

CONSUMING CULTURE: THE LATIN AMERICAN MUSEUM
IN NEOLIBERALISM

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This dissertation studies figures of economy in museum fictions appearing in Latin American novels, performance art, and theater from the late 1970s to the 2000s in order to describe the cultural transformation in the region after the neo-liberal turn. In particular, it analyses how these museum fictions reflect upon the circulation of fantasies and ideas about museums in Latin America through a comparative study of Chile, Argentina, and Peru, focusing on two significant moments: the introduction of neo-liberalism in the region and its consolidation. The works examined here signal towards a particular articulation of neo-liberal assumptions in Latin American culture: museums appear as circuits of production, circulation, and exchange of cultural value where subjects test their freedom to consume and, therefore, to produce value. Thus, the first goal of this study is to characterize transformations of museum practices that take place under conflicting relations with authority and consumerism. The second is to understand how these museum fictions make explicit that cultural consumption translates as cultural production within a political economic model that acknowledges free consumption as a form of investment and as a sign of citizenry.

The individual chapters discuss museum economies through the figures of waste, accountability and inflation, as significant of different instances of the establishment and consolidation of neo-liberal ideology and policies in the region. Expenditure appears in “Para no morir de hambre en el arte” (1979) by CADA and *Museo de cera*

(1981) by Jorge Edwards, museum fictions that respond to Pinochet's shock economy. Accountability emerges as a compensation to an assumed lack of civic responsibility as the common feature to the photographic book *Yuyanapaq: para recordar* (2003), by the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission and *Sin título. Técnica mixta* (2004), a theater piece by collective Grupo Cultural Yuyachkani. Finally, inflation is the mode of chosen as a strategy for the generation of value in narratives that recall the Dirty War in *El pasado* (2003) by Alan Pauls and *Museo de la Revolución* (2007) by Martín Kohan.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Ximena Briceño was born in Lima, Perú in 1974. After studying Latin American and Peninsular literature in the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, she came to Cornell for her doctorate in 2003.

Para Mateo, Diego y Santiago.

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INTRODUCTION

In 2004, when I was in Lima researching on theater and memory, Teresa Ralli invited me to the dress rehearsal of Yuyachkani's *Sin título*. I found myself in what I call in this dissertation the museum out of joint – a museum of sorts, where public and performers merged in an active experience of memory and historical examination. At first, given the recent investigations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and Yuyachkani's repertoire, I interpreted *Sin título* as a questioning of the representation of Peruvian political history. Later, I came to realize that Yuyachkani's piece, in as much as an artistic reflection, also makes part of the larger, global phenomenon of the museum boom. This museum expansion and growth began elsewhere around the late 1970s, and, by way of it, as Andreas Huyssen puts it, the museum progressively transformed from an elitist setting into a new “mass medium” (1995). In Peru, the museum became an important part of cultural economy along with the growth of the tourist industry promoted by the government's plan for economic ‘recovery’ in the 1990s. In fact, the very political turmoil and violence of the Fujimori regime that infamously ended up with the establishment of the TRC was the other side of the coin in Peru's conversion to the neoliberal model that advocated for the country's modernization and re-insertion into the global market. I decided to research on the relationship between museums and the neoliberal turn; some of the questions that accompanied me as I developed my project were: Was Yuyachkani's museum comparable to other works in the region? Could museums help me understand some aspects of the change in culture that had happened along with the economic transformation after the neoliberal turn?

If one can see an actual museum as a scale model for the production of cultural value at a given moment in a given society, it is because it makes explicit the

articulations of power and capital. Museums as public institutions are manifestations of capital exhibitionism and the relation of the museum visitor to its space and collection depends on her relation to capital as well. Although this may seem obvious, allow me to illustrate it with the recently inaugurated Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Lima (MAC), a museum that with no more than a fence, a webpage, and an unfinished structure, has stimulated a lively debate on museum practices and cultural institutions beyond the circuit of art connoisseurs, exhibiting a contradictory layering of relationships and ambitions.

A long-time project of the Instituto de Arte Contemporáneo (IAC), MAC was supposed to begin its construction 6 years ago at the park Manuel Beltroy, conceded for that purpose by the Barranco district council, finally making possible the establishment of a museum of contemporary arts in Lima.¹ Upon receiving the park, the IAC built a fence around it, but could not move forward with the construction. It was not until 2007, with the district operating under a new mayor, that IAC officially presented MAC-Lima as an operating project, launching their web-page with the slogan: “Hacia la culminación de un museo para todos.” In February 2008, they inaugurated the space with an exhibit named: “La construcción del lugar común.” The show included 14 interventions by young Peruvian artists, all grouped under the idea of re-signifying the park’s landscape into a zone of interchange and contact, open to everyone, as in a preview of the museum to come.

“La construcción del lugar común” was also a means for MAC to search for a common ground with its reluctant vicinity. As artists and public arrived, a group of angry neighbors accompanied by the mayor turned up to cancel the show. They put a

¹ For the history and relationship of the Instituto de Arte Contemporáneo de Lima (IAC) and MAC’s collection see the museum’s web page *Quienes Somos* section. A critical description of this history can also be found in Gustavo Buntinx’ “Communities of Sense/Communities of Sentiment: Globalization and the Museum Void in an Extreme Periphery” in *Museum Frictions* (2006).

sign on one of the doors: “Clausurado por disposición municipal.” The museum and its artists responded by intervening the sign so that it read: “Inaugurado por exposición municipal.” The staff managed to keep the exhibit open using a transitory permit that allegedly allowed MAC to operate while the process of appropriation was resolved in court. To this day, the new mayor and the neighbors argue that the IAC has unlawfully fenced the park, keeping it from their community in order to rent the space for profit. MAC claims otherwise, arguing that the fence is closed only during the night time to prevent drug-dealing and related crimes. The museum has become a space of friction where these parties argue about the viability of a common locus; the definition and function of the arts; elitism vs. inclusiveness; profitability; institution and values; and modes of representation.

MAC’s fenced park and its problematic administration also bring to mind republican museums, where Latin American elites polemically sought to display the divisions between culture and nature, *civilización y barbarie*, in order to create/display national history. Embedded in imperial economy, the 19th century museum functioned as a cultural *enclosure* where public capital –brought into the empires through expansion and appropriation– was to be displayed and consumed in a controlled fashion that would produce self-regulated citizens. Following the European model, Latin American national museums were among the first institutions that, as Jens Andermann argues, founded sovereignty in such enclosures through the construction of a particular interplay of naming and perspective (Andermann *Optics of the State*). Standing at a disputed division between private and public property, while claiming an institutional space for the arts and culture, MAC’s fence renovates this history with a touch of irony. Thus, “La construcción del lugar común” could be read as an inclusive invitation to the construction of a common locus, but also as the affirmation of the common place – the museum cliché, the space for the *cultivation* of the arts. The

inaugural exhibition was also an invitation to see and experience how such a common place is constructed (or deconstructed).

Many of the artists who participated created pieces that specifically addressed the museum's controversial situation. Christian Luna's work exposed the MAC's conjunctural nature as symptomatic of the transformation of Lima's cultural economy. Luna posted sloppily manufactured signs along the park's fence. As if mimicking the neighbors' protest, he repeated four times the same question "¿Qué parece esto?" Each time a sign offered different answers: "Supermercado," "Penal," "Colegio," "Hospital." As a work of institutional critique, Luna's intervention brings to the fore important changes in the Peruvian culture of the last two decades. Along with a burgeoning of mass media, and the concomitant phenomena of exhibitionism and consumerism that sprung up since President Fujimori's shock economy in the 1990s, the supermarket equated the museum, the school, the hospital, and the prison as "ideological apparatuses."² Placed on the outside of the fence, the piece summons the spectator located outside of MAC; like the fence on which it is situated, it makes a separation based on education and experience –an homage to Bourdieu's notion of distinction. A spectator knowledgeable in the practices of contemporary arts and the MAC-Lima project may enjoy it as an insider's joke –she may know that even if the museum does not look like one, the place is a museum. Or she could even further the game by asking: what is an inclusive museum of contemporary arts *in Lima* supposed to look like, really?

Luna's universalizing question about how one consumes art (the piece asks, in general, "what does this look like"? Not "what does this look like to you or to her"), establishes a dialogue with the appropriation of the famous *ArtForum* magazine cover

² In a similar way, the relationship between the museum and the mall as spaces for consumption is drawn by the merging of both spaces through the Chilean campaign of itinerant museums –"Museos sin Muros"– of the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes.

by José Miyashiro, also included in the exhibit. The piece, a backlit poster entitled “My non-contemporary art museum,” borrows its materiality from advertisement and initiates an exploration of the relation between time, space and the forms of art consumption. Miyashiro changes the magazine’s name into “ARTFORM” and illustrates it with an image of the unfinished structure of MAC-Lima. Condensing a problematic history of art consumption in Peru, the work reminds one of the decontextualizing collection of masterpiece posters of the Museo de Reproducciones Pictóricas of 1951 –a perverse version of Malraux’s “museum without walls”³– and of the fact that while MAC is still under construction, ARTFORUM, as many other magazines, circulates among Peruvian artists in hardcopies and digital formats, as much as Peruvian art and artists circulate –like young Miyashiro himself– in the global art market and exhibition networks. With its fence and web-page, MAC confronts Néstor García Canclini’s challenging question: “¿No son incompatibles los museos y la globalización?” (100)⁴

Of course, García Canclini’s is a rhetorical question. Museums are not unable to coexist with globalization; on the contrary they make part of it. Nonetheless, the question prevails about what happens to inclusiveness when the frameworks that define the museum become less rigid. The step toward the “museum-as-a-hub” as predicted by Cuban curator Gerardo Mosquera⁵ may never be taken fully, but what is at stake in these transformations and the arguments that play a part in them is the understanding that art and culture are not separated from, but interwoven with, economy and the ways of the market.

³ In 1951, the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos assembled a collection of six hundred pictorial reproduction of world masterpieces under the name of “Museo de Reproducciones Pictóricas.”

⁴ García Canclini, Néstor. *Lectores, espectadores e internautas*. Barcelona: Gedisa, 2007

⁵ “The museum-as-a-hub would develop an international network of exchanges and activities, with which it would be dynamically connected, participating in a flux of information, projects and actions.” “Notes On The Museum-As-A-Hub” in: www.micromuseo.org.pe/lecturas/gmosquera.html.

As I researched more about museums, it became obvious that it was necessary to widen my perspective by studying other cases besides the Peruvian. Also, whereas I could appreciate how MAC, an ‘actual’ museum offered insights into the Peruvian culture and economy, I decided to focus my work on museums in fiction. I examined these museum fictions as spaces for the circulation of fantasies and ideas in exchange with the fictions the actual museums and their history had already created. I designed a comparative study of museums fictions that appeared across the genres of theater, performance art, and novels in Chile, Peru, and Argentina at the turn of the 20th century. Building on the original sense of the term “economy” – as the administration of resources in order to obtain the best profit – and keeping in mind its double register: oikos-nomia (the laws of the house), icon-nomia (the laws of the icon), I found the concept of museum economies useful to describe the organization of the circulation, exchange, and production of value within the museum as a system. Thus, I analyzed these museum as shaped in the form of a figure of economy – waste, accountability or inflation –related to the different instances of the establishment and of the consolidation of neoliberal ideology and policies in the region.

Neoliberalism as a political theory “proposes that human well-being can be best advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (Harvey 2); consequently, deregulation, privatization and freedom to consume have been the common features of neoliberal policies in Latin America and elsewhere. As part of the Southern Cone, Chile and Argentina share a history of development in the 19th century and early 20th century that allows them to have a similar political history in the 1970s and 1980s, that contrasts with the history and development of the Andean region. Moreover, in Chile and Argentina, the establishment of neoliberal policies was made possible by military coups backed up by

the traditional upper classes of these countries. In Peru the ‘conversion’ to the neoliberal model necessitated the termination of democracy in the 1990s, hailed with the promise of the cure to hyperinflation and defeat of the Peruvian Communist Party ‘Shining Path’. These three forced political and economic transformations only prove what Naomi Klein and others have forcefully argued: that history has proved neoliberalism as impossible to be maintained without constant crises (Klein, Harvey). Yet, and despite their differences, these transformations foresaw a horizon of cultural and economic synchronization with the first world that veiled the economic and political contradictions thereof, as well as the authoritarian exercise of power and violence needed to establish them. In hindsight, it seems that the so called ‘ethics’ of neoliberalism, which assumes that social good would be maximized by bringing human action into the domain of the market (Friedman), have somehow penetrated into Latin American culture as aesthetic projects and political discourses related to museums coincide in making of museums circuits of production, circulation, and exchange of value where the individual may freely consume and produce culture.⁶

⁶ For a recent and comprehensive investigation on cultural/economic value and its transformations in Latin America, see *El valor en la cultura. Arte, literatura y mercado en América Latina*. Luis E. Cárcamo-Huechante, Álvaro Fernández Bravo and Alejandra Laera (comps). I want to acknowledge that although their authors do not focus on figures of economy *per se*, the notion of museum frictions introduced by Corinne A. Kratz and Ivan Karp in *Museum Frictions. Public Cultures / Global Transformations* (2007) in an attempt to conceptualize “social processes and transformations that are generated by and based in museums, museological processes that can be multi-sited and ramify far beyond museum settings” (2) was very suggestive for my understanding of museum performance and its role in the production of cultural value. I want to underscore here the affiliation of the concept of museum friction to the literary scholarship from the interdisciplinary debate on how to interpret the relations between culture, capital and power. Kratz and Karp elaborate their notion of friction after James Clifford’s 1997 essay “Museums as contact zones,” itself a re-elaboration of Mary Louise Pratt’s concept of “contact zones,” introduced in her *Imperial eyes: travel and translation* (1992). Thus, the arch drawn by the history of “museum frictions” goes from the interpretation of writings that visualize the experience of circulation and exchange between the European center and Non-European peripheries since the 1700s to debates on museum performances that are making virtual and actual intersections happen in the globalized world of the last two decades. My study is set against the backdrop of such a scholarly practice. Also, Deborah Poole’s notion of visual economy as a pattern that allows her book *Vision Race and Modernity. A Visual Economy of the Andean Image World* (1997) “to frame the discussion of the Andean image world with the intention of capturing this sense of how visual images move across national and cultural boundaries” (8), inspired me to understand the museum as a systematic space stages and channels different forms of interactions and performances, while it also

This of course is not only a Latin American phenomenon. It makes part of a global museum boom and its consumerism, summarized in the phrase of Andrew Pekarik: “[I]n the context of the world’s leading consumer society, a museum visit is a purchase option an individual can choose to achieve something they want”(16).⁷ In order to grasp the different relations they set in motion, in my analysis I consider museums as *performances* of cultural economy. First, because the museum-effect springs in spatial-temporal relations. Second, because these relations are always inscribed (staged) with regards to a previous model or double.⁸ By focusing on conflict within the museum economy, I can describe a dynamics where politics of memory, an increasing cultural consumption, and discourses of institutional critique converge *in practice*. Together with the rise of consumption, the policies of privatization, and the thinning of the state functions, neoliberalism has brought along critical revaluations of institutions and their materiality, which echo the processes of return to democracy in South America. Such revisions have had a magnifying effect on museums as representational institutions, creating diverging positions that go from a demand of museums and museification to an institutional critique that strives to uncover hegemonic strategies. In addition, as I already advanced the boom of tourism and the consideration of “culture as a resource,”⁹ has renovated the value of the museum.

reminded me of the region’s history of uneven development and the differences amongst national museum histories as they confront the illusion of synchronization.

⁷ Pekarik, Andrew. “Museum Consumerism.” *Curator* 46.1. 2003:15-18. For a discussion on the transformation of the museum across the 20th century, see Andreas Huyssen’s “Escape from Amnesia. The Museum as Mass Medium.” *Twilight Memories. Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*. New York: Routledge, 1995.

⁸ On performance and doubling, I follow the convergence in Richard Schechner’s and Marvin Carlson’s theories.

⁹ I am referring here to the term coined by George Yúdice in his *El recurso de la cultura. Usos de la cultura en la era global*. Barcelona: Gedisa, 2002.

Even if the scope of this study is broad, it is situated at this specific conjuncture. Temporally, it begins in the late 1970s, when there was a rise in the number of institutional museums that were created and, simultaneously, an increased interest on the part of artists and writers in engaging museums in their own work. The geographic parameters are also specific: a comparative study of Chile, Argentina, and Peru. This comparison allows me to characterize the processes and transformations of museum practices that take place under a conflicting relation with authority and consumerism. Expenditure appears in Chile's museum fictions in reaction to Pinochet's shock economy; during the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission years, accountability emerges as a compensation to an assumed lack of civic responsibility; and inflation drives narratives that place the Dirty War recollections in two Argentine novels written at the turn of the 21st century.

The chapters are as follows. In the first chapter, I theorize the displacement of value from from production to consumption through the analysis of the economies of expenditure in the performance *Para no morir de hambre en el arte* (1979) by Colectivo de Acciones de Arte (CADA) and in the novel *Museo de cera* (1981) by Jorge Edwards. Following Bataille's idea of the subordination of production to consumption in market economy, I compare *Para no morir de hambre en el arte's* artistic potlach with *Museo de cera's* self-ironizing decadentism to argue that neoliberalism prompts anti-museum or hyper-museum drives similar to those of historical avant-gardes and of decadentism. The image of the closed museum in both works condenses the pressure to consume (emerging from the pathological discourse of shock economy), and the radical unevenness in wealth created by such a consumption. I describe the closed museum not only as a reaction toward authoritarianism, but also as the symbolic negation of what used to be the site for the cultivation of the bourgeois perspective.

The second chapter discusses the photographic volume produced by the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission *Yuyanapaq. Para recordar* (2003) and the performance *Sin título. Técnica mixta* (2004) by Grupo Cultural Yuyachkani. After a decade devoted to the spectacularization of politics and the banalization of images, both *Yuyanapaq* and *Sin título* propose the establishment of accountability as the defining feature of a new democratic pact. I describe the book as a symbolic family album offering class reconciliation through the consumption of revalorized photographs of the victims of violence, through which the viewer acknowledges a previous lack of perspective and simultaneously commits to a new vision. I describe *Sin título*'s multimedia montage as a deconstructed museum that transforms the visitor into a performer that is compelled to recognize her practice in the public space. I contrast the use of a solid, visible representational object with the ephemeral and fragile framing of history as competing metaphors of representation and re-foundation for the project of "privatizing" the nation.

In the third and last chapter, I read *El pasado* (2003) by Alan Pauls and *Museo de la revolución* (2006) by Martín Kohan against the grain of the strategies of inflation these novels use to produce value within an established economy of memory in Argentina. While Pauls writes against the museum as a space for the capitalization and preservation of reified memory, Kohan deconstructs the museum as a center of the economy of memory in order to expose proliferating perspectives from *outside* the museum. I argue that these museums' economies collapse the distinctions between exterior and interior, expose the museum's representational capacity as a myth, and converge in expressing the new as a value that articulates museum and market as spaces for capital-exhibition in the global museum boom.

In the following pages I examine these works in order to theorize on the ways in which the consumption of culture has transformed the cultural economy of Latin America under neoliberalism.

CHAPTER 1
MUSEUMS OF CONSUMPTION: ART AND NARRATIVE IN CHILEAN EARLY
NEOLIBERALISM

Art does not reproduce the visible; rather, it
makes visible

Paul Klee

In the 19th century *fin de siècle*, philosophical, political and sociological discourses resting on the notion of the political body and the pathological imaginary characterized underdeveloped countries as sick peoples – “pueblos enfermos.” At the turn of the 21st century, neoliberalism updated this image, emphasizing the medical character of the economic discourse: shock economy promised to cure the nations of their “illnesses.” The liberation of the market re-signified *consumption* as an always positive, productive activity/value, which would alleviate the decaying bodies. Hence, liberalized consumption would invigorate economies. Notwithstanding the ambivalence of the term – which condenses expenditure, use and exhaustion – in conjunction with the tendency to abstraction in the market, neoliberal consumption allowed for a displacement of value in the realm of the social-political institutions and representations. Less *matter* created the new social frames; such an abstraction of matter changed the museum as well.

This chapter discusses the neoliberal turn towards consumption in two Chilean museum fictions at the turn of the 1980s. The art action “Para no morir de hambre en el arte” (1979) by CADA (Colectivo de Acciones de Arte, which included sociologist Fernando Balcells, visual artists Juan Castillo and Lotty Rosenfeld, poet Raúl Zurita

and narrator Diamela Eltit) and the novel *Museo de cera* (1981) by Jorge Edwards are analyzed as two sides of the same process of dematerialization in culture.¹⁰

CADA's first art action series, "Para no morir de hambre en el arte" (Not die for hunger in art), revolved around the shock economy crisis. It used milk as a common denominator for all actions and included the symbolic closing down of the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes (MNBA), by way of a white canvas hung over its frontispiece, in reference to the establishment's complicity with the authoritarian imposition of hunger. It ended with the exhibition of the decomposing physical evidence of the actions in an art gallery. This was certainly not art to be kept in the museum.

Two years later, the Marqués de Villa Rica, the protagonist of Edwards' *Museo de cera*, (Wax Museum) creates an extravagant wax museum that eventually leads him into his physical and metaphoric ruination, as he depletes his fortune, while a revolution and a counter-revolution take place in the background. The Marqués's apparently whimsical investment in his museum project runs against the notion of conservation and accrual, characteristic of the museum.

¹⁰ Naomi Klein's *Shock Doctrine. The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (2007) has recently updated the history of the intervention by Milton Friedman and The Chicago Boys in Pinochet's Chile as the first test to Friedman's model that would later spread globally. Her book makes the case that neoliberalism established the 'shock doctrine' (by using violence and abusing power or by taking advantage of natural disasters) to impose harsh political and economic transformations from the top down as a needed therapy 'to better' underdeveloped economies. Of special importance to the elaboration of this chapter have been Luis Cárcamo-Huechante's book *Tramas del mercado: Imaginación, cultura pública y literatura en el Chile de fines del siglo veinte*. (2007) for its detailed study of Friedman's prescription of shock and its influence in Chile's culture, as well as Robert Neudstadt's detailed collection of documents and interviews *CADA DÍA: la creación de un arte social* (2001); the proceedings of the international colloquium *Arte y Política* that took place in Santiago in June 2004 and were published under the same title in 2005 by Pablo Oyarzún, Nelly Richard, and Claudia Zaldívar, and finally, the compilation of interviews by Federico Galende in *Filtraciones I. Conversaciones sobre Arte en Chile de los 60's a los 80's* (2007), which brings together the voices of a number of artists and critics of the period. As a contribution to such an excellent discussion of Chilean art scene of the period, I argue for a connection, through the figure of expenditure as a form of investment, between CADA's art actions and other novels of the period that do not belong to the neo-avant-garde such *Museo de cera* by Jorge Edwards, or even José Donoso's *Casa tomada*.

Given their different political orientation and poetics, CADA (Colectivo Acciones de Arte) and Jorge Edwards are rarely studied together. As one of the most important figures of the Escena de Avanzada in the 80s, CADA's art actions had a central role in the re-signification of the avant-gardes in Dictatorial Chile. Since the publication of his polemic memoirs *Persona Non Grata* (1973), Edwards entered the Chilean literary establishment as part of the "generación del 50," also known as "generación de la decrepitud." Apart from the common political critique against the Pinochet regime, one is struck by the bold tendency towards waste and loss in this unlikely pair.

These wasteful museum economies are not coincidental. While CADA's avant-gardist action opposed the fine arts museum and Edwards' novel exposed bourgeois decadence, the neoliberal shock economy with its radical urge for the highest profit was violently established in Chile by Pinochet's Chicago Boys. Created in between the economic recessions of 1975-1976 and 1982-1983, these works speak volumes of a period of severe hardship associated to the illusion of prosperity and consumerism, which correlates as well with the institutionalization of dictatorship, at least nominally, as democracy.¹¹ The concurrence of the neoliberal policies and these anti-museum fictions invite us to read neoliberalism as the backdrop to CADA's and Edwards' works, as they crystallize the problematic and somewhat contradictory

¹¹ The shock treatment immediately applied after the Coup caused a deep recession, with unemployment rising to nearly 20 percent. By 1975, government instituted the "Programa de Empleo Mínimo" (mimum employment program), a low-wage program to compensate for the scarcity. The agrarian reform was halted as currency was 'reformed': 1,000 escudos became one peso. In between the recession in 1975-1976 and a stronger one in 1982-1983, emerged the illusion of *moving* capital which concentrated mainly in the conglomerates (grupos económicos): "With European and American banks overflowing with "petrodollars" after the First Oil Shock, the conglomerates borrowed abroad on huge scale, using the money both to buy up companies and to make loans (very often to their own affiliates) at the much higher local interest rates. Construction boomed, as did the import business, fueled by easy consumer credit: in 1979 Chile's first credit card ("Diners Club de Chile") appeared on the scene." (Collier and Sater, 370) By 1981, Pinochet accomplished his goal of moving Chile into a "new" democracy. A reformulation of the constitution made possible the elections in 1981. Thus, Pinochet himself moved into "La Moneda", rebuilt after its bombing in 1973, adding one more turn to the odd games of metaphors.

relationship between art, capital, and power. This crystallization brings to the fore a post-modern turn that stands out in the context of the Chilean museum, its history, and its fictions, as it emphasizes consumption over production.

As a space for preservation and accumulation, the museum is constituted in tension with destruction and loss. Moreover, total expenditure is also a latent component in the museum economy, as value is accrued within a circuit formed by the use and exchange of both the object for consumption and the consuming subject. Hence, the museum economy – capitalist in the sense that it rests on the investment of “cultural” capital in the expectation of “cultural” profit – includes destruction, loss, and expenditure as negative poles. Tony Bennett has famously argued that the birth of the public museum in 19th century Europe was part of a “betterment of the economy of cultural power.” This betterment took the form of a large *exhibitionary complex*, a set of institutions that sought to transform a problem of order – in parallel to Foucault’s Panopticon – as a problem of culture. In other words, the exhibitionary complex sought to transform people by including them in power, by making them a visible part of the institution, thereby allowing them to emerge as both subjects and objects of power: “knowing power and what power knows, and knowing themselves as (ideally) known by power, interiorizing its gaze as a principle of self-surveillance and, hence, self-regulation” (Bennett, 63).¹² In other words, the inclusion was profitable as it was aimed to favor a self-regulated citizenry. Thus tied since its beginning to imperial economy and culture, the museum’s most notable changes emerge around the 1970s

¹² Such an investment of power in the people is parallel that of the so called managed capitalism, a period that, at least in Britain, on which Bennett bases most of his theory. It goes roughly from the second half of the 19th century into the 1970s. Managed capitalism is characterized by an increase in state management and control in the midst of international conflict; it is also a period of national insulation in which the increasing interest from the state on the management of market and capital also included management of class relationships by shifting from the repression of the working class to its incorporation via the extension of vote, the creation of political parties and the state taking responsibility of people’s welfare.

and 1980s as it shifts, conceptually and architectonically, from the fine art palaces to the mega museum stores while neoliberal beliefs begin to dominate globally in ideology and policies.

Museum history is not, of course, globally homogeneous.¹³ In Chile, the declared mission of the first institution of Fine Arts, the Academia de Pintura (1849), was to “fertilize” the seeds planted by the events of Independence; art was to – naturally, organically – render politics *productive*.¹⁴ Such a humanistic task was directed towards progress with the establishment of the Museo Nacional in 1879. The notion of culture as cultivation not only explains the metaphor of the germinating seeds, but also illuminates the fact that Art was cultivated as National History inside the Academia de Pinturas or the Museo Nacional as enclosures within which production could be controlled. As private collections were transformed into national patrimony, and the notion of a public emerged, the Nation-State was legitimized through the constellation of images in its museum: “La vista de esas imágenes les será [to the citizens] un saludable entretenimiento, un estímulo para el trabajo, para el estudio, para la virtud y el sagrado amor a la patria.”¹⁵ Thus, embedded in the epistemology of the Enlightenment and dependent on the taxonomy of the disciplines, the museum

¹³ For a critique on museum development on a global scale see: *Museum Frictions* (2006), *Museum & Differences* (2008), and *Museum Revolutions* (2007). Notably, only *Museum Frictions* includes critical studies on the museum in Latin America. For museums in 19th century Argentina and Brazil, see Jens Andermann’s recent: *The Optic of the State : Visuality and Power in Argentina and Brazil* Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007. For a comparison between museums and encyclopedias in Brasil in the 1930s, see Álvaro Fernández-Bravo’s article “Museos, enciclopedias y mercado: una hegemonía en disputa” in Cárcamo-Huechante, Álvaro Fernández-Bravo and Alejandra Laera (eds), and for the proceedings of an international colloquium on memory, museum and nation in Latin America, see: *Museo, memoria y nación : misión de los museos nacionales para los ciudadanos del futuro*. 1999.

¹⁴ “Si los hijos de la patria derramaron su sangre en los campos de batalla para asegurar su independencia y su grandeza, las bellas artes tienen la misión de *fecundar* esta semilla de virtud y patriotismo, *ilustrando* por medio del arte las hazañas de estos valientes” Inaugural speech by Alejandro Cicarelli, director of the Academia de Pintura (Aburto 207).

¹⁵ José Miguel Blanco, Chilean sculptor who developed the project on which the Museo de Bellas Artes was based. (Aburto 209).

functioned as the space where, in parallel to the European trend, the alliance of art and politics would produce/cultivate the physical and moral health of the citizens. In other words, as one consumed art and let oneself be consumed consuming it, one performed good citizenry – thereby rendering it productive.

The first institutional crisis occurred very early in the next century, as Paz Aburto shows, when around the 1910s and 1920s, painters like Juan Francisco González or the Grupo Montparnasse challenged the academic paradigm of creation, moving outside of the State-sponsored exhibition venues and opening independent *talleres*.¹⁶ Thus emerged new, alternative spaces for the circulation and legitimization of art practices, in a competing relation with those managed and financed by the State. In the sixties and seventies, a progressive politization of the arts – or in the words of Federico Galende “una desestetización del arte” – occurs as informal, object-based and ephemeral art emerge in Chile. In parallel with the questioning of socio-political and economic structures, art questions its framing, trying to break away from its material and spatial supports, as it searches for a radical transgression of representation. Notably, during this time there is an important private support for the arts in the form of contemporary art contests, whose awards are conferred during the sixties at the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo and later under Pinochet, from 1976 to 1982, at the Museo de Bellas Artes (Ivelic and Galaz, 157). Such a private support informs of an ambiguous relationship between the arts and its sponsorship from private and State capitals. The “ajuste cultural” parallel to the “ajuste estructural” was

¹⁶ Interestingly, the very choice of the name Montparnasse by the critic Juan Emar for the group signals an intricate web of national and international negotiations and legitimizing strategies: “Para los cinco exponentes ese nombre no indica una igual tendencia pictórica; para ellos *Montparnasse* no es una escuela, no es un mismo objetivo perseguido [...] De una total inutilidad habría sido un viaje por el viejo mundo, un estudio a los museos, una confrontación con el arte vivo en marcha y una larga estadía en el *Montparnasse*, si todo ello hubiese traído como resultado el abandono de una fórmula, de un modo, para optar por otro más en boga [...] Lejos de eso. La Europa del arte rompió en ellos la unidad de principios limitados y establecidos de antemano, para empezar a marcar en cada uno una lenta y segura evolución hacia el hallazgo de sí mismo.” (Aburto, 215)

taking place and the performance of consumption-as-good-citizenry becomes critical again. Yet this time, their economy, as the *forms and relations* derived from such consumption, runs against the grain of recognizable modern cultural representations.

Total waste is a negation of the museum's productive mission; it is, basically, giving up on the economy of transfiguration of the modern museum and on its trust in the materiality of objects as manifestations of a further order. It corresponds, in this sense, to the ultimate modernist utopia of resistance to interpretation. Challenging productive cultural consumption by means of unproductive organic metaphors – spilled milk, wax figures, the crumbling carcass, “Para no morir de hambre en el arte” and *Museo de cera* disallow the germinating powers of art. Yet, in doing so they also prepare for its bizarre afterlife, one that is left with little or no organic materiality. Accordingly, in what follows CADA's utopian waste will be discussed as a performance of total expenditure, which nevertheless in creating photographic and video testimonies counteracts its absolute consummation. After that, *Museo de cera* is analyzed as an updating of the motifs of decadence that produces decay even when there is no more materiality to mortify: a ‘degenerate consumption’. CADA and Edwards' closed museums, notwithstanding their wasteful efforts, remain within the same economy of capital display. The underlying question is: Could the museum have been transformed into a mediation for cultural consumption?

Total expenditure interrupted

CADA's new economy of art-*actions* leaves little material indexes. These actions register as rituals that seek to bring about a utopic merging of art and life. Linked to CADA's declared affinities with Wolf Vostell and Fluxus, among others, these aspects of the collective's initial works are representative of their anti-commercialist and anti-

art stance, but also of their orientation towards art-as-practice or as a process, rather than to art-in-objects.¹⁷ In this sense, CADA claims a different concept of art history, signaling towards a non-future of aesthetic art. Such a non-futurity of art as characteristic of a change of paradigm and as a trope of the neo-avant-garde has been utilized in different critical readings of CADA and of the Escena de Avanzada.¹⁸ I am interested, rather, in emphasizing CADA's intervention against the museum as a trope that sets in motion a performance of cultural production/consumption.

Beginning with its title "Para no morir de hambre en el arte," CADA's first work tied together consumption and art. By way of the image of spilled milk: "La obra es: Un vaso de leche derramado bajo el azul del cielo" (Neustadt 115), consumption and waste are contrasted to bring forward the question of a possible re-signification of loss via art. Milk, literally and metaphorically consumed, was the linking element for the different actions. First, the artists handed out 100 liters of milk to families in a settlement in the outskirts of Santiago. The milk was placed in plastic bags with the inscription "½ litro de leche" in remembrance of an Allende government campaign: ½ liter of milk for every Chilean child.¹⁹ Once the milk was consumed, the bags were to be used as artistic materials by the settlers and then returned to the artists to be used artistically again.

¹⁷ Balcells: "El pensamiento más desafiante nos venía imprevistamente de artistas como Duchamp, Artaud, Mallarmé, Malevitch, y tantos otros, Vostell y Beuys, más cerca de lo nuestro" (Neusdtat, 68) Though mostly overlooked by the critics, the influence of Artaud could also explain the necessity of bringing back the ritualistic side of life through a de-aestheticization of art.

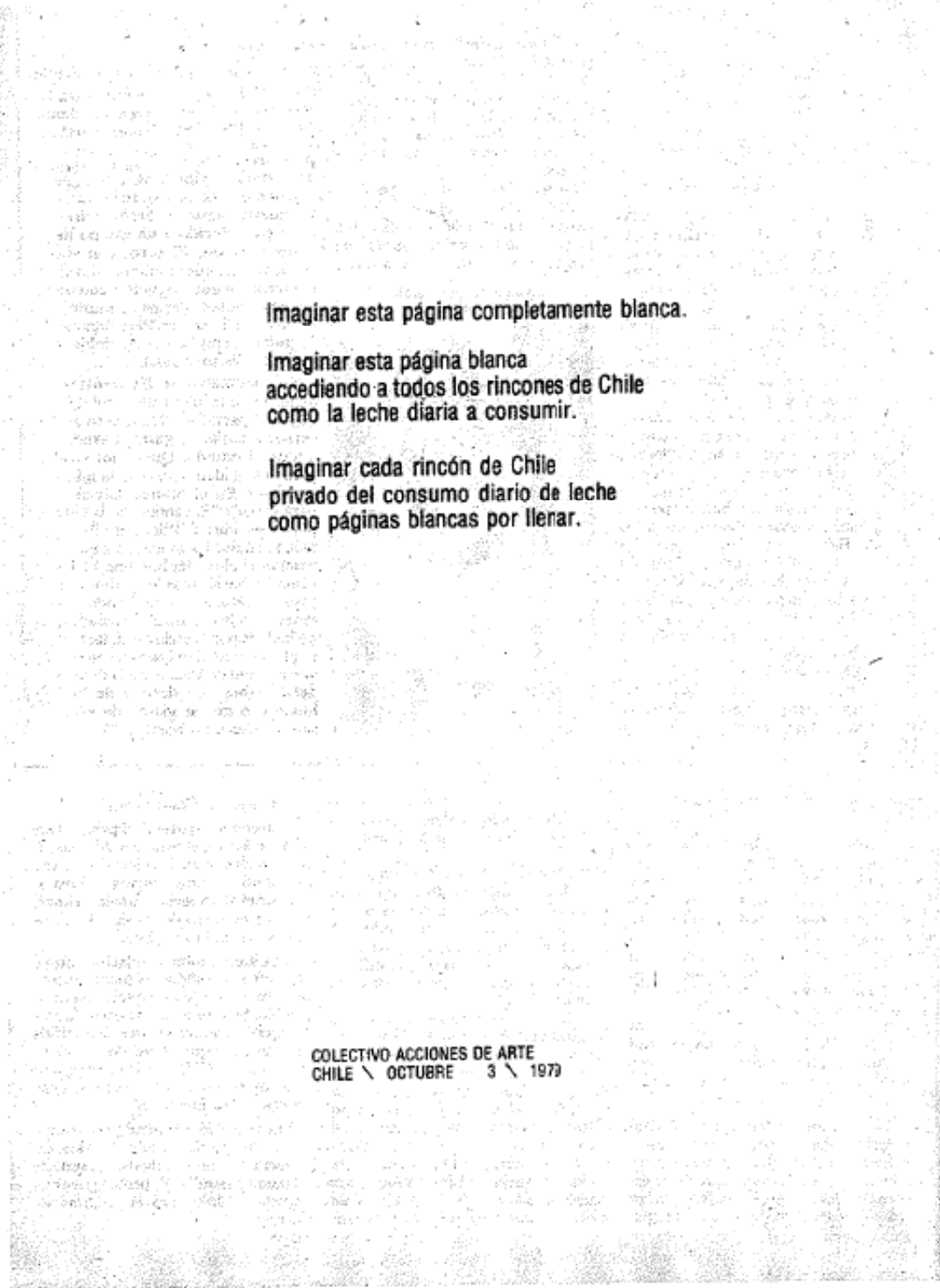
¹⁸ See for example Willy Thayer's "El golpe como culminación de la vanguardia" originally published in *Arte y Política* (2005) and then revised in *El fragmento repetido* (2006). From a different angle, Ina Jennerjahn, after Bolaño, argues for traits of fascism in Chilean neo-avant-garde in her article "Escritos en el cielo y fotografías en el infierno" (2002).

¹⁹ Naomi Klein's investigation about Chile in the *Shock Doctrine* reveals, through her readings of André Gunder Frank's *Economic Genocide in Chile*, that children were lacking milk both at home and at school because of Pinochet's cuts on the basic family budget: "Roughly 74 percent of its income went simply to cut out such 'luxury items' as milk and bus fare to go to work. By comparison, under Allende, bread, milk and bus fare took up 17 percent of a public employee's salary" (Klein 102).

Simultaneously, two other actions were taking place: CADA played the speech “No es una aldea,” proclaiming global solidarity against hunger, recorded in five languages in front of Santiago’s United Nation’s building, while a white page with a short text – “Imaginar esta página completamente blanca. Imaginar esta página blanca accediendo a todos los rincones de Chile como la leche diaria a consumir. Imaginar cada rincón de Chile privado del consumo diario de leche como páginas blancas por llenar.” – appeared in the center of a page in *Hoy*, a large distribution magazine in Chile. (Figure 1)

The next action, with its white canvas reversing the museum onto the streets was called “Inversión de Escena” (Scene reversal), to which I return later. Finally, these events and materials were gathered together at Centro Imagen, a gallery in Santiago, where CADA projected documentary videos of the actions (including one of the milk trucks parading in front of the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes – MNBA) and installed a sealed acrylic box containing 60 milk bags and the tape of the recorded speech with the purpose of exhibiting its physical decomposition as a parallel image of that of the actual wasting away of people deprived of nourishment: “para permanecer como el negativo de un cuerpo carente, invertido y plural” (Neustadt 123).

Working as a collective CADA avoided the authorial figure of the artist-as-individual-genius and rejected the notion of private work and private capital in art. Also, inspired by Vostell’s visit to Chile, they decided to *expand* the museum and transform the city into a site where they, as artists/researchers, could intervene and renovate the collective space: “[E]l paisaje como la mente y la vida son espacios a corregir”, given that to them “corregir la vida es un trabajo de arte.” (“No es una aldea” in Neustadt 128). Hence, “cada hombre que trabaja por la ampliación, aunque sea mental, de sus espacios de vida, es un artista.”



Inserción en revista *Hoy* N° 115, del 3 al 9 de octubre 1979.

Figure 1

Nelly Richard, who coined the phrase “museizar la ciudad” to name these operations of social construction and/or intervention, explains such an anti-museistic drive as a de-framing strategy common to most artists in the Escena de Avanzada: “De Vostell – cuyos trabajos se muestran en Galería Época, 1977 – y de su concepto de “vida encontrada” (es decir: de su proyecto de reprocesamiento estético de las coordenadas de existencia social), los artistas chilenos recogen la inquietud de confrontar *el tiempo muerto del cuadro* eternizado por el Museo a la nueva temporalidad móvil de un arte-situación que reprocesa sustratos de *experiencias vivas*” (Richard, 137, my emphasis).

²⁰ Performance and material abstraction, together with the oppositions life vs. death, and freedom vs. authoritarianism displaced the museum onto the streets. In the case of CADA, such displacement merged art and life in a utopia of des-esthetized art.

Though as a collective they did not openly engage the figure of the artist as shaman or demiurge, so important for the individual works of Zurita and Eltit, CADA rose from an artistic utopic *vision*, through which art should connect with life and ultimately disappear into it, since its final destiny:

no es la privatización de su *usufructo* en la sala de exposiciones, sino la permanencia en la retina y en la memoria del transeúnte quien ve así el paisaje urbano, por el que circula cotidianamente, transformado en un espacio creativo que *lo obliga a rehacer su mirada*, que lo obliga, en suma, *a rehacer y cuestionar el entorno y las condiciones de su propio transcurrir*. (Eltit cited in Neusdtat, my emphasis).

²⁰ Vostell’s imprint is also commented by Federico Galende, Ivelic, Galaz, and Neusdtat. CADA uses the term “social sculpture” as much as “acción de arte” to name “una obra y una acción de arte que intenta organizar, mediante la intervención, el tiempo y el espacio en el cual vivimos... El presente trabajo (Para no morir de hambre en el arte) es escultura en cuanto organiza volumétricamente un material como arte; es social en cuanto ese material es nuestra realidad colectiva” (CADA, cited in Nelly Richard). “Social sculpture” is fundamental to Fluxus artists, but most notably to Beuys. For Beuys and “social sculpture” see *Joseph Beuys: Diverging Critiques*. David Thistlewood, ed. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press and Tate Gallery Liverpool, 1995.

Based on the materialistic presupposition of culture as a veil for uneven development in capitalism, the museum as the ritualistic space for conspicuous consumption – namely, the space for esthetic vision – needed to be resisted or confronted. Outside of the controlled space of art history, the individual uncritical gaze could be “corrected” collectively; CADA assumed such a correction as their urgent obligation.²¹

Art could exist as producer of new life, CADA argued, only if it broke away with “el lugar enclaustrado y la función elitaria asignados por la oficialidad” (Neustadt 112). In contrast, they propose “el arte como una *práctica teórica* de intervención en la vida concreta” (113). Such a practice could function in “life” if it displaced the museum performance of production of cultural value onto the streets. In describing the genesis of the aesthetic structure of vision, Pierre Bourdieu emphasizes the use of the term “theory” in reference to the operations of seeing/*theorein* and making others see. Such theory, Bourdieu affirms, cannot operate outside specific kinds of spaces – most prominently the art museum – where the dialectic of consumption and production takes place. In other words, theory operates within the dialectic of cultural habitus and the artistic field, which in turn differentiates those who can *see* art from those who cannot. Thus, CADA inscribes its utopia in the contradiction of liberating art from art. As CADA professes an art that seeks a “perspectiva en la *cultura* democrática” (Neustadt, 113), it is clear that under the Pinochet regime, elitism is to be understood as complicit with authoritarianism and dictatorship. Notwithstanding, under neoliberal democracy, the problems of consumption and art taken on by CADA would still hold.

²¹ The sense of urgency of the change or correction (“obligándolo”) not only stands in the antipodes of a canon-forming, long-duration institution like the 19th museum, it has also been criticized as an imposition by in the works of CADA – a characteristic which is physically evident when they throw leaflets from planes in “Ay, Sudamérica” (1981), forcing onto the passer-by of Santiago a rain of papers. Just as the milk trucks could refer to tanks and the leaflets falling from planes to a bombing as shocking strategies of the Coup, the use of the word “correction” as in the “correction of the market” sought for through the economic shock signals a specular relation between CADA’s attempt to do away with the bourgeois consumption of art and the regime’s “ajuste estructural.” See the discussions on CADA’s performance in Federico Galende’s *Filtraciones*.

This action is remarkable for the way in which their opposition to the Pinochet regime is concentrated mainly with respect to the rule of capitalist consumerism. While this cannot be affirmed about their complete body of work, this first series, as the group's manifesto, was fundamentally directed towards making visible the production and expenditure of capital through and in art.²²

“Para no morir de hambre en el arte” is a performance of total expenditure. The whole series displays a circuit (composed by the settlement, the magazine, the United Nations, the trucks, the museum, the gallery and underlined by the trace of spilled, wasted, milk) whereby consumption, be it of milk or of art, when not related to a basic need of conservation, is but a manifestation of social power – conspicuous consumption. In effect, the polysemy of “blanco” (blank/white) and “consumir” (to consume/to exhaust) in the *Hoy* text, serves to emphasize the ambivalent link between consumption and conservation: while a white page evokes the whiteness of nourishing milk, the blank page brings to mind a barren, hungry country, which considered within the action's immediate context is in turn consumed by a political-economic project oriented towards free marketability and consumerism. The symbolic economy of “Para no morir de hambre en el arte” is based on an interplay of literal and metaphorical operations such as this one, insisting upon the fact that consumption and waste are two sides of the same coin. “Para no morir de hambre en el arte” produces different types of expenditure – the spilled milk, the cost of printing of an almost blank page, the

²² These actions were complemented abroad by Chilean artists Cecilia Vicuña and Eugenio Tellez. In Bogotá Vicuña created an action in which she spilled a glass containing white glue on the pavement in front of the Quinta de Bolívar, where she had written her poem “Vaso de leche.” It was undrinkable milk, in reference to the fact that children were dying because of decomposed milk. Tellez drank a glass of milk and read a text on democracy, hunger and poverty in front of the Toronto City Hall. Roberto Neustadt summarizes the international circuit of the series: “Al considerar ‘Para no morir de hambre en el arte’ en su conjunto, las tres instancias forman una cadena de alguna manera representando los excesos del sistema económico mundial. Canadá, un país del primer mundo, goza de exceso de leche y recursos. En Colombia la leche estaba siendo envenenada, y en Chile no había leche suficiente para mantener la salud pública.” (29-30)

consumption of paper, the unconsumed milk, the milk trucks parading in front of the MNBA, the decomposed milk – which beg the question about cost vs. value given the declaration of precariousness and hunger framing the whole series.²³

Challenging the re-signification of waste, the series stands as an artistic potlach. Thus “Para no morir de hambre en el arte,” understood as an imperative which literally or metaphorically seeks a way out of death by starvation in art, finds its way of becoming in reaching for the total consumption of art. In his revision of potlach, Georges Bataille proposes that in a market economy, potlach is not “any longer as directly agonistic” as it was in the economy of exchange famously studied by Marcel Mauss. “[E]xpenditure” writes Bataille “is still destined to acquire or maintain rank, but in principle it no longer has the goal of causing another to lose his rank” (123). For Bataille, production is subordinated to destruction in this new economy and therefore the most radical potlach would be that in which the “true nature of expenditure” is liberated, as total free waste, from its duty as warrant of the status quo.²⁴ With its articulation of production and consumption of different kinds, “Para no morir de hambre en el arte” can be understood as a potlach, as a grand social expenditure, which, in displaying the dialectics of the theory of the aesthetic vision (Bourdieu), consumes it up. Breaking away from the *blinding* veil of culture, it offers a new *revelatory* vision.

²³ For example, in Loty Rosenfeld’s account of how they managed to get the trucks, she emphasizes how they tricked the Soprole manager promising him a profitable relation between his product and the MNBA’s institutional value : “Los camiones fueron prestados por el gerente de marketing de ‘Soprole’ y con mucho entusiasmo. Diamela y yo les pedimos una entrevista y le dijimos que proyectábamos celebrar los 100 años del Museo de Bellas Artes con la leche como metáfora de la pureza, etc, etc. El estaba algo desconcertado en un comienzo y luego nos dijo que como propaganda para la empresa le parecía genial. Entonces, nos ofreció un camión nuevo que tenían con capacidad de transportar una gran cantidad de leche. Nosotros le dijimos “no, no, la idea es que sean varios, comunes y corrientes y, además lo más importante es que estén vacíos,” “¿se imagina el impacto que esa imagen puede producir, frente al Museo de Bellas Artes?” (Neustadt 50).

²⁴ For Bataille, revolution would take place when the “lower classes” took control of the means of expenditure, not production.

In fact, “Inversión de escena” and its structure of veiling and unveiling (Figure 2) creates the most notable comparison between consumption as consumerism and consumption as exhaustion in the whole series. Here I resort to Ivelic and Galaz’s account of it:

Cada camión llevaba el logotipo de la industria y la publicidad de sus productos en la carrocería: ‘Queso campo, leche sabor, crema, quesillo, mantequilla, yoghurt.’ Los transeúntes observaron sorprendidos el paso lento de esta flota de camiones que no sólo rompía los esquemas de circulación vehicular, sino que, además, provocaban atochamientos. Los camiones en fila contribuyeron a que los textos de sus respectivas carrocerías se hicieran reiterativos, psicológicamente como reflejos condicionados, justo a la hora del té. (209)

Such a narrative of the effect on the astonished-critics-passers-by, gives the art action a sort of miraculous character that corresponds with the “espectacularidad del ‘milagro económico’” so widely commented about the installation of shock economy in Chile. While the action generates confusion with the traffic jams and the ominous repetition of “Queso campo” and “leche sabor,” etc., the repetitive advertisement texts emerge as poetic condensations of how produce is industrially transformed into a consumable ‘image’ of the country, hitting the senses and educating the bourgeois *taste*. Just like the museum.



"Inversión de Escena", 1979.

Figure 2

At a first level, by projecting a sort of phantasmagoria of milk trucks and their advertisement signs onto the canvas screen placed in front of the Fine Arts Palace, “Inversión de escena” suggests, via a sort of projection, the contrast between the cost and value of food vs. the cost and value of art. At a second level, it makes visible the moebius strip of capitalism, where interior-museum and exterior-street finally merge. In his investigation of the poetics of commodity in the *Arcades Project*, Benjamin affirmed that museum display and shop-windows are part of the same continuum of capital consumerism in which the subject, by way of its desire for and identification with commodities, becomes part of that continuum. CADA’s “inverted scene” can be read along these lines as the visible circuit of desire and consumption of milk, which contrasts yet nevertheless merges with the MNBA as the house of the fertile transfiguration of art into the Chilean history.²⁵ “Inversión de escena” speaks of its times as it underscores that, given the change towards neoliberalism and its freedom of choice, within production/consumption interchange of museum economy the emphasis seems to shift towards consumption – as in Bataille’s understanding of the relation of production and consumption. In the liberation of art from the *controlled* consumption of culture within the museum, consumption finds no limits.

And yet, the series’ own exploration of the dialectics of production and consumption does not escape the contradictions thereof. These were the years of heated debate around politization of art as described by Benjamin in his “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.”²⁶ Photography and video appear as

²⁵ This circuit would appear again, but this time through an actual marketing campaign that occurred between 2001 and 2003 by L’Oreal Paris, which involved the covering of the neoclassical frontispieces of the MNBA and the Biblioteca Nacional with large format photographs of supermodels. The Dirección de Bibliotecas, Archivos y Museos (DIBAM), signed the contract with the cosmetic company and promoted the slogan: “Cultura, reflejo de nuestra belleza.” (See Aburto and Cárcamo for critical readings).

²⁶ On the neo-avant-gardes practices in relation to Benjamin’s notion of destruction vis a vis the politization of art, see Richard’s *La insubordinación de los signos*.

liberating languages, outside of the bourgeois economy of ‘culture’ and ‘history’, hence impossible to be coopted by ideology. Their objectivity opposed the aura of subjectivity and their document-like character was believed to surpass the manufactured work of art. History was not in them; Art was dead. But the mocking preservationist gesture was trapped in the economy of the visible and the invisible – even when it was not meant to last, even if technically it was made of fragments.²⁷ In the utopic future, which was already there since history was always-already crumbling, the new economy was supposed to be fragmentary and not solid, and transitory-ness was the new permanence. In their interplay of literalization and metaphorization, while exhibiting decomposing materials accompanied by the images of waste, “Inversión de escena” was, in the words of Paul Klee, not re-producing the visible, but *making* visible – performing – the thinning of matter.

The photograph of the covered Palacio de Bellas Artes is one of the most prominent of this period. It outlived not only “Para no morir de hambre en el arte,” but also the collective itself as it became the chosen image for the cover of Nelly Richard’s *Márgenes e instituciones: Arte en Chile desde 1973*. By way of the latter, it ultimately entered Chilean art history:

En 1979, el CADA tapó con un lienzo blanco la entrada del Museo, *tachando* la enunciación oficial de la Dictadura y la monumentalidad consagratoria de un arte conservador. Una negación: *Inversión de escena*. Siendo el punctum de disenso entre arte y política estatal y de toma de (o)posición política desde el arte. Y una nueva forma de

²⁷ The use of photography and video simultaneously with ephemeral art, resembles a compensation for lack of materiality and thus, photographs and videos are transformed in testimonies and evidence. See for example, the first actions and photographic installations by Carlos Leppe. In their history of Chilean art of the period, Milan Ivelic and Gaspar Galaz (1998) already discuss this coincidence of photography, video and ephemeral art and the dynamics of compensation it may entail. For further discussion, see Galende’s *Filtraciones*.

institucionalidad y legitimación: la trama discursiva de Nelly

Richard. (Aburto 211)

Notably, Aburto's account differs from that of Ivelic and Galaz with the stabilizing discourse of history. She underscores the *negation* of monumentality and authoritarian art as if condensed in the neoclassical building of the MNBA, which by extension is metonymic of the dictatorship's power to manipulate nationalistic aesthetics. In such a crossing-out, she locates the *punctum* where the annunciation/enunciation of a new "law" in art comes into being: Nelly Richard's "trama discursiva," interestingly revealed by Aburto in the latter's Barthesian language.²⁸ Such a re-valorization of CADA's actions was to be produced later, but two years right after "Para no morir de hambre en el arte" and "Inversión de escena," *Museo de cera* spoke of a similar shift in the production of cultural value. But this time, it appeared under the avant-gardes' *other* face, decadence.

A Degenerate Enigma

Published in 1981, it is quite evident that through the ordeal of the Marqués and its background of revolution and counter revolution, *Museo de cera* composes an obscure

²⁸ Adriana Valdéz has written about Nelly Richard's critical exercise as a trauma for the Chilean intellectual realm, in the sense that it seems to have become almost compulsively repeated by younger generations. (*Filtraciones y Copying Eden*) Interestingly, Aburto, by using the term *punctum* here not only uses Richard's characteristic semiological language – the Barthesian code – but also, by doing it, locates an original wound (*punctum* as the wounding, personally touching detail), a *trauma*, through which emerges Richard's *trama*, her distinctive critical works. One may argue that Aburto does not comment on CADA's action but on the photograph, which with the inscription *Márgenes e Instituciones: Arte en Chile desde 1973* has become an emblem of the avant-gardist anti-museum call as explained by Richard. Today, as Richard herself has suggested, with the inclusion of CADA and the Escena de Avanzada in contemporary Chilean art history, her title reads differently: "Que el libro haya pasado en veinte años de la precariedad del margen a la inscripción académica, no debería borrar enteramente la zona de riesgo e incertidumbre que orientó su gesto en medio del descampado. Digamos que el título, *Márgenes e instituciones*, se puede leer hoy de varias maneras." (*Filtraciones*)

caricature of Chile in the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s. Concentrating in the economic interests underlying the ‘monarchic sympathies’ common to the aristocratic elite and its servants in the restoration of power, Edwards’ novel explores the consequences thereof within the cultural economy. In other words, *Museo de cera* investigates the consequences of the cultural adjustment paralleling the larger economic adjustment as introduced by Pinochet and Friedman in the early seventies. In doing so Edwards establishes an acid dialogue with the avant-gardes. There seems to be a common understanding of the idea of the museum as a *trope* for the consumption of cultural value within the ‘liberated’ economy, yet in Edwards’s exploration of it, it appears as embedded in a re-vision of 19th century decadence, echoing in the idea of economy as the cure for a sick nation.²⁹

In Edwards’ novel the museum seems at first the synecdoche of a controlled mode of consumption, the principal producer of cultural value. As in “Para no morir de hambre en el arte,” the novel keeps the museum closed; moving the museum economy to the outside and transforming the museum into a trope that favors a reflection on consumption. However, *Museo de cera* creates an opposite narrative to that of CADA as it revises the museum economy without seeking any utopia. The narrator in Edwards’ novel incarnates the museum subject/consumer and, as such, he speaks from an apocalyptic future where most of the elements in the novel, including the Marqués’ palace, have disappeared or are forgotten. By the end of the novel, the Marqués turns into “polvo de alas de polilla,” or a mere “invento” (188) and poetic *actions* appear as hollow acts, deprived of political content (190). Hence, the museum economy seems

²⁹ Bruno Bosteels’ course “Dandies and Decadents” in the Fall of 2008 was of considerable importance to the elaboration of my argument on decadence in relation to Edward’s novel. Bosteels’ notion of the untiming of decadence and his emphasis on the importance of uneven development and imperial economy for the theories and narratives of decadence on both sides of the Atlantic at the turn of the 19th century invited me to think of a re-enactment of this at the turn of the 20th century in relation to neoliberalism. My contribution to the brilliant discussion he has initiated is to think of decadence and avant-gardes as complementary drives toward the hypermuseum and the anti-museum respectively.

unable to beget or produce anything but decay. *Museo de cera* gives *life* to a fantasy of eternal mortification, one that will persevere in consumption even when all matter has been exhausted.

Museo de cera begins expressing its goal of exposing the Marqués's enigma, which remains as such even when its physical evidence has disappeared:

La verdad es que el Marqués de Villa Rica fue un enigma siempre, antes y después de la crisis, y sigue siéndolo ahora, después de su *desaparición*, o de lo que podríamos llamar, en términos más apropiados, su *metamorfosis* última. (13, my emphasis)

Such a metamorphosis corresponds to dematerialization, which appears duplicated in the narrator's identity abstraction. The narrator in *Museo de cera* incarnates the voice of gossip among the bourgeois who belong to "el Club," of which the Marqués until his downfall is a distinguished member; it is the voice of the patriarchal power installed at the baccarat table, where executives, generals, and priests play, drink, eat, and lift their eyes only to stare at each others' women "cuyos pechos blancos, bajo lujuriosas ruedas de perlas, se ofrecían sobre los amplios escotes" (20) or to decide whether or not to target their antagonists. By introducing the protagonist in this way, the narrator introduces himself as part of the Marqués's enigmatic entourage – as there is no such thing as an enigma sufficient in itself. The Marqués's social standing – a noble title still supported on land, who suddenly marries Gertrudis, a beautiful and wealthy criolla daughter of a trader – is perceived as enigmatic by the narrator because it offers him a demoralizing reflecting image of himself – as he, upon finding out that Gertrudis is having an affair with her piano teacher, dispenses all his wealth to producing wax duplicates of himself and the adulterous couple. The narrator rejects this reflection as immersed in an apparently inexplicable instability and decay.

One can translate the enigma of the Marqués in terms of Marx's famous description of self-consuming experience in modernity: "all that is solid melts into air" dubbed in the novel as Gertrudis, having lost beauty and wealth, instructs her daughter: "En este país no hay nada sólido." (91) From its beginning, *Museo de cera* emphasizes conspicuous consumption as a cultural value in accordance with the narrator's class position, and in doing so it always leaves some angle for satire. For example, the Marqués's distinctive feature, his prominent belly, makes him a "persona de autoridad" in a contrasting world of accumulation of wealth and ever proliferating poverty and social distress, as much as his collection of "pintura colonial, oro indígena, modenas de la Antigüedad clásica, de mates y espuelas de plata, entre muchas otras ediciones de la Biblia en miniatura" (21). Here one can already detect a dematerialization or thinning of matter as the list of the aristocratic criollo representative objects, supporters of the Marqués' persona, ends in shrinking bibles.³⁰

Additionally, blending science and premonition, the medical rhetoric utilized to describe the controversial uneven accumulation of wealth as symptoms of "la crisis, que después se volvería *endémica*" (15, my emphasis) as a self-fulfilled prophecy, transforms these symptoms in the ominous signs of the Marqués's crumbling. In this game of odd reflections, the Marqués' decline contaminates the world depicted in the novel as the completion (*consumación*) of a long-term process of ruination.

Through the ambivalent looking glass of decadence, the narrative voice in *Museo de cera* looks into himself via the object of his gaze, the Marqués, trying to separate healthy from sick, natural from unnatural, wholesome from fragmentary, intelligible from indecipherable. Yet in doing so, he demonstrates that the relationship between

³⁰ The Club and the Marqués aristocratic manierisms reminds one of the Venturas in Donoso's *Casa de campo*. (1978) and the stark contrast between the republican present reality and the fantasy of aristocratic criollo oligarchy. Also, the cocinera and the servants double the dynamics of the native servants in Marulanda. Yet, the most clear relation between Edwards' and Donoso's novel is the taking over of the Marqués's house.

these dyads is more dialectical than oppositional. Aware of the transfiguring powers of the museum, Edwards reverses the mechanism and turns it into a Dorian Grayesque mirror through which the museum gaze, instead of producing a legible object, consumes it up. This mirroring effect appears in the definition of museums as performance by Donald Preziosi and Claire Farago:

Museums are ‘performances’ – pedagogical and political in nature – whose practitioners are centrally invested in the act of making the visible legible, thereby, personifying objects as the representations of their makers, simultaneously objectifying the people who made them, and in a second order reality that is part of the same historical continuum, objectifying the people who view made objects in their recontextualized museum setting. (5)

Here, the consumption/objectification circuit is positive, profitable, as the museum performance renews and reflects back knowledge and experience between the objects and subjects, whose positions are clearly interchangeable in the circuit.³¹ Conversely, Edwards troubles this circuit of visibility/profitability by producing a specular structure where the once visible gradually becomes indiscernible and objects are lost or broken into pieces. The novel constructs the museum performance as a specular

³¹ In relation to the museum performance as mirroring, in their performance piece “Undiscovered Amerindians” Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez Peña emphasize the problematic of the human exhibition in museums or fairs. “Undiscovered Amerindians” added a post-colonial reflection to the museum by performing an evidently exaggerated stereotype of “natives of a yet undiscovered region in Latin America.” Placed in a cage in different locations (Covent Garden in London, the National Museum of Natural History at the Smithsonian in Washington D.C., the Australian Museum of Natural History and Buenos Aires, Argentina), Fusco and Gómez Peña displayed themselves using the language of the museum and even using guards to act as mediators between them and the public to accentuate the satire. More than half of the people who interacted with them thought the Guatinauis were real. See: Fusco, Coco. *Corpus delecti: performance art of the Americas*. London: Routledge, 2000 For the discussion on museum performance as an intersection of reality and the imaginary, see Barbara Kirshenblat-Gimblett.

structure whereby object and subject progressively de-materialize, emphasizing the narcissistic side of the exhibitionist game of the museum.

Like the museum, the Club is a space for the exhibition and consumption of capital. By stretching their similarities, Edwards underscores their self-contemplating, self-consuming character and questions the inclusiveness of the museum-as-a-club. As Benjamin showed in his *Arcades Project*, the experience of an undisturbed interior, away from the spaces of the masses, was essential for the bourgeois society of the 19th century.³² Merging the museum's and Club's economies via the performance of the narrator, Edwards questions the construction of a historical consciousness within such an enclosed environment, suggesting that the museum supports history constructed *in infinity*; that is, history constructed *as if* there was no exteriority to it. In addition to such a problematic relation between interior and exterior, the narrative voice does not belong to a particular private character but rather, it is the faceless discourse of gossip. As the epitome of free-flow, gossip completes the questioning of framing and circulation. Sitting at the porous crossings of the private and the public, gossip opposes the concept of culture as the production of value within a stable, controlled space.

So far, I have suggested that as object of the museum gaze, the Marqués' performance of decay is constructed in comparison to a standard of health or 'plenitude' from the narrator's perspective,³³ which is simultaneously deconstructed

³² "Arcades are houses or passages having no outside – like the dream" (406) wrote Benjamin in his *Arcades Project*, where he included wax museums among the "dream houses of the collective," the architectural forms that gave expression to unconscious desires in capitalism. Though museums do not share with the arcades their particular kind of construction – in the words of Tom Gunning, "the fantasy of the exterior conceived as an interior" – they do create for the museum goer a similar illusion of the radical separation from the exterior while condensing the latter, as in a dream, for his or her consumption in the interior.

³³ Marvin Carlson's idea of the double: "All performances involve a consciousness of doubleness, according to which an actual execution of an action is placed in mental comparison with a potential, an ideal or a remembered original of that action." is akin to Richard Schechner's performance as "twice behaved behavior." The underlying notion of actions ghosted by previous experiences is essential to

by the fact that such a crisis reflects back onto the narrator. I have also intimated that gossip as a discourse disrespectful of boundaries endangers the very setting that originates it. I now want to focus on the ways in which decadence can be specifically linked with the neoliberal turn in Chile and why I consider that Edwards' updating of decadence speaks to the spirit of its time, in dialogue with its contemporary avant-garde.

Edwards' attraction to decadence is shared by other members of the Chilean "generación del 50," also called the "generación de la decrepitud," which groups together writers like José Donoso, Enrique Lafourcade, and José Manuel Vergara, among others. Recent works by María del Pilar Vila and Roberto Ampuero study Edwards' oeuvre, explaining his narrative as an exploration of a "cierta incapacidad o morosidad" of the Chilean bourgeoisie to acknowledge the directionality of historic processes, which worsened with the mediatic manipulation during the Pinochet regime (Ampuero 86) or as the work of an "historiador de la historia privada de la nación," the Balzacian author he claims to be (Vila 114). In fact, while most critics read decadence in Edwards' generation as either the expression of an existentialist anxiety (therefore, the dread of the passage of time, etc) or as a sort of intuition of Chilean history – where 'decadence' stands in mostly for an anti-authoritarian trait which denounces the 'corruption' or decay of Chilean society and the disillusionment with the project of modernity, the plausible relation to socio-economic changes remain mostly unexplored.

Cure and vigor are always summoned by the metaphor of decadence. As Luis E. Cárcamo has studied, the inscription of neoliberalism in Chile by Milton Friedman and Pinochet's Chicago Boys associated profit and well-being, prescribing the

museum behavior as, for example, in performing the visit and appreciation (consumption) of a museum exhibition, one consumes previous similar performances and produces a performance to be consumed by others.

economic shock as the cure for Chile, diagnosed as “un país enfermo.”³⁴ In fact, if the metaphor was meaningful it was because it resonated in a long rhetorical tradition about “decaying nations.” The structure of uneven development at the turn of the 20th century and its alleged cures echoed back both the desire/anxiety of health as metaphor for economic and political power. Moreover, the representation of interiority as insulated or the fantasies about exteriority characterized as a positive, developmental drive – with the implied notion of internationalism and the neoliberal notion of expansion and participation of global market – that resembles discourses and fantasies about the relationship between Latin America and Europe is rarely discussed in relation to Edwards’ oeuvre or to this particular novel. In fact, while the critique of the problematic consumption or exhaustion of materiality in the avant-gardes from the sixties onwards has insisted on the spectralization of culture with regards to the spectralization of market economy (Jameson), the *specters* of decadence and their contradictory relation to materiality have been left out.

Historically, uneven development and socio-political changes related to the emergence of industrialism in Europe help to explain avant-gardism and decadentism as two sides of the same coin. Thus considered, the anti-museistic drive of the former and the hyperbolization of the museum in the latter – think about the eclectic collections of Des Esseintes in Huysman’s *A rebours* (1884), with its Colombian flowers and Peruvian balsams – converge in emphatically pointing not only towards conspicuous consumption in culture but also towards a problematic relationship with linear history in the forms of disjunctions or clashes of temporalities, which in turn

³⁴ “No quiero dejarles con falsos conceptos o con equívocos: no se logrará ponerle fin a la inflación sin pagar costo alguno, pero continuar con una inflación tiene también altos costos. En el hecho, Chile es un país enfermo y un enfermo no puede esperar recuperarse sin costo alguno” (Milton Friedman, Santiago de Chile, 1975 cited by Cárcamo 71). Cárcamo studies Friedman’s speech as a mixture of prescription and preaching and its inscription in 1975 in the Diego Portales building as a symbolic introduction of the free-market theory at a larger cultural level via the figure of the economist as savior.

underscores the possibilities of limitless consumption in a sort of constant present in the centers of power and accumulation.

In a similar fashion, the connection between the wasteful museum economy in *Museo de cera* and that of “Para no morir de hambre en el arte” is telling of a moment in which the impulse of neoliberalism strengthens the unevenness of wealth through the illusion of a global timeless market. Bosteels’ suggestion that the logic of uneven development on a global scale may allow for understanding decadence with its critique of historicism on both sides of the Atlantic at the turn of 19th century as phenomena related to the crisis of the European imperial project, invites one to reconsider the relation between avant-gardism and decadentism as indicators of the expansion of neoliberalism in the 20th century (Bosteels, 277-279).³⁵

Museo de cera’s omniscient narrator is sitting outside of time. From there he can ‘see’ young Chilean executives of the future in their ‘artificial paradises’ of air-conditioned interiors in Tokyo and New York drinking hot sake as well as he sees the Marqués changing his usual scotch at the Club for the cheap aguardiente of the peñas with the artists and singers. The passage of time is not a problem when consumption can surpass matter. This is made even more evident in the ironic anachronisms of the relationship between the Marqués and the artists. Upon commissioning his sculptures, the Marqués, as if dissolving the *querelle des anciens et des modernes* meets and simultaneously befriends “los modernos” and Demetrio Paredes, “el Maestro.” These men are avant-garde artists who specialize in abstract art (“que esculpen puras formas,” 44) and performances, like that of a pair of lesbians as an *objet trouvé* in the Salón De Innovadores: (“Pero a nadie se le había ocurrido presentarlo en un salon de

³⁵ As an illustrative example on the other side of the Atlantic, one may think of Damien Hirst and other artists related to the YBA (Young British Artists) group and the Saatchi collection, who have become since the 90’s a sort of new decadents in Britain’s art world – known for their controversy in terms of technique and content, but also for challenging art value through the use of museums. At the time they appear, they represented the other face of Thatcher’s 80s.

escultura” 131). In a house enclosed by tall walls as if withdrawn from the rest of the city, they share *talleres* with “el Maestro,” an old-fashioned bohemian sculptor who eventually produces the Marqués’ wax figures. Paredes, who specialized in tombstones while living in París, “en la época de Montparnasse, mientras los demás pintaban cubos y vivían de becas” (45)³⁶, now makes his living by producing kitsch consumed by both the rich and poor. The joyful coexistence of different artistic orientations caricatures art history and dissolves any possible political implications in art, subordinating it to the consumption of both locals and foreigners. Such a coexistence is possible in *Villa Rica*, which despite the crisis is never less rich, and where art “innovation” cannot occur under the museum gaze of the Club, which deflates gestures toward change at the baccarat table: “Si así quieren desahogar su agresividad, ¿qué daño pueden hacernos?” (190)³⁷

From the perspective of the narrator, before his ‘metamorphosis’ the Marqués met all the requirements of the 19th century decadent and as such constituted a fashionable fetish for the conservationists. A collector and a misanthrope, he retained his status as an illustrious member of the “Partido de la Tradición” as a reward for his exercise of despotism. He was also a womanizer with a paradoxically ambiguous sexual identity, who, remaining unmarried, was used to having women cry desperately for his sexual favors or drink champagne from his shoes. Accordingly, his decision to abandon *public life* in his older years is justified as the acquisition through wedlock of the ultimate piece of his collection: Gertrudis, “una yegua fina, maravillosa” (23), whom

³⁶ The allusion to Montparnasse through both Demetrio Paredes and the avant-gardists – “la chica que viene de Montparnasse” – recovers the name of the Montparnasse group as chosen by Juan Emar in the 1920s. This coincidence underscores the existence of a community of artists outside the State-supported setting, and also signals the constant traveling across the Atlantic, of both cultural capital and the producers/consumers thereof.

³⁷ Like gambling, fashion for Benjamin alienated the human capacity for change. This final commentary on the lack of political implications in art occurs at the baccarat table, hence establishing equivalence between the avant-garde and gambling as a voided repetition of the new. Edwards here is referring to a scandal that involved Raúl Zurita’s masturbation at a vernissage of painter Juan Dávila.

the Marqués wanted but only to stare at her inside his mansion, “enmarcada por cortinajes de damasco, realizados por el resplandor de la chimenea, o sentada en la cabecera de la mesa del comedor, debajo de las perdices exangües y de las botas de vino de un bodegón español del diecisiete” (23). All is well while the Marqués’ excessive consumption can be re-signified, i.e. turned to profit, by the members of the Club. His affected manners, his “coche de cuatro caballos,” his cane and his *panza*, as well as his presumably French accent, “erres de entonación ligeramente exótica” (13), are accepted and included as a “symbol” or “emblem,” congruent with the aspirations of the usual attendees of the Club’s bar, the *Napoleón Bonaparte*.³⁸ Inside, affectation is natural and excess normal. His decision of constructing a wax museum seems to fill the Club’s *interieur* to the brim, not only as a narcissistic overindulgence, but also as the collapse of the distinction between interior and exterior, warrant of the narrator’s perspective: “asistimos estupefactos, a su *desplazamiento*.” (13, my emphasis)

It is precisely the distinction between interiority and exteriority that links together the questioning of bourgeois perception in both decadence and the avant-gardes, as it produces the architectural and the ontological foundation that museums simultaneously jeopardize and maintain – the illusion of ideology. If the museum, like the club, are spaces that favor the expression for unconscious desires in capitalism, to use the words of Benjamin, it is not surprising that such a displacement carries with it such anxiety and such a catastrophic imprint, especially when Edwards’ novel appears to be exposing the dream of a dreamer incapable of carrying out its analysis – the enigma. The Marqués’s performance of displacement softens one of the most *solid* distinctions of bourgeois cultural power and the crisis is immediately mirrored in the exterior: when he moves from the Club’s interior into the streets of the city to reunite

³⁸ Here there is also the suggestion that accumulation is product of theft as in the collections amassed in Napoleon’s conquests and later exposed in exhibitions. I thank Bruno Bosteels for pointing this out.

with his wife and meet Paredes and the modernos, groups of rebels protest on the streets, armed communists seize his abandoned mansion and, subsequently the members of the Club recuperate it with the aid of the Cocinera, the Marqués' cook who takes over, opportunistically stealing from her aloof master. The Marqués' detachment from the representations of bourgeois cultural power – “¡No es para tanto!” he exclaims when informed about the violence of the marches: “A mí me ahorcaron en efigie, en la forma de un monigote, ¡y aquí me tienes!” (56) – is as scandalous and unacceptable from the Club's perspective as the rebels' outright critique of it. Notwithstanding this acid political satire, Edwards is not interested in redeeming the Marqués; accordingly, there is no coming to political consciousness just as there is no possible re-vision of history.

Museo de cera refuses recuperation, in accordance with the progressive dematerialization of its character. If there is no matter, can there be any regeneration? Can the enigma of the museum be solved when no objects, or even worse, no museum is left? As Darío wrote about another decadent noble: “No hay que jugar al espectro, porque se llega a serlo” – by insisting on performing as a specter, the specter finally turns into one. Considering that neoliberalism brought back the pathological discourse of economy to Chile, one could read the impossibility of a cure as a sign of resistance on Edwards' part, yet it is impossible to decide upon the political orientation of the novel. Notably, in this sense it contrasts with the “programas de regeneración,” which appear in many novels associated with decadence in the Latin American 19th century such as, for example, José Martí's *Lucía Jerez*, José Asunción Silva's *De sobremesa*, or Manuel Díaz Rodríguez's *Ídolos rotos*.³⁹ These novels romanticized the pursuit of a national or social regenerative plan, by way of the contradictory combination of the

³⁹ There is an uncanny resemblance between the raping of the sculptures in *Los ídolos rotos* and the beating and breaking of the wax figures in *Museo de cera*.

withdrawal from “el mundo del trabajo” and a simultaneous necessity to politically affect it, characteristic of the aesthetically moral *beautiful soul* incarnated in the protagonist or in his closest circle of friends. *Museo de cera*’s updating of decadence, with the parallel drawn between the crisis of figures and the death of art, cannot accept the ideal of autonomy of art or any political utopias.

Edwards’ novel is, in this way, a revision of the many figures and tropes of decadence and the 19th century on both sides of the Atlantic. It includes the wax museum, the collector, the gamblers, the horror of the feminine⁴⁰, etc. But overall the ruin dominates this novel as the emblematic image of waste and as an image of the *other* side of the myth of constant becoming in capitalism (Benjamin). Notably, the novel itself performs the dialectic of monument and ruin by way of a transaction between center and periphery. Edwards elaborated the anecdote of the Marqués’ affair based on a chronicle written by his uncle, Joaquín Edwards Bello, which supposedly took place in 19th century Madrid.⁴¹

Though seemingly unimportant, this acknowledgement of “variation” gains value when one reads *Museo de cera* alongside the Spanish naturalist novels. While in the novels of Benito Pérez Galdós, José Martínez Ruiz ‘Azorín’ or Leopoldo Alas ‘Clarín’, the museum served as a space for the testing and legitimizing the character’s social standing, in *Museo de cera* this function has been inverted. While Isadora’s dream of being a *marquesa* and taking hold of Madrid in Galdós’ *La desheredada* (1881) seems to materialize as she visits the enchanting interior of the Museo del Prado and identifies herself with a portrait in its interior; the wax museum in the

⁴⁰ Although it is beyond the scope of this discussion, a notable insistence on sadism with female characters in the novel may be read along with the desire/anxiety of the feminine in decadence, which in turn could be compared with the work of Eltit.

⁴¹ See: Moody, Michael. “Jorge Edwards, Chile, and El museo de cera.” *Chasqui: Revista de Literatura Latinoamericana* 14, no. 2-3 (1985 Feb.-May): 37-42. Joaquín Edwards Bello (1887-1968) was prolific Chilean journalist, narrator and poet, inclined towards the Spanish Naturalismo.

Marqués's palace only causes him a growing dissatisfaction/dematerialization as his world seems to lose shape in his constant wandering through the city. There is a shared sense of "desencanto" both in Isadora and the Marqués as they confront the real world through the dream-world of the museum. In Galdós there is a consonance between reality and its representation in the museum (Isadora, after all belongs to the fair); the museum as a social stabilizer had not yet been confronted with the crisis of 1898.⁴² Conversely, in Edwards's novel, the Marqués's story unzips the economy of the museum, exposing the crisis of its social and material framing. *Museo de cera*, one hundred years later, situated at the beginning of the new orientation in economy, is the inverted reflection of the ruin of the Spanish Empire and the logic of uneven development that made it possible. Still holding onto modern representations of culture and power, the Marqués as emblem of the decadent bourgeoisie remains a self-ironizing specter of a ruin, who has transformed Rimbaud's famous imperative about modernity "il faut être absolument moderne" into the affirmation of a condition: "En este país no pasa nada." (106).

Shut value

In her examination of the history of display design at the Museum of Modern Art of New York, Mary Anne Staniszewski powerfully conveys the transformation of the museum as a space for increasingly freer consumption, both in relation to the specificity of display design itself and in invitations to the reader, like this one: "The next time you are in a museum, compare the time you spend eating, shopping, reading and socializing with the time you spend contemplating Art" (120). The fact that from the eighties onwards it is possible in the United States to imagine that a museum

⁴² For a critical reading of *La desheredada* see: "Isadora in the museum" by Luis Fernández Cifuentes.

would remain open even if the rooms designated exclusively for the contemplation of art would close (as it is more and more the case given the tendency to constantly arrange rooms for itinerant/floating exhibitions), opposes the defense of the democratization of pleasures and the suspicious art critic as the rationalist elitist in an unresolved discussion about museum politics and aesthetics.⁴³ Conceived as an inclusive institution that takes part in capitalism, such is the paradox of the museum.

Such a paradox is present as well in “Inversión de escena” and *Museo de cera*, though the literal crumbling of La Moneda in 1973 gives the parallel dematerialization of politicized market and culture a dramatic emphasis. This literal and metaphorical coincidence of consumption/exhaustion has played a distinctive role in the discussion of the anti-museistic drive of the Escena de Avanzada, in terms of the debate around the isomorphic relation between the discourse of destruction in the avant-gardes and that of progress in modernity.⁴⁴ Analyzing “Para no morir de hambre en el arte” and *Museo de cera*, I have tried to follow an alternative path. In the first place, I focused in the museum economy because it is there that, through transfiguration, the parallel appearance of consumption in culture and in politics intersect. Also, a reason to study these works together was that both had closed museums in it. Such closure

⁴³ On the state of the discussion in America, see Catherine Liu’s “Art Escapes Criticism, Or Adorno’s Museum”. In Europe, Nicolas Bourriaud’s “Relational Aesthetics” brings about the question of the liquidation of the subject/object relation in art. Bourriaud, the co-founder of the Palais de Tokio in Paris, proposes relational esthetics as “a set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space” (113, *Esthetique Relationelle*). For a critical analysis, see Claire Bishop’s “Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics.”

⁴⁴ Such a polemic has produced two antagonistic positions which Federico Galende summarizes as “una lectura culturalista de las prácticas visuales [...] ligada por lo general a un vector modernizante, inclinado a asociar ciertas prácticas artísticas a la renovación cultural del país, y una lectura filosófica o estética que, perdurando en su voluntad por ver en la obra un punto de vacío o resistencia al ordenamiento serial de esas prácticas, a su mecánica progresiva, ha llegado en la actualidad a enrostrar a la Avanzada su complicidad con el Golpe”. Filtraciones (10) For reference see: Nelly Richard’s “Lo político y lo crítico en el arte: ¿Quién le teme a la neo-vanguardia?” in *Arte y Política*. Compare in the same book: Willy Thayer’s “Crítica, nihilismo e interrupción. El porvenir *Avanzada* después de Márgenes e Instituciones.” And Galende’s “Dos palabras sobre arte y factoría”. See also, Thayer’s *El fragmento repetido*.

emphasized that power was not to be found in objects per se, but in the circulation of those objects, in the relations between them. There was a problematic of displacement that interested me as it kept moving value into unexpected spaces.

Critics of the museum since Bourdieu have analyzed the museum as space where the dialectics of visibility and invisibility parallel the dialectics of consumption and production, yet the death of Art has brought us to a shift towards an emphasis on consumption. When one goes to a museum of art to eat, shop or meet friends, one is still going to the art museum; it seems that given the dematerialization of objects and frames, one is able to consume museum going not as history or citizenry learning but as museum going. In other words, one consumes cultural consumption. Staniszewski's invitation reflects that the museum is no longer (or not only) a space for the cultivation of history and for the preservation/emulation of valuable objects of the past. The contradictory relationship between the history and its contemporary consumption in the MOMA (and in fact in many other museums) is telling of the museum performance as a trope of cultural consumption. This contradiction arises from the museum's capacity to display immediacy while still being attached to the 19th century model. When Bataille wrote in "Museum" that what differentiates a private collection from a museum, is not what hangs on its walls but its visitors, he was already shifting the definition towards its plural audience. Now that museums may have no walls and no collections, but only visitors, one needs to ask: What are they doing there? Where is the value?

Free circulation and consumption is a critical value of neoliberalism. "Para no morir de hambre en el arte" and *Museo de cera* make visible or intelligible the importance of circulation and consumption. The closed museum was not only a negation of the old order, a rejection of bourgeois perception; it also made explicit that the open museum stands on the illusion of liberalized consumption while it secures the

status quo. Uneven development then emerged as critical aspect of the museum performance. The free-flow of neoliberalism still reproduces the center-periphery dynamics, but it also helps understand the museum as part of larger circuits of consumption on a local and global scale. The museum performance of CADA coordinated actions in downtown Santiago and the settlements in the outskirts of the city as well as actions in Santiago, Bogotá and Toronto. *Museo de cera* also draws a constellation of different spaces of the city while connecting Villa Rica with Tokyo, New York and Hamburg. Democratization as liberalization of consumption is always in trouble with the different readings of capital flow in museum economy: Is it inclusive or exclusive? Is it dominant or conciliatory? Is it emancipating or binding? These are questions that cannot be answered without taking into account the circuits created within the museum performance.

In addition, the historiographic implications of comparing “Para no morir de hambre en el arte” and *Museo de cera* are two-fold. In the first place, since CADA belongs to the *Escena de Avanzada* and Edwards to the *generación del 50* these are works that never intersect. Yet, as I have suggested, it is possible to read them in a mirroring relation with respect to the historical decadence and avant-gardes of the turn of the 19th century and early 20th century. This not only allows one to discuss the historiographic model that reads the Latin American decadence as a backwards movement in comparison to the genuinely progressive Latin American avant-garde, but also to consider the poetics of problematized circulation, fragmentarization and waste, as a critical aspect of Chilean arts and literature that goes beyond the circle of the *Escena de Avanzada*. For example, one could read gossip as a performance of circulation that troubles accumulations of capital and power as a common feature in Eltit’s *Lumpérica* and *Museo de cera*, or investigate different readings of consumption in the museum and the mall as they appears later in the Chilean literature of the 90s. A

more integrated and fully interdisciplinary approach may allow for a broader understanding of the relations between capital, art and the dematerialization of culture in Chile's postmodernity. Furthermore, one may study the relation between avant-gardes and decadence at the turn of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st in other Latin American countries, also considering an interchange related to uneven development on local and global scale.

Finally, I want to go back to a critical aspect of the theoretical discussion of the museum that is related to tracing the flow of capital. As I suggested, the discussion of the works of Walter Benjamin was fundamental for the intellectual debates around politization of art in Chile, especially the essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," where Benjamin argues on the liquidation of art and the liberating possibilities of destruction. Art in the age of massive reproduction as discussed by Benjamin clearly surpasses the museum as the fertile enclosure of culture. Instead of arguing in favor or against the technological deterministic interpretation, I want to consider the problem of massive mediation. In other words, I think that museum performance considered in the logic of uneven development begs the question of tracing materials and contents as part of transmission and interpretation within a circuit of cultural capital flow. This is after all a distinctive trait of the museum that informs the museum performance in contemporary times: the consciousness of consuming in relation to other consumptions and the other's consumption with little or almost no restriction of matter.

CHAPTER 2

PERFORMING DISJOINTEDNESS: MUSEUM FRICTIONS AND CULTURAL CRISIS IN POSTWAR PERU

We must realize that the halls and the art objects are
but a container, whose content is formed by the visitors

Georges Bataille

This chapter discusses strategies for the revalorization of collective memory and identity during the years of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in Peru. Such a revalorization attempted to compensate a void in the national representation, while simultaneously denouncing it: the appalling sum of 70,000 deaths as result of two decades of internal war between the national armed forces, the Peruvian Communist Party ‘Shining Path’ (PCP-SL), and the Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru (MRTA), had gone *unnoticed* by the sector of the population that had remained untouched by violence. Since a narrative of a failure of vision began to gain ground among the privileged sector of the population, Lima became a stage where public demonstrations of all sorts, as well as newspapers, TV and radio programs were constantly redefining the political arena and national identity. The downfall of the Fujimori-Montesinos regime in 2000 inaugurated an archival predicament: the unquestionable urge for documenting and inscribing truthful information was accompanied by the questioning of the principle proper of documenting and inscribing. Given the fact that the vast majority of the victims of the violence were among the most deprived sector of Peruvian population, among citizens whose first language was not Spanish, the cultural and language difference pushed to the fore a

questioning of the frame within which the official legalistic archive functions in Peru and, by the same token, it stimulated inquiries on different codes of legitimization.

Visuality, consignment, documentation and inscription were questioned to the point in which performance, always ephemeral, and, arguably opposite to scriptural acts, appeared as a legitimizing instance of the latter. This confrontation of a double consciousness of the archive and of the archivable, was a crucial element of the *zeitgeist* of those years and the core of its dilemma. The museum, as a much needed national mausoleum for the victims, appeared in *Yuyanapaq. Para recordar* (2003), a photographic exhibition by the TRC, and in *Sin título. Técnica mixta* (2004) a performance piece by Grupo Cultural Yuyachkani. The volume that accompanied the TRC's exhibition, as a solid, visible representational object, is compared here to Yuyachkani's ephemeral fantasy of historical framing as competing metaphors to compensate the museum void. This chapter analyzes the ways in which both signal toward a dialectics of visibility and invisibility that intersects with redefinitions of the public and the private spheres oriented toward a new democratic pact based on what I call 'accountability', both in the positive ethical sense of responsibility and in the legal sense of liability.⁴⁵

Although *Yuyanapaq* was never officially introduced as part of the national museum system – it was moved into the Museo de la Nación as a temporary exhibit in 2007 – and even while its re-mediation of graphic material from the war remains controversial, its attempt to renew visual practices of the recent past vis à vis the

⁴⁵ According to the Oxford English Dictionary online: “The quality of being accountable; liability to give account of, and answer for, discharge of duties or conduct.” The term began to be used as a part of productivity policies in American based corporations in the 1990s to signify responsibility for expenditure within the company. Along the same time, it also entered the jargon of international policies like the IMF to set standards of governability.

archive crisis of the present constituted a landmark in Peruvian museum economy.⁴⁶ As it has become regular practice, both in museums and in galleries, *Yuyanapaq* included the creation of a catalogue for sale. Given the metaphor of the nation as family used by the TRC, and the introduction of *Yuyanapaq* as a national self-portrait, I describe the catalogue as a family photographic album to be purchased as a souvenir for private consumption. In contrast, *Sin título*'s multimedia montage offered the spectators an exploration of private memory and experience through a collective re-vision of history. *Sin título*'s montage included the spectators, who along with the actors participated in a performance of division blurring, deconstructing the dyads presentation/re-presentation, inside/outside, private/collective. The interweaving of these categories was crucial to the crisis of value during the TRC years, but it was also the point of inflection where the spectacularization of politics and the crisis of the image as a purveyor of truth overlapped with a long tradition of exclusion in Peruvian practices of representation. In both cases, the use of photography, video and performance renovated the museum economy, driving it closer to the ways in which the use of mass media had informed and shaped the war.⁴⁷

Around the 1980s, several intellectuals argued for the “modernization” of the national museum system. In *El museo peruano: utopía y realidad* (1986), the Peruvian art critic and museologist Alfonso Castrillón Vizcarra describes an exclusive practice

⁴⁶ In March 2009, the German government offered to the Peruvian government a donation of two million dollars for the construction of a Museo de la Memoria. The Peruvian government refused the offer, but finally accepted under the pressure of the public opinion.

⁴⁷ Thanks to the help of Debra Castillo, I was able to attend the Hemisferic Institute summer workshop in Lima, in 2005. As part of the reading list for the workshop prepared by Professor Gisella Cárdenas, I became acquainted with Deborah Poole and Isaías Rojas-Pérez typescript “Photography and Memory in Post War Peru,” still unpublished today. I had already written about the companion catalogue to the Yuyanapaq exhibition as a family album and had met Mayu Mohana and Nancy Chapel, curators of the exhibit, during my research. Yet, Poole and Rojas-Pérez’s work provided me with a critical view on the use of photography and video during and after the war in Peru that allowed me to further elaborate my ideas of the relationship between visuality and performance with regards to the catalogue. Later I complemented this with my analysis on Yuyachkani’s piece through the notion of accountability, as it finally appears in this chapter.

of cultural consumption, questioning Peruvian museums as structures dedicated merely to holding and displaying objects of the past for the foreign viewer's gaze: "una vitrina de lujo que sorprende al turista pero no guarda ninguna relación con el peruano de hoy" (19). The Peruvian museum is thus accused of seamlessly converging with colonial ideology:

Antes esas glorias [the museum objects] el presente palidece y no se tiene en cuenta para la creación. Franquear las puertas del museo significa ya un menosprecio por el presente incapaz de producir tan altos logros: fuera del museo no hay, pues, cultura (55).

From this perspective, the exoticization of the past cancels out the possibility of an identification with a Peruvian culture in the present. Having carried out himself the first national poll on Peruvian museums "Pobres y tristes museos del Perú" (1983), Castrillón Vizcarra argued that the state of underdevelopment of the highly centralized system of Peruvian museums was intimately related to a history of politically oriented decisions taken without any modern museological criteria, and to a history of a criollo bourgeoisie which consistently failed to identify itself with the contemporary "cultura nativa" (11). In the museum utopia envisioned by Castrillón Carranza, there is a continuity between the inside and the outside of the museum, between the past and the present. In reality, together with other educational institutions, the museum persists in modeling history and heritage as part of a bygone past, detached from the present. The criollo guest coincides with a 'foreign' tourist gaze that capitalizes archaeological objects into republican history.

Furthermore, violence was increasing in alliance with the model Castrillón Vizcarra examines. Castrillón Vizcarra's book includes the articles "Tres fundaciones

de un museo para el Perú” (1977) by Peruvian archaeologist Luis Lumbreras⁴⁸, and “El proyecto del Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Antropología del Perú” (1982) by Peruvian architect Julio Gianella, whose project had won a national contest for the remodeling of the Museo Nacional de Antropología y Arqueología (MNAA) in 1971. The quandaries of the national museum system as characterized in the writings of Lumbreras, Gianella and Castrillón Vizcarra are: political manipulation, the understanding of the museum only as the repository of decontextualized objects, centralization, and a debate between the disciplines of history, archaeology and anthropology as discourses and practices that shape history, and, therefore, the museum. Written in the early 1980s, the texts of Lumbreras and Gianella could not yet grasp the ways in which the problems of the national museum would come across the dynamics of perception of the war. Even Castrillón Carranza’s *El museo peruano*, aware as it is of how the museum mediates within economic power and culture power, does not find any possible bridging between the atrocities taking place outside the museum and the representations constructed inside of it.

It is relevant to note a particular attempt to perform this intersection in a later article by archaeologist Karen Guthertz Lizarraga: “From Social Archaeology to National Archaeology: Up from domination.” Guthertz Lizarraga claims that national archaeology in Peru had “laid the ideological and political ground for the end of terrorism in Peru” (363) by bringing together archaeology and history through the exhibition “Andean Renaissance.” In 1989, “Andean Renaissance: A Concept of Cultural Identity” took place in the MNAA; together with the publication of a

⁴⁸ Director of the Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Antropología, Lumbreras revises the re-foundation of the national museum system in three periods: the first, beginning with 1836, when the Museo de Historia Natural is installed in Lima; the second, between 1882 and 1930, which goes from the establishment of the Museo de Historia Nacional to the foundation of the Museo de Historia y Arqueología en 1930. And the third one, would go from 1930 to the present of the publication, with the re-foundation of the Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Antropología. Later in 1988, in the first period of President García Pérez, the Museo de la Nación would be installed.

catalogue, which included a *peace manifesto* that allegedly had been circulating since 1984. Renacimiento Andino strived to express: “the [historic] effort to create a coherent and harmonious Andean/Peruvian/American culture” (366, sic), in highly debatable terms:

The feeling of being dominated is a mental state of those who lack the inner fortitude necessary to assert the value of being (individually and collectively) and to put order, committing self to preservation of value in their own space. (366, sic)

Though bringing peace to the nation may seem a commendable effort, the assertion that domination is a “feeling,” a “mental state” in disregard to an actual socio-political situation in which values circulate voids the nature of the whole project. Guthertz Lizarraga’s article and its narrative attests to the defense of *archaeological values* that reifies national identity while supposedly striving for its decolonization and revival (renacer).

Though all these intellectuals agree upon the idea of renovating museology and decentralizing the museum at a formal level, they do not seem to pay much attention to the use and development of visual and graphic technologies as part of new exhibitionary techniques inside and outside of the museum proper, which, at a global level, were taking part in the renovation of museology and, at a local level, were linked to the dynamics of the war.

In fact, during the two decades of the war, visibility played a key role in the politics of terror exercised by both the PCP-SL and the state. In the 1980s, the PCP-SL took pride in having “mil ojos y mil oídos” to control the population, and in exercising their power from the vantage point of invisibility; thus it traversed the private and the public spheres. In the following decade, the Fujimori-Montesinos regime reclaimed

such power over the PCP-SL. After capturing the latter's leader Abimael Guzmán in 1992, the government exposed Guzmán in striped prison clothes inside a cage in the police headquarters. Furthermore, justified by the commitment to win the “war on terror” Fujimori and Montesinos adopted the invisible thousand eyes and ears of the PCP-SL, appointing “faceless judges” for the trials on crimes of terrorism and of “disloyalty to the Fatherland,”⁴⁹ exercising constant surveillance over civilians, and manipulating information through mass media. Infamously, the same images once used to abuse power resulted in its loss when in 2000 a video initially used for bribing appeared on national TV showing Vladimiro Montesinos handing a bundle of dollars to a politician.

After 2000, revealing and denouncing became more common than ever in newspapers, radio and TV programs, and especially in different kinds of street interventions – from protest marches to performance art. The TRC years contributed to the Peruvian *res publica* by training Peruvian citizens, especially Limeños, in a new performance of citizenship. This pedagogy of citizenship operated at an epistemological level, as well as at an ethical one. By composing symbolic images and situations that served as stages for the publication or exhibition of their findings, the TRC favored the awareness about the display and performance of identity. This process created a large wave of different kinds of performative actions by civilian institutions, groups and individuals. Some of these performances were museological in the sense that they created environments of memory that could serve as spaces for the articulation of history, legacy, and experience. In other words, they created sense-making maps of information and experience staged to support and favor the

⁴⁹ In 1992, the government of Alberto Fujimori promulgated the laws 25475 and 25659, which define respectively the crimes of “terrorismo” and “traición a la patria”. During the trials, the defendants were denied the possibility of knowing the identity of those who judged them.

performance of national legitimacy and membership. They strived to create a sense of collective responsibility, or accountability.

The interplay of the visuality and performance as “the archivable” characterize these years of the double consciousness of the archive. In this sense, such multimedia attempt to redeploy memory during those years is akin to the museum transformations that have deconstructed the rigid museum structure practice toward an increasingly spectral quality. If as Derrida puts it, the archive structure is spectral because it is neither present nor absent; neither visible nor invisible (84); such a double nature of the archive – that is always *a priori* – was emphasized in Peru because its very structure, language, laws and icons were publicly, and for good reasons, questioned. The need of a distanced perspective as much as the desire of proximity to “truth” enhanced the spectral quality of the archive. It was evident that national identity and history could no longer be found only in the written word (written in Spanish) as much as it was evident that if a sense of community could be created, a redeployment of values needed to take place. In this sense, TRC’s goal of memory restoration translates in terms of Bourdieu as an attempt to give the Limeños a different *theory/view* of themselves, given the importance of the dialectics of cultural habitus and aesthetic perception. This new theory was a means toward revaluation and restoration.

But, how different could this theory be when it was founded upon the previously used materials? Making a case in pointing to the use made of photographic material “as a vehicle for eliciting sentiments of shame and remembrance” (6), Deborah Poole and Isaías Rojas-Pérez have discussed the assumptions about knowledge and agreement underlying the TRC’s universalizing language of moral responsibility, visual truth, and national reconciliation (TS “Photography and Memory in Post-War Peru”). The anthropologists explain the TRC’s use of photography as “rubbing against” two important historical traditions of visuality and iconicity in Peru: the first

one, an aspect of Andean visual economy on which Poole has worked before,⁵⁰ is the quality of photography to fix human subjects as objects and thereby validate the very stereotypes the TRC wanted to confront. The second one, contemporary to the years of the war and the TRC, and in contradiction with the first one, consists in the use of visual images as material support to shifting truths. In this second sense, I agree with Poole and Rojas-Pérez's in their affirmation that the TRC's articulation of visual knowledge and moral conformity "closes off the possibility of articulating a more democratic (or plural) vision of reconciliation as "an agreement to disagree" (6-7). In what follows, my analysis of the strategies of revalorization in the photographic volume of *Yuyanapaq* and in Yuyachkani's *Sin título*, contributes to the understanding of the dynamics of the interplay of the performative and the visual as part of the museum frictions generated by the institutional crisis of the 2000s and the creation of the *Yuyanapaq* exhibit.

Recollections for Sale

The TRC collected both oral testimonies and photographic material. The latter conformed a photographic archive of almost 1,700 images and was initially planned to serve as web-site offering graphic evidence for a reflection on the past, while the televised public hearings would serve to restore dignity to the witnesses and memory to the spectators. In April 2003, four months before officially presenting its Final Report, the TRC inaugurated *Yuyanapaq. Para recordar*, a photographic exhibit that included 245 images selected from the photo archive. Through means of a curatorship that appealed to sentiment, the exhibition was an attempt to revert the practice of constant surveillance and exhibitionism that had characterized the war and to produce

⁵⁰ See for example, her excellent *Vision, Race and Modernity* (1997).

a museum-like environment that would promote in its visitors a revalorization of images that had previously *gone unnoticed*. *Yuyanapaq* was not meant as a permanent exhibition. The decaying house in which it was installed, significantly previously owned by the Riva-Agüeros, a famous oligarchic family, was the chosen metaphor for the Peruvian society in search for reconstruction, reconciliation, and healing (Poole and Rojas-Pérez 27). While the exhibit was conceived of as a sort of temporary mausoleum for victims of violence, a lavishly produced catalogue was sold as a portable and durable version of the exhibit.

There was a print run of 2,700 books and it was sold for US\$30 each. The funds raised by the catalogue sales were designated for “reparaciones civiles” for the victims and their families, but many of these catalogues were donated to universities and schools, as well as to other non-governmental institutions. Here, in the very notion of reparation, one finds a collective sense of accountability already implied by the monetary and political restoration. As I have stated, the largest number of victims and of the disappeared were found among civilians in the poorest regions of the country. Both the exhibition and the book were created for Peruvians in the center. Nonetheless, Salomón Lerner, President of the TRC, presents the book as a “self-portrait” of the whole nation, as the book’s purpose was to reconcile center and periphery. The *Yuyanapaq* project rests on the metaphor of the nation as a family and intends to educate the high and middle class Limeños, the “older siblings”, in what had happened to their “lesser siblings” in other regions.⁵¹ Remembering is thus

⁵¹ “Fuimos indiferentes frente a lo que ocurría con decenas de miles de hermanos a los que secularmente hemos olvidado por ser andinos, quechuahablantes, pobres, poco educados. No supimos, no quisimos saber o no entendimos cabalmente lo que ocurría en el Perú profundo y de este modo asumimos de manera a-crítica o errada un pesado legado de exclusiones, discriminaciones e injusticias. Hemos en suma intentado mirarnos en el espejo del pasado y el rostro que ha aparecido está lejos de ser agradable. Tenemos que aceptarlo; no solo resulta imperativo evitar que se repitan momentos trágicos en nuestra historia, es necesario calar más hondo.” In: *Informe final de la CVR*. “Recomendaciones, Capítulo 2.” The metaphor of the nation as family is a commonplace in the rhetoric of classism, racism and regionalism in Peru.

conceived as a moral command which should compensate the void in the national archive. This family self-portrait was deliberately *unheimlich*. On the one hand it forced familiarity with regards to the unfamiliar by showing how violence and its effect in the “other country” had not been recognized as important or relevant; on the other, this recognition estranged the knowledge and memory of the nation that once was familiar to the center.

Photographs of violence had existed ever since violence began; the problem had lain in their “invisibility.” The images included in *Yuyanapaq* came from very heterogeneous sources: the mass media, the dioceses, the police, and NGO’s archives, as well as personal albums. The project tried to turn them visible again:

Muchas de estas imágenes habían sido invisibilizadas o trivializadas.

La mayoría de acontecimientos y protagonistas de los que dan cuenta habían pasado desapercibidos o habían quedado en el olvido.

Rescatarlos, traerlos otra vez a nuestra memoria o inscribirlos por primera vez en ella, es parte de una lucha por la verdad y la reconciliación en la que estamos inmersos. Queda para la sociedad en su conjunto este legado visual con una certeza esperanzadora: Las imágenes no cambian, pero sí los ojos que las ven. (Carlos Iván Degregori, 20)

Commissioner Degregori speaks of a misunderstanding, or better, of incapacity of the beholder to see the truth contained in those images as if they were physical evidence – “las imágenes no cambian.” Some value was lost, trivialized, in the transactions of cultural economy. Use value and exchange value in visual economy can be recognized as, correspondingly, the representational function of photography and the value photographs accrue through social processes of accumulation, possession, circulation

and exchange.⁵² In this sense, Degregori's text speaks of a devaluation in both use and exchange value. The recurrent phrase "We did not know" was a reaction that asserted that value had been there, frozen or stationary in the past. Instead of a bestowal of value, the transaction was that of letting the images accrue their 'true value'.

One becomes, as Susan Sontag said, a "literalist" when facing photojournalism and tends to take for granted that "something like this happened" just by looking at the images.⁵³ Through this realistic contract, one immediately becomes subject and agent of visual economy. Yet, various factors made photographs of violence invisible: racism, classism, indifference, and habitus. Photographs in Degregori's rendering were simultaneously present and absent; visible and invisible; archivable and non-archivable. They had become ghosts who had lost their capacity to haunt. The response to this was an aesthetical redeployment in the hopes for a new opportunity to see; an act of re-enchantment.

Yuyanapaq offered a new perspective to an old history through remediation. Bolter and Grustin discuss "remediation" as a process largely used in the tradition of Western visual representation which basically deals with "the attempt to achieve immediacy by ignoring or denying the presence of the medium and the act of *mediation*" (11). The re-mediation performed by *Yuyanapaq* depended on the interplay of both denial and recognition. On the one hand, recognition of the past inability to see "the other country"; on the other, denial of the means – aesthetization and pathos – through which the new staging of photographic values operated. Only through this renovated suspension of disbelief could the images accrue value.

The exhibition had two parts: the first included rooms loosely organized in terms of chronology and the second involved rooms of homage to orphans, widows,

⁵² Poole. *Vision, race, and modernity* (23).

⁵³ Sontag. *Regarding the pain of others*. (47)

disappeared, etc. One room was devoted to the time line. The minimum use of information in the other rooms, the use of soft colors and large scale prints (some of them set up in altar-like compositions) created a silent space where visitors were dwarfed by the images and sentiment. In room devoted to the disappeared, images were significantly *loquacious*: a large speaker had been installed hanging from the ceiling, and a large scale identification photograph had been mounted on the speaker. When the visitor approached the speaker, the voice of a relative telling the story of the disappearance could be heard. Because it ran on a loop, very softly, she had to stand closer to the speaker and thus to the image. The narration never stopped, so she had to decide to move away from both the image and the sound in order to, finally, leave the building. This was the last room.

The exhibition was visited by thousands of people who probably had read the newspapers and watched the televised hearings for months. Visitors who walked through the halls of the exhibition performed what had become a necessary visit to the cemetery. The famous Adornian remark about the proximity between the terms museum and mausoleum cannot be overlooked here.⁵⁴ Though within museum scholarship this remark has supported claims against the museum as an institution that *kills* through decontextualization; in the case of *Yuyanapaq*, decontextualization was the sought-for effect: it allows specters to speak out. The exhibition as well as the book were spaces of memory specially designed to make the specters speak. In order to incorporate them *into life*, *Yuyanapaq* remediated the images as the hidden stories lost in the excessive visual economy of two decades.

Yuyanapaq invested in guilt. If the exhibition of *Yuyanapaq* served as a museological exhibit; the book, richly produced as the exhibition's catalog, served as coffee table book to be consumed in the newly inaugurated economy of memory

⁵⁴ "Valery Proust Museum in memory of Hermann von Grab." 1967.

restoration⁵⁵. Thus, the difference between the “two countries” was underscored through the recognition of the buyer’s purchasing power. Just by looking at the cover of the book one finds differences of language and experience. The title *Yuyanapaq. Para recordar. 1980-2000. Relato visual del conflicto armado interno en el Perú* marks a clear difference between Quechua and Spanish and also implies a certain ambiguity about the nature of the object. First, “Yuyanapaq” is translated to Spanish as “Para recordar.” This title suggests the designation of something which serves as a means for remembrance; something between an object, an episode, or a story. Or else, it can even suggest an imperative, akin to the bureaucratic *memorandum*. Second, the term “relato” can be understood either as an oral or a written account. The different meanings of the Spanish word “relato” (tale, story or history) are relevant here because they imply different means of representation, with their corresponding levels of exercise of power and verisimilitude. Considering the language diversity in Peru, this alone raises the question of legitimacy and points toward to the archive crisis. Finally, the anonymous hands cradling the identification card picture are representative of the problem of visibility characteristic of the moment. These hands belong to an unidentified woman, who was searching for a relative in Ayacucho, in 1984. Here lies the ultimate difference: picture and book are both *mementos*; they are both “yuyanapaq.” But holding that picture is radically different from holding this book (Figure 3).

The book intends to create what Kaja Silverman understands as “heteropathic identification” – a virtual, not vicarious experience of the conflict.⁵⁶ *Yuyanapaq* does not want the holder to take the place of the photographed subject and yet, if the pathetic emphasis of the book is to be exploited, a very close relationship must be

⁵⁵ Though it is beyond the scope of the present work, a comparison could be made with catalogues of artist Sebastião Salgado.

⁵⁶ Silverman, Kaja. *The threshold of the visible world*. New York : Routledge, 1996

developed between holder, portrayed subject, and theme. The final goal of this book is to create *memory* (in Spanish “hacer memoria”); a memory that could allow the holder to share the mourning with the surviving relatives. The *punctum* of the cover photograph is localized in the little picture of the man in profile, protected by the hands.⁵⁷ These hands in do not seem to signal to or even exhibit the man’s picture. We are invited to imagine the woman looking at the picture while holding it, but not to appropriate her perspective.

The reader/observer of the album becomes a storyteller who must complete the family account based upon the visual material. Because photography allows us to say “something like this happened” the narrator can update, while performing it, the family narrative in the present. In this manner, the family album can be seen as a means not only to *create* recollections but as a medium to pass this legacy to future “storytellers” and to the family as a community. Thus, the album is a social souvenir – it *accounts* for the family history, its narrative is created in an intersection between private and public. It is a material object where generations meet along the narrative and in the very act of holding the book. Holding the book, at the same time, insures them with a tangible sense of belonging to the same intra-history. Paradoxically, in the case of *Yuyanapaq* the very act of holding the book creates distance between holders and photographed subjects.

⁵⁷ As opposed to the *studium* (the cultural or political interpretation of images), Barthes’ famous term *punctum* denotes the wounding, personally touching detail which establishes a direct relationship with the object or person within it. *Camera Lucida*, 1980.



Figure 3

Benjamin defines storytelling as “the ability to exchange experience” (77). The handprints of a storyteller cling to the story as the potter’s cling to the clay vessel (82) and, because of that imprint, a personal story may accrue value as an exemplary one. To fulfill this exemplary function, the story needs to be received by a community that shares with the storyteller not only the language but a common frame of experience which the story illuminates. A case in point here are the photographs of the Uchuraccay massacre – the death of eight journalists who had traveled to investigate peasant uprisings allegedly related to PCP-SL. Discovered four months after their death, the camera of one of the journalists, Willy Retto, contained photographs that served as ‘revelatory’: they were believed to ‘inform’ of a cultural gap between the murderers and the deceased.⁵⁸ Precisely, the images supported the already existing disavowal of any common frame between the journalists and the comuneros from the Limeño perspective. This is the camera as the foreign archaeological technological vision.

The ways in which these events were reported by the media resulted in discourses that favored rather than reduced confusion about responsibility for the killings. The

⁵⁸ Different authors have commented on the case of Uchuraccay as symptomatic of how difficult it seemed not only to understand the war initial years of the war, but also of the way in which photography brought the war into public knowledge. On January 26th, 1983, eight journalists, a guide, and a comunero were killed in Uchuraccay, a small town in Huanta, Ayacucho. After violent conflicts between the community and the PCP-SL in 1982, President Belaúnde publicly supported the comuneros’ violent reaction through public declarations to the press. Both the military forces and the government supported what was basically the interruption of the State’s monopoly on the use of violence. On January 26th, a group of eight journalists (Sedano, García, Mendiivil, Sánchez, Retto, De la Piniella and Infante) from Lima and Ayacucho arrived in order to investigate the conflict. They were all killed upon their arrival by the comuneros – with them died their local guide and one comunero (Argumedo and Huáscar). More killings of PCP-SL suspects by Uchuraccayños occurred the next day. By the 28th, the death of the eight journalists was confirmed by two other journalists who had traveled to Huanta; a large judicial and mediatic investigation began. For an examination on later representations of the massacre within the Uchuraccay community, see Ponciano del Pino’s essay “Uchuraccay: memoria y representación de la violencia política en los Andes” in *Luchas locales, comunidades e identidades*.

report by the *Comisión investigadora de los sucesos de Uchuraccay* was composed of the writer Mario Vargas Llosa, journalist Mario Castro Arenas and lawyer Abraham Guzmán Figueroa. The *Comisión Investigadora*, based on what the TRC later would call “indigenist paradigm”, interpreted the massacre as the result of an almost unbreachable cultural gap – “un quiasmo cultural” – between the Uchuraccaínos and the journalists. Vargas Llosa in an article he published later asserted that such a chasm, in language and in history, represented the separation between Peruvian nation and modernity.⁵⁹ While the TRC’s report includes a large section dedicated to this subject; *Yuyanapaq* had to work differently. How could they re-mediate such pictures that almost everyone had seen before inscribed in such a saturated palette?

When commenting on the display of the Uchuraccay pictures in the exhibit, Poole and Rojas-Pérez emphasize that rather “than referring—as one might expect a photography exhibit to do—to the important role played by the images themselves in the reconstruction of the killings, the text tells of two sides of a debate about an incident, and a country, in which people would come, slowly, to understand how racial and cultural divisiveness can generate horrific violence.” If the anthropologists are correct in affirming that *Yuyanapaq* subsumes the Uchuraccay pictures in a narrative of reconciliation, then we must accept that remediation was successful. Yet, this is not achieved only through the arrangement and the text itself, but also in the use of color.

⁵⁹ Abraham Guzmán Figueroa, Mario Vargas Llosa, y Mario Castro Arenas. *Informe de la comisión Investigadora de los sucesos de Uchuraccay*. Lima: Editora Perú, 1983. Vargas Llosa, Mario “Inquest in the Andes,” *New York Times Magazine*, 31 July 1983. Also see, Enrique Mayer, “Peru in Deep Trouble: Mario Vargas Llosa’s “Inquest in the Andes’ Reexamined,” *Cultural Anthropology*, 1991, VI(4):466-504.

And it is in this aspect where *Yuyanapaq* is closest to the uses of photographs as souvenirs of ‘authentic’ experience.

The Retto photographic sequence appears in color in *Yuyanapaq*: these are copies of the prints kept by Retto’s father.⁶⁰ Originally taken in slide film, the pictures were first printed in color, but later reproduced massively in black and white by the media. Mayu Mohana and Nancy Chapell, curators and chief editors of *Yuyanapaq*, reproduced these five copies for the TRC archive and included them in the exhibition and the book. If one looks closely at these photographs it is possible to note they have been ‘intervened.’ A couple of pictures showed the mark of a red stamp, and the other three show the marks of the staples with which Retto’s father kept them attached to a piece of paper (Figures 4 and 5). The Retto sequence as seen in *Yuyanapaq* is no longer just the evidence used in the trial but a keepsake for the photographer’s surviving father. As a souvenir, *Yuyanapaq* serves as a trace of authentic experience of having visited the exhibition, of having witnessed the years of the TRC, though it clearly cannot bring one to experience Mr. Retto’s loss.

⁶⁰ From an interview held with Mayu Mohana and Nancy Chapell in Lima, 2003.



Figure 4 (Red stamp toward the upper right corner)



Figure 5 (Staples on the upper edge)

Fear of death is what configures family albums as archives (Silva 51); they very rarely hold images related to the event of the death of the relatives.⁶¹ *Yuyanapaq* is the negative of the family album because it is designed to remember the dead and not the living. The nature of this remembrance is less akin to *anamnesis* and closer to *anagnorisis*. *Anagnorisis* is etymologically associated to terms such as recognition, discovery and revelation and originally related to the denouement of a plot in Greek tragedy. As mentioned before, in order to be re-mediated the images needed first to regain their use value. Once the seer had recognized his or her former blindness, the image could flow into accumulation and exchange. There is a degree of self-inflicted violence in this realization – like that of Oedipus, who plucked his eyes out. *Yuyanapaq* is *unheimlich* because it manipulates this double vision in the seeing subject; it emphasizes guilt through a sublimated blindness. Yet, though painful, this guilt does not destabilize the hierarchy in kinship. If guilt is the price for reconciliation, reconciliation does not go beyond the class differences it denounces. The common ground is still divided.

The photographed other, *en-graved* in the pages of the album, is the one who the holder chooses not to forget, the one who makes it possible that he or she communicates with the world, visible and invisible. In this regard, it is significant to emphasize that the word *sema* equates *grave*:

For the Greeks the grave marker was not just one sign among others. It was a sign that signified the source of signification itself, since it “stood for” what it “stood in” – the ground of burial as such. In its pointing to itself, or to its own mark in the ground, the *sema*

⁶¹ Only photographs of children’s corpses are seldom kept in family albums. About the so called “retratos de angelitos” see the articles of César Federico Macías Fernández, “De la muerte dulce a la muerte infausta” and Nanda Fernandini, “La fiestas del angelito. Ritual funerario para una criatura” in: *Imagen de la muerte. Primer congreso Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades*. Lima: Universidad Mayor de San Marcos, 2004.

effectively opens up the place of the “here”, giving it that human foundation without which there would be no places in nature.

(Harrison 20)

Therefore, if the living can stand – “culturally, institutionally, economically (22)” – it is because their dead lie beneath the ground they inhabit. They are legitimized by their ancestors. As a family album, *Yuyanapaq* is this common locus (social, economical, emotional, and political) which legitimizes the surviving family members. Also, as a threshold between the visible and the invisible world, *Yuyanapaq* strives to stabilize the relations between the dead and the living. Through the photographed subject, the holder’s unconscious desires are revealed or unveiled. In this game, the photographed subjects are recognized as subjects only within the “imagined community” as consumed by the elite.

Althusser asked, “What is the ideology of a society or a period if it is not that society’s or period’s consciousness of itself, that is, an immediate material which spontaneously implies, looks for and naturally finds its forms in the image of a consciousness of self living the totality of its world in *the transparency of its own myths?*” (145, my emphasis). The production of this book and its effects presupposed the formal conditions and the self-awareness it intended to promote. Family appeared as a solid representation of unity, a safe setting to create, consume and exchange recollection. Considering the deep crisis of institutions and language, the TRC’s election to forge an imagined community in terms of the family metaphor is not surprising. Moreover, the Commission could have hardly been able to expose any information if it had not opted for it because many of the political parties and institutions under investigation were still in power. Nonetheless, it should be said that because of the power of this locus and its problematic *anagnorisis*, *Yuyanapaq* is

closer to melodrama than to tragedy. It raises expectations of reconciliation, yet it cancels them out through the very terms in which those expectations are posed. This is a gesture of accountability already impossible to account for in the actual conditions of Peruvian society.

Yuyanapaq narrates the melodramatic story of a family torn apart by violence and does not allow for a better understanding of the war; like the data in the timeline at the end of it, the information on the images does not explain what happened. The TRC needed to channel guilt into a “positively invested” reconciliatory power. As it is clear in the TRC’s Final Report, the crisis of years of violence in Peru is symptomatic of a conflict which involved political, socioeconomic and ideological causes. The subjective experience of the crisis in terms of social disintegration on the one hand, and of objective delegitimation of the political and economic systems resulted in the impossibility to determine the real “essence”, so to speak, of the conflict. Within this environment, the melodramatic gesture –hands that hold a picture, hands that hold the family album – serve as a wide screen upon which desire could be reflected. Even though the promise of the “renewed” vision was unfulfilled, the desire for it was formally expressed. In other words, the desire for a realistic representation of the nature of the war and an understanding of thereof was obliterated by the desire to move away from it. Exchange value surpassed use value; family members eager to reunite do not ask more questions. After it is emotionally consumed, the book can be closed until further events develop.

The Amazing Spectacle of “Nationing”

In July 2004, I was invited to Casa Yuyachkani to a dress rehearsal of their new work without knowing much about it. They made us wait, as they usually do, in the

hallway. To my surprise they asked the crowd to form a line before entering the theater. Instead of using the regular entrance, we were asked to go in through another door, normally used only by the actors. Once inside, we stood in a narrow corridor where objects and Peruvian history books were displayed in showcases and images were mounted on the walls, as if the place were a small exhibition room. From this point on, no instructions were given to us. We just kept walking, without knowing if we could or should spend more time looking at the installation. There was an open door which let into another room. We kept walking. The theater had disappeared: the stalls had been removed and the room seemed an enormous storehouse. The walls were painted in black and several inscriptions could be read on them. There were quotations from various sources – José Carlos Mariátegui, José María Arguedas, the TRC's Final Report, testimonies of the years of violence, the Peace Treaty between Shining Path and the Fujimori government, narratives of the Pacific War, etc. Placed in different spots along the walls were installations of various kinds allusive to two periods of Peruvian history –the Pacific War (1879-1884) and the years of violence (1980-2000). As part of the installations and standing on pedestals, actors in costume were placed on display like mannequins. The center of the space was empty (Figure 6).

We walked in silence around the exhibit. Thus transformed from theatergoers into museum visitors, nobody uttered a word. Then, the actors began singing. One by one the mannequins became animated as they joined the song. What followed consisted of a montage of various vignettes allusive to the two different historical periods. Yuyachkani members performed most of the time on top of wheeled platforms pushed back and forth by young actors dressed in high school uniforms, specially invited for the occasion. Yuyachkani changed costumes constantly in front of us, as they came in or out of an action. There was no actual narration; the different actions (or

installactions as the group calls them, emphasizing the combination of performative actions and artistic installations) were “framed” in the montage by movement, music and lighting. Actions unfolded sometimes simultaneously. The public, standing always in the same space as the performers, moved along with the spectacle trying not to miss anything, not to block the way or be blocked. As director of Yuyachkani Miguel Rubio explains, *Sin título, técnica mixta* created a space similar to “the attic of a museum or to the storage of an imaginary archive of the nation, where information piles up before being cataloged” (*Cuerpo Ausente* 12). Because they suggest a possible relation among the objects they include, museum exhibitions are normally metaphors; *Sin título* was a question.

Sin título was on the one hand an exploration of what Tony Bennet has called “the exhibitionary complex” – the technologies of display and performance of power that allowed the birth of the museum in juxtaposition to the Foucaultian “carceral archipelago” in the 19th century. And, on the other, it was an exploration of the circumstances I have discussed in terms of the archival crisis during of the years 2000 to 2004 in Peru. This piece illuminates the dialectics of memory and forgetfulness of that period.

State legitimacy had after all continued to rest on the ideal of rule by the people; but the “nationing” of the masses through its representations in the myths of the nation – the belief that Peruvians were all family, along with the belief in democracy, modernization and progress – had been profoundly challenged by the guilty blindness of the center of power and by an all encompassing sense of frustration. *Sin título* reflected upon the possibility of *seeing* the nation after undergoing such an experience. How does one make part of national history? How is it that we *see* history?



Figure 6

By 2004, the exercise of democracy had become deeply unstable but at the same time it seemed the only kernel of institutionality to which Peruvians could hold on to. The paradox, quite disturbing, seemed that as much as politicians would rule in the name of the people, they would legitimately claim an exercise of power out of the control over the people. This exercise of power above the law, constitutes a *blind spot* of the system. Such a blind spot, a space of the abandonment of citizens into the “fantasy” of democracy, is significantly questioned through *Sin título* by exposing the audience to a side of the museum that is usually concealed. If the museum works on the interaction of display and of consumption/reception, Yuyachkani erased the limits between production and reception by performing a radical erasure of the so called “fourth wall.” There is no stable distinction between inside and outside in *Sin título*. Brechtian and Artaudian all together, the spectacle transformed spectators into performers, and placed them in the impossible locus of someone who dreams awake while wandering around the secret side of the museum.

In the oneiric situation of objects that come alive, a comparison between the two historical periods is suggested through montage. Yuyachkani claims that this work was the completion of a longed planned project, but the montage of this piece also speaks of a need to put things in historical perspective. In this sense, this piece may be interpreted as an exhibition of the history of Yuyachkani and therefore as a retrospective inquiry into their own work.⁶² But it also incarnates, in the specific time frame of 2004, the old assertion about the tendency of history to repeat itself. As I have suggested in my discussion of *Yuyanapaq*, the lack of a thorough understanding of the internal war leaves the doors open to ambiguities which are melodramatically

⁶² In terms of works developed around these years, it can be argued that *Rosa Cuchillo* appears in the dance of Ana and Deborah Correa in the last vignettes as “bailes de sanación.” Many elements present in *Sin título* resemble *Santiago*: the use of the moving platform, the Quechua monologues, the procession of the Virgen and Christ. Nonetheless, arguably *Hecho en el Perú* is directly related to *Sin título*: the “vitrinas” transformed into a full exhibition.

resolved. The return of the repressed does not conflict with the latter – the family once reunited may fall again into war. Phrases like “Peruvian history never changes”, “this has happened ever since colonial times” create a homogeneous present that is actualized by the different avatars of the same narrative. History is thus transfixed by myth. Since there is no closed analogy between the two wars, the montage in *Sin título* does not subscribe to the mystification of history. Nonetheless, the Pacific War vignettes and their presentation through a circular procession raises the question of the repetition of history.

After being animated through singing (that is after being *en-chanted*), the actors began to circulate through the gallery on top of their moving platforms until they composed a wide moving circle along the walls. They all came out of the Pacific War period: a nun who turns out to be Rosa de Lima, a widow looking for her husband’s cadaver, a soldier, Quechua speaking men and women, etc. All of them seemed desperate to tell their story out loud while running away from or into the violence that devastated Lima and many areas in the Central and Southern Peru during the Chilean invasion – they were storytellers of violence. The wide circle suggested the cycle of history and echoed recent memories of the TRC hearings. The Pacific War, significantly a war over limits and national sovereignty, mirrored thus the internal war of 1980-2000. *Sin título* received its visitors with a circle of horror, even more horrific because it was a double of the recent past: thousands of non-Spanish speaking persons killed, thousands of orphans, extreme poverty, a war for many impossible to understand because of language and cultural differences and because of the lack of a strong state infrastructure which widened the already existing division between the capital and the rest of the country. While the group’s *Antígona* had made modern Peru visible (remediated) through classic Greek drama in 2000; *Sin título* installed a game of mirrors between Peru at the end of 19th century and Peru at the end of 20th century.

At the end of the procession, a gigantic Peruvian flag made of red and white clothing sewn together condensed history and dwarfed all performers in the room – actors and public alike. Were the bodies missing from inside those clothes worth the flag? Had there been any changes in 100 years?

Yuyachkani risks the cyclical interpretation of history. But there is also risk in *interpreting* – this is a key element in *Sin título*. Montage of any kind (cinematic, theatrical, museological, and political) is framed through at least two levels: the first level, that in which the images (or any other kind of material) are fixed to a frame as a support or foundation; the second, the socio-historical frame in which the latter is interpreted. The first frame is invariable; the second is ever-changing. Cultural capital is accrued in the mutual implication of these two levels. *Sin título* asks for a third level of framing: by juxtaposing near and far past through an unexpected collage of Peruvian history, the piece suggests that the meaning of every exhibit (even this one) is open to a negotiation with every visitor. Such a negotiation implied in turn the visitor's knowledge of Peruvian history. *Sin título* as a meta-museum raises awareness on the pedagogy of citizenship and the ways in which it is institutionally performed through museums, history or archives, and, of course, performance. To gain perspective about these levels of reading, one needs to take a step away from them and, by doing this, one risks falling outside of any frame – as the actors put themselves at risk in this montage by constantly moving in and out of the different frames. Therefore, *Sin título* translated the problem of visibility and invisibility into another opposition: visibility depends on taking a stand (interpreting in both senses, as exegesis and rendering) inside or outside the framing.

Derrida's deconstruction of the archive and memory-as-archive are relevant here. By exploring the principles of organization, consignment and commencement contained in the very notion of *Arkhe*, he argues that there is always already a negative

side to each of those principles. The archive (as much as the archive-of-memory or memory-conceived-as-archive) can be imagined as a neatly organized space, as a space of no contradiction and/or division. Nonetheless, in order to exist as a safe space, it actually depends on the possibility of contradiction, division and secret.

Similarly, there is a movement toward the dissolution of the national archive in *Sin título*. This is the ultimate risk: the implosion of the archive. Through the destruction of the notion of archive, Yuyachkani (in English “I am thinking”, “I am remembering”) jeopardizes its own identity as a group, its perception and practice of theater and performance. One inscription at the entrance of *Sin título* may provide us with a clue to this risky exploration: “La memoria necesita anclajes: lugares y fechas, monumentos, conmemoraciones, rituales.” One of those anchorages of memory is performance and, for that matter, Yuyachkani’s own oeuvre as an archive and as a practice of archiving. In this sense, if we accept that “all performances involve a consciousness of doubleness, through which the actual execution of an action is placed in mental comparison with a potential, an ideal, or a remembered original model of that action” (Carlson 5), performance and archive are closer than it seems. As much as the archive, performance always has *a priori* a double nature, because it executes an action in reference to some frame which is both present and absent. Yet, through the exposition of this doubleness, *Sin título* renews memory and performance, and re-enchants the archive at the edge of its dissolution.

There are two vignettes where *Sin título* expresses its strongest criticism against the archive and the archivable. To my understanding, it is in these vignettes where *Sin título* is closest to dissolving archive and performance all together. The first is a sequence that explores the violence of pedagogy and learning: Teresa Ralli, dressed as a school teacher, sings the Peruvian anthem *a capella*. Soon after, she begins writing down dates on a blackboard. Both writing and singing gradually become

distorted. She extends the notes in her singing, caricaturizing the anthem, while accelerating her writing. Soon both singing and writing are unrecognizable. While still singing, she undresses to reveal a student uniform under the teacher's suit. Actress Ana Correa, dressed as a school teacher, enters the space at that moment. Behind a desk and armed with a ruler-drumstick, she stands defiantly on top of her platform. Correa drums different rhythms with the stick against her desk, imposing her authority; while Ralli sitting on a smaller desk at a floor level begins turning to the rhythm marked by Correa, submitting to her power. Movement and drumming accelerate to the point of vertigo: Who is doubling who in this flashback?

Ralli and Correa continue in their acceleration until another song begins on another side of the room and our attention is immediately drawn to it. It is *Sirtaki*, the famous song of the movie *Zorba, the Greek*. There are also two characters in this second sequence: the leader of the Shining Path Abimael Guzmán appears on a TV screen located above actor Julián Vargas, who, on top of a platform and dressed as Guzmán, dances to the music too. The so called “Zorba video” was the only footage of Abimael Guzmán Peruvians had seen before Guzmán was captured in 1992. It had been aired many times on TV and it constituted a source of anxiety for many Peruvians. In the video Guzmán, presumably drunk, danced to the music during a private party with other members of his organization. Underneath the TV, Vargas mimicked Guzmán's movements. As in the previous sequence, a distortion in the rhythm initiates a distortion in the actor's movement. This time, Vargas slips out of his model's rhythm: the circular movement of the arm is transformed into a clumsy attempt to light a match. He misses many times, but finally Vargas/Guzmán is able to light his cigarette. People laughed at the caricaturization, and, through its ludicrous double, also at Guzmán.

By participating in the montage one cannot help but understand how it actually works. Circularity in *Sin título* reveals the potential *other* side of images: in the sequence of Ralli and Correa, the two elements of the comparison could collide if accelerated, but the proximity of the spectators impedes such an interpretation and rather creates the sensation of watching a montage of acceleration in slow motion. In the sequence of Guzmán and Vargas, the public laughter, as much as the distortion performed by Vargas, produced the caricature. An ominous video image was deprived of its power by the intervention of both the actor and the public. The caricature completed by the spectators revealed a risible side of Guzmán and, at least momentarily, destabilized from within the invulnerable image of the mastermind of the PCP-SL.

Yuyachkani had participated in the process of raising awareness of hidden histories during the TRC years not only with their *Antígona*, but also with *Rosa Cuchillo* and *Adiós Ayacucho*. Miguel Rubio has written about the awareness of offering/giving in their bodies – “haber puesto el cuerpo” – as mediums for the representation of the absent bodies of the death and the disappeared (15). Through the performance of the aforementioned plays, they experienced the juxtaposition of absence and presence that was especially significant to the performance of citizenship during these years. This awareness of the dialectics of presence and absence, of positivity and negativity, was at this fundamental in the poetics of Yuyachkani. In relation to it, the omnipresence of “students” in *Sin título* needs special consideration.

It is usual to imagine students as passive receptors of knowledge. In Peru they are used, indeed, to be taken to museums by their teachers to “learn” from the exhibitions in ways similar to the ones described by Castrillón Carranza. In the museum as exposed by Yuyachkani, school students are agents of movement, the power of circulation. They physically support the other actors’ actions and bodies. Regarding

the two basic frames I discussed, these students act at the level of the first and their uniforms are allusive of the second. Nothing would move without them and, therefore, it is not without a reason that the public is placed at the same level of the students. Not because they come to passively learn, but because they are the power that allows the play to move; they are the circulation power.

Nonetheless, students and public are different frames. The public's mobility is not the same as the students'. The latter are tied by their uniforms – a reminiscence of the education reform during Velasco's regime in the 70s – to their function. As part of the public, one can look always for different angles. There is no ideal post from which to watch and one can even decide not to move and resist the images and the performance. In this sense, if there is a pedagogical side to *Sin título*, it should be found in its affirmation of spectatorship as always active. Seeing is intervening because of the dialectic relation between image and its observer.

In 2001, with *Hecho en el Perú. Vitrinas de la memoria*. Yuyachkani had already experimented with the dialectics of the image by constructing a spectacle which consisted of six “vitrinas”, one for each actor. During 6 hours, the actors performed in a diorama-like space in front of the public in a hallway of Bellas Artes. Each “vitrina”, as they called them⁶³, was a montage of different images composed especially through caricature and distortion of familiar images like that of Montesinos, Rosa de Lima, Inka cigarettes, etc. These “vitrinas” stimulated memory through carnivalization and kitsch. The vitrinas as well as the caricatures of the vignettes allusive to the PCP-SL and the Fujimori regime in the second part of *Sin título*

⁶³ “Se denomina vitrina a una tarima rectangular, dotada de su propia iluminación y sonido. En ella hay instalación de objetos y está habitada por un actor o actriz. Algunas vitrinas tienen efecto de video que se proyecta sobre el cuerpo de la actriz o del actor. Otras tienen un sistema de auriculares que dan información complementaria a lo que expone la vitrina. En una de ellas hay un micrófono desde donde se leen recortes periodísticos y se cantan canciones.” En: <http://www.yuyachkani.org/obras/vitrinas/vitrinas.html>

resembled the exhibits and performances of fairs and freak shows, which make part of the exhibitionary technologies that were born with the museum and the exposition. *Sin título* thus moves from a temple-like museum in the first part into a forum-like museum in the second. In the circular logic of this piece, though, one mirrors the other. The experimentation with different languages and different media is evident, even in the title which draws from the tradition of plastic arts. *Sin título* composes a new dramaturgy of space moving toward intermediality.

Finally, I want to discuss the juxtaposition of different media as an instance of ‘nationing’ in the last vignettes of *Sin título*. This aspect is crucial to its critique of the archive as an instance of the construction of the nation. In the 19th century, the historical museum was significant to the formation of the nation state in Europe because of its capacity to historicize the recent past “as the newly emerging nation-states sought to preserve and *immemorialize* their own formation as a part of that process of ‘nationing’ their populations that was so essential to their further development” (Bennet 76, my emphasis). *Sin título*’s comparison between the Pacific War and the internal war is a similar process of “nationing” history. Another way in which the historical museum was “nationing” was its new way – compared to that of the Panopticon – of inscribing the messages of power and ideology into the people by making them aware of their own existence within a representational space and therefore by making them subjects of that knowledge.

The last vignettes of *Sin título* consist in the appropriation of the discourse of the TRC and the images of *Yuyanapaq* by Yuyachkani as cultural agent and producer of value within the Limeño cultural economy. Actresses Ana and Deborah Correa appear dancing on their corresponding platforms; Ana is dressed as a woman from the Amazonian ethnic group Ashaninka and Deborah is dressed as a woman from Ayacucho. This sequence resembles the exotizing exhibition of men and women of the

“other country” in Peru. Whenever the human body is put on display, the visitor is invited to “read” it as an object. In this sequence, Deborah invites the public to literally “read” her costume (Figure 7). Lights slowly dimmed, almost into full darkness while the music of both dances “mixed” into one. The “students” light the dancers with flashlights. Deborah, still dancing, reveals written texts hidden in the pleats of her dress and her hat. The dance “speaks” now about the campaigns of sterilization that took place during 1997 and 1998 in the Andes: 40,000 illiterate indigenous women were sterilized.

The performance – always doubling – confronts the present action with the memory of these images in the past. In a space where the division between the production and the reception of information has been blurred, the archive is within one’s own body and mind. In the case of Ana, she lifts her garment to expose her nude body along with many photographs of Ashaninka women and children that hang from the inside part of her clothing – some of them are images that appeared in *Yuyanapaq* to illustrate the violence in the Peruvian Amazon during 1980-1990. In both cases, we simultaneously see present and past within the same representational space. Together, the Correas compose a montage of image, music, dance and text. This juxtaposition is embedded in the questioning of the national archive and its practices as the quotations of the body of knowledge consigned during the investigation appear inscribed on the bodies of both actresses. Nationing is a multimediatic montage that works on both the social and the individual body.



Figure 7

In their investigation of heritage views in India, Arjun Appadurai and Carol A. Breckenbridge propose the term “interocular field” to describe the cultural field of museum-viewing in contemporary India, created by “the interweaving of ocular experiences, which also subsumes the substantive transfer of meanings, scripts, and symbols from one site to another in surprising ways” (418). Such transfer of meanings does not happen only in a visual field, but in the interplay of the visual and the performative. The constant traversing from private to public, from visible to invisible, from static to moving that takes place in *Sin título* exposes that, like Bataille suggests, it is the ways in which the visitors relate to objects (and one may add to other persons as well), be it inside and outside of museum halls, what actualizes contents in each visit.

In *Sin título*, the spectator’s consumption produces meaning and value. The juxtaposition of languages in the last vignettes highlights that these languages, as archiving codes, serve the multiple purposes of consumption, consignment, production and exchange. And it also underscores that hierarchy among these purposes – as in a flow – is always changing. If the constant changing roles of the actors in *Sin título* is coherent with the fantasy of the museum that suddenly becomes animated during the night when nobody is watching. On the other, the circulation of the public in *Sin título* is telling of an active manner of seeing history. In the last scene, the flashlights are placed among the public to aim at the dancers because it is the perspective of the public which “illuminates” the display. The double nature of the museum – temple and forum – does not allow for the canceling out of any element of the dichotomy: a space to enclose meaning or a place to produce signification. Both possibilities remain together in an *unheimlich* combination of absence and presence, in the unexpected image of a naked body that dances accompanied by photographs of naked bodies.

The Museum Out of Joint

Specters appear only on special occasions. Hamlet meets his father's ghost because there is some hidden message the ghost needs to pass onto the prince, a desire for vengeance that needs to be expressed, a calling from the unconscious. Lamenting about having to witness the decomposition of his world, Hamlet claims nostalgically that "Time is out of joint." In his often cited discussion of *Time Out of Joint* (1959) by Phillip K. Dick, Frederic Jameson affirms that science fiction eludes the historical thinking of modernity. Following Lukács's understanding of the 19th century novel as the worldview of the bourgeoisie, he claims that, in post-modernity, "we no longer experience history that way" (183). But, when the history of Peru's republican history is revisited, the contemporary sense of disjointedness may bring with it an ambiguous value. After the experience of the TRC years, many were struck by the way in which the world seemed to decompose, to separate in parts, to fall out of joint. *Sin título*, as the museum of memory that exposes its joints for everyone to see, is not nostalgic. It holds the visitor accountable for her actions; she is aware of her participation in a collective public space. It is a constant questioning about how we *see and perform* the nation and about how, by doing this, we are "nationed" and "nation" others. *Sin título* reminds the spectator that when she goes to the museum she also watches others watch. How others behave in the gallery of the museum sets a standard and is a guide for behavior. It is, in that sense, an exhibit of people's own cultural capital. The readings of *Sin título* depend on the framing each person wants to give to this exhibition and its collection.

Pomian and Bordieu insist that cultural capital is key to understanding how exchange value was accrued in collections – both explain it in terms of a negotiation between the visible and the invisible, dependant on the visitor's capacity to discover

the invisible lines which guarantee the communication among the visible objects in the show. Yuyachkani takes the chance of putting together an exhibition that is in many ways the specter of the museum of memory, its nocturnal double. The fantasy of the *Yuyanapaq* catalogue is to transform the spectator into a storyteller, who has regained a lost capacity to see. There is no simple resolution to the performance of disjointedness of these years.

The position of the observer in the works I have compared is always changing; out of joint. Such a disjointedness appears as liberating from the previous orderly social structure, perceived as the continuation of the colonialist model through the rhetoric of the “other country,” the “lesser siblings,” and the invisible subjects fixed as objects. *Yuyanapaq*, like a family album, creates a framework to hold images and memories in time: “El valor de dicho documento radica en su capacidad de perdurar en el tiempo y poder ser transmitido a futuras generaciones”⁶⁴. Whereas the success of *Yuyanapaq* as a souvenir lies in the contrasts it establishes with a previous tradition of *invisible* objects; its contradictory urge to make objects – photographs and videos – speak up in only one way and direction, undermines such an attainment. As meta-museum, *Sin título* re-enchants the dyad visible-invisible and offers the observer an otherwise impossible perspective: an insight into his or her own (disjointed) particular frame of vision. With regards to Castrillón Carranza’s differentiation of the inclusion and exclusion of the alienated national museum, both *Yuyanapaq* and *Yuyachkani* acknowledge a perspective of Limeños as foreigners in their own nation. As museum frictions in the void of national representation, both depend on a redefinition of nationing.

If nationing is not only a matter of spectatorship but of performance; it is a performance of consumption –to be understood as the appropriation of recollections,

⁶⁴ TRC webpage on visual heritage: <http://www.cverdad.org.pe/apublicas/p-fotografico/index.php>

but also as the expenditure of thousands of lives and the thinning of the institutions that characterized the exercise of shock the Fujimori-Montesinos maintained in the last decade. The 1990s, characterized mainly by strong privatization policies, ironically ended with a re-vision of what had been erased from the public sphere through saturation and excess. The social and political results of this performance at a larger scale are still to be found in the years to come. In the corporative culture that made part of the technocratic transformation of Peruvian economy in the 1990s and 2000s, accountability is precisely the concept that reorganizes the institution's economy after a period of excess to ensure the best profit.

CHAPTER 3

CAPITAL UNREST: VAMPIRES AND TOURISTS IN TWO ARGENTINE NOVELS OF THE 21ST CENTURY

Arcades are houses or passages having no outside –like the dream.

Walter Benjamin

In *El pasado* (Premio Anagrama, 2003), by Alan Pauls, many significant events revolve around museums: when a young couple visits London, they witness one of their favorite paintings getting destroyed in the museum gallery. At the end of the novel, they themselves become a shattered work of art in a Buenos Aires apartment that doubles as a personal museum. In *Museo de la Revolución* (2007), by Martín Kohan, two Argentines, an editorial agent and an exile, meet at the Trotsky museum in Mexico City to read and re-enact the narrative of a disappeared militant. Situated in the 1990s, both novels recall the last three decades of Argentine history. Yet, they do not do focus on Argentine political history. On the contrary, they use the museum as a way of framing the act of remembering itself. The alienating conclusions in these novels invite one to read their characters, as well as their narratives, as if they took pleasure in their own self-annihilation. In what follows, I read these novels against the grain of this intended interpretation. I study these claustrophobic interiors as re-visions of the economy of memory in contemporary Argentina.

Pauls follows a couple of middle-class high school sweet-hearts, Sofía and Rímini, in the never-ending collapse of their relationship. Significantly, the year is 1989, when Menem was first elected, the Berlin Wall fell, and neoliberalism's global hegemony

began. As these events happen in the background, Rímíni and Sofía's bubble of a perfect bourgeois interior implodes. Saturating the novel with references to history, art, literature, cinema, psychoanalysis, and theory, Pauls constructs a hyper-real monad that stands in contrast to the original implosion of the couple's bubble of alienating love. Working with 'illness' as a relational concept that sustains its narrative armature, the novel creates a bubble with no outside. *El pasado* does not mourn love purposely: writing against Freudian working-through, it creates an alienating economy of love ("economía del amor" 21) that profits on death drive. In order to do this, *El pasado* recurs to a vocabulary that includes galleries, museums, and collections, all spaces of exhibition-making and image speculation.

Martín Kohan sets *Museo de la Revolución* in Mexico City, 1995. The novel takes shape as a series of reading scenes where the protagonists, Norma Rossi, an exile, and Marcelo, an editorial agent, read from the notebook of Rubén Tesare. At the end of the novel, the narration places itself in a mise-en-abyme to suggest that Tesare's memoirs are, in fact, Marcelo's narrative: a story about how Norma seduces him in Mexico, as she allegedly did when her name was Fernanda twenty years ago, before handing Tesare over to the repressive forces. The bubble of desire between Tesare and Fernanda, and between Marcelo and Norma, implodes together with that of the reader's desire to take a grasp on Tesare's writing. All the while, the novel ponders the ways of the market, on how globalization makes it possible that one can buy the same brands in Mexico and in Argentina, and on the possible consequences of getting Tesare's papers published: "un texto así con un autor así puede estimular esa clase de disposición social que en otro tiempo (...) que un texto así, en cierto modo, puede acabar convirtiéndose en un museo, con un autor así, que vio caer sobre sí el rigor de un escarmiento irreversible" (48). While speculating about avoiding the market and its commercialization of 'authentic' memoirs, as a novel published with multinational

editorial house Random House Mondadori, *Museo de la Revolución* emerges as part of an editorial market that functions precisely thanks to these conflicting values.

While Pauls creates a poetics of illness, Kohan constructs one of myopic dialectics: looking through the museum ‘frames’ what one may see is the past, but this vision also blurs one’s perspective of the present. Both Pauls and Kohan point to the fact that, in Argentine memory, inflation is generated in terms of conflicts that the so called “museum boom” veils. The equation of bubble and museum, exposes inflation and re-introduces conflict over harmonization. The value of memory in both novels is thus situated within ideological conflict and against the backdrop of a growing institutionalization that may have reached a point of projecting conciliation onto present and past history.

The comparison of museum and bubble in capitalism is not new. In his study of the dream-work of capitalism in the *Arcades Project*, Walter Benjamin suggests that the bourgeoisie creates its own bubble, an illusory distance from the masses: “The private individual, who in the office has to deal with realities, needs the domestic interior to *sustain* him in his illusions” (19, my emphasis). Benjamin notes that the museum, as an “architectural form” that demonstrates the 19th century’s tendency to be “saturated” with the past, “appears as an interior magnified on a giant scale.” (407).⁶⁵ Thus, Benjamin poses the problem of an alienated world-view that takes the form of an interior detached from reality, upheld by the excessive production of images of the past. Such a world-view includes, dialectically, its own destruction: bubbles burst – that is what defines them and that is, precisely, the power of their attraction.

The museum as a bubble is always already in the realm of political economy. In Benjamin’s formulation of the museum as a dream-house of the collective one finds

⁶⁵ Among these dream-houses, the ‘arcade’ best exemplifies how the interior sustains a bourgeois view/valuation of the world.

the double nature of ‘economy’ *in-globed*: on the one hand, oikonomia translates as the laws of the house (oikos-nomia), where economics is associated with domestic administration, and on the other, as the laws of the icon (icon-nomia), where economics is related to administration of images into history.⁶⁶ Museum curatorship, originally understood as the administration of museum economy, is bound to economic and political power and to its inflationary dynamics. Today, when museums are not actual *houses* but rather abstract, labile frameworks of symbolic operations upon the image, the bubble effect is in need of consideration for the difference between inside and outside is less clearly cut. Furthermore, this also begs the question of *how* does the museum curate.

The history of the term “curator” illustrates the relationships between care and control as described by Michel Foucault: “From 1362, ‘curator’ was used to signify people who cared for (or were in superintendence of) minors or lunatics, and in 1661 it began to denote ‘one in charge of a museum, library, zoo or other places of exhibits.’” (Fowle 26)⁶⁷ In the republican museum, conceived as making part of managed capitalism, curatorship combines this overseeing and guarding with *a pedagogical democratic mission* of propagation of “taste” and knowledge. Thus, it encompasses Foucault’s understanding of the “cultivation of the self” as the conditions under which the citizen can/should perform socially, which in terms of Bourdieu, translates as the conditions under which she may internalize cultural capital. The republican citizen in the museum aspires to better herself together with society; her profit is, so to speak, a ‘higher’ profit. The curator, in this sense, orients/subjects the citizen’s desire into

⁶⁶ For a discussion of the ample register of the term, see Marie-José Mondzain’s *Image, Icon, Economy: The Byzantine Origins of the Contemporary Imaginary*, 2004.

⁶⁷ Fowle, Kate. “Who Cares? Understanding the Role of the Curator Today.” *Cautionary Tales: Critical Curating*, 2007 (26-35)

desire of the Other.⁶⁸ Herein lies a positivist, scientific notion of the ‘curator’ as the normalizing force of social conflict. We say, by contrast, that curatorship today is unstable, volatile, as citizen and museum strive for a more horizontal dynamics.

As I state in the previous chapters, with neoliberalism there has been a shift of emphasis in the dialectics of the museum from production to consumption, both in its materiality and in its discourse. With production on the foreground, the museum appears as the actual space for ‘production’ of national republican history and citizenry; correspondingly, when consumption comes to the foreground, the museum appears as a more abstract framework for cultural ‘consumption.’ This, of course, does not imply that from the 1980s onwards the discourse of productivity simply disappears. On the contrary, along with the establishment of neoliberalism, when memory as the recollection of a violent past becomes a critical democratic value, the museum appears as an indisputable *productive space*. What remains problematic, given the neoliberal rhetoric of the ‘rolling back’ of the state, and the crisis of politics in its institutional, historical sense, is the articulation of the individual desire into a collective horizon. Moreover, value and production, given what Bourdieu calls the double reality of all symbolic capital, stand as contested concepts.

It is not a coincidence that only in the last three decades has the term “curator” gone mainstream, signifying various different types of activities and missions that accompany the transformation of the museum.⁶⁹ Shifting from its hierarchical position

⁶⁸ Contrary to the monarchic subject, the republican citizen may resist the ‘optics of the state.’ Such resistance presupposes the existence of a collective horizon to the citizen’s desire –here, again, the higher profit. In my discussion, the museum embodies positive or negative incarnations of this symbolic horizon.

⁶⁹ While the changes toward the curator as exhibition-maker began in the 1950s, with the first large international art fairs, most critics agree that it is only around the 1990s that the term becomes globally mainstream. In the wake of this curatorial shift, curatorship academic programs have been created together with a vast arrange of critical studies on theory and practice of curatorship. See for example: *Curatorial Subjects, Cautionary Tales: Critical Curating*, and *Inside the White Cube: the Ideology of the Gallery Space*.

as an overseer, keeper, and guide, the curator's *perspective* may be understood as one that "lies *amongst* art (or object), space, and audience." (Fowle 32)⁷⁰ The institution to which the curator belongs to today is not exclusively the museum anymore, but rather a large industry that groups exhibition-making. In Argentina, this change becomes evident in the 1990s, along with Menem's economic boom. For instance, Jorge Gumier Maier's book *Curadores: Entrevistas* (2005) and *ramona* art magazine's article "Genealogía del curador como intermediario cultural (1)" describe the Argentine curatorial shift as a change that seems to synchronize art consumption globally.⁷¹ Such a change mainly implies that mediation between art and public appears as 'dissolved' into a more porous and unstable realm of cultural valuation. Consequently, both Gumier Maier's interviews and *ramona* describe a *continuum* of

⁷⁰ The question in Katherine Fowle's provocative title: "Who Cares?" invites one to consider the democratic significance of placing the curatorial view horizontally rather than vertically.

⁷¹ "En el mundo del arte, la figura del curador se ha constituido en *garante y motor, eje* de toda su mecánica rebosante de eventos y reflexiones. Entre nos, cantidad de curadores internacionales nos han visitado en años recientes y en su prédica nos urgían – a tono con el mensaje globalizador y en un lenguaje que nos resultaba familiar a *no descolgarnos del mundo*." (Gumier Maier 5) Notwithstanding, it must be noted that the figure of the curator in Argentina can be traced through important predecessors such as Jorge Romero Brest. First leading the art journal *Ver y Estimar*, then directing the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes from 1955 to 1963 under the Revolución Libertadora, and later directing the Centro de Artes Visuales of the Di Tella Institute until 1969, Romero Brest not only plays a major role in the internationalization of Argentine modern art, and influentially shapes its narrative, but also appears as a mobile figure that comes, controversially, in and out of official and political positions. This has generated ample debate, as can be seen in Guinta's brilliant book *Vanguardia, internacionalismo y política*. Also in Guinta's book, one finds a critical account of the history of the Torcuato di Tella Institute, founded in 1958 by Torcuato's sons Guido and Torcuato as an institute for culture and education, that was central to the development of the Argentine arts, theater, and music in the 1960s. The centers for arts and theater closed in 1969 – to some for political reasons and to others for economic reasons, but the Fundación Di Tella continued. In 1991, the Universidad Torcuato Di Tella was founded as part of the Fundación. One may say that the second half of the 1990s in Buenos Aires was prolific for the arts: besides these debates on the 1960s, numerous alternative exhibition spaces opened, and the museums and centros culturales were also highly productive. Infamously, the decade ended with the most waited inauguration of the Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires just three months before the scandal of the corralito. Guinta's book, together with that of Ana Longoni and Mariano Mestman, *Del Di Tella al "Tucumán Arde."* *Vanguardia artística y Política en el '68 Argentino*, both published in the 2000s, appear as part of an intense revision of the relationship of aesthetics and politics that emerges in the 1990s in the form of anthological exhibits, colloquiums, and debates. For a critical summary of the decade and a critical view on recent political Argentine art, see Rodrigo Alonso's article "Ansia y Devoción: Una mirada al arte argentino reciente," published by as a companion catalogue to Ansía y Devoción exhibit in 2003.

the curatorial practice laid out between two major poles: the institutional and the independent realms.

If neoliberalism presents itself as the erasure of conflicts, as the ultimate liberation of desire that brings antagonism into a closure (i.e. the imaginary of globalization as the erasure of limits); the original “aura” of the museum as a representational site of ideological conflict disappears. This is, to use Benjamin’s concept, the museum ruin, which expresses the neoliberal myth of the museum’s eternal profitability.⁷² In it, the guaranteed added economic value of the museum –the merchandizing profits; the museum as a hub for various activities that do not necessarily relate to the collection; the appraisal of cities, neighborhoods, communities, etc. *thanks* to the establishment of a museum– seems to imply that loss does not pertain anymore in the museum field. Moreover, in formal terms, the progressive dematerialization of art and the “lack” of historical objects realized in museums as simulacra coincide to emphasize consumption in the museum economy. It is at this point of the museum *in ruins* that *El pasado* and *Museo de la Revolución* situate their museum narratives.

When Ricardo Piglia’s novel, *La ciudad ausente* appeared in 1992, the unremitting production of memory fragments emerging from its museum (la máquina de Macedonio) confronted a boom in Argentine economy that coincided with an official deflation of memory. Piglia’s museum creates a space for the accrual of value of memory in contrast with the state’s denial of it. *El pasado* and *Museo de la Revolución* appear when this situation reversed. In 2003, in the midst of recession, President Néstor Kirchner negotiated political stabilization by annulling the laws of “Punto final” and “Obediencia debida,” which since 1986 cut short the hopes for trials on human right crimes denounced by the “Nunca Más” report in 1984.⁷³ Additionally,

⁷² For a discussion on the *decadence* of the modernist museum, see Douglas Crimp’s *On the Museum Ruins*, 1995.

⁷³ Report by the Commission on the Disappearance of Persons (CONADEP).

Kirchner capitalized moral standing by bringing together associations like Madres and Abuelas de Mayo, and announcing the creation of the site museum at the Escuela de Mecánica de la Armada (ESMA).⁷⁴ Memory, thus, provided the government with a cohesive discourse in what otherwise appeared as a highly fragmented political space.

The confidence in the productivity of the museum as a ‘representational’ institution converges with a boom of art museums that contrast with the Argentine economic crisis. Andrea Giunta describes the “unexpected emergence” of new art museums in Argentina despite de crisis of the early 2000s: apart from Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires (MALBA), inaugurated in September 2001, the Neuquén site of Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes (MNBA-Neuquén) and Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Rosario (MACRO) were established between 2002 and 2003, and inaugurated in 2004.⁷⁵ While Giunta states that it is surprising that these museums were able to open regardless of the crisis, she suggests that the crisis itself and/or the tourist industry may have contributed to this boom: “no deja de ser cierto que la crisis vende” (223); “No pasa desapercibida la positiva relación entre la oferta de los museos

⁷⁴ The act of establishing the ESMA museum restores value to memory of the recent past but also, following the narrative of end of corruption placed upon these initiatives, appraises the newly installed government in contrast to that of Carlos Saúl Menem: “Here Kirchner confronted yet another legacy of the Menem period: a court that had been sacked with obsequious judges who had rendered verdicts in exchange of payoffs and favors and who, to all intents and purposes, had then comprised an automatic majority for the former president and his positions and interests” *Broken Promises. The Argentine Crisis and Democracy*. 2006. For a collection of essays and artworks about the museum’s project, see Marcelo Brodski’s *Memoria en construcción: el debate sobre la ESMA* (2005). For a revision of possibilities and limits to the ESMA museum project, see Hugo Vezzetti’s “Políticas de la memoria: El museo en la ESMA” *Punto de Vista*, 2003. On the difficulty of discussing memorials and museum in Argentina, see María Silvina Persino’s discussion of Parque de la Memoria and Museo de la Memoria in reference to anti-memorialism: “Memoriales, museos, monumentos: la articulación de una memoria pública en la Argentina dictatorial. *Revista Iberoamericana*.222. 2008 (33-52)

⁷⁵ Giunta, Andrea. “Crisis y patrimonio”, Cárcamo-Huechante, Álvaro Fernández-Bravo and Alejandra Laera (2007). Besides this, a long heterogenous list of museums and institutions makes part of this museum boom – some of them are Museo Eva Perón (established 2002), Casa Museo Carlos Gardel (established 2003), Borges Fundación Internacional (established 1988 and declared Monumento Histórico 2004).

y el turismo” (233). One may hesitate to include them, but tourism and the commodification of crisis are part of the museum economy.

Read against this backdrop, *El pasado* and *Museo de la Revolución* emerge as part of the museum boom but also in contrast to it. With their disavowal of “production of memory” and their wariness about memory reification, *El pasado* and *Museo de la Revolución* confront the memory fetish. Both novels coincide in pointing at the constructive and destructive aspects of museum inflation. Publishing *Museo de la Revolución*, in 2007, Kohan disturbs the official time-frame of memory about state violence by referring to the disappearance of militant Ruben Tesare in the Córdoba sierra in 1975, including thus the persecution of the clandestine groups like the trotskist Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo (ERP), to which Tesare belongs, and the clandestine left wing of Peronismo, Montoneros. In this sense *Museo de la Revolución* reads as an intervention in its present political circumstance, as a museum of *conflict* rather than *conciliation*. Four years before that, *El pasado*’s narrative of decadence and memory consumption forsakes harmonization from its outset: the museum is a space of *crisis*, a mausoleum upon which nothing can be founded and where history is erased in view of pictures dated 1976.

The Surface of Things

Soffa and Rímini, the couple of young “ancianos precoces” (28) “conservadores, monógamos” (48), inhabit an a-political sphere of love in the Argentine seventies: “los objetores que acosaban a Rímini también eran althusserianos, sólo que habían ampliado el campo de la reflexión, tradicionalmente compuesto por las regiones de la ideología, la religión, el arte, con una esfera que hasta entonces no se había mostrado muy permeable a la inspección política: la *esfera* del amor” (53, my emphasis).

Enclosed in their own sphere, love keeps them away from a richer social life: “trataban con amigos cuyos sufrimientos los hacían sufrir (...) esa cercanía, lejos de predisponerlos a la complicidad, parecía reforzar cierta política de sobriedad, incluso desapego”(49).

However, Pauls’ novel undoes the idea of depth: the sphere of love is a mirror-reflection of the world. It expresses ideology, which in Althusser’s terms can be understood as “the reproduction of the relations of production.”⁷⁶ The limit of love, its surface, is where ‘deeper’ relations between inside and outside emerge, and therefore it is at its surface where the couple’s malaise makes itself evident: “Vivían en el interior de un interior, uno de esos ecosistemas que reproducen por medios artificiales, entre cuatro paredes, *detrás de un tabique de cristal, para que los visitantes puedan admirar su realismo* (...) Sofía y Rímini respiraban normalmente, pero el exterior ya empezaba a volvéseles un poco borroso.” (58, my emphasis) Pauls’ novel thus lays out the “spatial metaphor” of ideology at the surface of the sphere. One could argue that, in principle, this amounts to bubble bursting. Conversely, this transformation does not wish to lead to the unveiling of ‘reality’ presupposed in the materialist perspective. Written against a cultural economy that favors memory reification, *El pasado* assumes reification fully to look directly at the ‘surface of things.’

Contrary to nostalgic narratives of love, *El pasado* does not long for past times of amorous plenitude. It follows closely the couple’s descent into progressive decay, which, as the overtly meticulous narrator suggests, was already present, though subtly, during the period they live together. Passages like “Casi no eran humanos. Pero eran humanos – al menos Rímini” not only raise suspicion about Sofía’s humanity (which will later be confirmed by her transformation into a vampire), but, also predisposes the

⁷⁶ Althusser defines the ideological apparatuses of the state as those who hold the reproduction of the relations of production under the repressive forces of the state in favor of the ruling class in “Ideology and the State”.

reader to look for more symptoms of peculiarity. *El pasado*'s economy is one of excess and repetitions, as it does not seek resolution. One may argue, in this sense, that the novel seeks to perform a Lacanian 'analysis' of the past, considering that healing from therapy is a 'delusion.' As a result, the novel appears *saturated* with symptoms, turning illness into a condition rather than into an exception.

Accordingly, it is organized in four consecutive crises: "Primera", narrates the couple's origins, from high-school years to their separation; Rímini's denial to revise their photographs, and the beginning of Sofía's persecution of Rímini, who falls into a mania of intensive translation, coke-consuming, and masturbation, while he initiates another relation with Vera, a pathologically jealous girl, who moves in with him. This crisis is circular; it ends where it begins: Rímini's reflection over Sofía's photograph of the memorial exhibition of Jeremy Riltse, the British artist whom they both adore. "Segunda," comprises the death of Vera; Rímini's infatuation and marriage with Carmen; his loss of the ability to translate; their trip to Brazil; the birth of their son, Lucio, which coincides with the death of Frida Breitenbach, Sofía's mentor, and finally, Sofía's reappearance, and her kidnapping of Lucio. In "Tercera," after losing Carmen, and Lucio, Rímini is bankrupted and depressed. His father moves to Montevideo, leaving him to a tennis instructor that turns Rímini into one. As such, he meets Nancy, a rich, narcissistic woman, with whom Rímini has yet another affair and in whose house Riltse's work appears. Through it, the novel leaps into a biography of Riltse, that narrates his last days, returning then to the present in Argentina by way of Nancy's husband, who obtains Riltse's "El agujero postizo" in Cannes, in exchange for not presenting charges against a Vietnamese prostitute. In Argentina, the specter of Sofía reappears again by way of an encounter of Rímini with her father, Rodi, at a hotel where he has been meeting his life-long mistress. After Rodi's death by heart attack, Rímini, demented, robs the Riltse and ends jailed. In "Cuarta," Sofía pays for

Rímini's bail and brings him back home, where he finally organizes the long-deferred box of photographs.

While all along the novel museums appear on and off as framings of speculation about art value, specially in contrast to galleries and collections, it is in the last chapter when the museum finally traverses into the realm of the private – Sofía's place – as the space where Rímini and Sofía may re-inhabit the love image they had 'abandoned' at the beginning. The night of the public inauguration of Sofía's female collective's center, they have drunken sex, after which, insomniac, Rímini goes back to picture organizing. All of a sudden, he cannot recognize anything but Sofía and himself: “[l]os preparativos de la inauguración habían interrumpido la tarea cuando entraba en 1976 (...)Ellos dos estaban en foco siempre, pero todo el resto (...) parecía nublarse y replegarse y enmudecer bajo un velo opaco” (548-549). Right after, he realizes that they are both bleeding and goes back to bed, only to have a Hoffman nightmare, in clear allusion to Freud's *The Uncanny*: “había por lo menos media docena de ópticas y negocios de anteojos por cuadra. Óptica 10, leyó – o quizá, en el mismo sueño, ya estuviera recordando. Óptica Luz, Óptica Carron, Óptica Mia, Óptica Universal, Óptica Expres, Óptica Jesucristo, Óptica Nessi, Óptica Paraná, Óptica Americana.” This vision resonates with the narrator's commentaries about the museum gaze throughout the novel: “veía todo con ojos desollados,” “lo miraba con ojos distantes, los mismos con que habría mirado la misma escena reconstruida en un museo.” (154) Finally, the novel's last sentence: “Seguían desangrándose” suggests eternal repetition. (551)

Spanning from the 1970s to the 1990s, *El pasado* never mentions the Dirty War directly. The problem of perspective is central to this novel. To many, in Argentina and abroad, this 'lack' of representation of *the* defining event in contemporary

Argentine history was a puzzling political statement.⁷⁷ Apropos, Beatriz Sarlo wrote: “La ausencia de lo público y la política es simplemente asombrosa. (...) *El pasado* prescinde de la historia reciente con una radicalidad que obliga a pensar” (...) La distancia de lo político es de una *extranjería radical*, una decisión *en contra*.” (18) If this is true, in order to be recognized as a decision against the political in the literary, the novel must comprise a connection to the tradition of Argentine literature, which, as Sarlo states: “pasó veinte años mordiendo lo político de diversos modos” (18). Similarly, one may assume that as a radical foreigner to the contemporary canon, *El pasado* poses a question to the host’s identity – to its authority as owner of the house (*oikos*).⁷⁸ While Sarlo recognizes in el *El pasado* “una summa de la literatura argentina de los últimos cincuenta años”, it is, arguably, the ironic treatment of memory as its capital that ciphers the novel’s uncomfortable connection to Argentine political canon.⁷⁹ The Dirty War does not appear directly because Pauls wants to undo the Freudian working-through. Or rather, he favors repression in order to trigger the repetition compulsion. *El pasado* represses the ‘capital’ event in order to dwell in the symptoms of its capitalization in contemporary culture.

However, *El pasado* does not strive to produce a stable political position. In this sense, Sarlo is right: *El pasado* is explicitly anti-nomical. It embraces ‘illness’ seeking to stand *outside* of the logic of capitalization of memory, where the trauma of the Dirty War seems to be eternally profitable for the production of history.⁸⁰ As much as

⁷⁷ See reviews in *El País* “El amor después del amor,” 2003 and *The Guardian*: “In search of Argentina’s Lost Times”, 2007.

⁷⁸ Consider Derrida’s discussion about the role of Tiresias in Oedipus tragedy “the question of the Foreigner, only seems to contest in order then to remind people of what ought to be the obvious even to the blind.” (11)

⁷⁹ In an interview given in 2004, Pauls claims that Argentina suffers from “inflation of memory”

⁸⁰ I would like to thank Hayden White for our discussion on trauma as the sublime, and its *production* of aura. Although the present work will not carry out fully the implications of this analysis, it does consider that locating trauma within the aesthetics of the sublime implies the ‘productive’ location of the traumatic event into *the continuum* of history.

it utilizes over-saturation of detail and references, creating a hyper-real depiction of ‘the past’, Pauls’s novel creates a ‘critical gaze’ upon the universal notion of therapeutic memory and its normativization (capitalization) of trauma.⁸¹ It thus stands outside, or rather at the surface of this logic. By undoing depth, the novel deconstructs the possibility of working-through and suggests an association between Freudian mourning and the commodification of memory. The museum, as the place for the valuation and exhibition (“habían acuñado los trofeos del amor a lo largo del tiempo,” 59) is, in turn, exposed ‘in ruins’: “La noticia de su vuelta no sólo no lo [Rímini’s father] sorprendía sino que parecía aliviarlo, como si él también *tuviera intereses en el museo* y la repatriación de la pieza pusiera fin a una larga temporada de incertidumbres (...) Rímini descubrió hasta qué punto todo eso era una ilusión y hasta qué punto él había sido su víctima” (514, my emphasis).⁸² Rímini discovers the museum and simultaneously finds it void.

The novel’s epigraph: “Desde hace tiempo me acostumbré a estar muerta. Jensen, *Gradiva*” situates the novel in dialog with the famous Freudian analysis of the truth of delusions in “Delusions and Dreams in Jensen’s ‘Gradiva’” and its museum economy, as it relates to the archaeologist Hanold who ‘falsely’ falls in love with a figure seen at the Naples museum, which, in turn, is solved by Freud’s excavation and unveiling of Hanold’s repressed memories. Moreover, quoting from the original and not from

⁸¹ This posture resembles Žižek’s proposal in *Mapping Ideology*: “Because of this inherent character of the two poles, one should avoid the liberal-democratic trap of concentrating exclusively in the horrifying facts or the horrifying potentials of what is going on today in Russia and the ex-Communist countries: the new hegemonic ideology of ‘Eurasism’ preaching the organic link between community and the state as the antidote to the corrosive influence of the ‘Jewish’ principle of market and social atomism, orthodox national imperialism as an antidote to Western individualism, and so on. In order to combat these new forms of organicist populism effectively one must, as it were, turn the critical gaze back upon oneself and submit to critical scrutiny liberal-democratic universalism itself – what opens up the space for the organicist populism is the weak point, the ‘falsity’, of this very universalism.” (3)

⁸² The museum in Pauls coincides with the notion of the discourse of the museum as an “autopsy” in Jens Andermann’s book. Yet, here the death is not valuable for they were already dead. Another significant difference is that while the autopsy was executed in the 19th century by the national museum of history; here it is the bourgeois visitor who declares himself dead.

Freud's intervention, Pauls confronts the Freudian tradition of psychoanalytical exegesis of literature, which establishes the analogy between the work of literature and *dream-work*.⁸³

It is precisely in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, where Freud defines "the talking cure" as the *liberation* of the *repressed capital* of the unconsciousness into a normalized, productive circulation that seeks to make unconsciousness consistent with consciousness. Consider the following passage:

A daytime thought may very well play the part of the entrepreneur for a dream; but the entrepreneur, who, as people say, has the idea and the initiative to carry it out, can do nothing without capital; he needs a capitalist who can afford the outlay, and the capitalist who provides the psychical outlay for the dream is invariably and indisputably, whatever may be the thoughts of the previous day, a wish from the unconscious (561)

If the wish from the unconscious is capital, analyst and analysand appear as possible profiteers (entrepreneurs) who may appropriate *dream-labor*. One finds in Freud's theory a convergence with the 19th century liberal economics that proposes the bourgeois citizen as a subject of never-ending desire. The articulation of such desire into the normal –that is, the productive– equated to its capitalization into the 'higher profit' of the collective bourgeois ideal. Thus, the analysand needed to be brought back

⁸³ The reference to Freudian psychoanalysis in Argentine culture is always ironic in *El pasado*: in their trip to Vienna, "Rímmini aprovechó para visitar la casa de Freud, una ocurrencia que en el último mes y medio habían tenido tres docenas y media de argentinos, como le informó el visitante" (33). For a history of psychoanalysis in Argentina, see Plotkin, Mariano. *Argentina on the Couch: Psychiatry, State, and Society, 1880 to the Present*. New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 2003.

into being productive and this is why she invested in her own cure.⁸⁴

Therefore, Freudian normalization of desire implies a desire *of desire* as well – it can do nothing without capital. Similarly, one may argue that Freudian therapy and its notion of *working-through* trauma capitalizes memory, historically the Other side of neoliberalism’s *consuming desire* in Latin America. Pauls’ position confronts the task of mourning through literature.⁸⁵

Derrida’s *Archive Fever. A Freudian Impression* (1995) is relevant here. In it, Derrida deconstructs the Freudian legacy and its ‘productivity’ in Western Culture: the *mal d’archive*, which seems to be precisely Sofía’s malaise. We desire the archive. In turn, the archive, always already spectral, eludes us. Freud, Derrida observes, like Marx tried to conjure phantoms that appear at specific places, in a specific topology: “[H]aunting implies places, a habitation, and always a haunted house.” (86) Gradiva (the mid-day ghost) haunts Hanold and Freud in the archaeological site; just like commodities (mid-day ghosts) haunt Marx in the market.⁸⁶ Such significant transactions with specters, Derrida notes, take place in the realms of the social: they imply a crossing of time and space, and an interchange of signs and values. Arguably, the museum, like the market, is a frame for valuation of the specters. Let us not forget that Hanold had seen Gradiva first at the Naples Archaeological Museum. But the

⁸⁴ In his *Consuming Desire. Sexual Science and the Emergence of a Culture of Abundance, 1871 – 1914*. Lawrence Birken theorizes upon a transitional definition of citizenship in the 18th and 19th century that articulates the Enlightenment citizen as homo economicus with the citizen as homo desiderans of neo-classical economics in the emergence of consumer’s society. Birken traces the coincidences of Marx and Freud’s theories on production, life production, and capital. For an expansion on Birken’s study, see Bennett, David. “Burghers, Burglars and Masturbators: The Sovereign Spender in the Age of Consumerism”. For a study on the consumer revolution, see Rosalynd Williams’ *Dream Works: Mass Consumption in Late Nineteenth-Century France*.

⁸⁵ This explains, in part, the presence of Idelber Avelar in the conference of translators in Brasil. Idelber Avelar is author of the well-known *The Untimely Present: Postdictatorial Latin American Fiction and the Task of Mourning*, 1999.

⁸⁶ See also, Derrida’s *Specters of Marx*.

‘truth of delusions’, the enigma of ghosts, cannot be translated “[it] is irreducible by explanation.” (Derrida 87) If anything, it can be *expressed* as an enigma.

Sofía appears for the first time in the novel, enigmatically, at a museum. Situating itself in medias res, *El pasado* begins with a disturbing repetition: it’s 1995 and Rímini receives in his Buenos Aires apartment a letter Sofía sends him on the back of a photograph from London. The picture, taken in front of a windowpane at a London museum gallery, captures a reflection of Sofía’s presence at Riltse’s memorial show. Rímini must re-view the photo in order to see her in it:

Rímini volvió a la foto y volvió a examinarla. Reconoció el museo y después en el borde derecho, fuera del alcance del flash, la sombra de un cuadro de Riltse que antes no había notado. Ahora la vitrina parecía nublada por una sobreimpresión. Acercó la foto a sus ojos y vio, reflejados sobre el cristal que protegía a la rosa, el fogonazo blanco, la pequeña cámara automática y por fin, deslumbrante como una corona de luz, el gran halo rubio del pelo de Sofía. (17)

Like the photograph, the museum frames Riltse’s and Sofía’s spectral apparitions. Running against the ‘productive capitalization’ of memory, *El pasado* utilizes compositional strategies and effects related to photography and cinema (most significantly, *déjà vu*) while constantly making explicit reference to memory and its narrative as technological re-production (“uno de esos recuerdos mecánicos” 157, “todo en fatídica cámara lenta” 168, “Todo sucedió muy rápido, en un segundo plano” 180). In *déjà vu* one sees again what one cannot remember to have previously seen. It implies a disturbance of the frame of reference: is not a form of remembering

and it is not a form of forgetting, it cannot be shared or repeated at will. Therefore, it cannot be ‘appropriated’ as capital.⁸⁷

Thus, to undo the appropriation of memory as capital and the in-depth structure of Freudian dynamics, Pauls cancels the ontological hierarchy of image and art, of the image and Sofía. Sofía’s “gran halo rubio” emanates from the reflection of the flash in the window, not from herself. Sofía’s *aura*, is literally produced by the photograph, and thus linked to the consumption and appropriation of art as image.⁸⁸ Moreover, as one reads on and learns that Riltse’s artistic project runs against the art object and against art in objects, one realizes that neither his or her aura depends on reference to ‘objects.’ The museum is thus doubly exposed: the photograph signals to its mission of ‘producing’ art and artists, consecrating or auraticizing them, and, simultaneously, by re-producing aura, photography snatches the auraticizing effect of the museum. Pauls’ is a museum of simulacra in a system of repetition and difference, where “the different is related to the different through difference itself.” (Deleuze 355)

Consequently, the simulacrum in *El pasado* is not nostalgic for it does not have an exclusive center or reference to long for. The incorporation of the logic of photographic re-production and cinematic assemblage allows Pauls to confront the written word’s position of authority against the image. In the fragment commented above one notes that Sofía’s writing on the back of the photograph: “En Londres (como hace seis años) (...) Exactamente mientras yo soñaba (me enteré más tarde) se mataba Riltse”(17), much like the plaque with Riltse’s name, binds the image to the

⁸⁷ For a discussion of déjà-vu, media, and memory, see: Peter Krapp’s *Déjà-vu as Cultural Aberration* (2005). Krapp elaborates on media technologies’ acceleration of déjà-vu effect and the effect this may have on our relation to the familiar.

⁸⁸ Which is precisely how the couple first ‘fell in love with’ Riltse at school, when they used paste reproductions of Riltse’s work in “la portada de sus carpetas para humillar a sus enemigos”. (27) Here the consumerism and the decadentism is emphasized as Sofía and Rímini stress out when other students begin to consume the same ‘exclusive’ images they treasure. This eventually leads to an episode of the burning of the images, where they ‘save’ Riltse. This also reads as a commentary to a center-periphery circulation of art in reproductions.

factual. Notwithstanding, the narration will not give in to this hierarchy. Rather, it makes image and word, like image and object, stand in tension with each other: “Era tan obvio *ahora* que el enigma de Riltse no estaba en sus cuadros” (my emphasis, 199). It is the *now* of differentiation, where the enigmas of images *make sense*.

In Rímini’s ponderation on Riltse’s art, “Pensó en cosas vagamente sobrenaturales: apariciones, el santo sudario, casos de catalépticos, una mujer en una isla caminando descalza, en plena noche, bajo la luna, guiada por el eco de unos tambores” (199), one re-views Manuel Puig’s appropriation/quotation of Jacques Tourner’s film *I walked with a zombie* (1943) in his 1976 novel *El beso de la mujer araña*: “Que la chica está sola en la selva y se oyen los tambores (212) “Poco después la lluvia amaina. Nadie ha visto que la zombi ha tomado el camino de la casa vieja” (216) . The bubble of love in *El pasado* contrasts to that of the cell of *El beso de la mujer araña*, in which Molina and Valentín explore the ‘truth of delusions’ through an exchange of private projections of film and memories, in contrast to the scientific language of psychoanalysis that Puig places, significantly, in the footnotes of his collage of images and words. Moreover, *El pasado*’s exploration of enigmatic surfaces reminds one of “el final enigmático” (263) in Molina’s last film, whose effect lurks in déjà-vu at the police report on Molina’s death “o pensaba escapar con los extremistas, o estaba dispuesto a que estos lo eliminaran” and in Valentín’s torture declarations “le pregunto por qué es que llora y en un primer plano que ocupa toda la pantalla al final de la película ella me contesta que es eso lo que no se sabe, porque es un final enigmático” (285).⁸⁹

But, if in Puig the logic of center and representation still persists in the relation between cell and society, Pauls defies the possibility of the center by undoing the in-

⁸⁹ Pauls discusses Puig’s work in relation to the enigmatic faces of cinema, defined as “estética del close-up”, in *Manuel Puig: La traición de Rita Hayworth*.

depth structure that allows perspective, accelerating the logic of abstraction in the repetition. Thus, the cultural, political, and historical references of the last forty years appear always diverted and (mis)appropriated, abstracted from their 'origin', growing everywhere like an illness with no localizable cause. Significant examples of this are found in the scene when Rímini meets Javier, a former colleague of Sofía in Frida's school, at a party. They discuss the couple's separation, Javier's defection, and the group's retaliation: "¡La separación de ustedes fue la caída de mi muro de Berlín!" (146), "Al lado de Vidt, Waco debió ser Mayo 68" (148), "Traidor – él, que desde muy joven, secuestrado por las fuerzas de seguridad, había resistido dos meses de interrogatorios y tormentos (...) A él, traidor, ese puñado de inválidos físicos pero sobre todo psíquicos" (147). Similarly, Sofía's caricaturization of Rímini's change seems to void political partisanship and action of any meaning: "Sos como un militante. ¿No es demasiado? Ya está dejá de luchar tanto (...) No tenés que estar cambiando de vida *todo* el tiempo" (173). Or, finally, in the superimposition of Cortázar's *Rayuela*'s grand experiential tour into García Márquez' dramatic culture clash of the Caribbean bourgeois Nena Daconte and Billy Sánchez in "Rastro de tu sangre bajo la nieve," through the recollection of Sofía and Rímini's trip to Europe. In their tour, the couple is always secluded from the political and cultural coming of age of their peers "el problema era todo lo que *no* vivía" (...) "¿La policía no tendría que mirarnos con desconfianza, pararnos, pedirnos documentos? (31). When they stay in Vienna, Sofía falls ill at a hotel room on a sixth floor, while Rímini, in despair for not being able to communicate with hosts and doctors, observes "el milagro de los copos de nieve caer, lentos e imbéciles, en una noche asombrosamente roja." (32) In this case, the novel produces conflict superimposing these images and texts at the surface, confronting them as uncanny doubles of each other, thus disturbing the capital normally ascribed to them.

El pasado appears as a confrontation to the sixties and seventies' *healing* promise of youth, turned into its neoliberal ruin. This is the moment in which their 'love,' reified, turns against them: Sofía transforms into a vampire and Rímini into her prey. Pauls, in this sense, is close to Michell Houellbecq's apocalyptic view of the sixties aftermath and its generational conflict and its insistence on the horrific and decadent side of the bourgeois way of life. This is most evident in the parental figures of Frida and Rodi, who, besides Sofía, cling to the image of the couple with declared sexual desire. Hence, confronting Rímini about his having a child and getting older: "Y ahora que vas a tener un hijo crees que vas a rejuvenecer, ¿no?" (274) Frida confesses "y así, mientras los recordaba, me hacía la paja tirada en el sillón, con la pollera arremangada, rodeada de platos con restos de comida" (275). Later on, after having a heart-attack, Rodi asks Rímini to call on his mistress and to masturbate him in his death-bed: "Dame tu mano y todo va a estar bien, vas a ver. Es un segundo. Tu mano, por favor. Tu mano me va a liberar" (462).⁹⁰

Additionally, there is a constant reference to the Cold War atomic angst. This appears in the numerous references to the epoch's films and the spy genre, but also to the visual strategies used in this kind of films, as in the persecution of the Riltse, where the "lucecita verde (Salgo) y la lucecita roja (*El agujero postizo*)" (402) separate as in the double screen of spy films. The Cold War and its threat of atomic destruction is used in one of the novel's passages when the couple's love is compared to an object that survives in a shelter and comes out of it, anachronic, to confront life on Earth:

(...) y que el mundo, ahora, tantos años después de haber formado parte de él por última vez, está desfigurado, es irreconocible, es indiferente y los mira con el azoramiento divertido con que dentro de

⁹⁰ Besides the coincidences with the perspective of Houellbecq's novels, there is also appropriation of yet another Houellbecquain novel, Frédéric Beigbeder's *99 francs* (2000). Pauls introduces Nancy's husband in the fantasies of sexual violence in the Cannes Publicist Film Festival in Beigbeder's novel.

algunos años, no muchos, la población infantil del mundo
contemplará todas las cosas que hoy son emblemáticas. (54)

After the threat of the atomic bomb, history becomes uncanny to the survivors, for whom the world is indifferent and, because of this, unrecognizable. Again, Pauls does not celebrate the continuation of youth (preserved in the shelter) in a culture that consumes the past reified with an ‘azoramiento divertido’.

But the original cause of the ‘illness’ is never apparent and, because of that, ever proliferating. Pauls presents this poetics of illness through Jeremy Riltse, the British artist named after after Proust’s Eltsir – the painter whose work allows Marcel to view the world “telle qu'elle est, *poétiquement*.”⁹¹ (Proust 115) Riltse’s artistic theory is not objectual, but relational: “el Sick Art como una *economía del doble don*, como infección cruzada: no donar enfermedad al arte sino donar arte a la enfermedad y viceversa (376). The reference to Mauss via Bataille is evident: Sick Art operates like absolute potlach against “la vieja función curativa – y por lo tanto religiosa – del arte” (375). Sick Art works aesthetically with excess at the level of the ‘normal’ interchange of capital. Together with this, appears yet another textual subversion that assimilates art, healing and capital: “¿Qué es curarse un órgano comparado con enfermárselo?”, se pregunta el artista parafraseando a Brecht, a quien jamás había leído pero cuyas chaquetas proletarias siempre le despertaron envidia” (375). Like that of Turner via Puig, this is an already existing appropriation in the Argentine canon: Piglia’s epigraph to *Plata quemada* (1997): “¿Qué es robar un banco comparado con fundarlo?” Here, the anti-curatorial project of *El pasado*, defines illness as the limit to

⁹¹ Rímimi and Sofía’s sick love in connection to Riltse can be read against the repetitive time of hell in Dante’s *Inferno*, where Paolo and Francesca da Rimini appear connected to each other forever, in the Canto V. Like Paolo and Francesca connected through literature (Galeotto fu il libro e chi lo scrisse!), Rimini and Sofía are together because of Riltse’s sick art.

exclusion: if one considers the comparison of museum and bank as places for the accumulation of capital and the promotion of exclusion, illness and free circulation oppose *cure* and *preservation* of capital.⁹²

As illness is ever expanding, all encompassing, the novel must sicken its reader. I want to go back here to the depiction of Sofía as a vampire. There is an explanation for Sofía's vampiric obsession with Rímini: somehow she turns into a vampire because of Rímini's disavowal of the box of pictures: "No me dejes sola con este muerto," she begs at the beginning of the novel (64). But this is myth, like that of Count Dracula being turned into a vampire after challenging God. This does not explain Dracula's enigma. As Franco Moretti argues, Dracula is capital and, as such it exalts desire. Elaborating on Marx's phrase: "Capital is dead labour which, vampire-like, lives only by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks," Moretti claims that Bram Stoker's *Dracula* reflects the threat of foreign monopoly capital to the larger national Victorian economy, where "losses and benefits are perceived as something larger than themselves" (93).⁹³ The superimposition of capital and libido in *Dracula's* allegory brings into play the dialectics of fear, whereby the monster stands as the Other of Jonathan Harker and associates, and, therefore, of the reader as well. In *El pasado* Sofía, like Dracula, does not appear in photographs once she becomes a vampire. But, even though she does seem fixated in a monopolistic relation with Rímini (she sabotages every relationship he is able to establish), no crowd of vampire slayers organizes to save Rímini. On the contrary, she eventually

⁹² Notwithstanding the likely analogy to the digitalization of images and the new media ecology, the novel always stays within the realm of analog images.

⁹³ "Because the nineteenth century bourgeois believes in free trade, and he knows that in order to become established free competition had to destroy the tyranny of feudal monopoly." (Moretti 93)

gets a crowd of heart-broken, memory-driven female vampires to join her, grouped under the suggestive acronym “MAD: Mujeres que Aman Demasiado.”⁹⁴

This moment of female solidarity takes place only when the novel is about to end, and Rímini is already back in Sofía’s apartment. After Rímini’s return, Sofía elaborates a theory of love that she presents to the collective whereby memory becomes the warrant of love – “la memoria era la *garantía*” (538, my emphasis) . As the women internalize Sofía’s theory, they develop a vocabulary that conjugates authority and administration: “Rímini casi no las oyó usar otras expresiones que no fueran *archivo, capital mnémico, administración del pasado*” (538) . As MAD archontes, their mission is “hacerle una memoria a los hombres”. Here Pauls appropriates the Spanish idiom “hacer memoria” (to remember) used in Argentine politics of memory to emphasize *active* memory as a requisite to create/make/produce an alternative to official history. In doing so, he simultaneously diverts the sequence create/make/produce into an economy of sexual antagonism: “como los hombres se pasaron siglos haciéndoles hijos a las mujeres” (539) . Clearly, Sofía’s equation does not solve the antagonism. Rather, it translates it into a polarity that reinforces the underlying capitalist dynamics. In this deviation of the economy of memory, Pauls *interpellates* the reader as subject to it.⁹⁵

At this point, the novel emphasizes the superimposition of the bourgeois interior “la mesa de comedor, las sillas, la biblioteca y los sillones de mimbre (...) la gran

⁹⁴ Here one finds a caricature of Argentine Human Rights associations like Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, composed eminently by women, who using wide white handkerchiefs resembling diapers wrapped around their head, were among the first Argentine citizens to create an awareness of political persecution and state terrorism in Argentina. Pauls describes the MAD women: “un puñado de mujeres delgadas y cenicientas, con pañuelos anudados al cuello, las muñecas y los tobillos, como si fueran regalos.” (541) One finds the pañuelos diverted to other parts of the body. Also here one finds reference to the best-seller book *Women Who Love Too Much* (In Spanish *Mujeres que Aman Demasiado*) by Robin Norwood (1985). This book is iconic of the culture of self-help, self-healing, and self-empowerment.

⁹⁵ “All ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects, by the functioning of the category of subjects.” Althusser, Louis. *Ideology and the State*.

alfombra blanca y peluda (...) los posavasos de corcho, las láminas de plantas y pájaros en la cocina, la radio a válvula, siempre milagrosamente en forma...” (512), and the museum: “Volvía a un museo: el museo en el que había nacido, que lo había formado, del que había sido robado y que, a lo largo de los años, no sólo se había negado a llenar su lugar con otra pieza sino que lo había preservado así, vacío” (513). The limits of public and private are dissolved. Here, the narrator describes the protagonist’s *déjà vu*: “Rímini se dejó envolver por ese *déjà-vu* general, atmosférico...” (512) to express his exhaustion. This is again an image of the uncanniness of history, one that complements the first one: the Cold War disaster threat that *never happened* upholds the comfortable bourgeois life. This is what turns Sofía and Rímini into vampires.

El pasado invites one to think of the possibility of an economy of the death drive. Considering Sofía’s abortion; Rímini’s loss of the ability to translate and, therefore, to work; his loss of wife and son; the absence of any couple in the novel that produces life besides the parents who are cancelled as life-givers by their children (“les gustaba imaginar que juntos habían nacido allí” 50); the numerous masturbation scenes; the sexual violence, prostitution, and gender mutilation; one does not find positive bourgeois productive desire to be capitalized in the novel’s “economía del amor”. Always consuming and consumed by their own desire, the protagonists only produce an alienating image of their love. In other words, the individual desire, liberated to itself, does not lead to the desire of Other, it does not tend toward any collective horizon: the museum is void.

Something to Write Home About

Museo de la Revolución initiates with disappeared Rubén Tesare emerging out of darkness: “Estira una mano, y desde esa mano dos dedos, para alcanzar la discreta saliencia que, una vez apretada, le dará algo de luz” (9) . Tesare is eager to read his journal and so is the reader. The scene promises a revelation that is cut short: “Se equivocaba, me dice Norma Rossi ahora, casi veinte años después de aquella noche y de aquel viaje: también en eso, o al menos en eso, Tesare se equivocaba” (15). To Norma, the Argentine exile who holds Tesare’s manuscript, his mistake lies in differentiating center and periphery based on local consumption patterns: “a pocas horas de micro de la ciudad de Buenos Aires, pero repara en los nuevos nombres (Pritty, Córdoba, Saldán) como si de veras pudiesen llegar a ser expresiones de exotismo (...) En el año setenta y cinco la Coca-Cola ya era global, lo mismo que ahora” (15) . A tight network of flashbacks and flash forwards between 1975 Córdoba and 1995 Mexico City, *Museo de la Revolución* is a reader’s thriller.

Tesare travels undercover on a mission from Buenos Aires to Laguna Chica. Once there, while waiting for his comrades at a hotel, he is abducted after being seduced by another traveler, Fernanda. In the present of the novel, Marcelo’s business trip mirrors Tesare’s. Once in Mexico, Marcelo meets Norma Rossi, a mysterious woman who holds Tesare’s political writings and private memoirs. After their encounter at the Trotsky Museum, where they stay after hours for the “desmontaje,” Norma reveals herself as Fernanda (137). Later they have sex in a hotel in Cuernavaca, much in the same way that it had occurred in Laguna Chica. She finally gives him Tesare’s papers. The medium that binds time and space in the novel is Norma’s compulsory reading, whereby the reader learns details about Tesare’s last days and his copious notes on the writings of Lenin, Marx, Engels and Trotsky.

Kohan's thriller does not unveil truths of the past. Though one may assume Tesare is an ERP, one never gets to know exactly what he was involved in or why did Fernanda seduce him. Rather, it invokes topics and discourses about the debates on political memory in Argentina. The disassembled museum, the museum in ruins, serves as the space in which the ideology of political memory can be expressed. The enigma ultimately resides in the actual book one holds, as a reader of Kohan's novel. It emerges as a 'souvenir.' Thus the novel as a museum provides a frame for the specters to appear, placing their voices momentarily inside of it.

Kohan's previous works already engage debates about memorialization in Argentina.⁹⁶ Given the novel's explicit reference to 1975 as the year of Tesare's disappearance, one may read it as a statement against the Argentine official time-frame of political crimes.⁹⁷ Besides, *Museo de la Revolución* participates in an intense dialogue with Beatriz Sarlo's *Tiempo pasado. Cultura de la memoria y giro subjetivo* (2005) and Ricardo Piglia's *El último lector* (2005): the first book, a philosophical-political positioning against the validation of testimonial narratives as historical truths; the second, an essay on "reading scenes" in Argentine literature that obliquely articulates a political reading position: that of the last reader, always in the *back*, in contrast to the leading positions of the market, the avant-gardes and/or mainstream discourses.⁹⁸

In her book, Sarlo questions what she defines as a theoretical contradiction: the status of testimonial narratives as *warrantors* of historical knowledge and truth in face

⁹⁶ Kohan has engaged historical memory in his previous novels *Los cautivos*, *Dos veces Junio*, and *Segundos afuera*. He also wrote a book on Eva Perón with Paola Cortés-Rocca, and participated on the debates on personal documentary in *Punto de Vista*.

⁹⁷ The Ezeiza massacre, the persecution of ERP and montoneros do not register in these political initiatives.

⁹⁸ In a personal interview with the author, Kohan affirmed the close relationship between *Museo de la Revolución* and Piglia's poetics of the essayistic novel. More specifically, he mentioned the influence of Piglia's *Respiración artificial*.

of the simultaneous theoretical deconstruction of the “self.” Furthermore, she denounces the convergence of the commodification of memory with what she calls “el giro subjetivo”: “una cultura de época que influye tanto sobre las historias académicas como sobre las que circulan en el mercado” (162). The subjective shift is defined as “una democratización de los actores de la historia, que da la palabra a los excluidos, a los sin título, a los sin voz” (161).⁹⁹ Sarlo considers there is alienation and contradiction in memory discourses and seeks to reverse this situation.

Against what could be called memory populism (the melodramatic acceptance of pathos as historical validation), Sarlo argues for a withdrawal from the *authenticity* of suffering in the first person narrative. Instead, she offers fictional examples, among which she includes Kohan’s *Dos veces junio*. She perceives the accepted (in)authentic historical rendering of literature as closer to the historical truth:

Si tuviera que hablar por mí, diría que encontré en la literatura (tan hostil a que se establezcan sobre ella límites de verdad) las imágenes más precisas del horror del pasado reciente y de su textura de ideas y experiencias (...) La literatura por supuesto, no disuelve todos los problemas planteados, ni puede explicarlos, pero en ella un narrador siempre piensa la experiencia *desde afuera* de la experiencia, como si los humanos pudieran apoderarse de la pesadilla y no sólo padecerla.
(166)

Here, authenticity of truth is ‘recovered’ at its original modern value, which, according to Lukács, is ciphered in the loss of unity or center to social existence in capitalism. This is why the novel renders truth ironically, as if it were always already “desde

⁹⁹ A. Wieviorka, *L’ère du témoin* (128), cited in Sarlo. It is relevant to note here that Sarlo utilizes terms that are similar to those used in the 1980s in the U.S. Cultural Wars.

fuera.” The novel’s authenticity is, as Lukács would put it, “transcendentally homeless.”¹⁰⁰

This idea of homelessness is key to Kohan’s novel. The museum, as the center of political economy, appears deconstructed, presented in the after hours with its spectacle disassembled (“Quien se queda presencia cómo desarman los decorados” 137). The novel as a museum is an empty center (oikos) whose discourses and laws (nomos) are framed “desde afuera.” Yet, the novel does not strive nostalgically to fill it with ‘truth’; rather its purpose is to expose its emptiness. Therefore, *Museo de la Revolución* deterritorializes political memory at three different levels. First, through the appropriation of the theoretical discussions of Engels, Marx, Lenin, and Trotsky, Kohan affiliates the novel’s reflection to IV International thought and its ‘homeless’ dissidence; not coincidentally the novel does not have a literal national ‘home’ or location, but rather is constructed through discourses between Mexico and Argentina.

More specifically, the novel’s treatment of the Trotsky Museum literally *locates* homelessness in regards to house, tomb, and flag:

La casa de Trotsky es hoy un museo, y antes fue una fortaleza. La casa también es una tumba, o un cementerio entero para una sola tumba. (...) Su tumba en su casa, en el patio de su casa, en su lugar privado. (...) Es la bandera de la Unión Soviética, pero la Unión Soviética hace ya seis años que no existe más. (...) La tumba y la bandera entran *ahora, es decir, desde hace seis años*, en una perturbadora relación de correspondencia. (52, my emphasis)

¹⁰⁰ The “historico-philosophical condition” of the novel is precisely to express ironically its nostalgic relationship to God or home. “Irony, with intuitive double vision, can see the lost utopian home of the idea that has become an ideal, and yet at the same time it understands that the ideal is subjectively and psychologically conditioned, because that is its only possible form of existence (...) irony has to seek the only world that is inadequate to it along the *via dolorosa* of interiority.” (92, my emphasis). Thus, the authenticity of the novel is pathetic because it expresses the human condition of homelessness. Lukács, *Theory of the Novel*.

The correlation museum-mausoleum is evident here. The museal frame, as in *El pasado*, permits the specters of ideology to appear. The material traces (house, tomb, and flag) bring to mind the history of the Soviet Union and its demise to update its global significance in the now of the narration: the Mexican Trotsky museum-mausoleum in 1995, year of the negative Tequila Effect over the South American economy, disturbingly reminds the Argentine editor of global neoliberal hegemony. The haunting relation disturbingly duplicates on the reader in the 2000s.

Second, as an iconic image of political exile, the Trotsky Museum has a place in the Argentine political exile memoirs, in terms of what Tesare's writing calls "las revoluciones fallidas." One is reminded, for instance, of Tununa Mercado's chapter "Visita guiada" in her memoirs *Estado de memoria* (1990): "Ir de visita a la casa de León Trotsky es una especie de ritual iniciático y debe creerse que sólo en ese lugar cobra alcance histórico y colectivo la suerte personal" (77-78). For Mercado, these visits reinstall individual loss into a collective horizon. Nonetheless, as much as this is reassuring, it is also ominous, as it appears in the daughter's repetitive dream: "Soñé que estábamos en la *casa* de León Trotsky, con el perro, y que no podíamos salir" (80, my emphasis). If, as Andreas Huyssen, proposes the museum-mausoleum is a space for resurrections, the exiles at the Trotsky museum, like pilgrims in contact with relics, enter a liminal space where they themselves are turned into living-dead who cannot leave the symbolic home of homelessness. Thus, the Argentine exile memory seems to open up, like that of Trotsky himself, into a collective image of the international left in the second half of the 20th century: "la frase condenaba la historia y el destino de la izquierda en los últimos cuarenta años, nuestra historia y nuestro destino" (80).

It is at this point where Kohan's novel differentiates itself from previous narratives of political memory. Not only because, to follow Sarlo's argument, it is fiction and not

an autobiography, like Mercado's. But also, and more significantly, for its revision of the links between pilgrimage, exile, and tourism in relation to the museum economy and museum boom. The museum in Kohan's novel is the paradoxical home of homelessness because its memory is like that of exiles:

Su memoria [Norma's] ha de ser la de los exiliados que nunca regresaron, ni tan siquiera a visitar parientes: una memoria fijada en detalles que ya se perdieron, una memoria que, al igual que la de los museos, es capaz de fijar precisiones justamente porque ha tenido que sustraerse del paso del tiempo. (24)

The museum as an interior with no outside, as in Benjamin's definition of the arcades, may bring the past closer. But, this of course is an illusion, a dream, a bubble that can burst. The museum contains wish images of a lost past and, by the analogy with the exile, of a lost *Heimat* (in its double register as "the place of safety to which we return and as that of lost origin which is sought in the alien world" Frow 135). Kohan's *Museo* thus exposes memory 'production' by way of an impossible illusion – that of guarding and preserving memories 'intact': "una memoria sin pasos intermedios" (25), which is proved illusory by the 'authenticity' of the novel. Like Norma – "Norma Rossi tiene el poder de poner cerca ese pasado (...) y de pronto el viejo cuaderno Gloria aparece *entre sus manos*" (25), *Museo de la Revolución*, promises (falsely) to bring a *souvenir* of the past to the reader's hands.¹⁰¹

The relationship between exiles and tourists is implied by the fact that, while in Mexico City, Marcelo not only *works* but also tours the city ("Me hago un tiempo a la tarde para ver los murales de Diego Rivera en Palacio de Gobierno", 32), guided

¹⁰¹ Here one finds similarities with the double trajectory of Piglia's *La ciudad ausente*. In the words of Idelber Avelar: "La ciudad ausente thus takes place in the contradictory juncture between the detective story's denouement-oriented poetics and Macedonio's open, unfinished, antidenouement novel." (125)

sometimes by Norma: “se ofrece a llevarme a conocer las ruinas de Teotihuacán (...) Sería imperdonable haber pasado por México e irse sin conocerlas” (35). Zygmunt Bauman has compared, in post-modernity, the condition of tourists to that of illegal immigrants and war exiles (under the category of “the vagabond”) in terms of their different success and failure to consume and travel freely. (Bauman 1998) While tourists may stay in a place as long as they want, vagabonds can stay as long as they are admitted— as long as they are wanted. As an exile, Norma is allowed to stay in Mexico but not to return to Argentina.

Tourists are, in Lukàcs’s terms, fundamentally homeless. This is evident when contrasted with pilgrims in terms of the distance and temporality in their travel. The pilgrims’ voyage’s significance is derived from “the diminishing distance separating the traveler from the previously selected destination” (Bauman 209). The pilgrim’s time-frame is always already historical as both travel and traveler are defined, religiously, as moving toward home (Mercado, Trotsky, the global left). Tourists travel in secular time, consuming time, distance, and energy without any eschatological dimension. This is why in search for ‘authentic’ experience, tourism is embedded in what John Frow defines as modernity’s “semiotics of nostalgia”: the paradox of the impossible appropriation of the Other. The exile, banned from return by laws of the home, is always in an impossible appropriation of himself or herself; he or she remains historically and hermeneutically alienated.

In this respect, *Museo de la Revolución* is, arguably, creatively nostalgic. Tourist and exile stand in tension with each other in the novel’s economy of myopic perspective: the first one visiting the museum, consuming images and narratives with no historical commitment, the other, in the background, longing for and producing alienated images and narratives of in-authenticity. These are the two poles within which the novel lays its ‘reading’ experience.

It is significant to note that the disappeared one, Tesare, alienated from home and incapable of producing himself any narrative or image but only absence¹⁰², is recognized as a tourist at the beginning of the novel. This occurs precisely when he is confronted by a ‘vagabond’, a mixture of a beggar and a street vendor woman who tries to sell him lemons at the bus stop. She catches Tesare off guard with *gratuitous* brutality “Eh, vos, porteño hijo de puta, comprame unos limones” (17). This, in turn, calls the attention of a guard who comes in Tesare’s defense: “Rajá de acá, vieja de mierda, no molestés más a los turistas” (17-18). The man hits her and finally obliges her to go: “Y que no te vuelva a ver molestando al turismo por acá” (18). Tesare stresses out, fearing the endangering of his mission, but he is also confused about what to do with the woman’s impossible business proposal: “Se pregunta qué es lo que conviene: si consultar el precio, en la ficción una escena de compra y venta, o si arrimarle algún billete ornado con el rostro de Manuel Belgrano, cediendo a la evidencia de que se trata de una limosna” (17). In this sense, she is uncanny, and in turn he becomes estranged: the paradox of this encounter is that Tesare is a fake traveler passing as a *faux voyageur* (this notion differentiates the tourist from the heroic traveler, who allegedly traveled with an ‘authentic’ interest for the culturally ‘authentic’ Frow 137). He must pass as a tourist for vagabonds, like dissidents, or abducted people, cannot do business – they are outside of economy. They cannot, by the same token, enter the museum unless they do so as abstractions (the transformation of Tesare into “el turismo”). This small vignette of the encounter with the Other condenses the logic of uneven development and the dynamics of production and consumption that sustains the modern museum and its dynamics with tourism.

¹⁰² The writings are his, but the reader may access them because someone else – Norma or Marcelo – possesses them.

However, *Museo* activates the reader's desire by promising to bring the homeless home – both Norma and Tesare.

The novel completes its theory of the museum through its analogy of museum memory and exile memory, and practices its curatorial myopic perspective by constantly blurring the transactions in the foreground while keeping the reader's attention at the background. In doing so, it succeeds in bringing the two temporalities together, fulfilling the prophetic vision of the modern museum as self-sacrificial¹⁰³: “que lo que está pasando, que lo que nos está pasando, es lo que tenía que pasar” (167). Upon reading the last entries of Tesare's notebook, finally in the hands of Marcelo, the novel ends with his determination to write: “Afuera dentro de poco, va a empezar a atardecer. Por los ventanales del parador, la puesta de sol se va a ver con la amplitud de los panoramas. Si me concentro escribiendo, sin embargo, seguramente me la voy a perder.” (171). If in globalization, tourists repeat and consume in the eternal time of neoliberal capitalism, Marcelo finds here something to write ‘home’ about. His enigmatic writing –we don't know its contents– produces the novel's souvenir. As a secular relic, the souvenir reestablishes and contests the impossible return to home: it is a *gift* that re-inscribes the desire to overcome distance, but in order to keep the desire going the novel must simultaneously leave its signifier empty –like that of Tesare, Fernanda/Norma, and the Trotsky museum.

As obvious as it seems to the reader that Fernanda and Norma are the same person, it is only suitable that Marcelo should get Tesare's papers. The use of Tesare's papers, like that of Edgar Allan Poe “Purloined Letter,” can only be potential, never actual: “but in that case the letter exists as means of power only through the final assignments

¹⁰³ “This is the silent threat implied in the museum's visual pedagogy, the fact that, as one is turned into the eye that beholds the object world from a position of scopic authority, one nonetheless never ceases to be a body that might itself become the object of an immaterial, disembodied gaze.” Andermann, *Optics of the State* (57).

of the pure signifier, namely: by prolonging its diversion” (Lacan 15). This model in the end fulfills the prophetic future vision of the *modern* museum, but leaves the reader space to consider its *assemblage*, its in-authenticity.

Crucial aspects of political consumption and political readership of Ricardo Piglia’s *El último lector* appear in Kohan’s novel to make possible the novel’s speculative museum inflation, in spite of its exhibition of the museum in ruins. The identification of these aspects of Piglia’s argument on the tradition of the reader in Argentine modern narrative will allow me to comment the crossings of the novel and the museum as stagings of desire.

In the section of *El último lector* dedicated to the iconic image of Che Guevara, Piglia models his theory of a readership capable of solidarity in isolation. It is relevant to note here that this reader resembles the figure of the modern museum curator: “el que construye el sentido en aislamiento y soledad” (137). Guevara, doctor and guerrillero, is always reading. He is *with* his comrades (in the making of social change) but also *without them* (making sense of the social change); keeping a distance marked by the aura of reading. Piglia, borrowing from Sennett on Malraux’s *Les Conquérents* (1928), calls this figure of reading “identidad purificada”: “La distancia que aparece como una forma de relación que permite estar emocionalmente siempre *un poco afuera*, para ser eficaz” (128, my emphasis).¹⁰⁴ Reading constantly, Guevara is in the political, but simultaneously outside of it; he traverses its discourses through its edges: “Guevara se mueve por los bordes” (129). Piglia’s theory of Guevara’s

¹⁰⁴ Che Guevara’s model carries with it a re-definition of the relationship between care and control: “Entra como médico y sale como guerrillero.”(129) Piglia’s discussion of Guevara’s picture as a young medicine student, reminds one of Benjamin’s discussion of the Baroque emblems and allows one to see the curator uncannily laying among/with the objects, but simultaneously a bit ‘outside’ thanks to its gesture: “Hay una foto inolvidable de Guevara joven, cuando era estudiante de medicina. Se ve un cadáver desnudo con el cuerpo abierto en la mesa de disección y un grupo de estudiantes, con delantal blanco, serios y un poco impresionados. Guevara es el único que se ríe, una sonrisa abierta, divertida. La relación distanciada con la muerte está ahí cristalizada, su ironía de siempre.” (128) Guevara’s smile in Piglia’s rendering is the enigma of the icon.

‘guerrilla reading’ explains the efficacy of Kohan’s deterritorialization of political memory, as both follow the economy of the icon and the creation of its enigma: an identity defined within the realm of the political by a simultaneous withdrawal from it that produces a blank space, a ‘new’ subjectivity that does not *represent* the political but *expresses* its laws.¹⁰⁵

The relationship between literature and politics, which Piglia projects onto the modern Argentine canon considers how to overcome cultural *habitus* as an isolating bubble and, at the same time, reinforces the ‘productivity’ of this friction: “Todo esto forma parte de una tradición literaria: cómo salir de la biblioteca, cómo pasar a la vida, cómo entrar en la acción, cómo ir a la experiencia, cómo salir del mundo libresco, cómo cortar con la lectura en tanto lugar de encierro” (127).¹⁰⁶ This is the conundrum of the man of letters – of the “letrado” to use Rama’s term; which Piglia *solves* through the figure of Guevara.

The ethics of Guevara’s *habitus* is the constant distrust that exasperates and disturbs the division between friend and foe, becoming stricter when closer to *home*:

La categoría básica de la política para Carl Schmitt (y también para Mao Tse-tung), la distinción entre amigo y enemigo se disuelve para Guevara, el enemigo es fijo y está definido. La categoría del amigo es

¹⁰⁵ I am following here Marie-José Mondzain explanation of the doctrine of the image and the icon.

¹⁰⁶ “En definitiva, la pregunta “qué es un lector” es también la pregunta del otro. La pregunta – a veces irónica, a veces agresiva, a veces piadosa, pero siempre política – del que mira leer al que lee. La literatura argentina está recorrida por esa tensión. Muchas veces la oposición entre civilización y barbarie se ha representado de ese modo. Como si ésa fuera su encarnación básica, como si allí se jugaran la política y las relaciones de poder. Recordemos la escena en la que Mansilla (uno de los más grandes escritores argentinos del siglo XIX, autor de *Una excursión a los indios ranqueles*) lee *Le Contrat social* de Rousseau – en francés, desde luego – sentado bajo un árbol, en el campo, cerca de un matadero donde se sacrifican las reses, hasta que su padre (el general Lucio N. Mansilla, héroe de la Vuelta al Obligado) se le acerca y le dice “Mi amigo, cuando uno es sobrino de Don Juan de Rosas no lee *El contrato social* si se ha de quedar en este país, o se va de él si quiere leerlo con provecho.” Y finalmente lo envía al exilio. En esa escena que Mansilla cuenta en sus *Causeries* y que transcurre en 1846, se cristalizan redes de toda la cultura argentina del siglo XIX. La civilización y la barbarie, como decretó Sarmiento.” One may add tourism and the authentic, at the turn of the 20th century.

más fluida y ahí se aplica la política. La única garantía de que la categoría de amigo persista es el sacrificio absoluto y la muerte.

(134)

This difference is most significant because of its fluidity, of its constant deconstruction of itself. One finds here again the identification of enemy and host in the Latin term *hospis*. In terms of the present discussion, the opposition translates as that between tourist and native, as the capitalist redefinition of the guest/host pair. The Other to Guevara, is Marlowe, the private investigator, who works within capitalism.

Piglia's notorious theory about hardboiled detective narrative illuminating history as "crime fiction" allowed Jens Andermann to map Argentine museum fiction as "counter-institutional narratives" in an article from 1997: "Total Recall: Texts and Corpses, the Museums in Argentinian Narrative."¹⁰⁷ From this perspective Macedonio's machine in *La ciudad ausente*, reads as "a discourse of negativity contrary to the vigilant discourses of historical realism," whereby the production of history performed under dictatorship is re-narrated as crime history (Andermann 28), which creates its own precursors in Macedonio Fernández's *Museo de la novela de la Eterna* (1920s to 1940s) and Borges' *El hacedor* (1960). The former as an inversion of the dynamics of production and consumption – where the reader produces the

¹⁰⁷ This is a pervasive motive in Piglia's production. See specially, *Crítica y ficción* and *La ciudad ausente*. Andermann discusses collection formation and display in Museo de la Plata at the end of the 19th century. Museum hierarchical curatorship, when assimilated to state violence narrates history as a 'civilizing autopsy' in the sense that it confirms/inscribes the death of cultural practices including them in their collection – in this sense, the hegemonic institutional museum as the state's *écriture conquérante* is a discourse of historical realism whose function is to historicize nature and naturalize the nation. From this perspective, the critic finds Piglia's argument of history as crime fiction most compelling in the confirmation of the crimes under dictatorship in 1984: "In a way, we might think of the *Nunca más*, the haunting report on torture and repression during the most recent military regime, as the museum of this sinister face of totalitarian representation, or, as a character called Macedonio in Ricardo Piglia's novel *La ciudad ausente* puts it: 'La tortura es la culminación de esa aspiración al saber, el grado máximo de la inteligencia institucional.'" (Andermann 26)

story/history that Macedonio's novel constructs 'in absence'; the latter as a way of resorting to pre-modern cabinets of curiosity assemblage in the "Museo" section, as a means to contest the modern museum's homogenizing narrative. By contrast, Kohan's counter-institutional narrative does not direct itself toward the institutionalized narratives of state only, but to the broader cultural economy in which memory narratives circulate in Argentina and abroad, including those of Piglia's and of Kohan's himself. If in *La ciudad ausente*, the circulating memory fragments held some traces of utopia; in *Museo de la Revolución*, with Marcelo seeking to "tantear una posible puesta en circulación de sus libros en el mercado mexicano" (20), this value seems lost, reminding one of Lukács's transcendental homelessness of the novel with an economic vengeance.

Kohan's adoption of the Guevara model and simultaneously the Marlowe model in his novel works toward the re-installation of a political conflict that the cultural consumption of memory in liberalized economy has erased. Yet, this re-installation of political conflict does not appear in the shape of the production of an auratic object (which would be Tesare's memoirs) but in the localization of conflicted desire within the novel, in the museum, which is, essentially a space for canonization. Thus the novel frustrates the experience of the auratic, working aesthetically on relations, rather than objects. Significantly, the novel transforms into a caricature of hardboiled detective novels, once Marcelo realizes that it is impossible to find the original link that brought him to Norma:

- Quiero saber por dónde vino el contacto de ella: de qué lado vino.

Sebastián baja el tono.

- Mirá, Marcelo, estás alterado. No entiendo nada de lo que decís, no sé de qué lados hablás. ¿Hablás de política? Ya viste que los peronistas ahora se abrazan con el almirante Rojas. Y viste que

Galimberti ahora trabaja para Jorge Born. *Yo ya no puedo explicar más quién viene de qué lado.* El dato a Poletto no sé quién se lo pasó. Capaz fue alguien que se enteró de casualidad. Ahora que el cambio es favorable, cualquier poligrillo tiene aires de grandeza y se va a tomar el sol a Cancún. Alguien supo y contó que una argentina que vive en México tenía un libro inédito de un desaparecido. Si no lo tiene, no importa.

- Lo tiene, lo tiene. Claro que lo tiene. Eso es lo terrible: que lo tiene.

- Bueno, Marcelo, si lo quiere tener que lo tenga. Igual no se lo pienso publicar.

- Pero lo tiene de la manera más turbia, ¿te das cuenta?

- Aflojá con el chile, Marcelo. Me voy a dormir. (159, my emphasis)

Kohan turns Marcelo into a *private* investigator at the moment when Sebastián confirms the dissolution of the pairs friend/foe, host/guest upon which the novel has been working (including that of Marcelo and Sebastián). This, in turn, relates to the crisis of institutional politics in Argentina: sides are not clear anymore. This homelessness is at the center of the ethics of Marlowe as described in *El último lector*: “El perdedor, el que no entra en el juego, es el único que conserva la decencia y la lucidez. Ser un loser es la condición de la mirada crítica” (98). The detective, a man of letters *fallen* into the world of crime, is a loser because he has renounced to live within social relations but not to that which defines them: “lucha solo y *por dinero* contra el mal” (98). If capital, as Marx puts it, is “a social relation of production,” then the isolation in Marlowe’s bubble is made of hollowed-out capital, of its ruins.

Such a realization about the perversion of social relations to which he belongs is the moment of the definition of the detective as a loser. The same for Marcelo, who

breaking the link to *home*, decides to go *solo*, and, according to the characteristics of the genre, follows Norma – as Piglia reminds us “las mujeres están asociadas al dinero” (93) – investing from his own money in order to get the manuscripts.

Marcelo’s autonomous gesture equates political independence and private funding. Like money, he circulates alone: he changes his return plane ticket: “Ese trámite comporta una multa y la afronto de mi propio bolsillo”, and rents a car: “También ese gasto lo asumo yo, por lo que finalmente eligo el auto más chico y más económico” (161). Here one finds the liberal illusion that assimilates economic independence to moral responsibility. He reports back home, but decides not to turn in the Tesare memoirs to the ‘repressive forces of the publishing market’: he tells Gallo the papers are worthless, “no vale la pena publicarlo” (171). In doing so, he resembles the circulation of the empty signifier that cannot reproduce anything other than itself: money. Marcelo, like money, enters in the realms of expenditure. He spends money in the plane and the car, has sex with Norma without getting any pleasure (“ni siquiera nos une lo que sucede a la vez, ni siquiera eso”, 167) and, finally, is himself consumed by his desire to write, in promise of fulfillment of the reader’s desire to read: “Si me concentro escribiendo, sin embargo, seguramente me la voy a perder” (171).

Thus, *Museo de la Revolución* introduces contradictions into this ‘heroic’ economy of memory. Repetition in *Museo de la Revolución* creates nostalgia ironically: in the heroic vision of cultural economy, Marcelo seems closer to the 19th century voyager, not to the tourist. He travels in search of discourse and in the end appears as writing his journal, he does not have a camera, and therefore he does not seem in search for scenes or views.¹⁰⁸ But, as Marcelo emerges from the hotel into the highway after having his final encounter with Norma, he sees an enormous publicity *sign*:

¹⁰⁸ According to Dean McCannell, tourism, as a quest for authentic experience in a post-industrial world, is bound to produce its own simulacrum of the ‘authentic’. The production of sights (the picture of a picture) allows the tourist to ‘know/consume’ the world.

Es enorme. Exhibe una impactante propaganda de Nike: un inmenso atleta negro, casi tan inmenso como el propio cartel que lo contiene, está a punto de saltar, se diría que sobre la calle o sobre mi auto (al que aplastaría). De acuerdo con los nuevos parámetros que rigen las estrategias de la publicidad, no se ve cuál es la marca de la ropa que el atleta usa, aunque se infiere que es Nike. (169)

This reminds us of Norma's discussion on Coca-Cola and other brands in the definition of the local and the global. Marcelo faces the sublime of advertisement – propaganda in Spanish. He meets the threatening image of Nike and Michael Jordan as his medium of passage back into the world in the present –this is the first time it is not through Norma's reading. In the world of global branding it is difficult to distinguish between inside and outside; it is a world where the gaze, transformed into a global tourist gaze, is always already in presence of signs: "Jordan and Nike are emblematic of a new paradigm that eliminates all barriers between branding and culture, *leaving no room* whatsoever for unmarked space" (Klein, *No Logo* 59). In contrast with it, the novel inscribes its desire for a memory that can distinguish significant sides. But rather than longing blindly for this lost home, the novel stretches its contradiction and places them in full view, contrasting its anachronism with signs of changing global times, like that of Nike or Coca-Cola. The political reading model in Piglia creates a bubble of desire that preserves the reader (and its cultural capital) in isolation. *Museo de la Revolución* is in conflict with this exclusive capital. The museum and the novel are, in fact, bourgeois modes of consumption of cultural capital. But, while the novel is read in isolation, the museum forces one to share and expose oneself to others.

Tedium

“El deseo inflacionario de los manuscritos, al que se refería Barthes, se devalúa y se convierte en déficit, y ese déficit está en la escritura. Existen libros publicados que desean a un comprador, y aun la Obra de un Autor que desea a un Lector; pero difícilmente pueda decirse que exista, en estos casos, un texto que desea una lectura,” (8) writes Kohan in his polemic article entitled “Más acá del bien y del mal.” Using the Nietzschean reference to place his query close to home, the writer insists: “Que para hablar de literatura y mercado haya que hablar de venta de libros es ya una victoria del mercado: un punto a favor de la percepción contemporánea de que el mercado es todo (y que por tanto no tiene afuera)” (12). Kohan signals toward a sort of blind spot in Argentine literature, where “la vanguardia y el mercado han dejado de funcionar como antagonistas” (11). How, is it possible to produce value when this friction is dissolved? In other words, if *écriture* is supposed to be a *revolutionary* practice, how can *écriture* continue to be *écriture* in the market? This is, in fact, a question that traverses the novels I discuss in this chapter.

It is relevant to note here that the transformations of the museum in neoliberalism, which accompany the demise of the sovereign state, also accompany that of literature’s privileged position within what Ángel Rama called “la ciudad letrada.”¹⁰⁹ The crisis of the museum then, in terms of what Kohan describes, may be understood as a crisis of the liberal imagination that understands literature as a *liberal practice of the spirit*, independent from the market. The production of value, as it stems from this perspective, should be beyond the market that consumes it. As this chapter shows, in

¹⁰⁹ For a discussion on the end of literature in Latin America, see Brett Levinson’s *The Ends of Literature*. (2001)

Kohan's own novel these two sides (production and consumption) appear in conflict with each other. Rather than assuming the harmonization of *écriture* and market, *Museo de la Revolución*, I argue, tries to accrue 'value,' emphasizing this conflict.

In an interview published the same year as Kohan's article, Alan Pauls proposes a similar revolutionary destructive attitude against the canons of the past:

No hay que creer que se acabó el valor, porque la variante más posmoderna, conservadora o cínica es que ahora que se acabaron las jerarquías, no hay valor. Yo creo que es al revés: hay que acabar con las jerarquías para producir un nuevo valor. El valor tiene que estar ahí, presente. (...) Lo único que hemos hecho, en el mejor de los casos – y es algo que no se ha hecho mucho todavía aquí –, fue desmontar, desmenuzar, desactivar eventualmente un sistema de valores que ya no funciona, que autorizaba dogmatismos naturalizados que ya no reconocíamos. (67)

Yet, the disassembling of hierarchies is already done. Again, the question seems to be how can value be accrued in the absence of friction? By placing itself against the capitalization of memory and of literature as mourning, Pauls tries to generate 'value' in *El pasado*.

At the conjuncture of the neoliberal Menem economics, the problematic of the market faced by the generation of Pauls and Kohan in the 1990s¹¹⁰ seemed completely new, unprecedented in the works of authors like Juan José Saer or Ricardo Piglia, prominent figures of Argentine literature in those years. Consider this passage from an article by Daniel Link on Argentine literary consumption and production in the 1990s:

¹¹⁰ Though they do not belong to the same generation chronologically, they are generally considered part of the generation that began publishing in the 1980s and 1990s.

Las nubes y Plata quemada clausuran la literatura argentina del siglo XX en el sentido que clausuran un modo de entender la literatura: *un modo de leerla, un modo de escribirla y, sobre todo, un modo de acceder a ella (es decir un modo de circulación)* (...) Todo lo que hay en esos libros sólo puede leerse como *una ruina* que poco o nada tiene que ver con el presente (es decir: con las condiciones que permiten que esos libros lleguen hasta nosotros y que, una vez entre nosotros, sean objeto de una atención crítica.) O, si se prefiere, un estado de la imaginación técnica. (Link 18-19, my emphasis)

It is precisely at the juncture of crisis of liberal and technical imagination where *El pasado* and *Museo de la Revolución* confront the ‘narrative’ possibilities of the novel vis-à-vis the idea of the museum. Thus, I have brought closer the museum and the novel, not in terms of the legal-political similarities of the novel and the modern museum (Andermann’s interpretation of museum narratives counter-institutional), but in their economic-political similarities (the administration of home and icons) in neoliberalism. If the narrative projects can be understood as curatorial it is because their work (sampling, collecting, re-organizing, exhibiting, etc) is performed at a moment when they strive to circulate and produce within, and simultaneously against, the very institutions that value their work in assemblage (*un modo de leerla, un modo de escribirla y, sobre todo, un modo de acceder a ella*).¹¹¹

However, one cannot fail to acknowledge that political memory occupies a capital place in contemporary Argentine canon. Here is the double bind of political memory: repetition creates value and it is also exhausting: “los relatos históricos más

¹¹¹ For a discussion of curatorship as an institution in-between art history, academia, art fairs and the market, see Carlos Basualdo, “The Unstable Institution.”

provocativos de la década [1990s] desplazan sus modos alusivo-alegóricos a referencias de segundo grado, como si se sintiera que el recurso de usar un pasado nacional ‘verdadero’ para decir el presente estuviera retóricamente gastado” (Avellaneda 131). The museum as a locus for ‘revolutionary’ writing in Pauls and Kohan is telling of this double bind: it conjugates the avant-gardist anti-museum drive, but also the decadent, desperate gesture of differentiating their consumption as valuable from that of the masses – in this case, of an economy of memory already canonized.

Wary of these conjunctures but also willing to invest in them, these writers bring vampires and tourists into the museum. Inhabiting the border between tradition and the new, the elite and the masses, home and homelessness, vampires and tourists are figures of desire and of economic discourse, always at odds with satisfaction through unstable relations with capital, memory, and images. In *El pasado*, together with vampires, one finds saturation; in Kohan’s *Museo de la Revolución*, the tourist is a figure of constant deferral. Saturation and deferral are worked out by these authors as ways of the economy of memory turned back to the reader as ideological interpellations, were they re-inscribe friction to produce value.

As modes of the market, saturation and deferral also produce tedium. The novelty in capitalism according to Benjamin produces “hellishly repetitive time” –illustrated by wish images placed *in abyme*. In their questioning of a productivity that can be co-opted by the economy of memory, *El pasado* and *Museo de la Revolución* enter the realms of death drive, the economy of excess as described by Bataille in the *Accursed Share*, sacrificing bourgeois ‘productivity’. In their speculation for value, they also enter the threshold of the transitory revolutionary moment of the museum, which as Didier Maleuvre reminds us, hastily transforms itself into a conservative act.

(Maleuvre 13-17) In fact, monotony and the new are not that far away, and so are the museum and the market: vampires and tourist are figures of capital unrest.

CONCLUSIONS

In the prologue of *El último lector* (2005), Ricardo Piglia re-writes Jorge Luis Borges' well-known short story "El aleph." An unnamed protagonist visits Russell, a man who hides an infinite replica of Buenos Aires inside his house: "tenía un centro pero no tenía fin"(16). Before introducing him to the replica, Russell shows the protagonist a peculiar map that includes its viewer: "Usted está ahora aquí. – Hizo una cruz –. Es éste. – Sonrió" (15). Thus, Piglia alludes to another text by Borges, "Del rigor en la ciencia," and its "mapa inútil" in the "Museo" of *El hacedor*. But, whereas in "El aleph" and in "Museo", the fantastic originates in the *auteur* as visionary and collector, in Piglia's "aleph," fantastic vision is possible because of technological reproduction. Russell (the realist) is a photographer, his city is a "máquina sinóptica." Visuality and reading come together in Piglia's assimilation of the act of reading and photography. Nonetheless, the technological reproduction does not guarantee democratic vision. The arbitrary law of this private museum, "la construcción sólo puede ser visitada por un espectador por vez," is justified by the protagonist: "[e]l fotógrafo reproduce, en la contemplación de la ciudad, el acto de leer" (12).

Russell's rule of isolated contemplation resembles that of poet Carlos Wieder in Roberto Bolaño's *Estrella distante* (2000): "Uno por uno, señores, el arte de Chile no admite aglomeraciones"(93). Wieder is a pilot who writes poetry on the Chilean skies while he secretly commits and photographs crime.¹¹² One night he arranges an

¹¹² Ina Jennerjan's article "Escritos en los cielos y fotografías en el infierno. Las 'acciones de arte' de Carlos Ramírez Hoffman, según Roberto Bolaño" (2002) argues that the art actions of Hoffman/Wieder refer to the Chilean neo-avant-garde and the art collective CADA studied in the first chapter of this dissertation. "Carlos Ramírez Hoffman. Santiago de Chile, 1950 – Lloret del Mar, España, 1998." is Carlos Wieder's predecessor in Bolaño's mock historical encyclopedia *La literatura nazi en América* (1996). In the last entry of the book, "Ramírez Hoffman, el infame," while the investigator-narrator is taken prisoner after Pinochet's coup, Ramírez Hoffman makes a career as an artist under the protection of the elite in power. The narrator, an alter ego of Bolaño, witnesses Ramírez Hoffman's first aerial inscription of poetry, his first 'acto poético,' from his cell (184). Here Bolaño clearly alludes to poet Raúl Zurita's project of inscribing 15 verses of his trilogy "Anteparaiso" (1982) with the aid of five

exhibition of his art at an apartment in an exclusive neighborhood in Santiago for a selected group of guests: young military men, pilots, journalists, a right wing avant-garde poet, Wieder's father and a woman – “que se sepa a la exposición sólo acudió una mujer, Tatiana von Beck Iraola.” (88) She is the first to enter the exhibit:

La Tatiana de aquella noche, recuerda Muñoz Cano con melancolía ligeramente teñida de horror, era una muchacha hermosa y confiada y entró en el cuarto con la esperanza de encontrar retratos heroicos o aburridas fotos de los cielos de Chile (...) No había pasado ni un minuto cuando Tatiana von Beck volvió a salir. Estaba pálida y desencajada. Todos la vieron. Ella miró a Wieder – parecía como si le fuera a decir algo pero no encontrara las palabras – y luego trató de llegar al baño. No pudo. Vomitó en el pasillo (..) (94-95)

The visions that appear in Bolaño and in Piglia are both perversely sublime visions that are beyond measure. Observers leave the room speechless: “–¿Ha visto? – preguntó. Asentí sin hablar” (Piglia 16). The vision is exclusive: personal, untranslatable, in-transferable. And, one may add, because of that, desirable. While these private museums do not keep auratic *original* objects, the auratic lurks in the sublime experience of technological reproduction.

According to Susan Buck-Morss, photography, in contrast to verbal language, “creates a visual image taken off of the sur-face of the world [that] sends out two lines

aeroplanes across the sky over New York City. *Estrella distante* reads as a further elaboration of the relationship between Hoffman/Wieder and the narrator investigator, who this time follows Wieder from Chile to Spain. Yet, also another figure of *La literatura nazi en América*, Willy Schürholz also creates artistic interventions after Zurita: “La figura se sirve del mismo tipo de acción de arte y landart del que había hecho uso el artista chileno Raúl Zurita en Agosto del 1993” (Jennerjhan 75), as Zurita had verses from his “Vida Nueva” inscribed in the Atacama deserts. While Jennerjhan's argument about Bolaño's elaboration on many aspects of Chilean neo-avant-garde discourse and practice holds, it must be noted that these interventions by Zurita do not make part of CADA's production.

of force, one toward the viewer, the other one toward (any aspect of) the world” (“Visual Studies and Global Imagination”, 17). These lines create connections through which viewers, as a collective, may create new *theories* (theorein) of the world. With the progressive abstraction of social and art *matter*, the museum in late-capitalism raises expectations about unrestrained freedom as emancipating and democratic. But this condition is always in tension with the bind of capital. The museum was and remains a capitalist institution and, therefore, it is always exclusive: Wieder’s guests are at the exhibition because of their relation to power. The museum economy is determined by the administration of the experience that takes place inside of exhibition room. By isolating the viewer, the photographer cancels out the museum’s potential as a political space. In silence, the guests eat and drink (consume) from the remainders of the party, while they put down the photographs. This museum economy profits from the isolation of the viewer. So does the museum economy in Piglia’s prologue: the protagonist *sees* Russell’s replica because he *reads* it as if looking, alone, through the lens of a camera.

Bolaño’s novel and Piglia’s essay work upon the idea of aesthetic appreciation as cultural capital, something that Bourdieu calls “distinction.” In Wieder’s tale, Bolaño brings together avant-gardism and the Pinochet coup as technological languages with similar destructive powers: “lo llamaron para que hiciera algo sonado en la capital, algo espectacular que demostrara al mundo que el nuevo régimen y el arte de vanguardia no estaban, ni mucho menos, reñidos” (86). Piglia’s prologue wants to point at or produce a subtle difference between two abstractions: money and Russell’s model. The protagonist brings with him a coin that he gives Russell before going into the room; Russell returns it to him when he comes back, after commanding that he let others know what he saw, thus leaving open the possibility of similar future exchanges. Here we have money, that abstraction that cannot reproduce anything but

itself, already circulating: “no representa nada, salvo lo que se ha perdido” (13). However, whereas money may circulate freely; aesthetic vision does not –one must first know how to read in order to have access to the city. Moreover, in order to read, aesthetically and politically, Piglia suggests that one has to be always *outside, behind, at the back of* mainstream circulation. This position creates friction, value. The “last reader” as a theoretical subject is always “inactual, siempre está al límite” (189). Piglia wants to separate what Bolaño puts together because it implies his own position as author.

As abstractions, the coin and Russell’s Buenos Aires may both have the same value, which, as Marx affirmed, is not in the object as such but in the object as a sign. “La diminuta ciudad es como una moneda griega hundida en el lecho de un río que brilla bajo la última luz de la tarde” (13). If they both are signs that precede their original, how can one differentiate them? This is where Piglia sets the limit: “El arte es como una forma sintética del universo, un microcosmos que reproduce la especificidad del mundo. La moneda griega es un modelo en escala de toda una economía y de toda una civilización y a la vez *es sólo un objeto extraviado* que brilla al atardecer en la transparencia del agua” (13, my emphasis). Symbolic capital, as Bourdieu affirmed, always has a double reality; some trace of a difference between them is there for the last reader to recognize. Yet, the *last solitary reader* is himself already a sign of modernity’s abstraction acceleration (“Hay un anacronismo esencial en el Quijote que define su modo de leer”, 189). As the technological subject goes mainstream in post-modernity and abstraction speeds up, this significant position may be about to disappear. Herein lies its heroic *anachronic* nature; in the “hellish time of capitalism” as Walter Benjamin called it, the new is death.

Elitism and democracy, apocalypse and utopia appear in the works I analyze as the poles that define value in cultural economy. Thus, the triangle of museum, market, and

the new emerges at the turn of the 21th century as a disturbing feature that contrast to the modern Latin American tradition that had paired them otherwise since the turn of the 20th century: on the one hand, there was the market and the new, and, on the other, the museum and the new. One finds the first opposition synthesized in the sad smile of the petrified poet who keeps turning the wheel of a ‘new song’ to the amusement of the bourgeois king in Rubén Darío’s remarkable *memento mori* “El rey burgués” (1888). The second appears in Vicente Huidobro’s famous “Arte poética” (1916), where he claims the avant-garde’s ability to electrify the dead muscles of tradition: “Estamos en el ciclo de los nervios / El músculo cuelga, / como recuerdo, en los museos.”¹¹³ In the 20th century, the cultural turn around the 1960s, defined by Jameson as the expansion of culture into social space,¹¹⁴ brings with it the possibility of analyzing cultural transformations *along with* economic transformations rather than placing the former always in a role dependent of the latter. In the museum economy of neoliberalism, museum and market converge as spaces for capital-exhibition, and the ritual of novelty in both of them enforces the value of the new.

As reflections on canonization, on the construction of history, and on cultural consumption, museum fictions explore this convergence as a source of anxiety: how can value be produced if the museum and the market are no longer antagonistic? That is, how can there be significant difference where there seems to be no conflict?

Martín Kohan summarizes Piglia’s response thus: “si hay una vanguardia, entonces, es

¹¹³ Latin American avant-garde poetry considers itself in tension with the museum, its force is an anti-museistic drive; except in Brazil. For the relation between poesia concreta and the museum, see Gonzalo Aguilar. *Poesia Concreta Brasileira. As Vanguardas na Encruzilhada Modernista*. Sao Paulo: Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 2005.

¹¹⁴ “The very sphere of culture itself has expanded, becoming coterminous with market society in such a way that the cultural is no longer limited to its earlier, traditional or experimental forms, but it is consumed throughout daily life itself, in shopping, in professional activities, in the various often televisual forms of leisure, in production for the market and in the consumption of those market products, indeed in the most secret folds and corners of the quotidian.” *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983-1998* (110).

la vanguardia de un ejército que retrocede.” His is a reaction to the cultural economy I have analyzed in this dissertation through the figures of expenditure, accountability and inflation (12). Thus, the horizon that defines this work is a crisis of value: what enters in the museum (an object, an image, a relationship, a story) enters the market, and vice versa. Value, as the new, exists only transitorily –that is, while it circulates, as fiction, towards or against each one of the two poles.

I found inspiration to model my research in institutional critique, a mode of artistic inquiry on the nature of the museum as a canonizing institution complicit with social-political and economic power relations that initiated in the 1960s.¹¹⁵ A clear example of institutional critique’s questioning about the institutions’ relation to the power is Hans Haacke’s *MoMa Poll* (1970), an installation at the MoMa that asked visitors to participate in the census, “Would the fact that Governor Rockefeller has not denounced President Nixon's Indochina policy be a reason for you not voting for him in November?” Such a question also implies that the artist, who poses it at the museum, is part of the very institution he criticizes. In this sense, Michael Broodthaers’ installation “Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles” (1968), which took place in the artist’s apartment, conflates the site of production with the museum, a site of perception/consumption. As Douglas Crimp notes, this also “calls into question the ideological determination of their separation: the bourgeois liberal categories of *private* and *public*” (210). I read in Broodthaer’s work the will of the artist to implicate himself as part of a “museum fiction.” With these intersections in mind, I researched the museum fiction *in the fictions* in contrast to the museum fiction *in reality*. My interest was to find conflict at these junctions that would, transversally,

¹¹⁵Associated with the minimalist focus on perception, as well as with conceptual art and theory of art, institutional critique, was launched in the 1960s by artists including Daniel Buren and Marcel Broodthast in Europe, and Michael Asher and Hans Haacke in the US.

illuminate transformations in the cultural economy after the establishment of neoliberalism in the region.

The museum cannot be conceived of without the obscene (off/scene); there is always a dialectical relationship between the background and the foreground. In my study I have placed mourning for the loss originated by political violence in the background. The foreground is occupied by moments that mark the introduction of neoliberalism in the region (Chile at the turn of the 1980s), and then its consolidation, when economy and culture are already transformed by it (Peru and Argentina in the 2000s). If, as Rosalind Krauss argues, “the industrialized museum has a need for the technologized subject,” (612) one can say that the neoliberal museum in Latin America needs the liberal subject. Or, more precisely, the democratic liberal subject. This holds true for the works I analyze in chapters two and three, and arguably for chapter one, where the works I analyze coincide with the period in which Pinochet cynically declared Chile’s democracy *restored*. This is the obscenity of neoliberalism: with consumption in the foreground, production is less obvious.¹¹⁶

In my analysis, museum economies express the spirit of their times in the reciprocal relation between economy and culture. They do so through the figures of waste, accountability, and inflation. Thus, one finds a significant expression of neoliberal cultural economy in the consideration of the museum and not the library or the archive (centers of the legal/scriptural par excellence) as the symbolic frontier against which social and individual representations are tested or measured. If, as Roberto González Echevarría suggests about the modern novel and the *boom*, archival fictions return to law as origin in order to delve into the archival structure proper¹¹⁷;

¹¹⁶ If mourning appears in the museum, it is soon instrumentalized. For a critical discussion of post-dictatorial critical thought, see *Pensar en/la postdictadura*. Nelly Richard, Alberto Moreiras, ed. Santiago de Chile: Editorial Cuarto Propio, 2001.

¹¹⁷ Roberto González Echevarría. *Myth and Archive* (1990). I do not intend to affirm or celebrate a transformation of “the lettered city” into a ‘performed city’ – as this may very well be a transformation

museum fictions after the 1980s, *make visible* the rituals of ideology (“the reproduction of the relations of production”), in images and in performance, as much as in language discourses. As I suggest above in the examples of Piglia and Bolaño, the museum experience implies watching others watch, or watching while being watched by others. This awareness of the surveillance circle is the strongest point of Yuyachkani’s in *Sin título*, where it appears re-signified as political responsibility. Together with the empowerment of the viewer as performer, Yuyachkani emphasizes awareness of a shared performative space. One must consider that accountability as the condition of taking responsibility for one’s own actions is not necessarily a feature of the law proper, but of the performance of the individual and/or institutions within legal and economic frameworks. Thus, one recognizes in the emergence of accountability, together with transparency, the new ‘features’ of political economy in neoliberal democracies vis-à-vis the global expansion of trademarks and branding.¹¹⁸

Similarly, the problematic of representation, the coincidence of art and life, and the progressive abstraction, crystallizes in the figures of waste and inflation that relate to the blurring of the private and public realms. The earliest museum fiction that relates to this is Flaubert’s *Bouvard et Pécuchet* (1881). Flaubert’s unfinished novel exposes the private museum as a space of folly linked to duplication and expenditure. Not only are the two copy-clerks determined to double everything, but through their performance they underscore yet another mirroring relation: that of the public museum and the bourgeois interior. As their museum degenerates into accumulating vain efforts to privatize that which is otherwise public, the novel dwells in the uncanny relationship between the museum and the interior. Flaubert stages the poles of the

that favors uneven development still further, both locally and globally, reinforcing the distance between the real and the symbolic city as Rama originally affirmed about the *ciudad letrada*.

¹¹⁸ For further elaboration on visibility and globalization in relation to trademarks, see Susan Buck-Morss’ “A Global Public Sphere?”

museum desire: possession and dispossession, construction and destruction. Not only because of their compulsion to repeat but also because of their resolution to spend endlessly, one recognizes Freud's definition of death drive as the other side of bourgeois productivity – not gratuitously Bouvard and Pécuchet's interior explodes.¹¹⁹ As Flaubert was writing, the history of the relationship between the 19th century bourgeois interior and the museum as its *other* was in the making. One may argue that the death drive of *Bouvard and Pécuchet*'s tragic comedy is connected to this period where expenditure and constitution were two sides of the same coin, and the culture of mass consumption was on the rise.

Benjamin's *Arcades Project* shows how, in the wake of the transition of the French Revolution and the emergence of the private individual, the desire for the past expressed in the museum and in the bourgeois interior is a desire for sovereignty: the dispossession of aristocracy is the possibility of the 'domestic reign' of Louise Phillippe, the transitional "Citizen-King." This may also be why the museum's revolutionary drive so hastily transforms into conservatism, as Didier Maleuvre and Jens Andermann have noted. While one can trace the origins of consumer society at the turn of the 19th century, it is only in neoliberalism that the figure of "sovereign consumer" appears as a celebration of the assimilation of free-trade and free-choice as a feature of market's *nature*. If dream-work is supposed to express a repressed desire *that defines the subject*, what happens when the desire is fulfilled, when the fantasy is reached?

The term "boom," the onomatopoeia of a bubble bursting, makes evident the economic resonance that defined one of the most important literary phenomena of the last century, which ends precisely where this dissertation begins. I have found it useful

¹¹⁹ For a deconstructivist discussion of Flaubert's museum explosion, see Eugenio Donato's "The Museum's Furnace."

to think of strategies for the creation of value in the Latin American museum in terms of bubbles and bubble bursting. Ángel Rama in his *Más allá del boom – literatura y mercado* (1981) argued that the *boom* created literary value along with the market drive that made it possible as cultural event. In other words, Rama pointed to the ideology of modernization present in the boom, according to which nations and their literatures progress *together*, converging in the market. Globalization and neoliberalism contest this economy, or, to put it differently, they dream another dream.¹²⁰

Marx and Althusser coincided in describing ideology as dream. The latter, after Marx, coincided with Freud that ideology as dream has no history (like the unconscious), but claimed that “ideologies have a history of their own” (34). At this point, one must go back to the idea of Benjamin about the arcades as the ‘interior with no outside’ that defines the dream of the bourgeoisie. The interior and the exterior dialectics in Benjamin implies a profound structure of analysis, like that of the Freudian psychoanalytic dynamics of the conscious and the unconscious. If, given media and technology transformations, the difference between interior and exterior, like the distinction between private and public, collapses or becomes radically blurred, one is invited to think of ideology in terms of a hyper-real assemblage with no depth – which, like the global, has no outside.¹²¹

¹²⁰ In this respect the conclusion of John King’s essay “The boom and the Latin American novel” is telling: “Commenting on the polemic some twenty five years after the event, Vargas Llosa argued that the polemic should ‘remind us that writers must be judged for what they write, and not by anything else, because to try to introduce to literary analysis criteria like those of residence (or nation, political or religious affiliation, or race) can only lead to arbitrariness and to confusion)’ Yet in the increasingly polarized world of the early seventies, it was precisely issues of commitment to nation, politics, and race that would come to dominate political and cultural debates. The moment of the Boom had come to an end.” (78)

¹²¹ Maybe the Lacanian affirmation that the unconscious, as the “discourse of the other” is not *lying beneath the surface* of the conscious, but rather in the gaps of speech, in the stumbling points, allows one to reconsider or reorient the discussion toward the surface of ideology, as sur-face of the world. Yet, as I already suggested, when considering the museum today as expression of ideology, one must also resort to visual and performance studies. In relation to these, the positions of Buck-Morss and

Besides this, the dissertation has allowed me to formulate possibilities for a discussion on the historiographic models that read the avant-gardes and decadence at the turn of the 20th century in contrast to the avant-gardes and decadence at the turn of the next century as developments of the consumer society. In this sense, the naturalization of the market in neoliberalism may contrast with the naturalization of history in the early Republics, as both utilize the scientific language of history/market to insert Latin American history into the hegemonic trade of Western tradition.

Another inquiry that stems from this dissertation is the connection between the rhetoric of tourism and the museum in Latin America. If, after Frow and Bauman, one may question the semiotics of nostalgia in tourism and the museum in neoliberalism through a commodification of the Third World (by means of a false appraisal and promotion of wealth of tourist *sites*, among them, the museum), the recent book *La fiesta vigilada* (2007) by Cuban novelist Antonio José Ponte adds to the present project. In it, Ponte narrates the commodification of Cuba after the collapse of the COMECON by way of tourism that feeds on nostalgia for the 1950s and 1960s Cuba. Closer to the novels of Pauls and Kohan, Ponte shares with them the vision of the museum in ruins, but also the authorial gesture of writing against but also toward the museum.

Moreover, the inclusion of Ponte's novel may open the possibility to yet another assemblage of museum economies in the contemporary Latin America. As a comparison of Ponte's novel with that of Edmundo Desnoes' *Memorias del subdesarrollo* (1968), allows for a reading of the museum as a bourgeois form of

Yúdice share a similar interest in providing an alternative reorientation to the present global cultural economy. While Yúdice resorts to a democratic potential in performativity – the processes “by which identities and the entities of social reality are constituted by repeated approximation of models (i.e., the normative) as well as by those “remainders” (“constitutive exclusions”) that fall short.” (31); Buck Morss argues for the reorientation of the processes of globalization and the new media toward its revolutionary potential as a form of cognition that may create rhizomic connections. (“Visual Studies and Global Imagination”)

appraisal of cultural capital standing in tension with a transitional subject in revolutionary Havana; Yuyachkani's *Sin título* and Mario Vargas Llosa's *El hablador* (1987) could be contrasted as forms of opening or closing the anthropological gap as a feature of Peruvian cultural economy; and finally, the pairing of *Museo de la Revolución* to Ricardo Piglia's *La ciudad ausente* as its immediate precedent could serve as a means to contrast their use of the Borgesian hypallage as an alternative mode of production of value, both as a narrative model that the author adopts to produce counter-narratives of history, and as a means to situate himself within the Argentine canon.

Artists and their work make part of the same social relation they work upon – “Capital, is, also, a social relation” Marx said. A form that always expresses something other than itself, the museum frames capital, allowing one to perceive one's own participation in its different injunctions. As a contribution to the understanding of a changing cultural economy, my work seeks to participate in the future transformations of the Latin American museum.

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