This is why Pedro became a sort of celebrity due to his failures; unlike someone, who in other circumstances, would try to hide their defects and miscarriages, a melancholic shows them off. There are multiple examples of how the shadow of the lost object fell upon the ego of the Manrique. Among the references made in section 1.4, this could be clearly observable in the public display of the caricature (in which he projected his own experience) depicting the artist's rejection from the independent saloon. In the same mind frame, it could also be explained the case of self-objectification that was manifested in Figueroa's attempt to donate himself as a part of the collection of the Colombian National Museum.

As Freud explains, most of those self-accusations are hardly applicable to the melancholic. With slight modifications, most of these reproaches fit the description of the patient's loved object. For example, the episode of the National Museum could be understood when we acknowledge that at the end of his life, Manrique came to the understanding that communism was something to be buried in a museum as a thing of the past. These types of actions are the key issues to determine the pathology in

¹⁷ Freud. "Mourning and Melancholia," 3042.

¹⁸ Ibid, 3046.

the artist. In Freud's words, it is because "we perceive that the self-reproaches are reproaches against a loved object which have been shifted away from it on to the patient's own ego."¹⁹ This indicates that loss of the object has had a profound effect on the subject's own image. In the case of Manrique, this ambivalent love-hate relationship with communism is manifested in some of his later works. About a 1976 piece, the artist commented: "the Chinese in hell are damned to the eternal punishment of reading Mao's Little Red Book."²⁰ The title of the collage is *Al Diablo con Mao* [To Hell with Mao] (Figure 25). Freud explains Figueroa's reaction against his lost-loved object: "in this way an object-loss was transformed into an ego-loss and the conflict between the ego and the loved person into a cleavage between the critical activity of the ego and the ego as altered by identification."²¹

Dominick La Capra further elaborates the difference between mourning and melancholia by differentiating between the notions of loss and absence. According to him, loss can be situated and specified at the historical level while an absence is transhistorical. This is why Freud noticed that—contrary to a mourner—the melancholic knows whom he has lost but not what he has lost in him.²² This means that for a melancholic, the object's absence is the realization of a void—a lack—an indicator that there is a need or a deficiency in the subject of something that might be out there but is missing. In words of La Capra, an absence "is not an event and does not imply tenses (past, present, or future). By contrast, the historical past is the scene of losses that may be narrated as well as of specific possibilities that may conceivably be reactivated, reconfigured, and transformed."²³ Following this logic, the historian insists on the importance of naming and specifying the losses within a society in

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ospina quoting Pedro Manrique Figueroa. "Homenaje a Pedro Manrique Figueroa," 23.

²¹ Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," 3047.

²² Ibid, 3043.

²³ LaCapra, "Writing History, Writing Trauma," 49.

order to have the possibility of engaging in the process of mourning. Only through the representation of a traumatic event, these experiences may be articulated with the present to become memories. This is to say, that only when there is a mediation given by memory, the subject is able to have the critical distance to perform the differentiation between then and now—which, according to LaCapra, is the process of mourning. When this engagement with the past becomes impossible, “mourning turns to absence and absence is conflated with loss, then mourning becomes impossible, endless, quasi-transcendental grieving, scarcely distinguishable (if at all) from interminable melancholy.”²⁴

It is worth recalling the statement made by Manrique in *The End*: “But the painful memories persisted on haunting her. In the crystalline screen appeared the worshiped image of the love of her life.” As suggested earlier, this text is a direct reference to the mental state in which the memories of the lost object haunts the melancholic. Following Freud, during the process of grief, each memory of the lost object is brought back in a kind of “hallucinatory wishful psychosis.”²⁵ In the case of mourning, this is a form of working through loss in which memories are experienced again to acknowledge that the lost object no longer exists. Melancholia, on the contrary, acts-out all the memories of the absent object in order to psychically prolong the life of the lost objects through memory work.²⁶ In this sense, there is a significant difference between mourning and its pathological other in the relationship with time. Mourning is aimed at maintaining the continuity of life by breaking the bonds with the deceased through the process of putting him to rest. In opposition, the melancholic refuses to accept that the loved object is something from the past. This refusal dislocates the typical relationship between death and life, as the negation of death subsequently negates the progress of life. About the haunting

²⁴ Ibid, 22.

²⁵ Freud. “Mourning and Melancholia,” 3042.

²⁶ Ibid, 3051.

memories of the lost object, La Capra expands on the difference between acting-out and working through:

In acting-out, the past is performatively regenerated or relived as if it were fully present rather than represented in memory and inscription, and it hauntingly returns as the repressed. Mourning involves a different inflection of performativity: a relation to the past that involves recognizing its difference from the present—simultaneously remembering and taking leave of or actively forgetting it, thereby allowing for critical judgment and a reinvestment in life, notably social and civic life with its demands, responsibilities, and norms requiring respectful recognition and consideration for others. By contrast, to the extent someone is possessed by the past and acting-out a repetition compulsion, he or she may be incapable of ethically responsible behavior.²⁷

Returning to Manrique's last years, a clear example of this could be the work he attempted to pursue through the A.B.A. As mentioned in Section 2.6, after his expulsion from the communist party, Manrique conceived this organization as a way to radicalize his political militancy. The idea was to gather several artists from Latin America to use their imagination in a subversive way. But besides him, no one else joined the organization. The former Argentinean guerrilla fighter Jorge Masseti explains the reason for that. As he remembers, he once had a meeting with Manrique to discuss a project of money falsification in which he thought that they could work together. Masseti wanted to falsify dollars but Manrique had a completely opposite proposal in mind. Instead falsifying dollars, one of Manrique's organization's main projects was to stamp real dollars with the word "fake." As he explained, the idea was to destabilize the US monetary system by affecting the consumers' confidence in the currency. According to Manrique, this was the secret to destroying capitalism but—as Masseti points out—the main problem of this insane proposal was getting the number of dollars to have a systemic impact on US society.²⁸ This was a project that was destined to failure from the beginning. Perhaps, the artist subconsciously knew that, but as a melancholic, the idea was to keep acting-out a past in a manner that

²⁷ LaCapra, "Writing History, Writing Trauma," 22.

²⁸ Jorge Masseti interview by Luis Ospina, "Un Tigre de Papel," 1:35:00.

will never reach a conclusion. This type of militancy can also be read as an excuse to torture himself, as any dollar that he earned as a cook was put out of circulation by his own project (Figure 25).

3.2.

Now, I want to focus our attention back to the alleged collage of Pedro Manrique Figueroa, to talk about the sensual aspects of the piece. Beside the formal aspects of the object that were discussed earlier, these details are the indicators of a temporal distance among three intertwined moments. Looking at the fragments of paper, there are some images that have noticeable black round dots characteristic of a low-resolution photographic halftone impression. There are other impressions with a distinctive pastel color that were also produced with this type of printing grid, which is no longer commercially available. These papers are ruins of the first moment where the sources of the collage were generated (Figure 26).²⁹

Somewhere between the printing of those images and our viewing of the artwork, the collage was made. About this moment, there are all sorts of indicators of a hand manipulating the papers. For instance, in the lower right corner of the monochrome stripe of the piece, there is a notorious crack on the paper, which is evidence that the paper was once folded before being pasted as part of the collage. Just below this section, there is an indicator of the hand's pulse manifested in an irregular line that separates the monochrome and the magazine article (Figure 27). Turning our gaze onto to the top center of the piece, in the cutting of the small depictions of the eye and ear, there is a particular kind of gesture produced by the knife. The original image seems to come from a religious stamp and was aggressively torn apart by multiple linear cuts that delineate the depiction of the body parts. Between the letter "S" and the image of the ear, there is a stain browned by oxidation,

²⁹ Digital halftoning has been replacing photographic halftoning since the 1970s when the "electronic dot generators" were developed for the film recorder units linked to color drum scanners.

which is the only visible evidence of the use of liquid glue in the assemblage of the collage (Figure 28). All these slight details are footprints—or in linguistic terms, indexical signs—that the artist engraved in his work.

According to Charles Pierce's linguistics, an index is a particular kind of sign as it possesses a direct physical or existential connection with its object. As Mary Ann Doane explains: "given the fact that Peirce applied the term "index" to such diverse signs as a footprint, a weathervane, thunder, the word "this," a pointing finger, and a photographic image, it is not difficult to see why the concept has occasioned confusion."³⁰ She further clarifies that the index could be separated into two main groups of signs. One would be in the order of the trace, when the object leaves a physical evidence of its presence by leaving his imprint on a sensitive surface. For example: a footprint, a death mask or a photograph. The other type of index exists through the use of signs that point to the object such as finger pointing, an arrow, or pronouns such as "this," "now," "I," "there," "here." What is common to all this heterogeneous signs is that their meaning is based on association by continuity to its object and not by resemblance to it (icon) or a cultural convention (symbol). As Pierce once wrote, "if an index could be translated into sentence form, that sentence would be in the imperative or exclamatory mood, as in Look over there! Or Watch out!"³¹ In this sense, anything that points to the presence of an object is an index. An index says nothing more than this indication.

In an art object—besides the traces of the material from which the object was made and the imprint left by the artist's hands—there is a third ghost which has also delicately engraved his existence onto the object's materiality. In the case of film, Lisa Cartwright addresses this intruder as the hands of the projectionist. As she

³⁰ Doane, Mary Ann. "Indexicality: Trace and Sign, Introduction." *Differences*, Vol.18, no. 1 (2007): 2.

³¹ Charles Pierce quoted by Georges Didi-Huberman. "The Index of the Absent Wound (Monograph on a Stain)" *October*, Vol. 29 (Summer, 1984): 68.

explains, “the concept of indexicality similarly requires the creative work of the apparatus [that socializes the object], with all of its involvement of the work of the hand, to shore up its authenticity.”³² There is a physical relation that the object establishes with the body of the multiple actors who have been in contact with it. As she explains, in this relation “the work of the hand in the projection is a primary condition of spectatorship.”³³ This is expressed in the material degradation of the artwork. The passing of time manifested within the object due to its natural degradation is summed by the touch of its projectionists who worked to socialize an artwork: gallerists, collectionists, curators, museographers, conservators, etc. In the case of the collage discussed, this is visible in the worn-out borders of the work where the presence of this third ghost expresses a history of the object (Figure 27).

The sum of these indexical signs is what Walter Benjamin addresses as the authenticity of a work of art. According to him, this unique existence of the object made through time is the element that any mechanical reproduction of the work of art lacks. In this sense, authenticity is understood as the object’s “presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be. This unique existence of the work of art determined the history to which it was subject throughout the time of its existence.”³⁴ In the experience of viewing an authentic work of art, there is an inapprehensible excess of meaning that is inscribed in the object’s material vulnerability where the historical testimony of its existence is recorded. About this, Benjamin claims that “since the historical testimony rests on the authenticity, the former, too, is jeopardized by reproduction when substantive duration ceases to matter. And what is really jeopardized when the historical

³² Lisa Cartwright. “The Hands of the Projectionist.” *Science in Context*, Vol. 24 no. 3 (September 2011): 451.

³³ Ibid, 448.

³⁴ Benjamin, Walter. “The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproductivity.” In: *The Art of Art History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 437.

testimony is affected is the authority of the object.”³⁵ This authority of the object is the spectral quality of the indexical signs where the body of the viewer is in direct contact with a series of ghosts that have left their footprints on the object as testimonies of their presence.

In this notion of authenticity is contained an experience of time that goes beyond what is currently living. Roland Barthes addresses a similar phenomenon in the experience of looking at photographs. This logic may be generalized to understand the spectral qualities of the indexical signs that came into existence by the direct contact with a presence from the past. Barthes addressed this ghost through the concept of the *spectrum* of a photograph. He uses this term because in every photograph’s indexical quality is implicit notion of spectacle summed with the experience of “the return of the dead.”³⁶ The referent—or spectrum—is that which was once in front of the camera to be apprehended by the indexical sign that is presented to us now. The spectrum is the body that left its trace on a sensitive object. As Barthes further explains, “the photograph is literally an emanation of the referent. From a real body, which was there, proceed radiations [of light] which ultimately touch me, who are here [...the index is] a sort of umbilical cord links the body of the photographed thing to my gaze.”³⁷

This belief in a direct connection between the body of the artist and its spectator is what the art market is founded upon. The gallery circuit of the art market trades with the traces that artists leave in their works. That is why the art-object’s price is valued according to the name of the artist that touched the object and not the name of the work he made. In this sense, gallerists trade with pictures and not images. As W.J.T Mitchell explains, an image is a kind of ethereal appearance where

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 9.

³⁷ Ibid, 81.

the intellectual property resides, whereas a picture is the “image plus the support; it is the appearance of the immaterial image in a material medium.”³⁸ The image can be equated with authorship while in the picture resides the notion of authenticity that we just discussed. Besides the art market, there are others institutions that are based on the spectral qualities of the index as a verification of a past existence. In religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism or Christianity, relics are one of the most powerful objects of veneration. The physical traces of a sacred presence, or its corporal remains, are conceived as an immediate connection between the body of the saint and his contemporary believers.

A famous relic is the body of Saint Lucy. Nowadays, the proof of her existence is safeguarded in the Saint Jeremiah and Saint Lucy's Church in Venice (Figure 28). In these bodily remains, there is inscribed a military history of the thousands of projectionists who risked their lives and conquered cities only to have custody of this umbilical cord that links them to the presence of the saint. Her body is the most abducted relic in Catholic History. From the year 304, when the saint died, the historical records narrate her body's tortuous journey that started in Syracuse (Greece) to violently pass through Sicily (Italy), Corfinium (Italy) and Metz (France). From this French city, Lucy's arms were taken to Speyer (Germany) while there is not a clear record about what happened to her other body parts during the period of 972 to 1204. During the 1200s, France captured Constantinople (now Istanbul, Turkey) and found some bones attributed to Lucy's body. These relics were preserved in a Venice monastery. In 1513, the Venetians presented the Saint's head to Louis XII of France that was exhibited in Bourges' cathedral (France). This collection of body parts was reunited in the 19th century as it found its way to Saint Jeremiah and Saint Lucy's Church. A century later, on November 7, 1981, thieves stole all her

³⁸ Mitchell, William J. Thomas. *What do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 85.

bones except her head that was protected by a silver mask. The police claimed to have recovered most of Saint Lucy's parts a week later, but some of them have been located in multiple European cities.³⁹

The art historian Georges Didi-Huberman has worked over the cultural practices surrounding these sacred indexical signs. According to him, in the relics "a fantasy of referentiality sustains this entire will to see. Actually, to re-see."⁴⁰ From a hermeneutical perspective, the power of a relic is that it functions as a verification of an experience that "demands an experimental verification of its own semiotic hypotheses."⁴¹ The exhibition of these corporal remains aims to ontologize them through a narrative structure that goes beyond its qualities as an index. As stated earlier, the index only says "there" as an indication of a presence. Nothing more. In this sense, a narrative is projected onto a trace in a way that most of the time, as in the case of Saint Lucy, it is impossible to verify if that collage of body parts corresponds to a particular corpse. In a relic, the power of a cultural narrative is intimately intertwined with an index that sustains the will to see a material proof of the story. About this conceptualization of the traces from the past, Didi-Huberman asserts that a relic:

requires in any case inventing a structure of substitutions, returns, and representations: a structure of retracement. Retrace, in other words, tell, retell story, but also trace a line over it, a line that, let's say, will make the original trace 'represent a subject for other traces,' those traditional narratives known as the gospels.⁴²

Like an authentic work of art, these types of indexical signs construct an imaginary connection between the past and the present. It is a leap of faith over the narrative that describes whose bodies are connected through time. A gospel, or an art historical text, attempts to construct a discursive support to these traces as

³⁹ Bridge, *St. Lucy*.

⁴⁰ Didi-Huberman, Georges. "The Index of the Absent Wound (Monograph on a Stain)." *October*, Vol. 29 (Summer, 1984): 74.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid, 67.

something real, but at the same time, this discourse depends on the trace as a material verification of its narrative. In the case of art history, this circular rhetoric would be something like: ‘the artist existed because in front of you there is an authentic trace of the author; the footprint that you are looking at is an actual indexical sign of the artist because it was made during a particular point of his existence.’ The use of this circular rhetoric to construct a truth claim brings to mind one of Nietzsche’s most famous declarations: “truths are illusions of which one has forgotten that they are illusions, metaphors that have become worn-out and have been drained of sensuous force, coins that have lost their imprint and are now no longer seen as coins but as metal.”⁴³

As the philosopher explains, what is culturally considered as truth is not the thing in itself—an essence—but a designation of “the relations of things to men, and for expressing these relations he lays hold of the boldest metaphors.”⁴⁴ In this sense, what we consider as the truth is a set of established conventions used as a peace treaty among men who wish to live in a community. Therefore, this treaty is a cultural convention that unites individuals through a “uniformly valid and binding designation of things [that] is invented, and the legislation of language likewise yield the first laws of truth.”⁴⁵ In this mind frame, the social contract of truth is an ossification of these original metaphors as the community collectively forgot that they are an illusion. As a result, this gives the perception of a consistent social reality. In opposition to the uniform legitimacy of these cultural conventions, art and myth are manifestations of the basic human drive to continually imagine metaphors to describe the relationships among things in the world. This drive is an attempt to make sense of a world that we are unable to fully grasp. In this attempt, these

⁴³ Nietzsche, Frederick. “On Truth and Lie in a Nonmoral Sense.” In: *On Truth and Untruth: Selected Writings of Frederick Nietzsche*, ed Taylor Carman (New York: HaperCollins, 2010), 30.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 26.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 23.

practices openly construct relationships that go beyond socially established notions of truth. According to Nietzsche, in these activities:

It constantly confounds the rubrics and cells of concepts by arranging new figurations, metaphors, metonymies, constantly exhibiting the desire to make and remake the existing world of walking man as colorful, irregular, inconsequential, incoherent, charming, and eternally new as dreams. Indeed, walking man himself is clear that he is awake thanks only to the rigid and regular web of concepts and, for that reason, occasionally comes to believe that he is dreaming when that web of concepts is torn apart momentarily by art.⁴⁶

Returning to Pedro Manrique Figueroa's work, this feeling of intellectual uncertainty due to the momentary instability of this web of concepts that constructs our notions of truth (*Unheimliche*⁴⁷) is particularly strong. In our approach to a work of the Precursor of Collage in Colombia, there is a particular uneasiness that this work brings with the basic notion of reality constructed by art history. As mentioned, the truth claims of art history are edified over a circular self-contained rhetoric composed by authenticity and authorship—elements that are dissonant in the case of Manrique. While we have been discussing authenticity in the order of material traces, authorship is the narrative that logically connects a series of ideas and images to an identifiable entity within a society. In this sense, the name of an author is used to describe a distinctive existence in the narrative that we collectively understand as reality. About this, Michel Foucault clarifies that “the author's name is not a function of a man's civil status, nor its fictional; it is situated in the breach,

⁴⁶ Ibid, 42-43.

⁴⁷ The term “Unheimliche”—in English un-homely—was discussed on the explanation of the term Uncanny in chapter 2. About it was said that this is the felling produced with the encounter with the familiar, yet repressed. Etymologically, this word is the opposite to “Heimliche” (meaning “familiar,” “congenial,” or “belonging to the home”). The sensation of un-homeliness is the period of intellectual hesitation over the explanation of an event—a hesitation between a natural and a supernatural explanation of the event. Once the person concludes that it was an illusion he was in the realm of the fantastic. If, by hand the other, he witness an event that cannot be explained by the laws of nature he was present in what is considered marvelous. See: Tatar, Maria M. “The Houses of Fiction: Toward a Definition of the Uncanny.” *Comparative Literature*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (Spring, 1981), pp. 167-182

among the discontinuities, which gives rise to new groups of discourse and their singular mode of existence.”⁴⁸

In the case of Figueroa, there is a trace of him contained in his collages and there is also a fully identifiable narrative that articulates his ideas, images produced, and life experiences. The *Unheimliche* feeling relies in the fact that these two characteristics that constructs the image of the artist are out of joint. In the case of a heteronym, the concepts of authenticity and authorship exist but they do not fully correspond to one another. As mentioned in the first chapter, a heteronym is an author that never had a civil status as a man, and whose material traces have been constructed by someone else. In this sense, the notion of the heteronym operates according to the logic of the ghost, where the existence of these bodiless subjects exceeds the binary opposition of *actuality* (present or empirically living) and *ideality* (an absolute non-presence).⁴⁹ Imitating a ghost, the heteronym inhabits a middle ground of the social convention that determines the basic difference between what is existent and non-existent. The series of traces made on Figueroa’s behalf are supported by all the characteristic rhetorical strategies of art history. In this sense, works like this produce a logical problem when it is openly acknowledged that the author of the footprint never had a material presence. This is to say that the presence of the heteronym makes an insurrection on the notion of truth sustained by art history by stimulating a short-circuit in its circular rhetoric.

Keeping this in mind, we can now say that the material presence of a collage of Pedro Manrique Figueroa is something different from an indexical sign in the order of a trace. In these collages, there is an interest in the indexical capacities of an art-object only to question them and empty these signs as containers of truth. Following Lisa Saltzman’s notion of post-indexicality, in a work of this nature “the index

⁴⁸ Foucault, Michel. “What is an author?” In: *The Art of Art History, a critical anthology*, Ed, Donald Preziosi (Oxford: Oxford University press, 2009), 325.

⁴⁹ Derrida, “Specters of Marx,” 78.

emerges as a form rather than a function of representation, as a point of reference rather than a referential structure of representation, as a vestige rather than a viable means of representation.”⁵⁰ In this approach to the construction of memory as an artistic practice, the index is conceived as a manifestation of an absence rather than the unquestionable presence of a spectrum. In this sense, the index becomes a form to represent this absence through the “self-conscious relation to, yet irremediable distance from, the historical object it takes as its subjects.”⁵¹ These practices function as a contemporary form of a mnemonic device. As an apparatus for the activation of memory, the trace is not a replacement or a simulacrum of its object. Instead, it is “an outline, a marker, a designated space in which to remember.”⁵²

About the mnemonic apparatuses constructed through art, Aleida Assmann complements the notion of the post-indexical by talking about the social functions of these practices. Regarding this issue, she asserts that “in a culture that does not remember its past and has even forgotten its own loss of memory, it is artists who bring memory back vividly into the present by giving visible form to its lost functions through aesthetic simulation.”⁵³ In this regard, the contemporary practice of an art of memory is something different from the traditional use of art for the preservation of memory. In the case of oral storytelling or the genre of historical painting, art is put at the service of memory as a means of preserving the present community experiences for the future. Its social function was to organize a collective experience in a memorable form to keep the present from oblivion. According to Assmann, “the new memory art has a different starting point. It does not come before but after

⁵⁰ Saltzman Lisa. *Making Memory Matter: Strategies of Remembrance in Contemporary Art* (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 68.

⁵¹ Ibid, 13.

⁵² Ibid, 23.

⁵³ Assmann. “Cultural Memory and Western Civilization,” 357.

forgetfulness, and it is neither a technique nor a preventive measure but at best a therapy, a careful collecting of scattered remnants, an inventory of losses.”⁵⁴

As I have been arguing throughout this thesis, the project of Pedro Manrique Figueroa is a practice of grief that is aimed to keep alive the memories of the communist cultural militancy. Through the ghostly figure of Manrique, a mnemonic apparatus is constructed as a way of pointing towards the experiences of the recent past that have been collectively repressed in our contemporary society. In this sense, a collage of Figueroa functions as two different things. On one hand, a collage, like *The End*, functions as a marker of an absence—an acknowledgment of something that is lacking in the contemporary social order. It is a kind of melancholic gesture in itself, which grieves for the vision of the future that cultural practices such as social realism used to provide. A characteristic of social realism is that it was not a document of the actual conditions of existence, but instead a “rhetorical means to access an imminent and (for now) invisible future.”⁵⁵ As I will explain in the next section of this thesis, this vision of a shared future is something that is lacking in our contemporary society. On the other hand, a collage by Figueroa is a way of bringing to our attention the existence of those subjects whose existence has been culturally rendered as invisible.

As referenced in the previous chapter, what is culturally considered as obscene are the issues that are disregarded as the nonfunctional parts of society. What is known but not acknowledged. Is the existence of those persons and cultural practices that have been repressed from the realm of cultural memory through a systematic exclusion from public attention by Ideological State Apparatuses. During the past twenty years we have been witnesses of the process through which a structural claim for social justice have been displaced on to the margins of social reality. As a form of

⁵⁴ Ibid, 345.

⁵⁵ Bird, Heuer, Matthew, Jackson, Mosaka and Smith. “Vision and Communism,” 30.

counter-denial to this process of repression, a practice like the exhibitions of Figueroa's work demands the viewer's engagement in what is culturally alien in order to make the lives inhabiting the periphery of culture recognizable and present. A collage of Manrique Figueroa is an outline that makes visible the errant ghosts that suffered symbolic death by the fall of the Berlin Wall. Aligned with the ideas of Ross Chambers, we can say that these art-objects operate in the manner of a pointing finger that acknowledges the presence of those ghost that are here—something that, although is occulted, remains here.⁵⁶

In this sense, Figueroa's collages function as markers that come to humanize the individuals who inhabit the liminal space between life and death. Through the simple act of pointing to their presence, this project is an insurrection on the restrictive conception of the lives that are considered real in the social conventions established by neoliberalism. Judith Butler elaborates on the experiences that a body goes through as it suffered the symbolic violence of their omission from what is culturally considered existent. According to her, the risk of being treated as something less than human relies on the fact that those lives "cannot be mourned because they are always already lost or, rather, never 'were,' and they must be killed, since they seem to live on, stubbornly, in the state of deadness. Violence renews itself in the face of the apparent inexhaustibility of its object."⁵⁷ As the philosopher explains, as a social being one comes to gain existence by being addressed by others. By being recognizable and recognized by the other members of a community. Thus, a socially invisible existence is subject to a continuous perpetration of violence as its disappearance "leaves a mark that is not a mark. There will be no public act of grieving [...] there have been no lives and no losses [...] none of this takes place on

⁵⁶ Chambers. "Untimely Interventions," 37.

⁵⁷ Butler, Judith. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York, London: Verso, 2004), 33.

the order of the event. None of this takes place.”⁵⁸ In order to escape from this continuous degradation of a body’s status as a human being, is necessary for someone in the community to acknowledge the presence of those lives as part of the cultural landscape. Is necessary for someone to recognize that these voices are produced by human—or givable—lives. By the act of directing our attention to those lives in the periphery of culture the project is inviting them to keep on dancing with the rest of the collective.

3.3.

Time is out of joint. Appropriating these words from Hamlet, Jacques Derrida uses the lines of the famous playwright to assert that one of the main problems regarding the end of 20th century is a crisis in our notion of time. In his words, the end of Marxism “is perhaps the deepest wound for mankind, in the body on its history and in the history of its concept.”⁵⁹ Despite all the things that have been said about Francis Fukuyama’s thesis, it is difficult to ignore those ideas when we see that nowadays it is hard think of a future different from a neoliberal society. The only other visible prospect to liberal democracy in the horizon is its darker oriental version, in where democracy is eliminated from the equation to construct a neoliberal totalitarian state.⁶⁰

Contemplating this landscape, we can assert that something did end with the fall of the Berlin Wall. More than communism itself, what ended is the collective fantasy that we are part of a linear progression of history, in which through hard work, someday we could reach an ideal form of society. This collective mental image of a dreamworld is what we are grieving for. As Susan Buck-Morss explains, this

⁵⁸ Ibid, 36.

⁵⁹ Derrida, “Specters of Marx,” 121.

⁶⁰ Slavoj Zizek interview with Tom Ackerman. “Slavoj Zizek: Capitalism with Asian values” In: *Talk to Al Jazeera*. <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/talktojazeera/2011/10/2011102813360731764.html> (acceced, May 5, 2012)

mental image of an ideal future is something more than a shared illusion. A dreamworld is the insistence on “what is is not all there is, they are assertions of the human spirit and invaluable politically. They make the momentous claim that the world we have known since childhood is not the only one imaginable.”⁶¹ This claim of another possible world was the fantasy that in the 20th century orchestrated the collective effort to pursue the construction of an ideal society. The dream of a mass utopia “was the driving ideological force of industrial modernization in both its capitalist and socialist forms.”⁶²

In Lacanian terms, the depictions of this ideal future-to-come could be seen as a place where the collective desires for something different than the present reality articulates. Cultural agents such as the social realist artist, whose task was to depict and socialize these images in order to construct a collective fantasy, significantly contributed to manufacture this fantastic vision of the future. In these images, the community of viewers was asked to place its immediate needs aside in the pursuit of the dreamworld that was presented to them. In an effort to explaining the work of Lacan, Slavoj Žižek states that, “through fantasy, we learn how to desire.”⁶³ This means that for psychoanalysis, fantasy has a fundamental role in the development of consciousness as it gives coordination to the subject’s desire. In Žižek’s words, “what the fantasy stages is not a scene in which our desire is fulfilled, fully satisfied, but on the contrary, a scene that realizes, stages, the desire as such.”⁶⁴ When a mental scenario of desire is constructed, the subject is able to specify its object of desire and locate its position in relation to it. In this sense, the construction of fantasy is a performative act in which the object is named to bring forth a new presence in the

⁶¹ Buck-Morss. “Dreamworld and Catastrophe,” 238.

⁶² Ibid, IX.

⁶³ Žižek. “Looking Awry,” 6.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

world. This is to say, that the shared fantastic depictions of an ideal society brought into existence the promise of the future that was waiting for us.

The neoliberal interpretation of reality has been very effective in persuading us to believe that with the fall of the Berlin Wall an ideal alternative to our present circumstances crumbled. As Fukuyama has eagerly argued, after neoliberalism “there would be no further progress in the development of the underlying principles and institutions, because all of the really big questions had been solved.”⁶⁵ As we have shown in the previous chapter, although these have been ignored, there are still pretty big questions to be solved. But, by the continuous work of the Ideological State Apparatuses that continuously replicate the neoliberal discourse, there is something of this interpretation that has been able to affect our consciousness as historical subjects. As the case of *Occupy Wall Street* showed, there is still a latent dissatisfaction with the neoliberal system but no one seem to be able to imagine a different alternative to it. Possibly, what this continuous reiteration of the neoliberal discourse, as the only imaginable reality has been able to do, is affect our capacity to fantasy as a collective.

As Bauman has pointed out, in the depiction of the contemporary dreams of progress, there has been a shift from a notion of societies’ shared improvements to the individual enhancements of the subject’s life. In this sense, nowadays “when one thinks in progress, no one has in mind the impulse to go forward as a society, but to keep on the race of life through all means possible.”⁶⁶ The fantasy of an ideal world that we call utopia, or dreamworld, is what used to collectively mobilize progress. As the sociologist explains, progress was a continuous movement in the pursuit of utopia, more than the realization of it. That is to say, the fantasies of a dreamworld functioned as the mechanical rabbit of a greyhound race, an image “fiercely pursued

⁶⁵ Fukuyama. “The End of History and the Last Man,” XII.

⁶⁶ Bauman, Zygmunt. *Tiempos Liquidos: Vivir en una Época de Incertidumbre* (Barcelona: Tusquets Editores, 2007), 145.

but never reached.”⁶⁷ These types of desires continue to mobilize human appetites. The difference is that modern utopia proposed that as a result of the collective hard work there would be an end point to this effort, while the neoliberal fantasy proposes an endless accumulation of capital as the means of personal satisfaction. This means that the vision of an utopia disconnected from a larger social project is “the dream of end-less work.”⁶⁸

The sense of crisis in our relation with time has something to do with this neoconservative notion that there is nothing else to expect, other than the preservation of the present circumstances. About this issue, the main curator of the Figueroa project made an acute reading of the ideological environment in which we are involved today. As Ospina points out, it seems that the 1970s was the last time that “mankind thought that the world could be changed. Today we are simply resigned to save the planet.”⁶⁹ Beyond the desire to perpetuate the conditions that makes the present possible, there is an evident lack of a collective fantasy able to create a vision for the future. As Derrida describes, with this absence we are lacking a measurement with which to measure history, since we are missing the vision of a future that was waiting for us as a collective. This image of a fantastic future is what allowed us to map a desired future and to locate our present position in relation to it. A dreamworld constituted a promise that made the present a part of the future-to-come. This promise that our present has a larger meaning than its immediate consequences is “the condition of the event and thus of history (nothing and no one would arrive otherwise [...]).”⁷⁰

This sense of crisis in our relationship with time is the background from which several cultural agents are responding in their work in diverse disciplinary

⁶⁷ Ibid, 136.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 152.

⁶⁹ Thomann (Ospina). “El secreto mejor guardado,” 11.

⁷⁰ Derrida. “Specter of Marx,” 82.

fields. In this sense, the project of Manrique Figueroa can be seen as part of the notorious tendency of continuous retrospection that we have been viewing in the last couple of decades. This tendency to reinterpret the past from the present circumstances is visible in the entire cultural spectrum. Since the early 1990s, Frederic Jameson has pointed out this phenomenon by addressing the increasing production of nostalgia films as an attempt to process the past. According to him, these films “show a collective unconscious in the process of trying to identify its own present at the same time that they illuminate the failure of this attempt, which seems to reduce itself to the recombination of various stereotypes of the past.”⁷¹ In the last couple of decades, it seems that this attempt to re-elaborate the past in the pursuit of a vision of the present has been increasing to the point where it has become a world wide cultural phenomenon. Intellectuals like Simon Reynolds are still thinking about this phenomenon. About the current preoccupation with the past, Reynolds asserts “there has never been a society in human history so obsessed with the cultural artifacts of its own immediate past”⁷²

Bringing this phenomenon to the case of visual art, the number of artists working over a re-elaboration of the past is simply astonishing. It seems that almost every contemporary artist who is not working over immediate political affairs is working with the resent past in some way. Among the multiple examples, we can reference three groups of the most evident tendencies of this issue. First, there is a group of artists occupied over the aesthetic codes of modernism and the avant-garde legacy.⁷³ There is also a group working over collective traumas, whose work is being

⁷¹ Jameson. “Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic,” 296.

⁷² Reynolds, Simon. *Retromania: Pop Culture’s Addiction to its Own Past* (New York: Faber and Faber, 2011), XIII.

⁷³ It comes to mind an eclectic list of artist form all over the world such as Anish Kapoor (India), Danilo Dueñas (Colombia), Luis Hermano (Brazil), Jose Antonio Diez (Venezuela), Neo Rauch (Germany), Fernando Uhía (Colombia), Michael Heizer (U.S.A), Regina Silveria (Brazil), Tom Friedman (U.S.A), Wim Delvoye (Belgium), Jaime Tarasona (Colombia) or Nelos Leiner (Brazil).

used as a form of socialization of these experiences as a mean to work through the past.⁷⁴ The third group would be the artists operating with the archive as a form of questioning the construction of cultural memory.⁷⁵ Of course, this is an arbitrary division, since several projects (as the one of Manrique Figueroa) could all fit into these categories at once. This is not only an issue of high culture; on the contrary, the most visible form of this phenomenon takes place in popular culture. The strength of this tendency has reached the point in which the first decade of the 21st century has been characterized as the “Re-decade.” As Reynolds points out, “instead of being the threshold to the future, the first ten years of the twenty-first century turned out to be the ‘Re’ Decade. The 2000s were dominated by the ‘re-’ prefix: revivals, *reissues*, remakes, re-enactments.”⁷⁶

In this sense, collage, as an exercise of cutting and displacing preexistent images, has become the dominant cultural practice of the last decades. In this type of cultural production nothing new is created but the past is constantly put up-to-date through a hypertextual reading of the existing material. As Christine Poggi explains, collage’s “originality then, could only be sought elsewhere, in the imaginative reordering of signs, in the gestures of the mind rather than in those of the hand.”⁷⁷ Methodically, collage is a practice of tearing the image from its established boundaries and displacing it to a new site of interaction with objects that otherwise would not belong together. The collagist detaches a set of existing images of the

⁷⁴ In this line of work I can point out artist such as Doris Salcedo (Colombia), Mona Hatoum (Libano), Juan Fernando Herrán (Colombia), Teresa Mangolles (México), Christian Boltansky (France) or Anselm Kiefer (Germany).

⁷⁵ For this third group I’m thinking of the work of artist such as Joan Fontcuberta (Spain), Fernando Byce (Peru), Zoe Leonard (U.S.A), Alessandro Balteo Yazbek (Venezuela), Atlas Group (Lebanon), Jose Alejandro Restrepo (Colombia), Eugenio Dittborn (Chile), Zhang Dali (China) and Fred Wilson (U.S.A).

⁷⁶ Reynolds. “Retromania,” XI.

⁷⁷ Poggi, Christine. *In Defiance of Painting: Cubism, Futurism and the invention of Collage*. (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1993), 254.

world to manipulate the interaction among them in order to construct a new reading of the existent material.

Collage offers a space to think about the preexistent material available and the possible relations that can be established in the reading of it. Analogous to this practice, in other disciplines this same approach is manifested in the use of techniques like film montage and music sampling. In the case of music, this practice is understood as the “capture [of] any sound existing in the world, and built it into a musical instrument [...is] the idea of borrowing voices for musical instruments.”⁷⁸ This cultural practice is widely associated with electroacoustic music and in popular culture with hip-hop music as well as the genre of electronic dance. The practice of sampling has to do with the articulation of existing material in a coherent sequence. As in the case of collage, this form of articulating the past from the present emerged in the early 20th century but it has become a dominant approach in the cultural activity in the last couple of decades.

The persistence of cultural practices following the logic of collage could be seen as an attempt to construct a vision of the present in relation to the past. Through the articulation and selection of events that could map the significant elements for the construction of a shared memory, these works try to create a stable reading of the past that can function as a reference point for the notion of a shared vision of the present. But as Jameson stated, this only illuminates the failure to identify our own present when our vision of the present is reduced to a collection of references from the past. In this sense, contemporary cultural production is trapped in this endeavor in which even the most radical form of contemporary cultural production working with memory is *only* concerned with the relationship between present and past.

⁷⁸ Davies, Hugh. “A History of Sampling.” *Experimental Musical Instruments*, Volume 5, Issue 2 (August 1989): 17.

Probably the most important art-works operating with memory are the types that pursue a kind of restitution of past events by questioning the legitimacy of our functional memories. But although the importance of these practices make us think about our present, it seems that there is an evident lack of vision able to relate the present with the future. Possibly this same assertion can be made in all the contemporary cultural production. Jameson highlighted this problem as the principal symptom of a crisis in our relationship with time. As he points out, the perception of the present as history has been lost. We have reached the point where it seems that there is no longer an organic relationship between the “history we learn from schoolbooks and the lived experience.”⁷⁹ As a consequence of this, there is “an ultimate historicist breakdown in which we can no longer imagine the future at all, under any form—Utopian or catastrophic.”⁸⁰

As stated in the introduction to this section, something did end with the fall of the Berlin Wall. The continuous reiteration of the neoliberal ideology has made us believe it is the only possible reality. This has affected our ability to construct a fantasy of the future-to-come. As the fantastic depictions of an ideal future society vanished, the collective desire to be a part of the evolutionary notion of history through which mobilize the improvement of a society also ended. While technology advances as an expression of the pursuit of individual progress, as a society we are trapped in a socio-cultural landscape filled with social contradictions that no one is able—or willing—to solve. On the current obsession with memory as reaction to this crisis in time, Andreas Huyssen complements the ideas of Jameson: “the imminent move beyond the year 2000, which only twenty-five years ago fired the imagination

⁷⁹ Jameson. “Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic,” 22.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 286.

of American futurologists, fills few of us with confidence either about what the future has in store or about how, let alone if, the past will be remembered.”⁸¹

As referenced in the introductory pages of this thesis, besides the fantastic vision of a future waiting for us, the other possible relationship we can have with the future is in the archives. As Derrida points out, “the archive has always been a pledge, and like every pledge, a token of the future.”⁸² Following the ideas of the philosopher, the conditions for an event to make sense as part of history depends on the promise that the present is in relation to the future-to-come. This is what Derrida calls messianic without messianism, or what historians call historicity. According to him, “whether the promise promises this or that, whether it be fulfilled or not, or whether it be unfulfillable, there is necessarily some promise and therefore some historicity as future-to-come.”⁸³ As we have been saying, the notion that our current actions are part of a narrative that determines a logical relation past-present-future, is the fiction that enables us to act as historical agents. Historicity is the conviction that our actions have repercussion beyond anything that is currently living. It is the conception of the present as history. Therefore, this promise of the present as part of the future, is the consciousness that allows us to understand that in the moment of their occurrence current events have an irreducible historical character.⁸⁴

Continuing with the ideas of Derrida, the archive, a physical place where the present is saved from its decomposition, is used to ensure the possibility of its recall in another time. In this sense, the archive “is a question of the future, the question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for

⁸¹ Huyssen. “Twilight Memories,” 2.

⁸² Derrida. “Archive Fever,” 18.

⁸³ Derrida. “Specter of Marx,” 92.

⁸⁴ Thaddeus Jackson Patrick. “The present as History.” In: *Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis*, ed. Robert Goodin and Chales Tilly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 497.

tomorrow.”⁸⁵ In it resides a spectral figure of a future reader that, perhaps, will be able to know what the things we have archived for him have meant. Even though we have been affected in our capacity to construct a vision of this future reader, in the archive, there is still the messianic promise of a spectral figure that is looking at us from this future-to-come. This conviction still sustains some sense of historicity through the illusion that there is a specter from the future that “sees [us] without being seen.”⁸⁶ In the light of our historicity, we have an obligation to that specter in the way he will remember us. That specter of a future historian will—perhaps—be the judge of our present actions as part of his inheritance. He is who will condemn us, forget us, or will ask some of us to keep on dancing with him.

When the fantasy that our present is part of the progress towards a splendid future has been disrupted, the only thing left is the hope that someone is looking at us from the future-to-come. The archive sustains the faith that—even though we are unable to understand how the present relates to the future—this spectral presence will be able to comprehend that we have not lived and died in vain. Hopefully, the future will grieve us in order to find a proper place for the inheritance that we are leaving for it. Besides the evident desire to articulate the recent past as memories, I understand our culture’s obsession with the past due to the expectancy of our disappearance.

In the faith that our present will be part of this history-to-come, relies the explanation of our current contraction into the archive. That is why there are so many artists carefully recording the losses after the catastrophe, trying to understand what happened in order to archive all our memories from the recent past. There is an attempt to preserve everything that is vanishing in our existence, as the structure of what is archived determines in advance what are the possible meanings that can be

⁸⁵ Derrida. “Archive Fever,” 27.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 41.

made of the present. The reason why we are consumed by the endeavor of doing everything in our hands to collect our past experiences is due to the consciousness that “what is no longer archived in the same way is no longer lived in the same way.”⁸⁷ In this sense there is a desire to give that future historian all the tools to remember us in order to keep on dancing with him in the future.

3.4.

A complementary reading to our collective obsession with our own immediate past could be that we are in the process of mourning for the dreamworlds that used to mobilize us as a collective. As described throughout this thesis, mourning is a wishful psychosis through which the past is lived again in order to put it to rest. By means of the process of working through the past the subject is able to gain the necessary critical distances to determine how the present is closely related, but at the same time, different from the past. What the process of grief displays is the point in which we were bound to that fantastic vision of the future. Judith Butler complements the ideas previously expressed about mourning, when she explains that when we undergo a loss:

something about who we are is revealed, something that delineates the ties we have to others, that shows us that these ties constitute what we are, ties or bonds that compose us. It is not as if an ‘I’ exist independently over here and then simply loses a ‘you’ over there, especially if the attachment to ‘you’ is part of what composes who ‘I’ am. If I lose you, under these conditions, then I not only mourn the loss, but I become inscrutable to my self. Who ‘am’ I, without you? When we lose some of these ties by which we are constituted, we do not know who we are or what to do. On one level, I think I have lost ‘you’ only to discover that ‘I’ have gone missing as well.⁸⁸

The experience of working through the past is a gradual process that will finally end up in the acceptance of loss, once the remains of those ties are localized in order to give them their proper place in the text of tradition. The overcoming of loss, through mourning, is a period characterized by the suspension of the social relations that are

⁸⁷ Ibid, 18.

⁸⁸ Butler. “Precarious Life,” 22.

not connected to the memories of the lost object. During that time, the mourner has to reinvent himself, through the process of looking for the “I” that has gone missing in order to find a version of himself that is able to continue living without the attachments to the lost object. In this sense, there is a transformative effect of loss that affects the ones who continue being part of the storm of progress. As Butler points out, in Freud’s work is not completely clear in what moment the subjects undergoes through a successful mourning process. To fill this gap, Butler suggest that possibly “one [finally] mourns when one accepts that by the loss one undergoes one will be changed, possibly forever. Perhaps mourning has to do with agreeing to undergo a transformation.”⁸⁹

The mourning of the ideal vision of the future has been a long process. Decades after the fall of the Berlin Wall, there are still intellectual productions— such as this thesis—that are thinking about the consequences of the vanishing of our collective dreamworlds. The event that has most significantly forced us to undergo a collective transformation was the fall of the Twin Towers. As referenced in chapter 2, Wegner highlights that with this event a new world order was put into place through “the destruction of the symbolic universe of the Cold War.”⁹⁰ Even though we are painfully accepting this transformation of what we call reality, the constant repetition of the past in which the illusions of this dreamworld existed, highlights that we are still in the process of finding a collective identity for our present.

From all the forms of wishful psychosis, when we look a collage of Pedro Manrique Figueroa such as *The End*, there is something that stands out from the group of contemporary artist working with the ruins of the past. While most of the artists⁹¹ are working through the loss of an ideal vision of the future, a collage that

⁸⁹ Ibid, 21.

⁹⁰ Wegner. “Life Between Two Deaths,” 9.

⁹¹ As examples of this I’m thinking of the work of artists such as Aleksandr Kosolapov (Russia), Pil and Galia Kollektiv (Israel), Ilia Kabakov (Ukraine), Matt Irie (U.S.A),

describes the memories of a catastrophic vision of the future manifest a refusal to let go of this fantasy. In the project of Manrique Figueroa, there is an evident rejection of the transformative effect that is implied in the acknowledgment of the lost vision of the future. This is to say, the presence of Manrique denies that the fantastic vision of the future is something from the past. In this sense, the project acts out the past as a means to indefinitely prolong the life of the absent object through memory work. In a melancholic gesture, the narrative of Figueroa denies any kind of reinvestment into a life without a dreamworld.

As we have seen, mourning is commonly seen as a desirable reaction to loss, it is understood as a process of articulation of past experiences into memories that logically connect the past with the present. Contrary to this position, there are authors like Slavoj Žižek, Klaus Mladek and George Edmondson, who sustain that as a way of engaging with society through the passing of time, melancholia could be addressed as a radical form of political intervention. Following Žižek, the conceptual and ethical primacy of this kind of affirmative decompletion is useful as a way for engaging with unfinished political business through the melancholic fidelity to a cause. For example, the philosopher mentions ethnic groups that are required to enter in to a capitalist modernization process, arguing that “under the threat that their specific legacy will be swallowed up by the new global culture, they should not renounce their tradition through mourning, but retain the melancholic attachment to their lost roots⁹².”

In the melancholic gesture of declaring that the past is not over, there is an effort to unleash the wings of the angel of history from the storm of progress. As we

Fernando Bryce (Peru), Yuri Shavelnikov and Fresenko (Russia), Wochenklausur Collective (Austria), Yiluo Bai (China), Pablo Helguera (Mexico), Hayes Sharon (U.S.A), Thomas Hirschhorn (Switzerland), Juan Mejia (Colombia), Nils Norman (UK) or Dmitri Prigov (Russia).

⁹² Žižek, Slavoj. “Melancholy and the Act.” *Critical Inquiry*, Volume 26, Number, 4 (Summer, 2000): 658.

discussed in the first chapter, the notion of the Angel of History proposed by Benjamin, the passing of time is seen as the continuous unfolding of irremediable losses within a society. In this conception of time, the process of mourning permits life to continue its course by differentiating the moment when a particular catastrophe occurs and the present time. The melancholic denial of this process dislocates the typical relationship sustained between life and death; the denial of death subsequently negates normal progression of life. This refusal to let the time run its course in psychoanalytic terms is seen as a relation of fidelity to the object. This means that the act of letting go of the subject's attachments to the object proposed by mourning implies "a kind of betrayal, the second killing of the (lost) object."⁹³

As seen in chapter 2, the last battlefield of the Cold War is occurring in the way that the memory of it is being articulated in the present and in the way that we collectively are accepting the loss of the socialist regimes. Keeping this in mind, the melancholic fidelity contained in the project of Pedro Manrique Figueroa is a refusal to accept the death sentence that Neoliberalism has given to Marxism and its followers. It is also a refusal to accept neoliberalism as the only way to understand the social organization of reality. By the act of pointing out that somethings of those lives and of those thoughts are still here, Ospina and the other artists implied in the project are affirming the existence of those ghosts as something from the present. In this regard, the figure of Figueroa is a way to affirm the impossibility of performing a work of mourning for the revolutionary ideals through the gesture of giving that ghost a body that enables us to interact with it. As a good a melancholic, Ospina is the one "who invites ghosts to the table, who welcomes their arrival, who affirms their intrusion. By drawing forth the melancholic core of the political, ghosts burden

⁹³ Ibid, 658.

us with a cause that has no guarantee of compensation.”⁹⁴

According to Freud, the main characteristic of melancholia is that the patient “knows *whom* he has lost but not *what* he has lost in him.”⁹⁵ Through the disappearance of the object, a lack in the subject is made evident in the sense that the lost object becomes “nothing but the positivization of a void.”⁹⁶ Following Žizek, melancholia is a particular relation to the object since “what we never possessed can also never be lost, so the melancholic, in his unconditional fixation on the lost object, in a way possesses it in its very loss.”⁹⁷ As we have seen, a lack indicates the need or a deficiency of something that might be out there but is missing in the subject. Different from loss that can be situated and specified in the historical level, an absence is transhistorical. Following this logic, we can see why melancholia has traditionally been demonized as a pathology; because it threatens to disrupt the foundations of social order. This is because melancholia is the affirmation of an absence, the affirmation that something is lacking in the contemporary social order. As Mladek and Edmondson further suggest:

A melancholic politics is nothing but the affirmation of the eternal recurrence of the same, a movement directed toward the purging of the negative, moralistic, and reactive currents from political thinking in the name of a universal lack. A politics of melancholia thus consists of the strict politicization of psychoanalytical thinking, not as a retrieval of the lost bonds of community but as a meticulous, noninstrumentalist unbinding of all community bonds.⁹⁸

In its militant refusal to acknowledge the past as something different from the present, the subject that performs melancholia becomes “the neighbor who makes community impossible.”⁹⁹ As we saw in section 3.2, what is considered truth is a set

⁹⁴Mladek, Kluas and George Edmondson. “A Politics of Melancholia.” In: *A Leftist Ontology*, ed Carsten Strathaus (Mineapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 230.

⁹⁵ Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia,” 3043.

⁹⁶ Žizek. “Melancholy and the Act,” 658.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 660.

⁹⁸ Mladek and Edmondson. “A Politics of Melancholia”, 220.

⁹⁹ Ibid, 229.

of established conventions used as a peace treaty among men who wish to live in a community. The acceptance of these cultural conventions is what binds a series of individuals as part of a community that shares the perception of a consistent social reality. The melancholic affect this notion by resisting to the economy of metaphors and substitution that mobilize the winds of the storm of progress. By doing so, he affirms that there is something the present condition of existence is unable to deliver. In this regard, the melancholic announces the lack that delegitimizes any claim of political significance in the present social order.

By maintaining his fidelity to the absent object, the melancholic refuses to give in to the socially accepted conception of truth. He will not move forward due to the understanding of “the yet-to-come as radically different from the not-yet.

Melancholia, like fidelity, declares that our past is not done, that it can never be done, that the dead cannot be killed.”¹⁰⁰ More than the loss of the socialist ideal, what the experience of looking at the work of Pedro Manrique Figueroa manifests is the structural lack of a promise able to make the present a part of the future-to-come. In this sense, the haunting presence of Manrique affirms the impossibility of a work of mourning for that vision of the future that he represents. By maintaining the melancholic fidelity to the memories of a vision of the future, the project declares that its ghost cannot be killed and the past without a future-to-come cannot be completed. As a conclusion to this thesis, it is worth invoking the street sign that accompanies several exhibitions of the project (Figure 29). In a paper eroded by time, there is a ceaseless declaration that translates: “B.A.A. Bolivarian Association of Artist. Open letter directed to academics, collaborators, critics, gallerist, archivist and collectionist. We demand the liberty of the work of Pedro Manrique Figueroa, Precursor of Collage in Colombia. ALIVE THEY TOOK IT, ALIVE THEY WILL TURN IT BACK!”

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 227.

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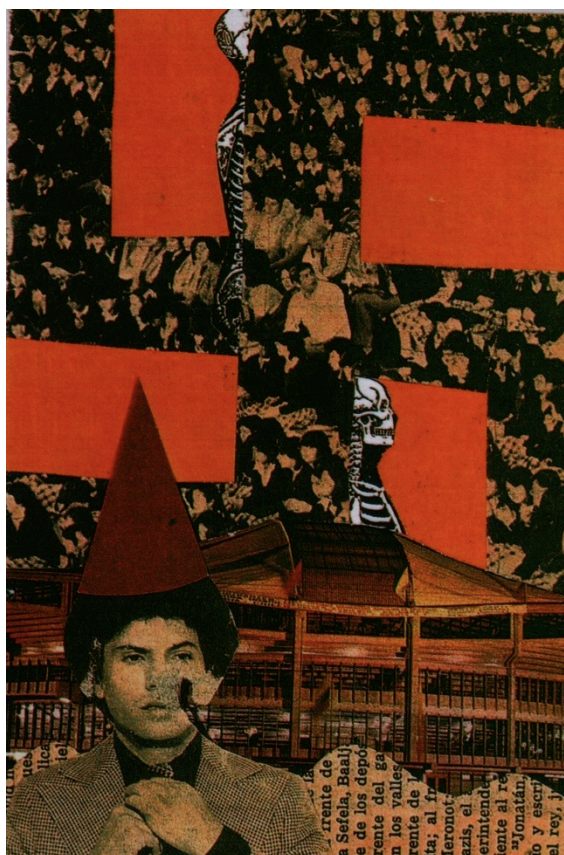


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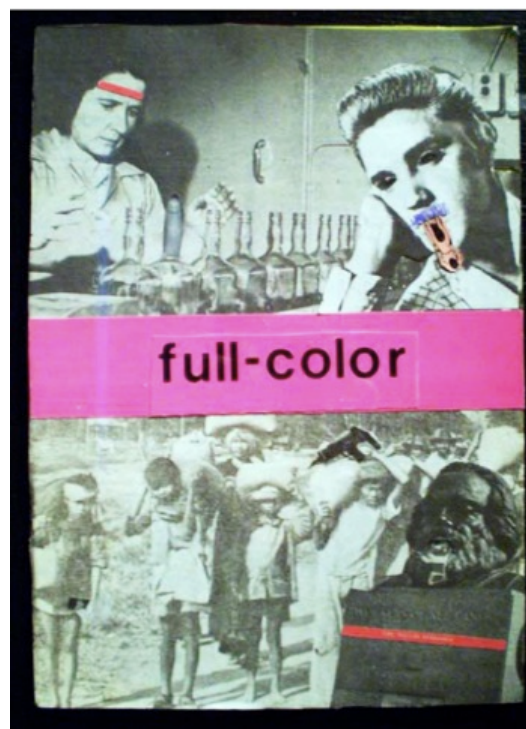


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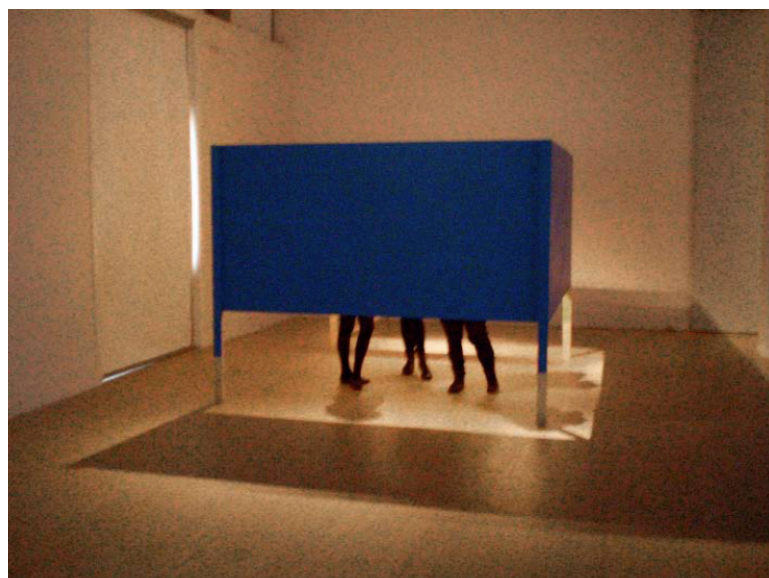


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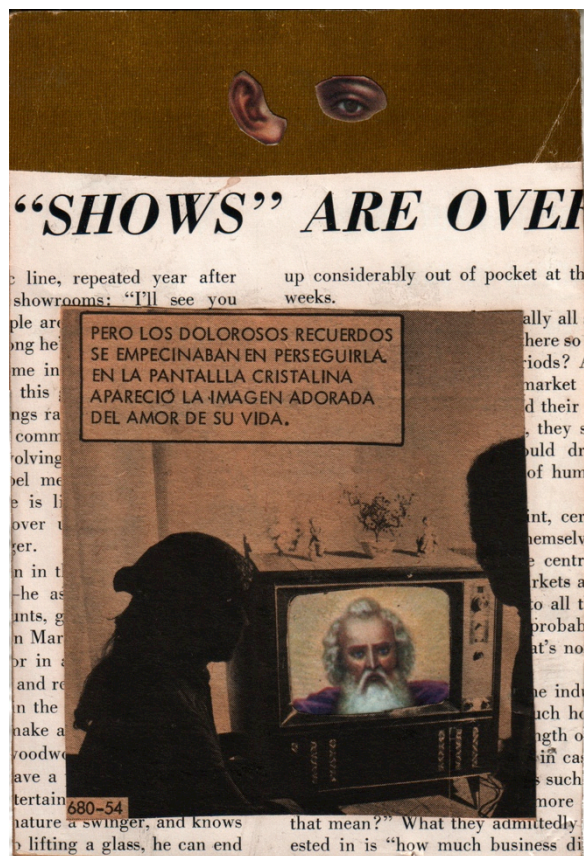


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Figure 24. Jacopo Palma il Giovane, *Saint Lucy*, 1615 ca., Saint Jeremiah and Saint Lucy's Church, Venice. Creative Commons License, PD-old-100. Source: Preguntas santorales.es.

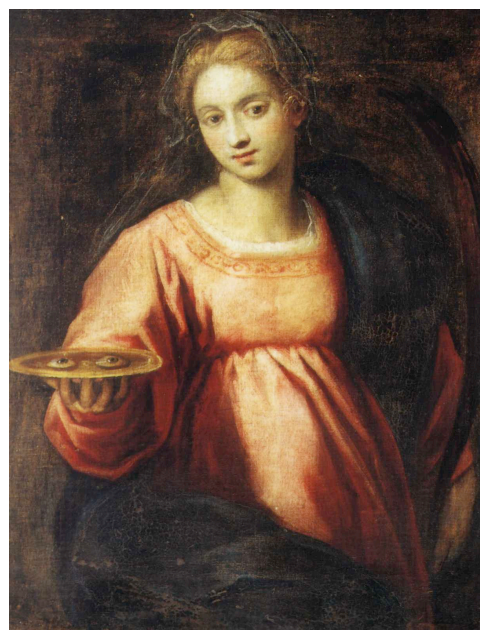


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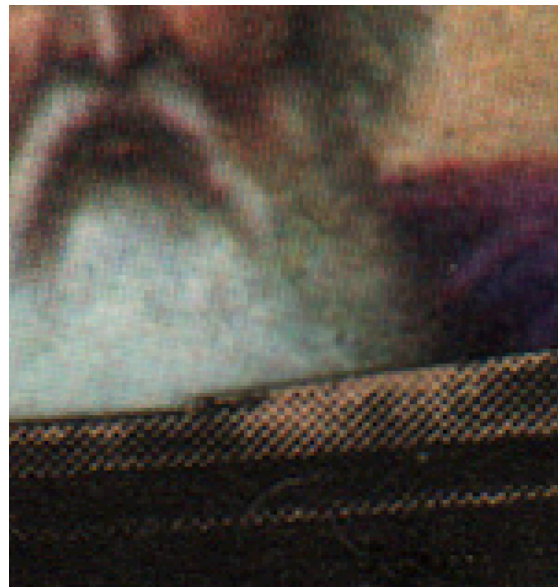


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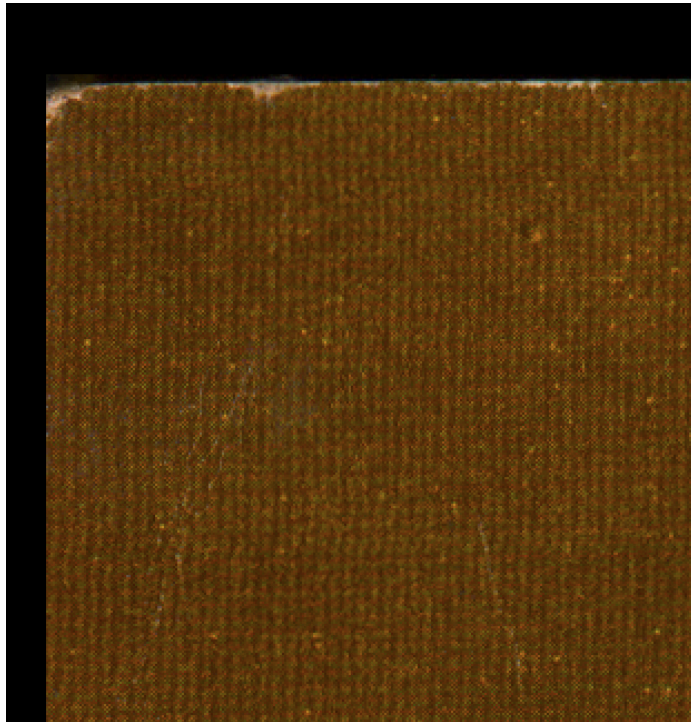


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