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Olegario da Costa Maya Neto

El Che Vive: Memory, Cinema, Art and Politics

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Orientador: Prof ª. Drª.Anelise Reich Corseuil
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El Che Vive: Memory, Cinema, Art and Politics

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To Che Guevara and to all who have fought for humankind's emancipation.

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Lo han cubierto/ de afiches de pancartas
de voces en los muros
de agravios retroactivos
de honores a destiempo
lo han transformado en pieza de consumo
en memoria trivial
en ayer sin retorno
en rabia embalsamada
han decidido usarlo como epílogo
como última thule de la inocencia vana
como añejo arquetipo de santo o satanás
y quizás han resuelto que la única forma
de desprenderse de Él
o dejarlo al garete
es vaciarlo de lumbre
convertirlo en un héroe
de mármol o de yeso
y por lo tanto inmóvil
o mejor como mito
o silueta o fantasma
del pasado pisado
sin embargo los ojos incerrables del Che
miran como si no pudieran no mirar
asombrados tal vez de que el mundo no entienda
que treinta años después siga bregando
dulce y tenaz por la dicha del hombre.
(BENEDETTI, 2009).

RESUMO

Che Guevara, morto há mais de cinquenta anos, surpreende por seu persistente ressurgimento através de imagens. Essa fascinação pelas imagens de Che se explica pelo conceito da ansiedade de lembrar e não-lembrar, fruto da demanda de rememoração e redenção – no sentido Benjaminiano (LÖWY; BENJAMIN, 2005) –, a qual é expressa através do olhar fantasmagórico de Che. Tal olhar fantasmagórico é ambivalente podendo potencialmente levar a imaginações artísticas e ações emancipatórias que recriem Che, ou a apropriações capitalistas ou outras formas de tentar controlar as imagens de Che. Na tese, são criadas algumas pontes entre o Marxismo e o pensamento decolonial, tal como entre o conceito de ação criativa Arendtiana (1998), da consciência antecipatória de Bloch (1996) e a cosmovisão ancestral (WILSON, 2001; LACLAU, 2016; ANZALDUA, 2012), e no entendimento amplo do conceito de alienação/fetiche. Diversos exemplos contemporâneos de imaginações artísticas e ações emancipatórias são discutidos, desafiando a retórica de suposta irrelevância política das imagens de Che. Tentativas de apropriação por corporações capitalistas, por um movimento nazista e por um artista gráfico também são discutidos a partir de uma redefinição ampla da teoria da alienação. Um conto e dois poemas de minha autoria sobre Che também são discutidos na tese, assim como cinco filmes: The Last Hours of Che Guevara (THE LAST HOURS, 2016), El Dia que Me Quieras (EL DIA, 1997), El Che de los Gays (EL CHE DE LOS GAYS, 2004), Personal Che (PERSONAL CHE, 2007), and Che! (1969).

Palavras-chaves: Che Guevara. Cinema. Rememoração e Rendenção.

ABSTRACT

Che Guevara, who died more than fifty years ago, keeps resurging through images. This fascination with Che's images is explained by the concept of the anxiety of remembering and non-remembering, caused by the demand for remembrance and redemption – in the Benjaminian sense (LÖWY; BENJAMIN, 2005) –, which is expressed through Che's ghostly look. Such a ghostly look is ambivalent and can potentially lead to artistic imaginations and emancipatory actions that recreate Che, or to capitalist appropriations or other ways of trying to control Che's images. In this doctoral dissertation, some bridges are created between Marxism and decolonial thought, such as between the Arendt's concept of creative action (ARENDT, 1998), Bloch's anticipatory consciousness (BLOCH, 1996) and cosmovision (WILSON, 2001; LACLAU, 2016; ANZALDUA , 2012), and in the broad understanding of the concept of alienation / fetish. Several contemporary examples of artistic imaginations and emancipatory actions are discussed, challenging the rhetoric of supposed political irrelevance of Che's images. Attempts at appropriation by capitalist corporations, by a Nazi movement and by a graphic artist are also discussed from a plural redefinition of the theory of alienation. A short story and two poems of my own about Che are also discussed in the dissertation, as well as five films: *The Last Hours of Che Guevara* (THE LAST HOURS, 2016), *El Dia que Me Quieras* (EL DIA, 1997), *El Che de los Gays* (EL CHE DE LOS GAYS, 2004), *Personal Che* (PERSONAL CHE, 2007), and *Che!* (1969).

Keywords: Che Guevara. Cinema.Remembrance and Redemption.

LIST OF FIGURES

ABBREVIATION LIST

ABNT Associação Brasileira de Normas Técnicas

EcuRed Enciclopedia colaborativa en la red cubana

USA United States Of America

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1 INTRODUCTION: *EL CHE VIVE*

¿Por qué será que el Che tiene esta peligrosa costumbre de
seguir naciendo? Cuanto más lo insultan, lo manipulan,
lo traicionan, más nace. Él es el más nacedor de todos.
¿No será porque el Che decía lo que pensaba, y hacía lo que decía?
¿No será porque eso sigue siendo tan extraordinario,
en un mundo donde las palabras y los hechos muy rara vez se encuentran,
y cuando se encuentran no se saludan, porque no se reconocen?
(GALEANO, 2015).

Alguna gente se muere
Para volver a nacer.
Y el que tenga alguna duda
Que se lo pregunte al Che
Nada más
(YUPANQUI, 2020).

1.1 MY STORY WITH CHE

My story with Che Guevara begins in my childhood and adolescence. Growing up in a conservative family, I was taught I should always be wary of communists and revolutionaries. Especially so by my father, an Army retired colonel who had been on active duty during the Civil-Military Dictatorship in Brazil. Later on, between the ages of ten and seventeen, I studied in a military school. Back then, I used to relieve the nineteenth century dream of Brazil as a great country and to despise anyone who championed socialism, especially Che Guevara.

Looking back, I probably despised Che because he had somehow managed to become an inspiration for many groups and movements who resisted order and even aspired to socialism. The Landless Movement – MST in Portuguese –, for example, was growing during the 1990s. I remember reading about it on *Veja* – a conservative Brazilian magazine – and listening to my father ranting about the "reds." Interestingly, while recently searching on *Veja*'s online database, I was able to find a 1998 photograph of a Che flag in a MST camp (Picture 01) along with the subtitle "Che Guevara's image in a Northeast camp: sandinism, maoism and the Church" (PETRY; OINEGUE, 1998, p. 45, *my translation*[1]). Based on the article's accusatory tone, the inclusion of the photo seems to be justified as proof of the supposedly secret communist agenda of MST.

[1] "Imagem de Che Guevara em acampamento no Nordeste: sandinismo, maoísmo e Igreja" (PETRY; OINEGUE, 1998, p. 45).Concerning texts published in other languages, all translations are mine if not otherwise indicated.

Picture 1– Che flag in MST camp.

Source: (PETRY; OINEGUE, 1998, p. 45).

Picture 2– Brazilian teenager wearing a Che T-shirt illegally arrested by the Police.

Source: (BERGAMO, 2015).

Despite the context of its publication, this photo illustrates Che's political potency of resurgence – a potency that both Galeano and Yupanqui talk about in the epigraphs –, of being born again by the hands of those that take inspiration from him to face their present struggles. Although I could not define it as I can now, it was precisely that potential that troubled me then. Still now, I can say such potential still troubles me, but for very different reasons. Although I probably was disgusted at such photograph when I read the article in 1998, my reaction to it would have been completely different during my college years,[2] distinct even from the reaction I have now.

[2] As I look at this photo and reminisce, the memories and thoughts do not come chronologically ordered. On the contrary, they come as they please, following no particular order. Different moments in the past are mixed, intertwined, almost blurred, with this moment in the present. It is I who create a chronological narrative in order to help the reader to follow my line of thought. After all, we are all so used to positivism and its linear progression of time that it would be very challenging for the reader to be confronted from the start. But I warn

It was only at the university that I learned to think critically and to think for myself. At the same time, I got involved in the students' union and in different movements. I even eventually became a member of an extreme-left party! Indeed, the me of those times would have looked at this photograph with a completely different set of eyes compared to my childhood and adolescence. During my undergraduate years, for me, Che was a revolutionary leader who believed in a socialist world and died fighting capitalism.

However, there was not much that distinguished Che from other revolutionaries, such as Trotsky, Lenin or Mao, in my mind at the time. It was only many years later, when I became a master student, that I took a longer and deeper look at Che. I started learning more about the particularities of Che's history, what distinguished him from other revolutionary leaders.

Reading different biographies and watching several biographical documentaries, I learned he was seen as a restless individual, brave but not reckless (ANDERSON, 2010), intelligent and self-taught in many ways, warm yet ascetic (CHE GUEVARA, 1973), with the tendency to be rigorous and even harsh sometimes regarding matters of discipline (VILLEGAS, 1997). Best known for being a guerrilla leader and a medical doctor, he also made contributions in organizing schools for illiterate peasant warriors in Sierra Maestra and helped setting up *Radio Rebelde*[3] (ANDERSON, 2010), he supervised appeals during the judgment of former Batista secret service goons after the victory of the Cuban revolution (ERNESTO GUEVARA, 2016), and he contributed to the 1960s Marxist economics debate regarding the future of Cuba while implementing measures to industrialize Cuba (TABLADA, 2008; YAFFE, 2009).

More importantly, he was a Latin American who tried to combine the struggle for international socialism with Simón Bolivar's dream of creating a united continent, *Patria Grande*. He contributed with his own theory of revolution – known as *foquismo*, it was very different from the Communist Party's approach – and his own ethical theory – known as *el hombre*[4] *nuevo* (TABLADA, 2008; LÖWY, 2009). Despite helping secure Soviet and Chinese support for the Cuban revolution and despite being the international emissary of

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my reader that I will endeavor not to be positivistic later on in this introduction and in the analytic chapters that follow it.

[3] Founded on February 24 1958, it transmitted from the depths of the Sierra Maestra. It was one of the main channels of communication for those in other provinces to keep up to date regarding the MI6 movement and the guerrilla. More information is available at http://www.radiorebelde.cu/quienes-somos/

[4] Throughout the dissertation I call attention to how problematic it is, in terms of gender, to picture man or men as stand-ins for humankind.

Cuba between 1959 and 1965, he was also a critic of Soviet and Chinese international policies (TABLADA, 2008; LÖWY, 2009).

Besides the specificities of Che's history, I also learned that what differentiated Che from other revolutionaries was the intensity of how his image has been flowing in very different contexts, from art pieces in galleries and on the internet to murals on the streets, flags (Picture 1), on T-shirts worn by protesters such as a student occupying schools in Brazil in 2015 (Picture 2), posters, photographs, movies, and even on memorabilia.[5] In my Master Thesis (MAYA NETO, 2017a), I analyzed the fascination surrounding Che's image based on Roland Barthes's (1991) conceptualization of myth as depoliticized speech in bourgeois society. I argued that it is impossible to completely separate Che's image from historical and political meanings associated to Guevara. In addition, I analyzed two movies – *The Motorcycle Diaries* (THE MOTORCYCLE DIARIES, 2004) and *El Che*: *Investigating a Legend* (EL CHE, 1998) – regarding how Che was represented[6] and how such representation contributed to the process of mythologizing Che Guevara.

Although in my thesis I challenged the scholarly rhetoric of Che's image becoming frozen in time and empty of meaning, based on Walter Benjamin's concept of actualizing[7] the past, I still had not profoundly realized how important the idea of memory has been to my research.[8] In addition, I would like to highlight the memorial symbolism of 2017,[9] the year I defended my Master Thesis: it was both the fiftieth anniversary of Che Guevara's death and the one hundredth anniversary of the Soviet Revolution.

And, finally, my story with Che continues through the writing of this dissertation. What motivated to carry on the research was the desire to counter-argue the rhetoric of Che's political irrelevance in the Twenty-First Century. Indeed, I offer plenty of artistic and

[5] Instead of using the words knickknacks or souvenirs, I prefer the term memorabilia, which is akin to the idea of memory and of remembrance that I am developing in this Dissertation. Knickknack and souvenir tend to further trivialize the transformation of Che's image into merchandise, a process that is already too banalized. In chapter five, I discuss in detail the process of fetishizing Che's image, questioning the dissociation between memory and image, and pointing out the political implications of trying to make Che's image meaningless.

[6] Representation was the term I used in my Master Thesis. However, in this Doctoral Dissertation, I will use instead the term recreation, which emphasizes the artistical and imaginative elements in acting upon and through Che's image. Moreover, recreation is more adequate to the theoretical framework of my current research.

[7] Also called remembrance. Although in my Thesis I chose the term "actualize", I now prefer "remembrance", since it makes the issue of memory more overt and since the former may lead to misinterpretations regarding the idea of progress. Walter Benjamin has a very distinct but coherent vision of history, which will gradually resonate throughout this Dissertation.

[8] I realize now I had already been interested in other revolutionary leaders or other controversial historical figures, such as Nelson Mandela (MAYA NETO, 2014), Carlos Lamarca (MAYA NETO, 2017b), Patrick Pearse (MAYA NETO, 2019), and La Malinche (MAYA NETO, 2018a).

[9] 2019, the year I write this chapter, is the sixtieth anniversary of the Cuban Revolution. It is impossible to think of Che Guevara – even his image – completely dissociated from the collective struggle of the Cuban people.

activist/revolutionary evidence in Chapter Two. In addition, I realized during my Master Thesis the need for an open-ended and plural theoretical system that reasonably accounted for the fascination around Che's images, while also critically analyzing both its more overtly politicizing recreation[10] and the capitalist appropriation attempts.

1.2 DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES REGARDING CHE'S IMAGES

Since I am dealing with different images from different times and with different perspectives, I find that a non-positivistic approach is what better suits this dissertation. Therefore, Walter Benjamin's concepts of remembrance-redemption and time of memory are vital for understanding the analysis. Indeed, remembrance and redemption are two key concepts in Benjamin's theses on history – a combination of Marxism, Jewish Messianism and German Romaticism, Benjamin's last work is a proposition for a Marxism free from the ideas of progress and evolution –. According to Löwy,

> the whole of the document […] is oriented towards both the past – history, remembrance – and the present: redemptive action […] Messianic power is not solely contemplative – the 'gaze history directs onto a past'. It is also active: redemption is a revolutionary task that is performed in the present. It is not merely a question of memory, but […] . of winning a game against a powerful and dangerous opponent. 'Our coming was expected on earth' to rescue the defeated from oblivion, but also to continue and, if possible, complete their struggle for emancipation (LÖWY, 2005, pgs. 33-4).

"Rescue the defeated from oblivion" and "complete their struggle for emancipation" – remembrance and redemption, respectively – make sense if we remember Benjamin's vision of history, since "whoever has emerged victorious participates to this day in the triumphal procession in which current rulers step over those who are lying prostrate" (BENJAMIN *apud* LÖWY, 2005, p. 47, Thesis VII). In other words, for Benjamin, history is a continuum of dominance, in which victors of the past relay to new victors power that is based on oppression. In that sense, "those who are lying prostrate" may refer both to the oppressed of the present and those who fought to end oppression but were defeated.

Thus, by remembering those who fought but fell, we rescue them from being forgotten and, at the same time, we gather strength to complete their struggle. Only

[10] I use the word in a slightly different way from the usual. If we consider the etimology of "recreation", we see that it refers in the late Latin *recreātiō* to a "'spiritual refreshment, amusement, new birth', going back to Latin, 'act of restoring', from *recreāre* 'to make new, restore, revive'" (RECREATION, 2020).

revolutionary action can temporarily or definitively disrupt the funeral procession since "messianic/revolutionary redemption is a task assigned to us by past generations. There is no Messiah sent from Heaven: we are ourselves the Messiah; each generation possesses a small portion of messianic power, which it must strive to exert" (LÖWY, 2005, p. 32).

We can see both remembrance and redemption through[11] Pictures 1 and 2. In both examples, the image of Che emerges as a potential reminder of the Cuban Revolution and the commitment for international socialism he died fighting for. But this is not a contemplative exercise since memory is acted upon, it is brought alive, for example, through the redemptive action of MST in organizing landless peasants in Brazil (Picture 1) and of the students protesting against the closing of ninety four state schools in São Paulo in 2015 (Picture 2).[12]

In addition, in both cases we have instances of punitive reactions to Che's image: in *Veja*'s 1998 article, the photo (Picture 1) was used to denounce the supposedly secret agenda of MST and to call for such menace to be stopped; in the 2015 photo (Picture 2), we see the Military Police has illegally handcuffed a teenager protester. But the violence is even more explicit in a preceding photo (Picture 3): a police officer is brutally chocking the same teenager protester wearing a Che T-shirt. I wonder what is so threatening in a teenager wearing a Che T-shirt protesting for schools to remain open. As we can see, punitive actions towards Che's images and people associated with them are an indication of their political potential of remembrance and of inspiring redemptive struggles.

Besides rhetorical violence and violence directed to individuals associated with Che's images, there are also attempts to destroy Che art. As if by destroying one image, an individual or group could also destroy Che's potential of evoking or of being invoked. One example is the blowing up of Praxíteles Vázquez's 1970 sculpture of Che Guevara.[13] The first sculpture of Che to be erected in the world after his death, it was the result of a collective effort of the inhabitants of the Chilean commune of San Miguel, a place with a history of workers's organization and support for the Socialist Party. Furthermore, the six meter statue had "a ramp that invited [the public] to go up and get near the brass Che [which] appeared to relive wearing combat fatigues, with extend arms in a V shape offering his rifle to the Chilean

[11] I am using the preposition "through" instead of "in" or "at" on purpose since remembrance and redemption are not contained in the images being discussed, but rather they traverse the images.

[12] More information about the Occupy movement is São Paulo is available at https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mobiliza%C3%A7%C3%A3o_estudantil_em_S%C3%A3o_Paulo_em_2015

[13] There are other examples of violence towards Che art, but they will be discussed in Chapter two.

people while moving forward and rallying his past-present-future comrades"[14] (LAUTARO, 2013) (Picture 4).

Picture 3– The same student is chocked by the Police before being handcuffed.

Source: (BERGAMO, 2015).

Picture 4 – Fidel Castro (holding his chin) visits Vázquez's statue of Che in 1971.

Source: (OLLER, 2017).

Vázquez's statue was perhaps especially troubling because it made Che alive, only three years after Guevara was killed, and during Salvador Allende's government. It was a very powerful resurgence, as if Che, despite being defeated and killed, had come back to remind us, to call us to continue fighting. But the strengthening of the extreme right in Chile throughout 1973 and the military coup – backed by the United States – in September of the same year put a stop both to the dream of achieving Socialism through a peaceful way and to Vázquez's Che remembrance-redemption. First, on April 22, a paramilitary group called

[14] "*Y una rampa invitaba a subir y a estar junto al combativo Che de bronce. Parecía revivír vestido con uniforme de campaña, con sus brazos extendidos en forma de "V" como ofreciendo su fusil al pueblo chileno, mientras avanzaba y arengaba a viva voz con sus compañeros. Compañeros pasados, presentes y futuros*" (Lautaro 2013).

Patria y Libertad exploded “Che’s” head using dynamite. Second, on September 15, four days after Allende was murdered, a military patrol tore down “Che’s” body from the pedestal (LAUTARDO, 2013). It was as if the Chilean paramilitary group and army wanted to kill Che again, even though he had been dead for almost six years then. I argue they wanted to kill Che’s capacity to resurge as image, or yet, its potential for remembrance-redemption.

The violence of punitive actions and discourses are not the only form of tension arising as reaction to Che’s images. There is also tension when Che is fetishized (Picture 5), between its remembrance-redemption potential and becoming a merchandise, and there might also be tension depending on the unusual combinations people may create (Picture 6). Picture five is one example of how corporations – Unilever, in this case – try to transform Che into a product. The issue of fetishism will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three. And Picture six is an example of tension that may result from juxtapositions of images, as well as their context and reception. Leonel Camasão, a LGBTQ activist and former PSOL candidate for governor of the Brazilian Santa Catarina province in 2018, shared in his social medias a photograph he took in downtown Florianópolis of a car bearing both Che and Bolsonaro stickers. Instead of pointing out the bizarre juxtaposition, Camasão only wrote “find the contradiction” (CAMASÃO, 2018).

Picture 5 – Magnum’s Cherry Guevara.

Source: (ZIFF, 2006, p.113).

Picture 6 – Che sticker (hood) and Bolsonaro sticker (windshield).

Source: (CAMASÃO, 2018).

The tension we see through Pictures 1-6 is not incidental. In fact, Maria-Carolina Cambre identify such tension with a "contest over his [Che Guevara's] memory," between "the culture industry that sells his image and the anti-systemic movements that revere him" (CAMBRE, 2015, p.27). According to her, "Che Guevara's image has not been domesticated by capitalism or the tension around it would not exist" (CAMBRE, 2015, p.27). When we compare images of a fetishized Che, such as Picture 5, with Che's images that have received punitive reactions, such as Pictures 1-4, we can better understand Cambre's argument. In fact, Cambre's argument of a contest over Che's memory resonates Benjamin's remembrance-redemption.

However, I am not arguing that there has always to be tension amid all Che's images or between a Che image, its context and reception. Instead, I argue that there is the possibility of tension, especially when it concerns specifically the potential for fetishizing Che's image and for acting upon Che's image for remembrance-redemption purposes, or regarding punitive reactions and rhetoric against instances of remembrance. I further discuss this issue later on in this Introduction, when I talk about constellations, and in Chapters Two and Three.

1.2.1 Reductionist perspectives

Nonetheless, we also perceive tension in the diverging views of scholars regarding

the political relevance of Che's images. For instance, there are scholars who insist on the transformation of Che in merchandise as a sign of Che's political irrelevance. For them, Che's image has become frozen in time and completely static. For Alvaro Llosa,[15] for example, "Che Guevara, who did so much (or was it so little?) to destroy capitalism, is now a quintessential capitalist brand. […] [his image], thirty-eight years after his death, is still the logo of revolutionary (or is it capitalist?) chic" (LLOSA, 2005). Llosa, however, contradicts himself by simultaneously pointing out the irony behind fetishizing Che and claiming there has been a "political and ideological collapse of all that Guevara represented" (LLOSA, 2005). If the latter was true, according to his own argumentation, how could there still be irony in fetishizing Che?

A similar perspective is presented by J.P. Spicer-Escalante,[16] who considers that Che is "an example of Marx's notion of commodity fetishism where social relationships become objectified relationships between both commodities and money" and, as a result, "consumers' understanding of Guevara as an ideologically driven doctor or a revolutionary ideologue becomes unimportant, even irrelevant, to their ability to identify with a commodified Che" (ESCALANTE, 2014, p.83). Although Escalante's argument regarding commodity fetishism is certainly seductive, much more elaborate than Llosa's, Escalante seems to conveniently have forgotten that, for Marx, fetishism[17] is a social relationship that must constantly be reproduced in capitalism, and, as such, it can be resisted and even overthrown.

Besides the issue of fetishism, Escalante explains Che's capacity of resurgence based on a progressive process of "denaturing" his image, to the point of making it empty of any meaning. According to Escalante, "the ensuing popularity of the image is also a prime indicator of how far the original […] was becoming increasingly removed from its historical reality" (ESCALANTE, 2014, p.79) to the point that

> the image comes to have no relation to any reality whatsoever: it has become its own pure simulacrum. Che exists as a parodic counter-statement of himself. Here the parody implies some degree of prior knowledge of the Guevara legacy but no ideological commitment to that history (ESCALANTE, 2014, p.84).

Similarly to Llosa, Escalante contradicts himself in his urge to both laugh at and deny any meaning of Che's images. After all, how can the image "have no relation to any

[15] Alvaro Vargas Llosa is a writer and political commentator in Peru. The eldest son of Mario Vargas Llosa, he is a senior member of the Independent Institute, an academic and lobbying organization with neoliberal ideas where his article was published.

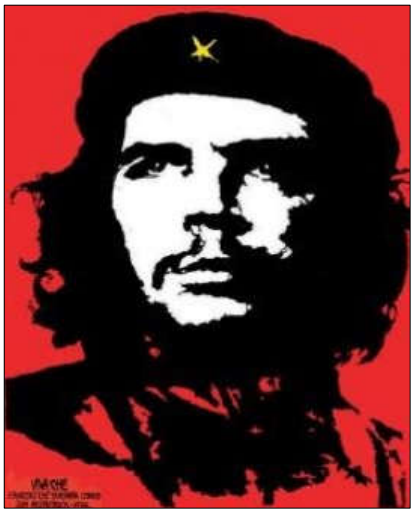
[16] Escalante is a Professor at Utah State University. Besides Che Guevara and Marxism, his research interests include Latin American Literature.

[17] I discuss the issue of fetishism in Chapter Three.

reality whatsoever" but, at the same time, be a parody that implies "prior knowledge" of Guevara's legacy? Escalante's rhetoric of loss is related to the ideas of progress and evolution implied by the chronology he creates of Che's images. For him, first Alberto Korda captured a moment on March 5 1960 (Picture 7), then the Cuban photographer "denatured" Che by cropping the photograph, followed by its transformation into a political poster in the late 1960s, and after that Pop Art "co-opted" Che's image (Picture 8) – making it even more abstract – which was finally followed by the "manipulation" of Che in films, plays and literature (ESCALANTE, 2014, pgs. 76-81).

Picture 7– Alberto Korda's negative. The cropped version was called *Guerrillero Heroico* by Korda.

Source: (KEMP, 2012, p.177).



Picture 8– Jim Fitzpatrick's 1968 *Che Guevara*.
Source: (KEMP, 2012, p.185).

Although didactic, such chronology distances the supposed[18] "origin" of Che's images, Korda's photograph, which becomes removed in time. In addition, a chronology implies continuity and progress, turning Che's image into a passive element that is available for continuous "co-opting" and consumption, until it evolves to become nothing more than a brand. Therefore, Escalante is basically insisting on the immobility of Che's images. Besides having an extremely reductionist perspective, by resorting to a chronology of Che's images, Escalante is creating acedia based on melancholia or nostalgia for a lost time, with the ensuing powerlessness of who can only gaze in retrospect but cannot do anything. In other words, it is a perspective that is based on immobility, leaving little or no creative movement for the observer of Che's images, making consumption the only way people can relate to them, concluding non-surprisingly with the loss of any remembrance-redemption potential.

In contrast, Benjamin's understanding of history and of time, especially the already mentioned ideas of remembrance-redemption, allows us to look differently at images of Che, considering a multiplicity of moments at the same time. For instance, I argue that the Che flag in MST's camp (Picture 1) simultaneously may refer to a multitude of moments – depending on who is looking at it – such as the La Coubre memorial in 1960 during which Korda took Che's photograph (Picture 7), to Pop Art recreations of Korda's photo in the late 1960s (Picture 8), to the predominantly-peasant guerrilla army which fought during the Cuban Revolution, to the peasant army under the leadership of Zapata during the Mexican Revolution, and to Brazilian revolutionary organizations such as ALN[19] and MR-8[20] that took up Che Guevara's struggle after his death. Therefore, one image of Che acts as a portal to constellations[21] that condense time, linking past-present-future and connecting one with other Che's images by means of interaction between image, viewer and environment. Such interaction relies heavily on a person's memory of previously seen Che's images, as well as on interpretation and creativity. Not only there is enough room for the observer's movement, but the perspective I propose in this Dissertation also acknowledges the possibility of every

[18] Korda's is not the only famous photograph of Che. Freddy Alborta1s photo of Che's corpse staring at us is also very famous. I will talk more about them in Chapter two. Regardless, it is very problematic to establish an original, since the art that took inspiration from Korda's poster was also recreating Che. To employ the words "original" and "derivative", therefore, would deny the creative potential of Che imaginations.

[19] *Ação Libertadora Nacional*, was formed by Carlos Marighella and dissidents of the Brazilian Communist Party after Marighella disobeyed orders not to participate of a Latin American Solidarity Organization conference in Cuba.

[20] Revolutionary Movement October 8 was formed by dissidents of the Brazilian Communist Party. The organization was named in reference to the date of Che Guevara's murder. Carlos Lamarca joined the organization in 1971. MR-8 is still active in Brazil.

[21] I discuss in more detail the idea of constellation at the end of this Introduction.

person to recreate Che. Furthermore, because constellations are a "time of memory" (LÖWY, 2005, p.95), they carry the potential for remembrance-redemption. I recap this perspective, discussing it in more detail, at the end of this Introduction.

Going back to Escalante, another point I would like to make is that his rendering of Pop Art is very simplistic. According to Escalante, the first Pop Art rendering of Che, by the Irish artist Jim Fitzpatrick[22] in 1968 (Picture 8), "only increased the image's and the icon's cachet" despite Fitzpatrick's "ideological proclivities in favor of social change," since "the aesthetic process fomented by Pop Art further removed the Korda image from the reality of social conflict from which it sprang" (ESCALANTE, 2014, p.80). Escalante even refers to Warhol's Che (Picture 9) as "a testament to the original image's journey from its ideological referent towards the patently bourgeois and materialistic world of Pop Art" (ESCALANTE, 2014, p.80). A contrasting view of Pop Art and of Warhol's Che, however, is offered by Jonathan Green:

> Pop Art itself is a rejection of traditional figuration, rhetoric, and rendition. Its egalitarian anti-art stance was the perfect corollary for Che's anti-establishment attitude. Pop's depersonalization simplified Che's image and helped align him with the masses, at the same time certifying his image as everyman. Traditional art relished ambiguity, chance, introspection and the logic of uncertainty. Pop's aesthetic pushed towards absolutely unambiguous and uninflected meaning and repeatability. Warholian Pop deals with outlines and surfaces rather than full chiaroscuro. This reduction of the real world provided the perfect vehicle for distancing the image from the complexities and ambiguities of actual life and the reduction of the political into stereotype. Che lives in these images as an ideal of abstraction (GREEN, Jonathan *apud* ZIFF, 2006, p. 81).

Both Escalante and Green converge regarding how Pop Art contributed with a more abstract Che. However, while Escalante argues Pop Art completely *removed* Che from "reality," Green contends it *distanced* the image from "reality," with the consequent survival of Che as an ideal of abstraction. Moreover, while for Escalante Pop Art is only commercial, Green argues that it had a critical stance towards traditional art. Overall, Green's citation is helpful as a counterpoint to Escalante, regarding Pop Art and Che, but his argument of distancing from "reality" and reduction to political stereotype still imply the idea of loss.

For the distinction between reality and art to be effective, one has to presuppose reality is the realm of concreteness while art is the realm of abstraction. Basing an argument on such separation is problematic because reality has become increasingly fluid and difficult to clearly define. Additionally, in many ways reality can be, or at least be perceived as,

[22] Although Fitzpatrick's imagination of Che is extremely famous, he was not the first Pop Artist to recreate Che. As I discuss in Chapter Two, Brazilian artist Claudio Tozzi was probably the first artist to recreate Che after Che's death.

immaterial and art can be material. After all, internet and social networks have become part of our reality and, on the other hand, art can materially be found printed in books, or exhibited in galleries, museums, murals, or as graffiti on walls, etc. Furthermore, to say that Pop Art reduced the complexities of the real world is to imply that Korda's Che was somehow a more complete copy of reality because it is a photograph. Such implication resonates the scientific enthusiasm of late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries for photography and cinema as "more real" than art, which has been largely criticized in Film Studies.

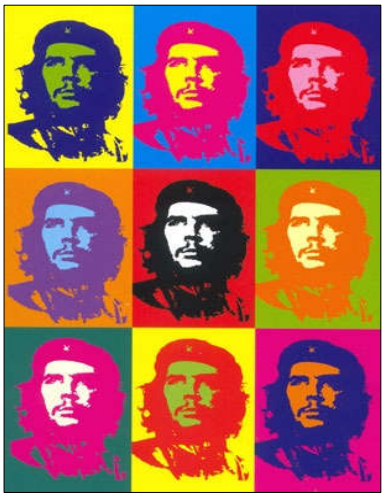
Going back to the authors that discuss Che's resurgence, Michael Casey[23] (2009), similarly to Llosa and Escalante, argues that Che's image is frozen and that it is only relevant because it has become a brand. However, he is the one to present the most developed argument among the three authors. His book reads as a mixture of travelogue and journalist essay, since Casey knits together experiences he had in different countries he visited, in order to do research, with key interviews to give insight regarding Che's image[24]. He also offers many examples of Che in art, music, and film. However, despite his rich research findings, Casey reduces all the possibilities he encountered to a single explanation for Che's endurance: Che is nothing but a political and economical brand. Moreover, like Escalante – who unsurprisingly cites Casey several times –, Casey views Che's image as frozen:

> The photographer [Korda] depressed the trigger. Light rays, dim as they were on that cloudy day, bounced off the features of his subject and then raced through the lens and the open shutter. When it landed on the Kodak Plus-X Film on the other side, it caused a chemical reaction among the tiny silver halide crystals embedded in the celluloid. A millisecond of time in a tiny part of our ever-changing universe had been *frozen* for eternity [...]. The first *frozen* millisecond, manifest as a striking photograph of Ernesto "Che" Guevara de la Serna, would eventually take the world by storm (Casey 27-8, *my emphasis*).

[23] At the time of writing his book, Casey was editor of the Wall Street Journal. He is now a Senior Lecturer at MIT Sloan School of Management.

[24] Like Escalante, Casey does not use the word "image". Instead, they prefer "icon". At the end of this Introduction, I discuss different terms used in association to Che, such as "image," "icon," "symbol," "myth," among others.

Picture 9– Andy Warhol's Che, attributed to Gerard Malanga



Source: (ZIFF, 2006, p. 79).

Picture 10– DFace's *CliChe.*

Source: (WEISER, 2013, p. 701).

As we can see above, Casey recurs to a scientific language, full of technical details about photography, to both create suspense and to lend authority to his narrative, as if he were merely stating a fact in saying that a moment of Che's life was frozen into an image. Throughout his book, there are several more instances of the words "frozen" or "froze" to refer to Korda's photograph of Che or to the action of taking a photograph. For example, Casey asks "how did this frozen millisecond become so powerful? How was it filled with meaning and then repeatedly emptied and refilled again with new meanings?" (CASEY, 2009, p.32). He is even more explicit when he calls "Korda's frozen moment […] a *static* template" (CASEY, 2009, p.50, *my emphasis*).

As I mentioned before regarding Escalante, the insistence on the immobility of Che

is related to its fetishizing. Llosa, Escalante and Casey insist on the perspective of Che's images as static in order to deny the latter's potential for remembrance-redemption and to support their argument that the fetishizing of Che is the only reasonable explanation for his resurgence.

But there is a fundamental contradiction in the argument of a "static template" flowing with great intensity as it is emptied and refilled with meanings again and again. "Static" comes "from [the] Greek *statikos* 'causing to stand, skilled in weighing', from stem of *histanai* 'to make to stand, set; to place in the balance, weigh'" (STATIC, 2020), while its counterpart "stasis" meant "'stoppage of circulation', 1745, from medical Latin, from Greek stasis 'a standing still, a standing'" (STASIS, 2020). In other words, following Casey's argumentation, for Che's image to become powerful it had to "stand" still, that is, to reduce the possibility of movement of the spectator towards the image. However, if the image stands still, it should stagnate, even stop "circulating"[25], which, as we know, it does not.

Furthermore, if Che's image had to be emptied of meaning, becoming an empty slate, to be powerful, what would account for its appeal over people to "refill" it again and again? After all, a template does not have the appeal over people to affect them in a way that they want to affect it back, that is, express their affect through it. A good example of Casey's contradiction is graffiti artist D*Face's parody of Korda's *Guerrillero Heroico*, called *CliChe* (Picture 10). In my thesis, I pointed out that "in such parody, D*Face pictures a bereted corpse, rotten, in decay. In other words, to insist on a static perspective is to be stuck with a stagnant-decaying image" (MAYA NETO, 2017a, p. 34).

A static image cannot satisfactorily explain Che's capacity of resurgence and why people keep recreating Che's image in varying ways. Casey is torn between supporting his argument that Che is nothing but a brand, which requires stasis, and explaining why Che's

[25] I prefer the word "flowing" instead of "circulating" because the latter reminds me of merchandise circulation in a capitalist economy. Even when used in another context, in my opinion, "circulation" as episteme carry traces of its usage in a capitalist context that might be dangerous when discussing Che's images, some of which have been fetishized, and since authors such as Llosa, Escalante and Casey have explained Che's resurgence exclusively as product of fetishism. Therefore, in this Dissertation, I will favor the word "flow" to refer to Che's images movement and I will use "circulation" specifically when dealing with fetishism. At this point of the introduction, however, I am using "circulation" in parentheses because I am referring to Casey's reduction of all possibilities of Che's imagetic movement to a single possibility: merchandise. In Chapter Three, I discuss in more detail the issue of fetishism of Che, linking it to Marie-José Mondzain's distinction between images and visibilities – which I present later in this Introduction. For the moment, let me just advance that, even when reduced to visibilities, fetishized, Che's images circulate, they have some movement in the capitalist cycle of production, distribution and consumption, although there is little movement allowed to *the spectators* of fetishized images – mere visibilities – of Che. In contrast, images of Che, that have not been fetishized, and imaginations of Che – obtained through recreation of Che – stimulate spectators's movement towards them, such as in the form of more artistic recreation and as remembrance-redemption action.

image keeps flowing, affecting people and being recreated, which requires movement: "we are not passive viewers of Korda's *frozen* moment" because "as we have *collectively filled* the image with meaning – some as Che's fans, others as his sworn enemies – we have *locked* ourselves into an endless *negotiation* with it" (CASEY, 2009, p.50, *my emphasis*).

The issue of stasis and movement is developed by Marie-José Mondzain,[26] who points out the importance of "assign[ing] spectators a place from which they can move" since "without any movement, the image becomes an object of communal consumption without any separation. […] The violence of the visible results in the intentional abolition of thought and judgment" (MONDZAIN, 2009, p.21). Following Mondzain's argumentation, we can see why authors such as Llosa, Escalante and Casey insist on the stasis of Che's image since they argue it is only still – pun intended – relevant because it has been fetishized.

After all, "by simplifying the image into a more basic, flat graphic, they [Marxist inclined artists] freed it from the confines of photographic realism. […] [This is how] Che became the quintessential postmodern icon – anything to anyone and everything to everyone" (CASEY, 2009, pgs. 131,133). As we can see, Casey is basically arguing that Marxist inclined artists ironically contributed to the fetishization of Che's image by making it static. However, his argument is already contradictory since artists's imaginations of Korda's Che are recreations of it and, as such, generally imply the spectatorial movement referred to by Mondzain. Furthermore, if an image has the potential of becoming "anything to anyone and everything to everyone," instead of being static, I would argue it is flowing intensively.

Therefore, Escalante and Casey's argument that Marxist inclined artists contributed to Che's fetishization by making supposedly more abstract versions of Korda's Che and by distributing them copyright free is inconsistent. By considering the great variety of Che inspired artwork of the 1960s-1980s, which authors such as Trisha Ziff[27] (2006), Martin Kemp[28] (2012) and David Kunzle[29] (1997, 2015) bring forth in their books, I argue instead that artists of such period positioned themselves strategically to recreate Che's image in a way that allowed critical and creative movement for spectators.

After all, "the world of enslavement is that of satisfaction, while the world of images demands that one is never completely sated. Thirst for seeing the invisible, thirst for hearing

[26] Mondzain is a philosopher and director of the *Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique*.
[27] Ziff is a movie director, curator of art exhibitions and Guggenheim scholar based in Mexico City.
[28] Kemp is an emeritus professor of Art History at University of Oxford, an expert in Leonardo da Vinci's art.
[29] Kunzle is an emeritus Professor of Art History at UCLA. He has published two books about Che's images and one article.

voices that do not demand that we be tied to the mast to protect us from a shipwreck" (Mondzain 41). The world of enslavement that Mondzain refers to is the market of visibility, while tying to the mast is a reference to Odysseus[30], who instructed his shipmates – properly protected from the entrancing singing of the sirens by means of wax ear plugs – to tie himself to the mast of his own ship so he could listen to the sirens and not be able to follow their command to destroy his own ship.

Mondzain is comparing the sirens's entrancing singing to visibilities – images that have been fetishized and promote "communal consumption without any separation" (21) – while arguing that we are thirst for images that allow us to see what had not yet been seen in them and thirst for critical voices. Therefore, we should not fear images themselves – she is primarily discussing the issue of images and violence in her book – but should instead fight against "the violence of the visible [which] is no more than the disappearance of these places [where spectators can answer and be heard] and thereby the annihilation of the voice" (41).

Curiously, Casey titles his second chapter "Odysseus" in reference to Che's capacity of travelling as icon. But unlike Mondzain, who wishes us *not* to be in Odysseus' position, Casey is willing to firmly tie us to the mast leaving our ears unplugged to the sight and sound of entrancing visibilities, so that we, as spectators, could not critically move towards or through Che's images, or hear the voice of other spectators.

In other words, instead of being able to hear the diverse examples of Che recreation and of remembrance-redemption, which would leave us as spectators thirsty for more and even for taking action ourselves, or at the very least would lean us towards a pluralist perspective, Casey wants us to be sated at gazing at a static Che-siren, trying to make us believe that this is the only possibility with Che. Indeed, for Casey, "capitalism has made Che what he is today: a brand, used for both commercial and political purposes" (CASEY, 2009, p.12).

Casey builds his argument by creating a narrative of Che as Castro's propaganda for the Cuban state. Talking about Castro's famous eulogy of Che on October 18, 1967, Casey says that "we witness […] a brand launch. […] Castro combined the Cuban revolution, Che's stellar qualities, and the *Guerrillero Heroico* image into a single attractive product" (CASEY, 2009, p.103). However, Casey fails to state what exactly was such product Castro was trying

[30] I am by no means comparing Odysseus to Che Guevara, or trying to emulate the former. I am just pointing out one literary reference in Mondzain's text and commenting on the use of the name Odysseus as the title of one chapter in Casey's book. Odysseus is a very problematic character in terms of gender and, if I were interested in studying him, which I am not, I would probably favor a recreation of the Odyssey, such as the Penelopiad (ATWOOD, 2005).

to sell. Nonetheless, Casey resorts to his unclear argument of Che as political brand to dismiss any example of remembrance-redemption he encountered during his research for the book, which includes the *Plaza de Mayo* Mothers[31], an activist organization called *Jóvenes de Pie* that recreates Che's image in Argentina in a poor *barrio*, the Second International Che Guevara Congress in La Higuera in 2007, Bolivian MAS's[32] adoption of Che's image in its political activism and government, and Venezuelan Bolivarian organizations that recreate Che's image. Instead of acknowledging the remembrance-redemptive potential of such examples, Casey tries to make them support his reductionist argument of Che as a political brand.

Besides that, Casey mentions several examples of artistic imagination regarding Che, including posters, statues, rock bands, an opera composed by Armando Krieger, photographs and films. Yet, he does not elaborate on the creative potential of such artistic recreations of Che, simply ignoring such potential in order to strengthen his own argument of Che as a brand that sells different products. As I have made clear by now, Casey's analysis is contradictory and reductive, since it denies the richness of his own research material, reducing diversity to fit his argument that Che only exists as a brand.

The best example of Casey's reductionist and positivistic perspective is found in chapter five of his book, in which he narrates how Korda's Che made its way to May 1968 risings in Europe and to the Antiwar movement in the United States[33]. In addition, Casey knits into his narrative his own appraisal of Counterculture and Pop Art. For Casey, "regardless of its co-optation by commercial forces, and in some cases because of it, the imagery and iconography of protest were transformed in 1968 into an expression of power for a baby-boomer generation," with businessmen and politicians adapting to "changes in tastes and social values" so that "capitalism could figure out how to accommodate their demands" (CASEY, 2009, pgs.132-133).

As we can see, Casey is diminishing the political importance of the late 1960s and 1970s, which was a period filled with attempts to disrupt the continuity of dominance I referred to previously in this chapter. Despite the failure of such attempts to definitively disrupt the procession of victors, and despite part of their cultural heritage becoming

[31] The organization was formed by mothers of activists that disappeared during the dictatorship in Argentina. They have been gathering in the May Square every week since 1977.

[32] The Movement for Socialism is a left wing party led by Evo Morales and Antonio Peredo, the latter was the brother of two members of the Ñancahuazú Guerrilla, Inti and Coco Peredo.

[33] Casey establishes a chronology of Che's images, which, as I have criticized before regarding Escalante, is already in itself positivistic.

fetishized, nonetheless, we cannot ignore the temporary disruptive power it had and its potential for remembrance-redemption.

This includes Che, since "the line between politics and business was just as blurry for the Che icon in 1968. No matter who wears or displays him, Che has always been consumed in one way or another. Our capitalist society insists it be that way" (CASEY, 2009, p.130). I disagree with Casey: who wears or displays Che, who recreates Che, as well as the specific contexts, matter. Casey is basically disregarding the spectators and their specific background in order to immobilize Che's images – as the policeman did with the young protester (Picture 3) – , as well as Counterculture, Pop Art, and revolutionary movements of the 1960s-1970s; he is trying to exclude a priori our possibility to remember those who struggled during that period and failed, trying to substitute the possibility of remembrance-redemption with consumption. Overall, as a critique to his positivism, I argue that Casey establishes a chronology of images contaminated with a retrospective gaze that celebrates the triumph of the fetish over revolutionary ideology.

1.2.2 Plural perspectives

Unlike Casey, Escalante and Llosa, another group of scholars has a more pluralist approach to Che's images. David Kunzle is one of such authors. He published the book *Che Guevara*: *Icon, Myth and Message* (1997), which was accompanied by a homonymous exhibition at the UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History in 1997. The book also brought Kunzle's analysis of posters created by Cuban artists for OSPAAAL[34] and ICAIC[35], and by non-Cubans artists influenced by them.

Kunzle was probably interested in developing the Chesucristo fusion he presented in one of the chapters in his 1997 book since he collaborated in Trisha Ziff's book (2006) with a chapter about Chesucristo and since he also published an article entitled "Chesucristo: Fusions, Myths, and Realities" (KUNZLE, 2008). In 2015, he published a much larger second book, entitled *Chesucristo*: *The Fusion in Image and Word of Che Guevara and Jesus Christ* (KUNZLE, 2015).

To some extent, Kunzle's first book (1997) resembles a bit an art exhibition since it

[34] Organization of Solidarity with the People of Asia, Africa and Latin America.
[35] Cuban Institute of Cinematographic Art and Industry.

brings different possibilities regarding Che, such as Che and Landscape (Chapter 2), Che in poetry (Chapter 3), Korda's Che and artistic imaginations (Chapter 5), Freddy[36] Alborta's Che (Picture 11) and recreations of it (Chapter 9), Che and cinema (Chapter 10). However, there is tension between the book's plethora of different possibilities regarding Che, which suggest a pluralist perspective, and Kunzle's overarching-trend argument that Che's images are not linked to armed struggle or revolutionary movements anymore, but to Christian motifs:

> I believe that the process is already well under way of seeing him [Che] less as the incarnation of armed struggle, than the proponent of something much larger, the New Human Being, imbued with what have been traditionally regarded as essentially Christian values: self-sacrifice, spirituality and idealism, summed up in the Christian cardinal virtues of faith, hope, and charity.
> The iconography shows that the process of fitting Che to the times has already undergone a detectable shift. In the posters of Che and on other themes in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Cubans did indeed emphasize the principle of armed struggle. […] And now [1997] the symbols associated with Che, even in Cuba, are the flowers and the dove of peace (KUNZLE, 1997, p.85).

Picture 11 – Freddy Alborta's photo of Che's corpse.

Source: (KUNZLE, 1997, p.88).

Picture 12– José Antonio Burciaga's *Last Supper of Chicano Heroes*. This is the central section of a 3-part mural.

Source: (KUNZLE, 1997, p.87).

[36] Freddy Alborta was a Bolivian photographer that took the famous photograph of Che's corpse lying down in Vallegrande's washhouse (Picture 11), which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

Although there certainly have been imaginations of Che as Jesus, and vice-versa, I argue that it is just one between many possibilities. Therefore, we must be careful not to forget the multiplicity of Che's resurgence, which defies any idea of evolution. Even when considering a Latin American context, which has been highly influenced by Catholicism and Liberation Theology,[37] we must consider how politics and religion often relate to one another. In other words, when discussing Che-Jesus imaginations, we must resist the temptation of excluding a priori the political or the spiritual spectrum of the analysis, that is, the temptation of *fitting*[38] the analyzed images to the theory being proposed. Despite the apparent plural perspective in his 1997 book, Kunzle risks reducing Che to Chesucristo.

For instance, Kunzle includes José Antonio Burciaga's *Last Supper of Chicano Heroes*(Picture 12) in both his books (KUNZLE, 1997, p.87; KUNZLE, 2015, p.175), in his chapter in Ziff's book (ZIFF, 2006, p.94) and in his 2008 article (KUNZLE, 2008, p.106). Despite including Burciaga's mural in all the sources above, Kunzle unfortunately does not elaborate on it in his texts, limiting himself to different versions of the 1997 descriptive subtitle:

> the heroes in this mural in the Chicano-themed Casa Zapata [sic] dormitory at Standford [University] were selected through a poll the artist conducted among students, faculty and staff. The Virgen de Guadalupe[39] [sic], patroness of the Americas and the spiritual heroine of Mexican and Chicano culture, did not place first but she was positioned above out of respect. Leading the poll was Che Guevara, shown here as Christ. Other heroes at the table include Benito Juárez,[40] Dr. Martin Luther King,[41] Emiliano Zapata,[42] César Chávez,[43] Dolores Huerta,[44] Frida Kahlo,[45]

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[37] A synthesis of Marxism and Christian theology, it was very influential between the 1950s-1970s. Gustavo Gutiérrez, Leonardo Boff and Juan Luis Segundo are its most famous theologians.

[38] Notice that "fitting", the same verb Kunzle uses, implies a loss, a cut, meaning that meanings associated with Che are lost, which implies a reductionist perspective.

[39] "And La Vírgen de Guadalupe, also known as Tonantzin inNahuatl, the spiritual heroine in Mexican culture and patroness of the Americas (see Elizondo elsewhere), lofts directly above Che and la muerte, with a beautiful multicolored fiesta ribbon above her head stretching from one Tolteca monolith to the other. Below Guadalupe's feet, flying just above death, is an "angelito negro" painted by Burciaga in response to the poignant Mexican bolero, "Angelitos Negros," that asks why artists never paint black angels" (José Cuellar par.21).

[40] "Benito Juárez the Zapotec native of Oaxaca who became Mexico's greatest president during the late 1800s, and author of the often-quoted '*el respeto al derecho ajeno es la paz* —respect for another's rights is peace'" (Cuellar par.14).

[41] "Three seats away from Che's left sits Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the assassinated civil rights leader who inspired efforts for equality all over the world" (Cuellar par.15).

[42] "Emiliano Zapata, the indigenous Mexican revolutionary leader who remains a heroic icon for native campesinos from Chiapas to California, and beyond, sits right of Che." (Cuellar par.16).

[43] "On Zapata's right sits César E. Chávez, the founding United Farm Workers (UFW) President from Yuma, Arizona who dedicated his life completely to la causa of improving the living and working conditions of laborers in the fields of California" (Cuellar par.16).

[44] "Dolores Huerta, Chavez's co-founding UFW Vice-President who has continued la lucha since Chavez's death sits to his right" (Cuellar par.16).

> Joaquín Murieta,[46] and Augusto Sandino. On the tablecloth is the additional dedication from one student's hero list: […] and to all those who died, scrubbed floors, wept and fought for us [so that I could be here at Standford] (KUNZLE, 1997, p.87).

The missing names in Kunzle's description of the mural are Luis Valdez[47], Sor Juana Inéz de la Cruz[48], Tomas Rivera[49], Ernesto Galarza[50], and Tiburcio Vázquez[51]. Furthermore, Sandino[52] is standing behind Che, next to the Death[53]. As we can see, Che is accompanied by a host of activist and revolutionary leaders, some of which were assassinated. Indeed, activism is all over Burciaga's mural, including the choice of the heroes and heroines, which

> is exemplary of the Chicanismo methodology of incorporating the voices of oppressed people into the creative process. He conducted a 200 person sample survey in 1988, asking 100 Stanford Chicano students and 100 Chicano community activists, to list their thirteen heroes with explanations for their choices. The stratified results of the 140 responses showed that the younger students scattered the votes over a total of 240 candidates while the older activists concentrated their votes on 60 who played important parts in American history, particularly during the 1960s/70s period of the Chicano movement.
> Burciaga realized that the survey responses collectively reimagined the definition of a Chicano hero/ine as a mythical, historical, symbolic, military or popular culture figure. In the final analysis, the results respond to some critical questions. Does a hero/ine have to be a Chicano/a to be included? If only thirteen individuals are to sit at the table, how should they be selected? What about the others who receive significantly fewer votes? The answers are painted on the wall. Burciaga decided that the top thirteen vote getters should sit at the table, and those who got fewer votes should stand behind them (CUELLAR, 2019, pars. 11, 12).

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[45] "Frida Kahlo, the daring German-Mexican surrealist painter and contemporary feminist icon sits between Luis Valdez and Joaquin Murieta" (Cuellar par.16).

[46] "Joaquin Murieta, the native Sonoran who migrated to northern California during the gold rush of the 1850s and became a legendary "Robin Hood"-like outlaw and all-out avenger of his wife's rape-murder by 'gringo 49ers'" (CUELLAR, 2019, par.16).

[47] "Luis Valdéz, CEO of Teatro Campesino and professor at California State University at Monterey Bay, as well as award-winning writer and director of plays and films" (CUELLAR, 2019, par.16).

[48] "Sor Juana Inéz de la Cruz (1648-1695), the 17th century mexicana feminist nun poet" (CUELLAR, 2019, par.15).

[49] "Tomás Rivera, Ph.D. became an influential award-winning writer and higher education leader who served as the first Chicano president of the University of Texas at El Paso and the University of California at Riverside before his untimely death" (CUELLAR, 2019, par.15).

[50] "Ernesto Galarza, a child immigrant to the United States from Jalisco, received a Ph.D. from Columbia University and pioneered an exemplary multidisciplinary style of Chicano community-centered activist scholarship that combined organizing farm laborers and writing critical analyses of their political and economic conditions, reflexive autobiographic prose, poetry and children's literature" (CUELLAR, 2019, par.15).

[51] "Early California-native and San José's first mayor, Tiburcio Vázquez, an educated poet who turned outlaw following a fight that killed a so-called "Yankee" constable, stands directly behind Murieta" (CUELLAR, 2019, par.17).

[52] "Standing directly over Che's right is Nicaraguan freedom fighter Augusto C. Sandino" (CUELLAR, 2019, par.18).

[53] "Burciaga painted a red-head-banded skeleton image of death/la muerte directly over Che's head, because death received enough votes to stand behind the lucky 13. Burciaga called la muerte a heroine, and great avenger and savior from la vida" (CUELLAR, 2019, par.19).

As we can see, Burciaga's mural does not lend itself well to an exclusively "spiritual" reading, despite Kunzle's persistent inclusion of it in his works. In fact, Kunzle seems to imply Burciaga's mural is self-explanatory evidence of his Che-Christ fusion, omitting the context of activism where it was created, as well as Tony and Cecilia Burciaga's contribution to the Chicano movement, including Cecilia's work in Stanford.

Besides Kunzle's omission of the mural's whole activist context, the Last Supper motif is not proof enough of a Che-Christ fusion since there is also a parodic element in how the mural was conceived and how the thirteen Chicano heroes came to infiltrate it. According to Cuellar,

> the idea for The Last Supper mural came to him while designing another mural on the mythology and history of corn/maiz. Burciaga conceived the Mythology of Maiz mural […] representing elements of the many Maya myths surrounding maíz and its creation. At its four sides, Burciaga painted a different colored corn to represent each of the four cosmic directions. At the upper right hand corner, as a satirical comment on the Judeo-Christian concept of creation, Burciaga represented an iconoclastic Chicano transformation of Michaelangelo's Adam complete with head-bandana and goatee, eye-shades and cigarette in hand, pachuco cross and teardrop tatus. In his words, "the central background color is a vibrant white, yellow, orange to red representing the energy of creation. The green corn stalks form a wreath. Above is a mountain range depicting the Southwest desert of Aztlán".
> Burciaga originally conceived the central panel of his three-part mural's as a depiction of a larger than life Christ and his twelve apostles at the Last Supper dining on corn tortillas, tamales and tequila instead of bread and wine. As a positive response to the negative reaction of some students to his Mexicanized Last Supper, Burciaga decided to replace the figures of Christ and his twelve apostles with those of thirteen Chicano heroes (CUELLAR, 2019, pars. 9, 10).

There seems to be a parodic twist in how the three-part mural takes hold of Eurocentric references and subverts them, such as Michaelangelo's *Adam* and Da Vinci's *The Last Supper*. Connecting the parodical element with the activist context already mentioned, we might look at Burciaga's mural as a form of remembering those who fought against the dominance continuum, while at the same time connecting their memories with present struggles. The line on the tablecloth, despite being written in the past tense, "those who died, scrubbed floors, wept and fought for us" (KUNZLE, 1997, p.88), actually connects the big fights with the small ones, and those in the past with "us" in the present.

Another issue Kunzle misses the opportunity to elaborate on is how Burciaga's mural recreates the cultural in-betweeness that characterizes Chicano and even Latin American life, which in turn could even be compared to some extent to Diego Rivera's[54] *History of Morelos,*

[54] According to José Cuellar, Diego Rivera is actually in Burciaga's mural, standing behind Frida Kahlo.

Conquest and Revolution mural in Cortés's Palace[55]. On the left of the mural, we see the Spanish invaders and priests, and on the right, there is the *mestizo* peasantry. And in the middle, in between, are all the invoked forms from the past.

Kunzle's reduction of Che's images to the Chesucristo, and of Che's capacity of resurgence to Christlike resurrection, is due to basing his analysis on a chronology of Che's images, which as I have previously discussed, is positivistic and implies ideas such as progress and evolution. A chronology implies linearity of time, since a form that comes later is understood to be more developed than its predecessors, superseding them. Hence, Kunzle understands what he calls Che-Christ fusion not as one among many possibilities, but rather as a culmination of a general process of "fitting Che to the times." The times Kunzle is probably referring to are the 1990s, the decade in which the USSR ceased to exist and in which Neoliberalism seemed to be hegemonic, since "the iconography originating thirty years ago [1960s] is no longer subject to the desire to change the world. Instead, it has to be adapted to a post-communist context" (KUNZLE, 1997, p. 92).

As we can see, Kunzle exaggerates the significance of the end of the USSR, implying it is also the end of revolutionary struggles, and that Che cannot be associated with revolutionary movements, socialism and activism to change the world. One could argue Kunzle's pessimism towards Che's political potential is probably due to the influence of the corpus he used in his book, primarily Cuban and Cuba-influenced posters of the 1960s-1990s, and of not having been able to consider social movements and protests that erupted after 1997.

Unfortunately, that is not the case since in his second book about Che, entitled *Chesucristo*, Kunzle (2015) presents the same perspective. For example, he says that "Che's internationalist revolutionary ideal was defeated, and what remains of it seems to accept some accommodation with capitalism, as is perhaps inevitable. Likewise Christianity sought compromise with Rome" (KUNZLE, 2015, p.20). Clearly for Kunzle, Che cannot be associated with revolutionary struggles anymore. Worse, Che's images have inevitably accommodated capitalism! Although Kunzle has carefully developed his reading of Che as Christ, by developing it not as one possibility among many but as the current trend, he has

[55] Rivera's mural deals with Mexican history, specifically the history of the Cuernavaca region where Cortés's Palace is located. In recreating the history of the invasion, Rivera made use of both European and Indigenous cultural and religious references. Both Burciaga's and Rivera's murals seem to be dealing with the issue of the pride of defeated peoples in terms of self-affirmation, contributing to subvert the dominant view on them.

made his Che as static as perhaps Casey's. With a such dynamic ramified subject[56], it might be tempting to make it static in order to analyze it. However, as we have previously discussed, by making an image static one moves towards consumption and the negation of the political potential of remembrance-redemption.

Furthermore, Kunzle contradicts himself. In his 1997 book, there are examples within his own corpus that contradict the supposed trend towards peaceful imagery. For example, Chapter six of his book is about René Mederos's[57] twenty five paintings exhibited in 1992 in Argentina for the twenty-fifth anniversary of Che's death. Unfortunately, Kunzle does not elaborate on the political potential in terms of remembrance through Medero's work and on the choice of date for the exhibition. Instead, Kunzle focuses on the "lack of conventional heroics, and two absences: that of visible enemy, and that of scenes of battle […]. This is the life of Che purified" (KUNZLE, 1997, p.63). It is possible to identify in Medero's work not the bourgeois aesthetics of painting, for instance, the Duke of Wellington rallying British soldiers during Waterloo, but rather the motif of the less glorious laborious tasks involved in guerrilla war and in its aftermath. Moreover, in many paintings of Mederos's series, either Che or other guerrillas are carrying firearms.

Overall, Kunzle is right in pointing out the importance of Che-Jesus imaginations, such as when he argues that "Jesus's [Christ] death was followed by a resurrection, the belief that he was and is spiritually present among us. Che's death, too, was followed by a spiritual resurrection: *Che Vive*" (KUNZLE, 1997, p.87). Unfortunately, Kunzle's choice of words, in the context of his books, makes it clear that he is referring to "a spiritual resurrection," as opposed to a spiritual-political resurrection.

His point of view becomes explicit when Kunzle says Che has lost its political potential as it is increasingly fused with the figure of Jesus Christ, following the end of the Soviet State (KUNZLE, 1997, p.87). I disagree with Kunzle. Following my previous discussion of Walter Benjamin's ideas, I argue in favor of Che's images remembrance-redemption potential. Indeed, *CheVive*, that is, he is made present by those that remember him and the struggles he was part of, actively linking such memory with present struggles against the continuum of dominance. Che is also constantly recreated through artistic imagination.

The motto itself, *Che Vive*, is an act of remembrance-redemption. It started to appear in spray painted walls and in Che's images as an act of defiance: to defy the authority of those

[56] I am resisting the urge to say "object" here. Subject makes more sense.

[57] René Mederos was a Cuban poster artist and graphic designer. To analyze his Che series would require a research work of its own. I might study his artistic imaginations in the future.

that systematically murdered revolutionary leaders by insisting they are “alive” in words, images, and, more importantly in those that carry on with the present struggles. Kunzle intelligently connected the motto, which may be interpreted as resurrection, with his argument of Che-Christ fusion. As the reader probably have noticed, *Che Vive* is the title of my Dissertation, but I use it as the motto itself, not in Kunzle’s way.

Che Vive also brings to mind words such as resurgence, return and resurrection. Although I prefer the first one, I would like to comment on the idea of resurrection, which is more spiritually explicit. According to Reza Aslan[58], “without the resurrection, the whole edifice of Jesus’s claim to the mantle of the messiah comes crashing down. […] But if Jesus did not actually die […] it [the cross] would be transformed into a symbol of victory” (ASLAN, 2014, p.176). The importance of resurrection is thus not only spiritual, but also politically relevant for the Greek speaking Diaspora preachers as they recreated the failed messiah figure Jesus of Nazareth in order to found a new religion. Hence, even if we accepted Kunzle’s argument of a Che-Christ fusion, claiming it is an exclusively spiritual resurrection would be problematic. Christianism has always been extremely political.

The connection between spirituality and politics is much more explicit, though, in the messianic tradition Jesus of Nazareth was part of. Instead of its resurrected counterpart, Jesus of Nazareth is “the story of the zealous Galilean peasant and Jewish nationalist who donned the mantle of messiah and launched a foolhardy rebellion against the corrupt Temple priesthood and the vicious Roman occupation” (ASLAN, 2014, p.169). As I argue in more detail in Chapter One, it is not possible to separate spirituality and politics regarding Che-Jesus images, which, by the way, are only one of many different possibilities of Che’s images. By rejecting positivistic notions of progress, chronology and evolution, which emphasize Christian resurrection and thus precondition us to read Jesus as Christ, it is possible to associate Che with Jesus of Nazareth instead.

Another scholar who has a more pluralist perspective is Trisha Ziff. Like Kunzle’s 1997 book, the book *Che Guevara*: *Revolutionary & Icon* (2006), organized by Ziff, was also accompanied by an exhibition, entitled *Narrative of a Portrait*: *Korda’s Che*, of which she was the curator. Ziff, also a filmmaker, would later direct the documentary *Chevolution* (CHEVOLUTION, 2008).

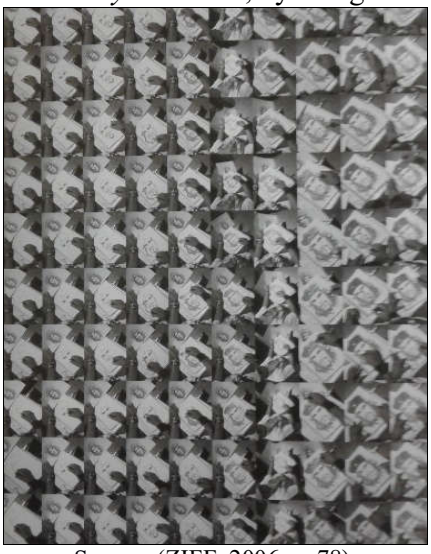
Ziff’s book is organized in an exhibition-like fashion, with chapters that are more selections of images grouped around a certain organizing idea. The juxtaposition of images

[58]Aslan is an Iranian-"American" religion scholar.

and subtitles is more important in her book than continuous text, which basically consists of short introductory essays written by herself and the other contributors – Hannah Charlton[59], Jonathan Green[60], David Kunzle, Rogelio Villareal[61], and Brian Wallis[62].

Like Escalante, Casey and Kunzle[63], Ziff also resorts to a chronology of Che's images: how the popularity of them are due to the copyright-free distribution and recreation of Korda's photo of Che. However, Ziff does not fall in the trap of setting one form as more complete or evolved than the others, graphically preserving the multiplicity of Che's images instead. She includes politically committed recreations of Korda's Che, parodies and instances of the fetishized Che.

Picture 13 – *Bobby Ras' Che*, by Douglas McCulloh.



Source: (ZIFF, 2006, p. 78).

One example which particularly struck me is the series of photographs taken by Douglas McCulloh in 2004 of street artist Bobby Ras drawing Che based on a T-shirt (Picture 13). McCulloh's series is a good example of artistic metalanguage involving two media: drawing and photograph. Furthermore, it allows us to consider that Che's images do not merely "exist," by bringing to the fore the artistic action involved in recreating Che.

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[59] "Hannah Charlton is a former journalist, editor and digital publisher, who is currently a communications and content specialist" (Ziff 127).

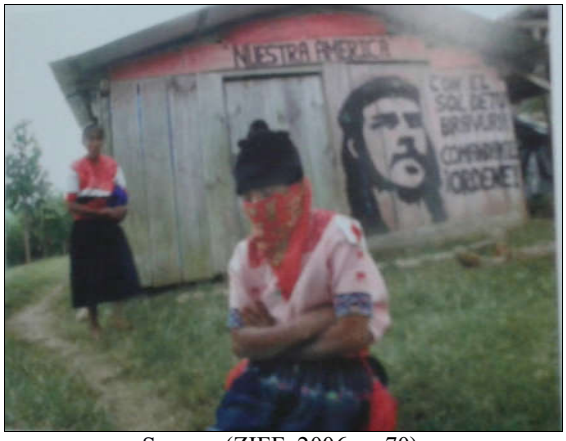
[60] "Jonathan Green is Director of the UCR/California Museum of Photography at the University of California, Riverside" (Ziff 127).

[61] Rogelio Villarreal is a Mexican author and editor" (Ziff 127).

[62] "Brian Wallis is Director of Exhibitions and Chief Curator at the International Center of Photography" (Ziff 127).

[63] Another scholar who also employs a similar chronology is Martin Kemp (2012). I decided not to include him in this chapter because I have extensively discussed his ideas in my Master Thesis. I will, however, comment on his analysis of the Alborta photograph and artistic imaginations of it in Chapter Two.

Picture 14– EZLN's Che.



Source: (ZIFF, 2006, p. 70).

Although Ziff's perspective is plural, there are not many examples of Che's images in association with revolutionary organizations and social movements in her book. There is an example of how the Zapatista National Liberation Army remembers Che (Picture 14), which reminds me of the MST photo (Picture 1) in the beginning of this introduction, but it is accompanied by a citation that renders it nonsensical, diminishing its political potential: "within the neo-Zapatistas in Chiapas, the image of Che blends in with that of Christ, Virgin Mary, truck drivers, vendettas. […] These people wear him as an accent on their clothing and stickers on their vehicles" (VILAREAL, Rogelio *apud* ZIFF, 2006, p.70).

There are examples of one Che mural by Chicanos and one by the IRA, but they are from the 1970s and 1980s, giving the impression that Che has lost some of its political potential. Hence, although visually preserving multiplicity, the selection of images and their juxtaposition with text in Ziff's book may downplay what I have been calling the remembrance-redemption potential of Che's images.

Perhaps having a pluralist perspective may not be enough in a context marked by attempts of fetishizing Che and by scholarly rhetoric of Che's political irrelevance. In my appraisal, a pluralist perspective of Che's images must be accompanied by some form of political commitment, actively positioning oneself towards one's subject of research[64] and the different ways it relates to the world. A very good example of such perspective is found in Maria-Carolina Cambre's book *The Semiotics of Che Guevara*: *Affective Gateways* (CAMBRE, 2015).

Cambre positions herself from the start since her interest in Che's images "comes

[64] I am writing subject of research instead of object of research on purpose.

somewhat obliquely out of personal experience, […] my conceptualization of the project was influenced by my realization that this phenomenon was important" (CAMBRE, 2015, p.3). She combines her political commitment with a pluralist perspective since "images represent an *other* mode of thinking. They bring new possibilities for imagining social and political change" but they also "have a multivalent nature and a tendency to allow multiple and sometimes contradictory interpretations" (CAMBRE, 2015, p.1).

Cambre's pluralist perspective is noticed not only on the Che's images she included on her work but also in her methodology of analyzing them and in how she organized the book. Unlike Kunzle and Casey, Cambre does not have one organizing idea into which she tries to fit Che's images. Rather, Cambre works with a number of related but open-ended ideas, such as the phenomenology of hope, Hanna Arendt's theory of action, Greimas's semiotic square, collage and Indigenous Research Methodologies.

In chapter three, Cambre develops the association with hope by meshing different photographs of Che, in protests and in connection with social movements worldwide, with experiential accounts of individuals regarding how Che's images have affected their lives. One photograph (Picture 15) she discusses was taken in India: student activists protest for free education during the national conference of the AISF (All-India Students' Federation) in 2006. The students wear traditional clothes while they carry portraits of Che Guevara and freedom fighters Bhagat Singh[65], P. Jeevanantham[66] and K. Baladhandayutham[67]. This is another instance of invoking revolutionaries and leaders from the past to increase the strength of present struggles in a specific context, not unlike Burciaga's mural.

Another photograph Cambre discusses is of a Che mural painted on a West Bank barrier[68] in Palestine (Picture 16). It is a recreation of Korda's photograph (Picture 7), with lines from Carlos Puebla's song "Hasta Siempre Comandante" and handprints of those who probably helped painting. The mural was painted on a physical barrier that confines Palestines in the area and which is constantly patrolled by Israeli soldiers. Therefore, painting the mural can be understood as an act of resistance and of revolutionary hope. According to a Lebanese student who offered her experiential account, identified with the alias "Abby," Che was

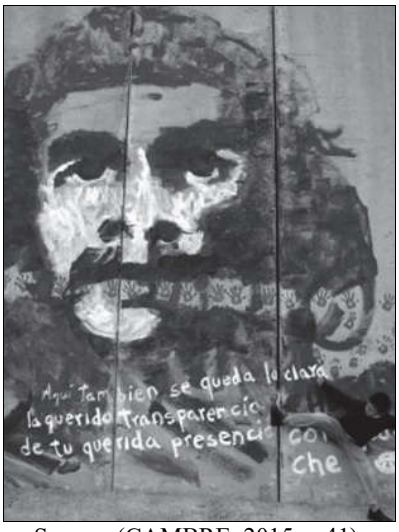
[65] Bhagat Singh was an Indian socialist revolutionary who fought for India's independence from the British Empire. He was arrested and sentenced to death. He was twenty three.
[66] P. Jeevanantham was a social reformer, a writer and political leader that helped organize communist and socialist movements.
[67] Shri K. Baladhandayutham was a member of the Communist Party and an elected member of parliament. He was sentenced to life after the independence.
[68] It is a wall spawning seven hundred and seventy eight kilometers that segregate an estimated population of twenty five thousand Palestines.

“bigger than life and almost bigger than the wall—looking out at a future—a possibility—over the wall and beyond the occupation […]. And this image, offering solidarity […], reminding Palestinians living under military occupation that they are not alone” (Cambre 40).

Picture 15 – Student activists protesting in favor of free education in India.

Source: (CAMBRE, 2015, p. 38).

Picture 16 – West Bank Che.



Source: (CAMBRE, 2015, p.41).

The account makes Cambre wonder if Che is able to dissolve or displace this wall and she concludes that “if the image transforms that which is empirically already there with an almost alchemical ‘as-if-ness,’ it is not because of some projection of political allies but rather for the unseen act of imagining an *other* future. Abbey expresses the hope of seeing a barrier become a bridge through the image” (CAMBRE, 2015, p.41).

Building on the phenomenology of hope, Cambre argues that Che’s images, such as the two already mentioned photographs (Pictures 15 and 16) have the power to avoid

complete despair by anchoring hope, which is collective in its performative aspect in participating in protests and social movements, but that is also subjective in the way each individual is affected by an image of Che and how it helps create a space of hope[69].

A related idea is Hanna Arendt's theory of action, which Cambre knits together with her experience with the Venezuelan youth organization *Colectivo Alexis Gonzáles Vive Carajo*[70]. Named after a fellow activist who was murdered, *Alexis Vive* brings together the remembrance of those who have fallen (Picture 17) with the redemptive struggles of a poor *barrio* in Caracas. And they create several Che murals, acting through Che's image. In other words, "they may seem to 'use' the image, but perhaps the image acts and also 'uses' them. Thus we might say the image is 'brought into play. […] It speaks and acts" (CAMBRE, 2015, p.79).

The members of *Alexis Vive* have recovered an abandoned pool, where there used to be trash and also drug dealing, and a parking lot which was used as a dumping ground. In both places, Che murals (Picture 18) celebrate the recovery of the spaces and help maintain the places clean of trash: "after the mural appeared, the garbage permanently disappeared. They implied that it was because of the image that garbage no longer accumulated in that spot" (Cambre 76). Interestingly, the community's behavior was affected by Che's images and what they came to mean for them.

Che's face is also on the daily-worn emblematic bandana of *Alexis Vive* members (Pictures 17 and 18) so that, when the activists wear it, they become Che. Or as the mural in remembrance of Kley Gomez (Picture 17) reads, "[*el que murió*] *peleando vive en cada compañero*' which means in essence that struggling (and only in the action of doing so), he returns to life within that companion" (CAMBRE, 2015, p.77).

Cambre observes the resemblance between *Alexis Vive* praxis, which they call *accionar*, and Hanna Arendt's notion of action, which "no matter what its specific content, always establishes relationships and therefore has an inherent tendency to force open all limitations and cut across all boundaries" (Hannah Arendt, Qtd. in Cambre 83). In other words, the activists of *Alexis Vive* act through the images of Che and of those who have fallen, remembering them and, at the same time, causing them to live again in the struggles of the present for redemption and for improvement of the lives in their neighborhood.

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[69] Cambre is referring to Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's notion of territory. I return to it when discussing constelattions.

[70] According to Cambre, "they had named themselves after a former member of the community, Alexis Gonzalez, who was shot and killed during the counter-coup upheavals of 2002 after which they officially formed the Colectivo. In daily use, they usually call themselves '*Alexis Vive*'"(CAMBRE, 2015, p.70).

Picture 17 – Mural in remembrance of Kley Gomez, an *Alexis Vive* leader who was assassinated.

Source: (CAMBRE, 2015, p.77).

Picture 18 – Che Mural in the recovered parking lot. Notice Che's face on the organization's emblematic black bandana.

Source: (CAMBRE, 2015, p.74).

Cambre is also the only scholar I have read so far that criticizes Casey's reductionism of Che to brand. Cambre argues it is not clear what would enable people to recognize Che as brand and she discusses the concept of brand, arguing that it is not adequate to analyze Che's images. According to her, the copyright of Korda's photograph have been used to protect it from being used by corporations for advertisement purposes, while continuing the tradition of allowing artists to recreate it (CAMBRE, 2015, pgs.11-13). Since Korda's Che has been recreated by so many, and still is, it would be too unstable as a brand and impossible to protect, as corporations normally do with their brands (CAMBRE, 2015,

p.16).

Furthermore, she points out a research gap by saying that “through a Marxist lens, one would understand the commodity value as determined by social relations, and allowed to be socially endowed with a fetishlike power unrelated to its true worth” (CAMBRE, 2015, p.26). However, Cambre does not elaborate on it. Hence, to discuss the issue of fetishizing Che based on Marxist concepts is one specific objective of my research and I do it in Chapter Three. The related research questions are: how can alienation and value theory help explain the fetishizing of Che’s images? Is it inevitable or can it be resisted?

Furthermore, the issue of Che’s political relevance is also part of the research gap I wish to address in my Dissertation. After reviewing the scholarly literature on Che’s images, we can see that most authors converge on considering Che a twentieth-century revolutionary figure, but not as many consider Che to be politically relevant in the twenty-first century. Therefore, my main objective in this Dissertation is to analyze Che’s resurgence, especially in films of both periods, arguing in favor of the remembrance-redemption potential of Che’s images in the twenty-first century. The related research questions are: Is Che the image of revolution only in twentieth century or is his image still politically relevant in twenty-first century? In what ways does Che’s images leave space for spectatorial movement to affect and be affected?

1.3 CONSTELLATIONS OF CHE’S IMAGES: TIME OF MEMORY

As can be perceived in the review of literature, most scholars tend to contrast Che’s images of the past with those of the present, which usually leads to conclusions that Che’s images have lost their political potential. Therefore, in order to be able to analyze the remembrance-redemption potential of Che’s images without recurring to positivistic notions such as chronology, progress and evolution, I must first discuss non chronological ways of relating present and past.

As I have previously discussed, authors such as Escalante, Casey and even Kunzle based their analyzes on chronologies of Che’s images, which means that the latest form must supersede the previous ones – the Che simulacra for Escalante, the Che brand for Casey and the Chesucristo for Kunzle. In addition, such perspective immobilizes Che’s images in time, generally implying a loss of political potential and an emphasis of their fetishization. In other words, by separating past from present, most scholars manifest acedia, which is

> the melancholy sense of the omnipotence of fate which removes all value from human activities. It leads, consequently, to total submission to the existing order of things. As profound, melancholy meditation, it feels attracted by the solemn majesty of the triumphal procession of the powerful (LÖWY, 2005, p.71).

In contrast, I am arguing for a non-positivistic approach that allows us to see a multitude of moments and forms. That is, one image of Che acts as a portal to constellations that condense time, linking past-present-future and connecting one with other Che's images by means of interaction between image, viewer and environment. Such interaction relies heavily on a person's memory of previously seen Che's images, as well as on interpretation and creativity. It is a similar approach compared to Cambre's places of hope, which are based on Deleuze and Guattari's notion of territory:

> It helps us describe what is happening when someone locates or is relocated by looking at any rendering of Che Guevara's face taken from the matrix photograph [Korda's Che] however indirectly. The dynamic mode of existence that Deleuze and Guattari call territory can be imagined as *a moment* where all the lines of context converge—from the medium (t-shirt or other) the image is rendered onto, to what an individual is thinking in the moment of detecting the image, to the colors and shapes, and how they strike that particular eye in that particular sighting, and any other thing that contributes the rhythm or "refrain" – allowing the "expression" of that rhythm to open up an inside of an outside and an outside of an inside of that experience […]. In this regard the experiences can be seen as places ("you had to be there") that are neither geocentric nor anthropocentric. Thus, they are free to be mobile and intersubjective and open any passages and conduits matching the rhythm of expression (CAMBRE, 2015, p.51, *my emphasis*).

Cambre is focusing on Korda's Che (Picture 7), but her argument is valid for all Che's images, including recreations of Alborta's Che (Picture 11). Furthermore, as we can see, the places of hope she is talking about are not contained in the image itself, but emerge through it, from "*a moment* where all the lines of context converge" – the image, the medium, what the image evokes in the observer's mind and what he or she may invoke the image for. Moreover, Cambre's places of hope remind me of Walter Benjamin's constellations, which are also a non-positivistic conception of time. According to Löwy,

> Against the quantitative historicist conception of historical time as accumulation, Benjamin here [Thesis XVII] outlines his qualitative, discontinuous conception of historical time. There is a striking affinity between Benjamin's ideas here and those of Charles Péguy. […] According to Péguy, in Clio […] the concept of time proper to the theory of progress is 'precisely the time of the savings bank and the great credit establishments […] it is the time of interest accumulated by a capital […] a truly homogeneous time, since it translates, transports into homogeneous calculations […] [and] transposes into a homogeneous (mathematical) language the countless varieties of anxieties and fortunes'. Against this time of progress, 'made in the image and likeness of space', reduced to an 'absolute, infinite' line, he sets the time of memory, the time of 'organic remembrance' that is not homogeneous, but has full and empty moments.
> *It is the task of remembrance, in Benjamin's work, to build 'constellations' linking the present and the past.* These *constellations*, these moments wrested from empty

> historical continuity are *monads*. That is, they are concentrates of historical totality - 'full moments', as Péguy would put it. The privileged moments of the past, before which the historical materialist comes to a halt, are those which constitute a messianic stop to events […]. These moments represent a revolutionary opportunity in the battle, today, for the oppressed past, but also, doubtless, for the oppressed present (LÖWY, 20015, p.96, *my emphasis*).

Since "it is the task of remembrance, in Benjamin's work, to build 'constellations' linking the present and the past" (LÖWY, 2005, p.96), I argue Che's images have the potential to build constellations. I am not arguing every person will actualize such potential in every context, but rather that Che's images carry such potential. After all, this organic time of remembrance, also called constellations or monads, is not homogenous; rather, it is constituted by wrested moments of the dominance continuum – they are revolutionary or messianic interruptions.

In that sense, I argue that monads refer both to revolutionary moments and to remembrance-redemption moments. For example, the Cuban Revolution, and its aftermath – especially in the 1960s, was a period of feverish revolutionary activity that completely disrupted the power continuum in Cuba and even threatened to do so in other countries, much to the United States despair at the time. Therefore, the Cuban Revolution was formed by different monads which, despite what the word may suggest, were not isolated in time, but rather connected that revolution with other revolutionary disruptions of the dominance continuum.

Picture 19 – Photograph of unknown author taken in Sierra Maestra in 1957. Che, Fidel, Calixto Garcia, Ramiro Valdés, and Juan Almeida.

Source: (GUEVARA, 2013).

Picture 20 – Mutilated bodies of some of the victims of the *La Coubre* sabotage

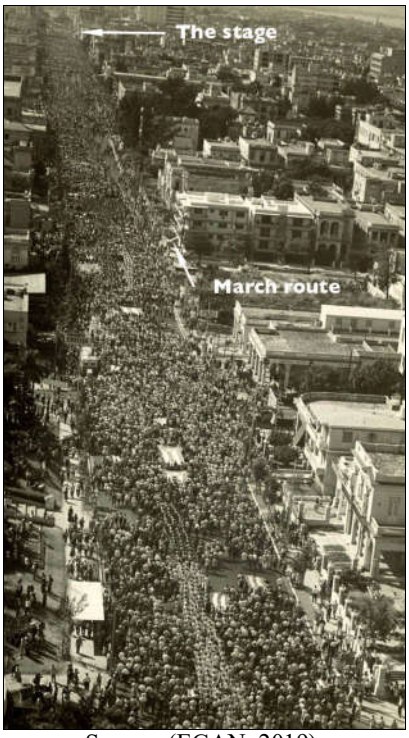
Source: (EDITORIAL Capitán San Luis, 2016).

For example, a photograph taken in Sierra Maestra of Fidel planning an attack alongside Che (Picture 19) is one moment among the constellations of moments of the Cuban Revolution. On the other hand, it has what Benjamin calls *Jetztzeit*, defined as "now time" by Löwy,

> a brief instant of complete possession of history prefiguring the whole, the saved totality, the universal history of liberated humanity. […] *Jetztzeit* comprises all the messianic moments of the past, the whole tradition of the oppressed is concentrated, as a redemptive power, in the present moment, the moment of the historian – or of the revolutionary (LÖWY, 2005, p.100).

The photo (Picture 19) prefigures one revolutionary action of a small guerrilla army, formed mostly by peasants, in a remote part of Cuba fighting a professional army in control of most of the country. This image also prefigures the planning and the revolutionary actions that would lead to the defeat of the dictator Fulgencio Batista. As constellation, this particular moment also connects itself with other instances of messianic intervention arising "against all expectation and in untimely fashion, and flashing up the possibility of fulfilling desires that history had buried beneath the rubble" (PROUST, Françoise *apud* LÖWY, 2005, p.134), such as the Mexican Revolution, the Cuban War of Independence, and even the October Revolution in Russia.

Picture 21– *La Coubre* Funeral March.



Source: (EGAN, 2019).

Another moment in the constellation of moments of the Cuban Revolution is the La Coubre sabotage on March 4, 1960 (Picture 20). The one-year-old Revolution was threatened by the terrorist attack on the French ship carrying grenades and ammunition bought from a Belgian factory. Two explosions, the second happening exactly thirty minutes after the first one, killed one hundred people – six of them were the French crewmen – and injured two hundred more. The second explosion was especially vicious because it hit first responders and other people trying to put out the fire and help the victims of the first explosion.

Picture 22– Fidel, Dorticós and Che leading the march.

Source: (EGAN, 2019).

Picture 23– Composite of the stage during Fidel's *Patria o Murte* speech

Source: (EGAN, 2019).

Among the rubble, mutilated limbs and twisted metal, it might have felt like the dream of a revolution was coming to an end. The following day, however, thousands of people showed up for the funeral march along *Avenida 23* (Picture 21), with Fidel Castro, Ernesto Guevara, Osvaldo Dorticós[71], and others leading the march (Picture 22). At the stage (Picture 23), near *Cemiterio Colón*, Fidel gave his eulogy speech known as *Patria o Muerte*. Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone Bevouir were also present, expressing solidarity. As we already know, it was also on this occasion Alberto Korda took his photo of Ernesto Guevara (Picture 7).

The photographer Korda later recalled there was something in Guevara's eyes (Picture 24) that caught his attention: "I remember as if it were today: seeing him framed in the viewfinder, with that expression – angry and grieved" (KUNZLE, 1997, p.58). Che was reportedly "so furious that if he had met a Yankee he would have eaten him alive" (SCIMÉ, Giuliana Scimé *apud* KUNZLE, 1997, p.58).

There is something special about Che's eyes. According to Kemp, "a very wide range of those who met Che were deeply impressed by his magnetic beauty and mesmeric eyes" (KEMP, 2012, p.180). For instance, Marylin Zeitlin said "he had eyes that went on forever" (ZEITLIN, Marylin *apud* KUNZLE, 1997, p.19). In addition, a peasant who met Che in la Higuera before he was assassinated said that "Che's gaze melts your heart." (KUNZLE, 1997, p.84).

And the fascination for Che's eyes are not only about when he was alive, but also about his corpse's eyes. Regarding Alborta's photo of Che's corpse (Picture 11), Kunzle

[71] A lawyer and politician, Dorticós was the Cuban president at the time.

states that it seems to "make Che come alive again, to make him immortal, mythic, '*jesucrístico*'"(KUNZLE, 1997, p.90). In fact, Kunzle (1997) does not limit himself to Che's eyes, but rather devotes a whole chapter to mapping out an iconography, which he calls "Symbols: Hair and beard, Cigar, Uniform, Beret, Star, the Name" (Chapter 4). Regarding Korda's Che (Pictures 7 and 24), Kunzle points out the irony that "a photograph admired worldwide as personifying Che the serene, even sweet visionary, should have been taken at a moment when Che was feeling not just angry but […] furious" (KUNZLE, 1997, p.58). Likewise, Casey highlights the mystique of Che's eyes "looking right through us, as if he is focused on […] [the] promise of a future utopia" (CASEY, 2009, p.36). Finally, Kemp similarly observes the spiritual aspect of Che's stare since it "seems to be directed towards some great source of inspirational strength, at once within and in some indefinable outer space" (KEMP, 2012, p.189)

In order to move on with the analysis, I first need to contrast the two preceding paragraphs. The former brings testimonies of people that met Che Guevara when alive, observing his gestures in person in a given context. In comparison, the latter paragraph brings scholarly discussion of Che as a symbol, or more specifically, about the symbolical meanings of Che's eyes and stare. This corresponds to an antinomic polarity since

> every image, in fact, is animated by an antinomic polarity: on the one hand, images are the reification and obliteration of a gesture (it is the imago as death mask or as symbol); on the other hand, they preserve the dynamis intact. […] And while the former lives in magical isolation, the latter always refers beyond itself to a whole of which it is a part. Even the *Mona Lisa*, even *Las Meninas* could be seen not as immovable and eternal forms, but as fragments of a gesture or as stills of a lost film wherein only they would regain their true meaning. And that is so because a certain kind of litigatio, a paralyzing power whose spell we need to break, is continuously at work in every image; it is as if a silent invocation calling for the liberation of the image into gesture arose from the entire history of art (AGAMBEN, 2000, pgs.55-56).

Connecting Agamben's gestures with the review of literature, I emphasize that the temptation to analyze Che's images as static objects is misleading because we then would be transforming images into visibilities, analyzing each one in isolation, as a symbol, or as a collection of isolated symbols. But there are ways to break the ligatio of Che's images. Cinema, as Agamben notes (56), has the potential to do so. We can, as Cambre does, recontextualize Che's images by discussing how they affect and are affected in experiential-specific contexts. And we can also attempt to recreate the context of certain Che's images, such as Korda's Che (Picture 20).

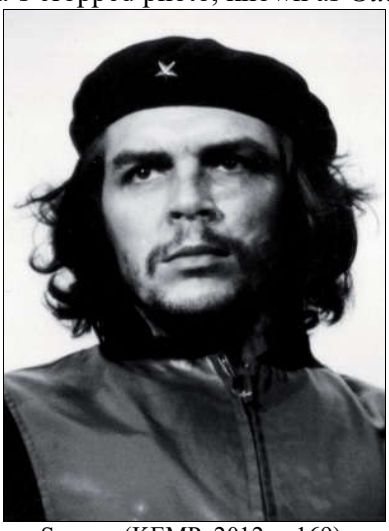
As I previously discussed, Korda's photo (Picture 7) was taken during Fidel's speech

(Picture 23), after the funeral march (Pictures 21 and 22) in homage of the deceased and injured by the *La Coubre*'s sabotage. Bob Egan's composite (Picture 23) helps having a contextual perception of what might have looked like to be amid the crowd that day: "there'd been a massive loss of life: hundreds of Cubans had […] suffered the wrenching pain [of] waking mind's first thought after a loved one is taken" and, beyond the deaths themselves, "the blast in the harbor had abruptly suppressed the innocent joy of a nation" (CASEY, 2009, p.37). Since Guevara witnessed firsthand the carnage attending the injured on location, Casey points out that Korda's description of him as angry and grieved on March 5 was accurate, that "it was the face of Ernesto Guevara mad as hell and eager to avenge bloodshed, yet also aware of the immense heartache associated with the struggle he'd chosen for his life" (CASEY, 2009, p.38).

At this point I would like to bring together Guevara's pain and anger on March 5, observed by the photographer Korda and by Guevara's friend Scimé, with the scholars's discussion of Che's look that seems to pierce us. However, if we argue Korda's Che looks through us, we must not forget to argue in turn that we also may look through him, connecting this image with revolutionary moments filled with Benjamin's now-time and also with other images.

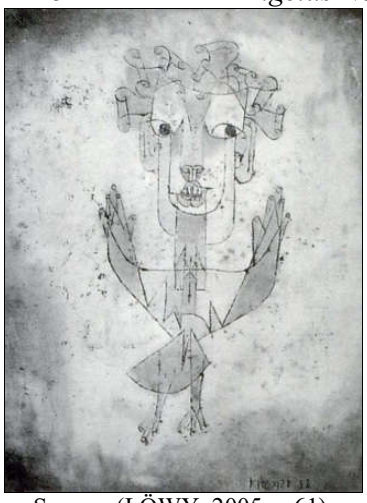
Instead of recurring to Christian associations, like Kunzle and Kemp do, I would like to compare *el Guerrillero Heroico* (Picture 24) with Benjamin's interpretation of Paul Klee's *Angelus Novus* (Picture 25). At first, there is not much similarity apart from the fact that both Che and Angel are facing us, looking through us. However, we must not forget that, like Che Guevara on March 5 1960, Benjamin's Angel witnesses a great human tragedy. In Thesis IX, Benjamin says that

Picture 24– Korda's cropped photo, known as *Guerrillero Heroico*.



Source: (KEMP, 2012, p.169).

Picture 25– Paul Klee's *Angelus Novus*.



Source: (LÖWY, 2005, p.61).

> There is a picture by Klee called Angelus Novus. It shows an angel who seems about to move away from something he stares at. His eyes are wide, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how the angel of history must look. His face is turned towards the past. Where a chain of events appears before us, he sees one single catastrophe, which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it at its feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise and has got caught in his wings; it is so strong that the angel can no longer close them. This storm drives him irresistibly into the future, to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows towards the sky. What we call progress is this storm (BENJAMIN *apud* LÖWY, 2005, pgs. 61-62).

Löwy considers Benjamin's allegory of the Angel as an inversion of Hegel's philosophy of history, a rationalist theodicy that legitimated every massacre as a necessary step towards the progressive triumph of Reason. According to Löwy,

> Benjamin's approach consists precisely in standing this view of history on its head, in demystifying progress and riveting a gaze imbued with a deep inconsolable sadness – but also with a profound moral revulsion – on the ruins it produces. These no longer bear witness, as in Hegel, to the "transience of empires" […]. but are, rather, an allusion to history's great massacres – hence the reference to the dead – and to the cities destroyed by war: from Jerusalem, destroyed by the Romans, to the ruins of Guernica and Madrid, the towns and cities of Republican Spain bombed by the Luftwaffe in 1936-37 (LÖWY, 2005, p.66).

Furthermore, Benjamin's Angel wants to awake the dead – an allegory for remembrance-redemption action – but is unable because of a storm that blows him towards the future, progress. He wants to help but is helpless, doomed to witness the repetition of the catastrophe. Furthermore, there is a correspondence between "the sacred and the profane, between theology and politics, which runs through each of the images" (LÖWY, 2005, p.63). For example, the storm blowing from Paradise can be understood as a reference to the expulsion of the Garden of Eden and to the hellish repetition of modern life in Sisyphus and Tantalus style (LÖWY, 2005, p.64). On the other hand, the storm of progress is also a critique to historical evolutionism, the belief that society is governed by natural laws which was specially harmful when employed by Social Democracy[72] and by Stalinism[73].

Returning to my comparative reading of Korda's Che and Angelus Novus, as Che Guevara seems to have been angry and pained by the catastrophe he had witnessed the day before and by his and the crowd's sorrow that day, having been part of a *funeral procession*, Benjamin's Angel is startled by the great social and political catastrophe of humanity it witnesses, the *triumphal procession* of the victors marching over the defeated: the dominance continuum of history Benjamin discusses in Thesis VII. Insisting on the parallelism between the two processions, I see in Korda's Che a mixture of feelings: the helplessness of the Angel and the messianic call to arms.

Benjamin's Angel watches helplessly all the massacres in human history and in the present as one single catastrophe. Although the Angel witnesses the power dominance continuum of history, he does not see it in a positivistic fashion, as a chronology of events, but rather as one single catastrophe. In comparison, being a revolutionary and an internationalist, the carnage of *La Coubre*'s explosions was probably not an isolated event for Che Guevara. Instead, it probably had synecdoche connotations. After all, Che had experienced the poverty, disease and oppression of Latin American peasants and miners in his two travels. He also experienced the paramilitary coup in Guatemala firsthand in 1954. And

[72] Benjamin takes issue with Social Democracy in Thesis XI (LÖWY, 2005, p.71).
[73] Benjamin takes issue with Stalinism in Thesis X (LÖWY, 2005, p.68).

he took Cuban's struggle against Batista's dictatorship and against economic dependence of the United States as his own, even though he was an Argentine.

But unlike the Angel, which was made helpless by the storm of Progress, Che was a non-orthodox Marxist, one who was critic of Stalinism and who attempted to bridge the gap between Eurocentric dogmas and the need for a Latin American revolution with his own theories of political revolution – *foquismo* and the New Man – and of economical revolution. Therefore, he was not a positivistic marxist and he was actively engaged in redemptive struggles. Hence, Che was not as powerless as the Angel since he was engaged in what Löwy calls emancipatory movements[74]: "from the political point of view, open history means, then, taking into account the possibility – though not the inevitability – of catastrophes on the one hand and great emancipatory movements on the other" (LÖWY, 2005, p.110).

There is after all complementarity between Benjamin's Thesis IX and XVIII, about the Angel and about the now-time of messianic struggle, respectively, since "what the Angel of History is impotent to achieve only the Messiah will be able to accomplish: to still the storm, to bandage the wounded, reawaken the dead and mend what has been put asunder" (LÖWY, 2005, p.67). Additionally, Löwy points out that Benjamin's way out of the Angel's conundrum is twofold: "religious and secular. In the theological sphere, this is a task for the Messiah; its secular equivalent or correspondent is none other than *Revolution*" (LÖWY, 2005, p.66). It is also important to stress that the Messiah for Benjamin is collective, not an individual:

> The important point for the author of the 'Theses' is that the last enslaved class, the proletariat, should perceive itself as heir to several centuries or millennia of struggle, to the lost battles of the slaves, serfs, peasants and artisans. The accumulated force of these endeavors becomes the explosive material with which the present emancipatory class will be able to interrupt the continuity of oppression (LÖWY, 2005, p.82).

Korda's Che evokes both Benjamin's Angel and a messianic potential, because of Guevara's active involvement in collective redemptive struggles and his inspirational leadership when he was alive and also because Che's image retains a remembrance-redemption *potential* of inspiring people.

[74] Che Guevara did after all try to aid the guerrilla struggle in Congo, in 1965, and create a new guerrilla front in South America from the remote Bolivian region of Ñancahuazú, in 1966-67.

1.4 CHAPTERS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Alborta's Che (Picture 11), which I discuss in more detail in Chapter One[75], also evokes the Angel and a messianic potential. The eyes of the deceased Che had witnessed a triple tragedy witnessed as a single event: the continuity of the social-political tragedy implicated by the failure of his new front project, the tragedy of being defeated from a military standpoint and the tragedy of being assassinated. But, even so, despite the mise-en-scène of the CIA and of the Bolivian Army, Alborta's Che has had the opposite effect, it has inspired artistic recreations and also remembrance-redemption efforts.

Another issue I discuss in Chapter One, entitled the "Phantasmagorical Che", is related to the contemporary ideological crisis, which was inaugurated by the end of the Soviet States. As I have argued, such crisis has had an effect on the scholarly rhetoric about Che's images, either by implying Che is only relevant because his image has been fetishized or by presenting readings that negate the remembrance-redemption potential of his images. Linking my previous comparison between Benjamin's Angelus Novus and Che's images with Jacques Derrida's discussion of the Specters of Marxism (DERRIDA, 2006), I argue that the allure of Che's images lies in what I call "the anxiety of remembering and not remembering." The research questions for this chapter are: how do films recreate Che's death?; do films reduce Che to Christ or do they allow enough room to accommodate religious-secular readings?

Also in Chapter One, I analyze two films that recreate Che's assassination and that contextualize Freddy Alborta's photograph of Che (Picture 11), such as *The Last Hours of Che Guevara* (THE LAST HOURS, 2016) and *El Dia que Me Quieras* (EL DIA, 1997). The former a two-hour-long biopic about, as the name of the film suggests, the last couple of hours of Che Guevara. Directed by Antonio García Molina and Karlos Granada, starring Granada as Che, the whole film takes place in the schoolroom in La Higuera where Che was kept captive until he was murdered. The latter is a 1997 documentary about the photographs taken of Che's corpse in Vallegrande. In the thirty-minute film, the director Leandro Katz intersperses sequences of poetic montages with sequences of an interview of Freddy Alborta,

[75] I have numbered the chapters for formatting purposes, but there is no particular order to read them. Actually, except by the Introduction, which is to be read first, and the Conclusion, which is best read last, the analytical chapter may be read in any order. This is made possible by many cross references, textual bridges, I created throughout the analytical chapters. In addition, Chapters Two and Three were originally part of a single chapter but as the text grew in size, I decided to split it into two chapters to help reading. However, I strongly suggest reading Chapter Two and Three together because much of what is discussed in the former gives support for the film analysis in the latter.

In Chapter Two, called “The Living Che”, I discuss concepts such as vision and action, focusing on many examples of artistic imaginations and of emancipatory actions that invoke and/or recreate Che. I also discuss examples of violence towards Che imaginations. The research questions for Chapter Two are: what evidence of Che’s political relevance in the Twenty-First Century can be found in contemporary artistic imaginations and emancipatory actions?; do Che’s images still have any disruptive potential?; do contemporary films recreate Che in ways that carry remembrance-redemption potential?

In Chapter Two, I also discuss two films that recreate Che based on artistic imaginations of Che and/or contemporary emancipatory actions. One of them is a 2004 documentary called *El Che de los Gays* (EL CHE DE LOS GAYS, 2004) about Chilean activist and journalist Victor Hugo Robles’ performatic protest that recreates Che. The other film, *Personal Che* (PERSONAL CHE, 2007), is an eighty-six-minute documentary that interweaves sequences of interviews of authors who have written about Che or Che’s images with people from different countries that relate to Che’s images in different ways.

In Chapter Three, entitled “Fetishized Che,” I analyze films that deal with the issues of transforming Che into brands and products, and of its political potential in the twentieth-first century. The issue of fetishization is discussed based on a theoretical framework that includes Marxist theory of alienation from a Decolonial perspective. The film discussed in this chapter is *Che!* (CHE, 1969). The research questions of this chapter are: Is the fetishization of Che inevitable in Capitalism?; how does a Hollywoodian film contribute to the fetish of Che’s images?

Finally, after comes the Conclusion with my final remarks: a summary of all the chapters, of the research questions and of the main conclusions. I also bring the theoretical framework together with my main conclusions in a final appraisal.

Regarding the terminology employed by me in this Dissertation, I would like to briefly discuss now terms that are frequently used by Che image scholars and also the terms that I prefer to use. A very common term employed by Che scholars is icon, which, according to Peirce, is “a sign which represents its object mainly by its similarity to it; the relationship between signifier and signified is not arbitrary but is one of resemblances or likeness” WOLLEN, 2013, p.102). Other terms that are part of Peirce’s system are symbol and index. According to Wollen, Peirce’s symbol corresponds to Saussure’s arbitrary sign, whereas “an index is a sign by virtue of an existential bond between itself and its object” (WOLLEN, 2013, p.92).

A term that I adopted in my Master Thesis was myth, defined by Roland Barthes as "depoliticized speech" in a bourgeois society. It is "constructed from a semiological chain which existed before it: it is a second-order semiological system", meaning that "which is a sign (namely the associative total of a concept and an image) in the first system, becomes a mere signifier in the second" (BARTHES, 1991, pgs.114, 142). Barthes's myth has the advantage of combining semiology with politics and of accommodating movement between the first and second semiological orders. However, it is still very much structuralist, being dependant of the first semiological order around which the additional ones orbitate.

In this Doctoral Dissertation, I adopt the term image as a general word to refer to photographs, films and artwork. When referring to a specific image, I will try to make it explicit. According to Mondzain, "an image in the singular, a singular image, designates what appears in visibility without being visible" (MONDZAIN, 2009, p.31). For Mondzain, there is an important interrelation between what is seen – what she associates with the words "visibility", "imagery" and "icon" – and what is not seen – what she associates with the words "invisible", "unseen" and "image": "contradiction is intrinsic to the nature of the image itself. The image and the icon lie at the heart of all considerations of the symbol and the sign, as well as their relation to the problematic of being and appearing, seeing and believing, strength and power" (MONDZAIN, 2005, p. xiii). Furthermore, "an image's strength comes from the desire to see it and from the visible's capacity to veil and to constitute the space between what is given to be seen and the object of desire" (MONDZAIN, 2009, p.31). In other words, an image allows strategic space for the spectator to see through it what has not been seen yet by means of a critical voice, while imagery or visibility do not allow such space and instead sate the spectator.

Another term I have used in this chapter is imagination. I understand it in its etymological sense of setting and image into action – image-in-action. And I prefer to use imagination to refer to the artistic action of recreating a certain image. In comparison, redemptive action is another form of acting upon an image, more related to emancipatory movements. Depending on the example being discussed, there might be some overlap between artistic imagination and redemptive or disruptive action. Finally, another term I adopt is recreation instead representation. While the former emphasizes the creative action, representation is usually associated with copying, with negative connotations. I pick up this subject again in the next chapter.

Finally, I would like to briefly point out some methodological differences when

considering static and moving images. Because of the interdisciplinarity of my research, I analyze still images – such as photographs, art, and posters – and moving images – films. Although both forms involve an interplay between image, spectators and context, there are some differences regarding how I analyze them that should be pointed out. Concerning the still Che's images, I first read my way around them by taking into account what art historians, art critics, journalists and communication scholars had to say. Then, the different perspectives regarding Che's static images were interwoven in a dialogic tapestry of different voices to which I added my own, contributing with my own perspective towards Che's images: how the phantasmagorical gaze of Che's images caused an anxiety of remembering and non-remembering, which can be dealt with in different ways, including recreating Che through artistic imaginations and disruptive actions, and trying to destroy the politicizing potential of Che's images through appropriation for capitalist and/or fascist purposes.

In addition, the analysis of moving Che's images has a complexity of its own. Besides pointing out how different elements in the analyzed films relate to the perspectives of different authors who wrote about Che's images, and to my own perspective, I also take into account the specificity of the medium. Hence, when analyzing films, I also consider formal aspects such as cinematography, sound, narration, acting, mise-en-scène, and editing, calling attention to specific instances whenever relevant. Furthermore, although each chapter has one connecting idea, I am careful not to reduce the complexity and richness of each film analyzed.

2 PHANTASMAGORICAL CHE

> "a secret pact binds us to them [defeated past generations] and we cannot easily throw off the demand they make upon us."
> (Walter Benjamin, apud LÖWY, 2005, p.32).

A specter haunts us. A specter haunts the world: the Phantasmagorical Che Guevara. His face appears to us in many forms, in movies, photographs, posters, T-shirts, murals. Ubiquitously unexpected, Che surprises us when we are not looking for him, but he seems to be always looking at us, or even across us. It feels as if we are being haunted by Che[76], or at least by images of him, and yet we do not know what he wants from us – but it definitely feels like he wants something. It is almost as if Che were indifferent to his own death. Actually, it seems as though he thrives in this world in spite of his own death. Being everywhere, he seems to be alive, but, his vicarious "presence" through images also paradoxically means his absence. Ubiquitously unexpected, living-dead, crossing space and time, there is something in his ghostly eyes that seems to speak to us. Those eyes are calling us, but we cannot remember what for or why.

Indeed, as we can see in Mario Benedetti's poem (2009), in the epigraph of this dissertation, despite of all that has been done symbolically to Che in order to either set his image in action – we talk about imagination in Chapter Two – or to immobilize his image and separate it from himself – we discuss alienation in Chapter Three –, Che still keeps his eyes open staring at us in a sort of disbelief of our own disbelief:

> *sin embargo los ojos incerrables del Che*
> *miran como si no pudieran no mirar*
> *asombrados tal vez de que el mundo no entienda*
> *que treinta años después siga bregando*
> *dulce y tenaz por la dicha del hombre*
> (BENEDETTI, 2009).

In other words, the world, us in general, does not quite understand how and why can Che keep fighting for humankind five decades[77] now after his death. From that follows our feeling of anxiety that Che images stir, a mixture of attraction and repulsion, of memory and

[76] In this dissertation, I study Che's images. However, in this chapter I play with the ambiguity surrounding the specter of Che and the spectral image of Che. Although people relate to Che's images, they often feel they are relating directly to Che, which I discuss in terms both of Derrida's spectral absence-presence and of the indigenous conception of art as constituent of life – the ritual practices of bathing, caring for and making offerings to the images as if they were a living person.

[77] Although the poem was published in 2009, it was probably written for the thiertieth anniversary of Che Guevara's death since the title of the poem is Che 1997.

of amnesia, of strange familiarity – similar to Freud's uncanny[78]. Moreover, in Benedetti's[79] poem (2009), Che's eyes are perplexed[80] by our lack of understanding – or, as I prefer, lack of memory – of his continuous "struggle". We could even go a step further and interrelate Che's eyes in the poem to those of Benjamin's Angel. Ironically, in his poem, our lack of understanding or memory is as uncanny[81] as the phantom of Che itself. The issue of the uncanny[82] shall resurge – pun intended – later on in this chapter.

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[78] According to the Wikipedia, "Ernst Jentsch set out the concept of the uncanny which Sigmund Freud elaborated on in his 1919 essay Das Unheimliche, which explores the eeriness of dolls and waxworks. For Freud, the uncanny locates the strangeness in the ordinary" (UNCANNY, 2020).

[79] Another literary text dedicated to Che Guevara, originally written in 1968, is José Lezama Lima's "*Ernesto Guevara*, *Comandante Nuestro"*: "Girded by the last test, a pebble stone of the beginnings to hear the inaugurations of the verb, death went after him, but he jumped from one tree to another, from a talking horse to a hammock where an Indian woman, with her pitcher that coagulates dreams, brings and carries him. Man of all beginnings, of the last test, of staying with one death, of particularizing himself with death, stone upon stone, stone growing fire. The meetings with Tupac Amaru, the Bolivarian epaulettes on the silver of Potosí, awakened his beginnings, the secrets of staying forever. He wanted to make the Andes uninhabited, the house of secrets. The spindle of the course, the oil dawning, carbuncle trading in the magic soup. What was hidden and visible was nothing less than the sun, surrounded by Inca media lunas, mermaids of Viracocha's entourage, mermaids with their great guitars. The media luna Viracocha transforming the stones into warriors and the warriors into stones. Raising by the dream and the invocations the city of the walls and the armor. Nuevo Viracocha, all the arrows of the possibility were expected from him and now all the prodigies of the dream are expected. Like Anfiareo, death does not interrupt his memories. The aristocracy, the protection in combat, always had at the time of the cries and the rage of the neck, but also the hoarding, sacrifice, and eagerness of the holocaust. Sacrificing in the funeral pyramid, but before giving the terrible tests of his size for transfiguration. Wherever there is a stone, said Nietzsche, there is an image. And its image is one of the beginnings of the prodigies, of the sowing in the stone, that is to say, the growth as it appears in the first theogonies, depositing the region of the force in the empty space" (LIMA; 1981 *apud* PORTO, 2017). According to Porto, "for Lezama Lima the figure of the Heroic Guerrilla man according to his historical theories becomes a myth: 'in an associated image', acting in the past as in the present and in the future [...] For this myth the best elements are conjured up: the complete Latin American man of the lineage of Tupac Amaru - a hero who carried out the greatest indigenous revolution in the American continent - , the essences of Potosí and the most outstanding amongst the Inca gods: Viracocha. Like a New Viracocha, Lezama saw Che, that is, a new man who fulfills an expectation of Latin American people because 'all the arrows of possibility were expected from him and now all the wonders of dreaming are expected'. During his lifetime, the Heroic Guerrilla man demonstrated with his action that utopias could become realities, work-based chimeras were possible and now after his death these 'arrows of possibility' point to each person, towards each revolutionary, who sees a path in his image and myth" (PORTO, 2017).

[80] Note that *asombrados* does not mean exactly haunted since the verb *asombrar* refers more to causing feelings of anxiety and extreme surprise. Instead, to haunt in Spanish would be *aterrar*, to cause fear.

[81] "Canny is from the Anglo-Saxon root ken: knowledge, understanding, or cognizance; mental perception: an idea beyond one's ken. Thus the uncanny is something outside one's familiar knowledge or perceptions" (UNCANNY, 2020). Indeed, we can relate the etymology of uncanny, an idea beyond one's understanding, to the world's lack of understanding – or lack of memory, as I prefer – of how Che can still carry own his "struggle" after so many years of his death in Benedetti's poem (2009).

[82] "From a more secular perspective, Sigmund Freud's concept of the uncanny suggests a similarly vertiginous limit experience associated with the encounter with the monster. The unsettling affective sense of the uncanny is triggered, according to Freud, by a variety of experiences in which one's understanding of how the world works is called into question. When one mistakes an automaton for a living person, for example, or confuses her reflection for another person, one momentarily experiences the frisson of the uncanny, a brief undoing of the world. Of particular note to Freud in his discussion are instances in which old, superstitious beliefs in an animistic world populated by magical spirits and monsters, and filled with sorcery seem confirmed. 'Many people experience the feeling [of the uncanny] in the highest degree in relation to death and dead bodies, to the return of the dead, and to spirits and ghosts,' observes Freud. More generally, 'an uncanny effect is often and easily produced when the distinction between imagination and reality is effaced, as when something that we

In this chapter, I present a concept – the anxiety of remembering and non-remembering[83] – to explain the fascination around Che's images. Such capacity to affect, I argue, is related to the ambiguity of what I call the phantasmagorical gaze of Che Guevara. On one hand, such gaze expresses the demand of all those defeated in humankind history over the new activist generations, as this chapter's epigraph suggests. On the other, the phantasmagorical gaze may also express melancholy – which I link to Freud's (1957) concept of melancholia – and inaction[84]. Therefore, I offer examples from art, photography and film that, I argue, express the ambiguous haunting over the living, those who are looked through by Che's images.

To be looked at by Che's phantasmagorical images feels a bit like meeting someone on the street you are not quite sure you know or not, that anxiety of not knowing how to react: should I say something and risk the embarrassment of being wrong, or should I just try to ignore the person, trying to pretend he or she does not affect me? Furthermore, to be looked at by Che's phantasmagorical images stirs an anxiety similar to the one we experience when we feel there is something important we wished to remember but we just cannot remember what. When our memory falls short, the anxiety of remembering and not remembering lingers on.

In part, that is due to the cooperative principle (GRICE, 1975) of language. Even if we are unable to understand or remember what Che's ghost is trying to relay[85] to us, we still feel like we ought to. But that alone is not enough to explain why so many people from different countries and cultures are drawn to Che images. If we consider the words of Walter Benjamin in this chapter's epigraph, "a secret pact binds us to them [defeated past generations] and we cannot easily throw off the demand they make upon us" (Walter Benjamin, apud LÖWY, 2005, p.32), we can get a hint of why the attraction to Che images is so strong. Che, as part of the defeated past generations, has a pact with the new generations – us – and a demand to make. In order to understand what that demand may be, we have to take

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have hitherto regarded as imaginary appears before us in reality …' When the monster appears, rationalist frameworks for organizing experience are undone. The monster therefore threatens both our physical and our psychological wellbeing" (WEINSTOCK, 2014).

[83] I relate the ambiguity of such concept, and the disturbance it causes in terms of identity and borders, to Freud's concept of the uncanny, and to Kristeva's (1982) concept of the abject.

[84] The analytical chapters of this dissertation dialogue between themselves. Chapter Two, about invoking Che for emancipatory purposes, is about a responsive look by artists and activists to the phantasmagorical Che gaze. In turn, Chapter Three, about the capitalist attempts of appropriating Che's images, is a about trying to alienate – in several ways – Che's images.

[85] Relay here means both tell and and pass something on.

our comparison, between Walter Bejamin's allegory of the angel (Picture 25) and Korda's Che (Picture 24), further.

2.1 BENJAMIN'S ANGEL, MEMORY AND THE GODDESS NYX

Both witnessed funeral processions and great social tragedies, both have a direct gaze that traverses the spectator, space and time. In other words, I argue that Korda's Che and Benjamin's Angel see the human history as one single synchronic catastrophe – past-present-future interconnected and interdependent –, whereas the chronological notion of historical time is fundamentally diachronic, a succession of moments. Or yet, to make use of little geometry I can remember, we are taught to look at time as a line, which is great for measuring for obvious economic reasons, but it is troublesome to connect different fragments of time, especially if they took place long before our own little personal dots were included on the line. In comparison, from the *Guerrillero Heroico* and from the Angel of history's perspective, our human history neat line is nothing but a dot – one single, messy dot.

Another thing both Korda's Che and Benjamin's Angel have in common is that they make us think about the issue of memory politics. Che's life provides many examples of remembrance-redemption since he learned from political exiles from Peru – such as Hilda Gadea –, and other countries – such as the Castro brothers from Cuba – and made their struggle his own. Furthermore, there is an important connection[86] between the Cuban Revolution and anti-fascist struggle during the Spanish Civil War since Alberto Bayo, a Spanish-Cuban lieutenant colonel who had served in the Spanish Army and in the Republican Army, trained Che Guevara, Fidel and Raul Castro, as well as the other members of the 26 July Movement who left Mexico to start the guerrilla campaign in Cuba. Furthermore, Che Guevara's internationalism combined his unique view of marxism with anticolonialism, and in the case of Latin America, could be interpreted as a creative attempt of dialogue between Simon Bolívar's dream of a united continent with the non-orthodox marxism of José Mariátegui.

Likewise, the Angel of history also points out how political is memory. The Angel "sees one single catastrophe [w]here a chain of events appears before us" (LÖWY, 2005,

[86] When I use the word connection, I do not mean a line between two separate moments in time. Rather, I mean they interact since they are part of the same time, Benjamin's time of memory.

p.61). As a divine messenger, the Angel can see what we cannot, that is, he sees human history as a single synchronic tragedy whereas we, too stuck to the bourgeois idea of progress, only see history as a succession of fragments of time, diachronically. That is why Benjamin names "Progress" the storm that blows the Angel with his back towards the future, precluding his will to relay his vision, to make us remember, meaning that instead of a relay we have a delay, postponing the messianic liberation of humankind from all forms of oppression and exploitation because of the beliefs on socialdeterminism and social evolutionism. In other words, if we consider the etymology of the verb remember, "to bring to mind again", we can interpret that the Angel wants us to see what he is capable of seeing with his own phantasmagorical eyes by allowing us, humans, to make one again our optical vision of "present" social tragedies with the mental vision – images – of "past" ones. However, we are so used to the fragmentation of time – the positivistic idea of time – that such cosmovision lies uncannily beyond our understanding. However, remembrance and redemption efforts can disrupt chronological time and allow us to see time synchronically, the time of the constellations or "the time of memory", as Walter Benjamin calls it (LÖWY, 2005, p.96).

Andreas Huyssen (1995) creates a metaphor to refer to the crisis of history and to the renewed interest in memory at the end of the Twentieth Century: "twilight is that moment of the day that foreshadows the night of forgetting, but that seems to slow time itself, an in-between state in which the last light of the day may still play out its ultimate marvels. It is memory's privileged time" (HUYSSEN, 1995, p.3). Interestingly, not unlike Benjamin, Huyssen points out the risk of forgetting while remembering. I would like to build upon Huyssen's image of a phantasmagorical time, the in-betweeness of night and day that slows time and that foreshadows "the night of forgetting" (*ibid*).

In fact, I read – probably against the grain – Huyssen's imagery of the night of forgetting as a reference to Nyx, or the Black Night, the ancestral Greek goddess, the daughter of Kháos, she is "the lonely creator of all forces that hinder human life through privation and non-existence" (TORRANO, 1995, p.23). Nyx is mentioned in the beginning of the Theogony (HESIOD, 1997) in connection with Mnemosyne, the goddess of memory, and her daughters, the Muses. Emerging from the darkness of the *Night*, invisible, the Muses' singing and dancing bring forth all the deities, from the "current" ones such as Zeus, to the ancient forces of the universe: "Gaia and great Okeanos, and Black Night" (HESIOD, 1997, p.1). Comparing Huyssen's and Hesiod's imagery, we can see a similar interplay between forces that have the power of creating presence – the daylight in the former and the Muses in the latter – and

forces that have the power of causing absence – the night of forgetting and the Black Night, respectively –.

Moreover, comparing Walter Benjamin's Theses (LÖWY, 2005), Huyssen's twilight metaphor (1995) and Hesiod's Theogony (1997), we can see that all of them deal with the issue of remembering and forgetting in relation to time, while also crossing the boundary between what is considered objective and what is subjective. As we have discussed, Benjamin's allegories are based on a conception of time that is made of arrested, disruptive moments that threaten the march of the victors, composing a single past-present-future. Remembrance and redemption are the task of both the historian and of collective disruptive actions, such as those brought about revolutions and emancipatory movements. In comparison, Huyssen's twilight refers both to the passing from day to night, and metaphorically to the transition from the crisis of modernity to a still undefined time. He also comments on the crisis of history – identified with objectivity, as well as the public realm of modernity and the nation – and on the rise of memory, associated with subjectivity and the imagination of poets (HUYSSEN, 2003, p.2). And, in turn, past-present-future belong to Nyx's realm of oblivion, and, since humankind knows only the present, it is Memory who retrieves past and future, making them present through the voices of the Muses, who literally give voice to poets and kings (TORRANO, 1995, p.27). We can see here an interesting interplay between memory, language and making meaning out of time, be it the past – through what we call history – or future, through what we call divination. Besides that, the Theogony sheds light on Ancient Greece's oral culture, when written City-state laws had not yet distanced humans from the realm of the divine, and when the separation between public and private, objective and subjective, had not taken place yet. Furthermore, according to Huyssen,

> Whatever the specific content of the many contemporary debates about history and memory may be, underlying them is a fundamental disturbance not just of the relationship between history as objective and scientific, and memory as subjective and personal, but of history itself and its promises. At stake in the current history/memory debate is not only a disturbance of our notions of the past, but a fundamental crisis in our imagination of alternative futures (HUYSSEN, 2003, p.2).
>
> My hypothesis, therefore, is that the current obsession with memory [...] is a sign of the crisis of that structure of temporality that marked the age of modernity with its celebration of the new as utopian, as radically and irreducibly other (HUYSSEN, 1995, p.6).

Huyssen makes an important contribution in pointing out the political and cultural consequences of the crisis of ideas of progress, modernity and of teleological conceptions of history. In other words, he argues that since teleological philosophies of history aimed at a

future stage as the epitome of a progressive transformation, the crisis of such way of thinking shifted interest towards the past, instead, and to alternative philosophies of history – such as Benjamin's, I would like to add.

2.2 DERRIDA'S SPECTER AND FREUD'S MELANCHOLIA

One of the teleological philosophies of history who underwent crisis was Marxism(s)[87], especially the positivistic-oriented marxism, but the ideological crisis also had political consequences for other forms of marxism. The crisis of socialism and of marxisms was catapulted by the restoration of capitalism in the former Soviet Union, which took place in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Capitalism was on the offensive globally through a reorganization of production that changed many things, from logistics to labor laws, and through a hegemonic globalization discourse, spearheaded by the United States. Many intellectuals and militant organizations fell apart. It seemed as though the disappearance of the USSR only confirmed the inevitable triumph of capitalism. It was in 1991 that a conference called "Whither Marxism? Global Crises in International Perspective" was organized by the University of California. Derrida's lecture was the basis for the book Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International (DERRIDA, 1994). According to Derrida,

> There is today in the world a dominant discourse, or rather one that is on the way to becoming dominant, on the subject of Marx's work and thought, on the subject of Marxism (which is perhaps not the same thing), on the subject of the socialist International and the universal revolution, on the subject of the more or less slow destruction of the revolutionary model in its Marxist inspiration, on the subject of the rapid, precipitous, recent collapse of societies that attempted to put it into effect at least in what we will call for the moment, citing once again the Manifesto, "old Europe", and so forth. This dominating discourse often has the manic, jubilatory, and incantatory form that Freud assigned to the so-called triumphant phase of mourning work. The incantation repeats and ritualizes itself, it holds forth and holds to formulas, like any animistic magic. To the rhythm of a cadenced march, it proclaims: Marx is dead, communism is dead, very dead, and along with it its hopes, its discourse, its theories, and its practices. It says: long live

[87] I am using the word in the plural on purpose. Similar to feminist authors who have used the plural Feminisms to refer to the multiplicity of movements and organizations that consider themselves feminist, I am proposing we do the same with Marxism(s). Many authors have criticized marxists for ignoring gender, race and coloniality. However relevant their criticism is, if we adopted a reductionist stance that all marxists and any form of marxism is misogynic, racist and class-centered, we would make ourselves deaf to all the dissident voices that have existed within Marxisms, such as Walter Benjamin, Rosa Luxemburg, Ernesto Guevara, Ruy Mauro Marini and Vânia Bambirra, just to point out a few. Moreover, if we adopted a reductionist stance, we would not hear the new voices emerging which want to take Marxisms into new directions.

> capitalism, long live the market, here's to the survival of economic and political liberalism! (DERRIDA, 2006, p.64).

In order to understand Derrida's analysis of U.S. hegemony and of the ideological crisis of Socialism and of Marxisms, we have first to understand his reference to Freud's work about mourning and melancholia. First published in 1917, Freud's essay discusses two different ways of reacting to the absence of the loving object. While "the inhibition, 'absorbedness' of the ego, and the disinterest in the external world is evident in both" (HILMAN, 2013, n.p.), mourning and melancholia have some important differences. Mourning takes place when a person loses the object of love, and it is considered by Freud to be a healthy way of grieving, it is usually overcome when the person finds another object of love and the person's consciousness aids the recovery. In comparison, melancholia is caused by the rejection of the loving object:

> The libido is now faced with conflicting forces between the lost admiration for "object-love" and the past "libidinal drive" of wanting to stay connected with the previous love-object. When the libidinal drive is too forceful the subject will return to the love object not in reality but in a hallucinatory representation. Thus the subject will enter psychosis (HILMAN, 2013, n.p.).

Although Derrida, in the aforementioned excerpt, refers to the "triumphant phase of the mourning work", the way I understand it, he is actually referring to melancholia, which is the one related to hallucinations caused by a repressive discourse. One key element in understanding how Derrida takes inspiration from Freud's essay is not the rejection itself, but the impossibility of the rejected person of making meaning of the rejection – which, as we have discussed in the beginning of this chapter, is uncanny. The unconscious return to the love object through a hallucinatory mode is caused by "the 'libidinal object/person' becom[ing] internalized and identified with the ego itself" and, as a result, "all the ambivalence towards the objects is now directed towards the ego itself" (HILMAN, 2013, n.p.). The person's ego is, therefore, split between the ideal ego and the ordinary ego, as the latter identifies with the love object and the former starts to hate and criticize it as if it were another person, the love object.

In summary, Derrida's concepts are based on a political reading of a number of Freud's concepts: the impossibility of understanding the absence of the loving object becomes the difficulty in understanding what had happened with Marx, Marxisms and Socialism; the sadistic and prolific attacks of the ideal ego towards the ordinary ego become the hegemonic discourse of liberal democracies under capitalist globalization spearheaded by the United States; the hallucinatory mode in which the person self-deprecates as if he or she were talking

about the love object becomes the haunting of the specter. Moreover, if Freud is discussing a condition that affects patients, Derrida is talking about a worldly impatience that affects all of us with the longing for and exasperation with something that is presently absent and also absently present.

The difficulty and also brilliance of understanding Derrida's concepts of hauntology and specter lies in his avoidance of offering neat definitions straightforwardly and in his preference for taking his readers on extended critical "walks", which are aporic[88] since they delay resolution while setting authors and ideas in motion, in conflictive dialogue. A related concept to aporia, that also helped me understand the concepts of hauntology and specter, is Derrida's *différance*, defined as "what causes the movement of meaning making to be possible only if each element called 'present' [...] relates to something else, keeping within itself traces of the past element and allowing itself to be precipitated with the trace of the future element" (DERRIDA, 1998, p.9). Or put in a more didactic way,

> Derrida argues that language has two important characteristics: (1) its play of signifiers continually defers, or postpones, meaning, and (2) the meaning it seems to have is the result of the differences by which we distinguish one signifier from another. He combines the French words for “to defer” and “to differ” to coin the word *différance*, which is his name for the only “meaning” language can have (TYSON, 2006, p.253).

Derrida's careful excavation of words to preserve traces of past-future meanings and conflicts that dominant ideologies try hard to eliminate in order to naturalize themselves reminds me of Benjamin's proposal of a philosophy of history that excavates the defeated of the past from the rubble of oblivion. Indeed, we can understand Derrida's (2006) book Specters of Marx as a somewhat similar excavation, diving in the hegemonic discourse of globalized liberal democracies' triumph over socialism in order to reveal traces of past-future meanings and to reminds us of the dialogical dynamic of meaning making: that is, that the capitalist hegemonic discourse still needed something to be able to define itself in opposition from, and that by bashing Marx, Socialism and Marxisms, the same hegemonic discourse was paradoxically contributing to a resurgence of Marx, even if in a present-absent spectral state. Now I think we are better equipped to face Derrida's enigmatic presentation of the concept of hauntology which, in my opinion, is aimed at putting the reader immediately in the state of aporia:

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[88] According to William Harmon, Derrida's aporia lies in "indicat[ing] a point of undecidability, which locates the site at which the text most obviously undermines its own rhetorical structure, dismantles, or deconstructs itself" (2009, p.39)

> Repetition and first time, but also repetition and last time, since the singularity of any first time, makes of it also a last time. Each time it is the event itself, a first time is a last time. Altogether other. Staging for the end of history. Let us call it a *hauntology* [...]How to comprehend in fact the discourse of the end or the discourse about the end? Can the extremity of the extreme ever be comprehended? And the opposition between "to be" and "not to be"? Hamlet already began with the expected return of the dead King. After the end of history, the spirit comes by *coming back* [revenant], it figures *both* a dead man who comes back and a ghost whose expected return repeats itself, again and again (DERRIDA, 2006, p.10).

As we can see, Derrida is referring to the dialogic movement to be found in language, politics and history. He also refers to the difficulty in making meaning out of the hegemonic discourse that proclaimed the end of history, difficulty which we know is related to Freud's concept of melancholia. Furthermore, to be and not to be refer to the living-dead feature of the specter, which returns both as the dead man and as its ghost. In turn, Derrida's excavation becomes clearer in the following passage, which helps understand the significance of hauntology and of the ghost:

> And how is it that a discourse of this type is sought out by those who celebrate the triumph of liberal capitalism and its predestined alliance with liberal democracy only in order to hide, and first of all from themselves, the fact that this triumph has never been so critical, fragile, threatened, even in certain regards catastrophic, and in sum bereaved? Bereaved by what the specter of Marx represents still today and which it would be a matter of conjuring away one more time in a jubilatory and manic fashion (a necessary phase of unsuccessful mourning work, according to Freud), but also virtually bereaved for itself. By hiding from themselves all these failures and all these threats, people would like to hide from the potential – force and virtuality – of what we will call the principle and even, still in the figure of irony, the spirit of the Marxist critique (DERRIDA, 2006, p.85).

Interestingly, in Derrida's careful excavation of traces and of dialogism in the hegemonic discourse of globalized liberal democracies, we see that, different from Huyssen (2003) who talks about the crisis of all teleological philosophies of history, it becomes clear that the hegemonic discourse of end of history is based on a teleological conception of history that is asserting itself by bashing another teleological conception of history. In other words, the conception of globalized liberal democracies, spearheaded by the United States, as the ultimate stage in history poses triumphantly over the defeated Soviet-oriented project of Socialism. Furthermore, it is a pose that must be constantly reaffirmed to mask capitalism's own fragilities and to hide the fear caused by the specter of Marx and what it may stir. Regarding the specter,

> the specter is a paradoxical incorporation, the becoming-body, a certain phenomenal and carnal form of the spirit. It becomes, rather, some "thing" that remains difficult to name: neither soul nor body, and both one and the other. For it is flesh and phenomenality that give to the spirit its spectral apparition, but which disappear right away in the apparition, in the very coming of the revenant or the return of the specter. There is something disappeared, departed in the apparition itself as reapparition of the departed. [...] this non-object, this non-present present, this being-

> there of an absent or departed one no longer belongs to knowledge (DERRIDA, 2006, p.5).

A transgressive figure, the specter traverses the border between life and death, placing itself just outside our knowledge or memory, yet close enough to affect us through an uncanny feeling of familiar strangeness or of strange familiarity. Reactions will vary. We may literally or figuratively run in fear, or we may freeze not knowing what to do, or we may be more curious than fearful and decide to approach the specter. Besides a living-dead figure, uncanny, the specter is also movement between meanings or ideas – at the same time, the specter is and is not the dead Marx, it also is and is not what Marx have become since his death, and it is and is not the potential to become something new. Such movement is what perplexes the spectator, what makes the person feel what Derrida calls haunting and what I name the anxiety of remembering and non-remembering. Besides challenging our understanding and memory, the spectral movement also delays, it distends time. The specter ultimately cannot disrupt time, similar to Benjamin's Angel, but it does delay ourselves from being swallowed back by our everyday lives, just enough for us to be challenged by its paradoxical appearance, a riddle in itself, and also a demand for us to remember.

2.3 EXAMPLES OF THE SPECTER IN FILMS

A good illustration of what Derrida means by the specter is the initial sequence in the documentary called The Spectre of Marxism, directed in 1983 by Allan Horrox, written and starred by Stuart Hall. The film opens with a group of people walking through a cemetery. Trees and tombstones act as improvised masks[89], limiting the spectator's capacity to see the group of people (Picture 26). At the back, we seem to see Marx looking straight at us, but then we realize this is his memorial in Highgate Cemetery, in London. Marx's frontal gaze makes me remember of Che's frontal gaze in Korda's photograph (Picture 24). Then, the camera cuts to a close up and, later, to an extreme close up of red flowers over the tomb and of hands putting one flower over the other. At the same time, in voice-over, Stuart Hall provides some biographical information about Marx: "his chief characteristic was singleness of purpose, his

[89] Masks were a common way of experimenting with image shapes within the rectangular frame. According to Bordwell and Thompson, the effect was created by"attaching masks over either the camera's or the printer's lens to block the passage of light. Masks were quite common in the silent cinema" (BORDWELL; THOMPSON, 2008, p.187).

idea of happiness was to fight and his idea of misery was submission. [...] And his favorite color was red" (THE SPECTRE, 1983). The red[90] of roses and the reference to red in the voice-over create an interesting metaphor for what Marx and Marxism have become associated with: revolution.

Picture 26 – Marx gazes at us in the cemetery

Source: The Spectre of Marxism (1983).

Released to commemorate the one hundredth anniversary of Marx's death in 1983, the movie brings an eerily similarity with Derrida's book, published for the first time in 1993. The similarity is not only in the titles of the film and of the book, but also in the issue of how the specter relates to memory. In a montage sequence combining Stuart Hall talking to the camera, footage filmed at Marx's grave and animation, Hall keenly remarks that:

> Karl Marx died a hundred years ago. Yet, his specter continues to haunt our world. Though his body is safely buried in Highgate cemetery, his ideas refused to lie down and die quietly beside him. Those ideas have shaped our world more profoundly than Darwin, Freud or Einstein's. They have inspired men and women to fight and die for them, to overthrow old nations and construct new ones. And yet in Britain where he spent the most productive years of his life, people know relatively little about him apart from that grim, imposing monument[91] in Highgate Cemetery, with

[90] Ironically, in 2019, red paint was used to vandalize Marx's tomb and a marble plaque was smashed. This is only one in many attempts to try to destroy Marx's potential for remembrance-redemption by trying to destroy a spectral form of Marx. According to the Wikipedia, "in 1960, a pair of yellow swastikas was painted on the tomb, as well as slogans in German supporting Nazi leader Adolf Eichmann, who was then in custody in Israel. The tomb was the subject of two bombing attempts in the 1970s. The tomb was daubed in blue paint in 2011, but no lasting damage was done" (THE TOMB OF KARL MARX, 2020). Such violence towards a bust reminds me of the destruction of Vazquez's statue of Che Guevara (Picture 4), which I discussed in the Introduction.

[91] There are several monuments – Marx's and Che's – that I mention in this dissertation. I am aware that monuments are a bourgeois and patriarchal way of making someone, usually a white male, be remembered, while also covertly naturalizing power relations. I personally prefer recreations of Che that are more nuanced and ambivalent than monuments. Nonetheless, there is also something phantasmagorical in Marx's and Che's monuments, which I discuss in this chapter. Overall, I think we should be, on one hand, cautious when discussing monuments because of the possibility of interpreting them hagiographically; on the other, we should

> its gigantic beard, which has come to be a sort of symbol of what people think of Marx or Marxism. [...]
>
> From the Soviet Revolution in 1917 to the present day, a third of the world's population, one and a half thousand million people in over thirty countries, have come to live in societies claiming inspiration from the ideas of Karl Marx. His revolutionary ideas of class struggle have inspired a chain of revolutions throughout the world but the Marxist states that resulted have sometimes been a long way from Marx's original ideas. Even the forbidding monument in Highgate Cemetery is not in fact where he was originally buried. His original grave lies one hundred yards away marked by a plain stone slab. And the contrast between these two graves is like the gap between what Marx was and what he has become, between Marx himself and the long tradition called Marxism"(THE SPECTRE, 1983).

This gap Hall refers to corresponds to the previous citation of Derrida of how the specter challenges our comprehension and memory by being present and absent at the same time. Moreover, both Derrida's and Hall's words underscore the importance of the symbolical in the attempt of making meaning out of something or someone that is ultimately absent, after all, we haven't lived the period Marx was alive or met the man. We do not rely on the goddess Memory and on the Muses to give us voice, but instead our own memories of Marx and Marxisms are shaped by his phantasmagorical presence-absences in his books, books about his books, films and other forms of art, monuments, lectures about him, etc. Indeed, we can say the same thing about Che Guevara, a non-orthodox marxist who have fought for and inspired many revolutions, and whose images keep resurging despite the five decades since his death.

Another similarity with Marx is that Guevara's remains are located in the Santa Clara Mausoleum, as well as the remains of his comrades in arms, but he was actually buried in a mass grave in Vallegrande, the location of which was kept secret for almost three decades[92]. After the excavation of the remains, a Mausoleum was built in Vallegrande on the location of

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avoid dismissing Che's monuments as shallow or ignoring them altogether since they can trouble the spectator, potentially contributing to a later interest and research. In addition, if we dismissed monuments for being too shallow or for not contributing to emancipatory politics, we would also run the risk of doing the same towards other artifacts that are often thought to be depoliticized, such as Che's Pop Art posters and Che's T-shirts. In other words, although we should be aware of monuments, and of their role of naturalizing power relations in dominant politics, instead of moving away from them, I think we should bring the issue of relating towards them to the fore.

[92] As I have previously stated in my Master Thesis, "Guevara was shot [on October 9, 1967] and his body was displayed for the journalists [on October 10]. After that, both of his hands were cut off and the rest of his body was buried in an unmarked grave with other dead guerrillas. His remains were only found thirty years later, after the Bolivian retired general Mario Vargas Salinas revealed Guevara was buried near the landing strip at Vallegrande. After eighteen months of searching, in an effort evolving Bolivian, Argentinian and Cuban scientists, several bodies were found and identified, including Guevara's remains" (MAYA NETO, 2017, p.14). Furthermore, the mass grave where Che was buried with his comrades is the starting point of a short story I wrote about the return of Che's specter, called *Retorno*. I discuss the short story later on in this chapter and in Chapter Two.

the mass grave. Similar to Marx's tomb in Highgate Cemetery, both of Che Guevara's Mausoleums receive many visitors, as well as the washhouse in Vallegrande where his body was exhibited for journalists. There are, in fact, several movies that depict either the mass grave where Che was buried in Vallegrande and/or the Santa Clara Mausoleum, where his and his comrades' remains are.

For instance, the documentary Personal Che (PERSONAL CHE, 2007) shows the Bolivian nurse Juana Ocinaga (Picture 27) making an offering and praying to Che's soul, asking for protection for her in an upcoming trip she was going to take in search of work. The La Higuera and Vallegrande inhabitants' reverence of Che as a lay saint have been referred to by several scholars as compelling evidence of Che's contemporary political meaninglessness, as I have discussed in detail in the Introduction. However, I return to Kunzle's argument of fusion called Chesucristo later in this chapter when I discuss Che's corpse. I also analyze Personal Che in more detail in Chapter Two.

Picture 27 – Juana Ocinaga's offering to Che

Source: Personal Che (2007).

The mass grave turned Mausoleum also appears in the spooky documentary The Hands of Che Guevara (THE HANDS, 2006). Juan Coronel Quiroga, a former Comunist Party militant and one of the people involved in smuggling Che's hands and death mask to Cuba, talks with children about Che Guevara inside the Vallegrande Mausoleum (Picture 28). Interestingly, we can relate Quiroga, relaying his memories of revolutionary struggles to the children, to this chapter's epigraph about the pact and demand that binds the past and the new generations.

Picture 28– Quiroga invites the children to remember.

Source: The Hands of Che Guevara (2006).

At the end of the same film, Victor Zannier, another former leftist militant involved in smuggling Che's hands to Cuba, visits the Santa Clara Mausoleum. After an establishing shot of Zannier inside the Mausoleum, we have a series of shot and reverse shot of Zannier and Che's eyes – an artistic recreation of Korda's Che – in extreme close-up. I created a collage from the shot and reverse shot (Picture 29) to better reproduce here the effect created by the film. We can interpret Che's phantasmagorical gaze in the film as being directed both at Zannier and at us.

Picture 29 – Extreme close-ups of Che's and Zannier's eyes.

Source: The Hands of Che Guevara (2006).

The Santa Clara Mausoleum is also depicted by the biopic Ernesto (ERNESTO, 2017)[93], which tells the story of Freddy Maymura Hurtado, a Japanese-Bolivian medical doctor who volunteered to be part of the Ñancahuazú Guerrilla. The film creates a hauntingly parallel between the characters Ernesto Guevara and Freddy Maymura, since both were non-Cuban doctors who became revolutionaries and since the latter's alias for the guerrilla was

[93] The film was released the same year of the fiftieth anniversary of Ernesto Guevara's death.

"Ernesto". At the end of the movie, there is a spectral montage of fictional and non-fictional elements. After a sequence in which Maymura is executed by the Bolivian Army, having refused to disclose Che's location, we have a non-fictional sequence of survivors of the guerrilla visiting the Santa Clara Mausoleum and paying their respects to Freddy (Picture 30). After that sequence, the film returns to the fictional element with a guerrilla column marching single file through the bush. Maymura is the last man in the column, as a doctor, and, when someone calls him by his alias "Ernesto" offscreen, he turns and looks through us (Picture 31). His gaze, his long hair, beard and ragged appearance all remind Korda's Che. It is as if the ghost of both men have become connected somehow.

Picture 30 – Survivors of the Ñancahuazú guerrilla pay respect to Maymura.

Source: Ernesto (2017).

Picture 31– "Ernesto" looks through us.

Source: Ernesto (2017).

Once again we have the issue of the phantasmagorical gaze. "Ernesto", Maymura's alias, looks through us similarly as Korda's Che and as Benjamin's Angel do. It is an eerily look of a (non)being that is presently absent and absently present, living and dead, one that

demands something from us, if we could only remember. Such spectral gaze reminds of Thomas Moore's song, "The Dead":

> Oh, ye Dead! oh, ye Dead! whom we know by the light you give
> From your cold gleaming eyes, though you move like men who live.
> Why leave you thus your graves,
> In far off fields and waves,
> Where the worm and the sea-bird only know your bed,
> To haunt this spot where all
> Those eyes that wept your fall,
> And the hearts that wail'd you, like your own, lie dead?
> It is true, it is true, we are shadows cold and wan;
> And the fair and the brave whom we lov'd on earth are gone,
> But still thus even in death
> So sweet the living breath
> Of the fields and the flow'rs in our youth we wander'd o'er
> That ere, condemn'd, we go
> To freeze mid Hecla's snow,
> We would taste it awhile, and think we live once more!
> (MOORE, 1997).

Notice the transgressiveness of the ghosts as dead and alive at the same time, since their eyes are cold but they "move like men who live". The paradoxical ambiguity between life and dead is reinforced by, first, creating a contrast of imagery between the living and the dead, and then, by crossing it. After all, in the song, the dead return because of a yearning for life, to taste the living breath of the fields and flowers of their youth. Furthermore, in Moore's song, we observe the same spectral look we have noticed before in images of Che, in Benjamin's Angel, in the bust of Marx, and in Maymura's gaze (ERNESTO, 2017). It is an uncanny gaze that gives light despite the fact that the eyes are cold.

The uncanny light in the dead eyes reminds me of the common optical etymology between the words "specter" and "spectator": the former comes from the Latin *spectrum*, meaning "vision" or "apparition" (SPECTER, 2020), while the latter comes from the Latin *spectare*, meaning "to view" or "to watch" (SPECTATOR, 2020). In turn, the common optical etymology between specter and spectator reminds me of what Derrida calls "the visor effect", referring to the ghost of King Hamlet who appears wearing armor: "we do not see who looks at us, [...]the furtive and ungraspable visibility of the invisible, or an invisibility of a visible X" (DERRIDA, 2006, p.6).

The play or movement between what we are able to see and what we are not, between being present while absent, is what arises what I have called the anxiety of remembering and not remembering. Moreover, we can relate this paradoxical ambiguity to image itself, since

> [it] awaits its visibility, which emerges from the relation established between those who produce it and those who look at it. As animage, it shows nothing. If it consciously shows something, it communicates and no longer shows its real nature, that is, the expectation of a gaze.This is why, rather than invisible, it is better to speak of an unseen, of what anticipates meaning through public debate (MONDZAIN, 2009, p.30).

Although Derrida prefers the specter instead of spirit or ghosts, because of its optical ambiguity, ghosts in literature and cinema also bring interesting associations. For instance, Weinstock observes that "literary and cinematicghosts are also used to express a wide varietyof societal concerns" since "as liminal figures, ghosts oftenrepresent the experiences of displacedor marginalized peoples such as woman,immigrants, and various minority groups" (WEINSTOCK, 2014, p.251). If, then, Derrida's specter allows me a more focused theoretical framework for the film analysis, the broader idea of ghost makes it possible for my analysis to be connected to different ghost literatures and films, and also provides me some space to go beyond the eurocentric epistemological constraints of the concept of specter.

2.4 FILM ANALYSIS

The two movies I analyze in detail in this chapter deal with the issues of the gaze, the corpse *El Dia que Me Quieras* (EL DIA, 1997) is a 1997 documentary about the photographs taken of Che's corpse in Vallegrande. In the thirty-minute film, the director Leandro Katz interviews Freddy Alborta, the Bolivian photographer who took the famous photo of Che's dead body (Picture 11). The film received four awards: the Coral award for best experimental work at the 1998 International New Latin American Cinema Festival at Havana, the best documentary at the 1998 International Film Festival at Valdivia, a merit award by the Latin American Studies Association in 2000, and an award at the 2000 Society for Photographic Education Conference Film Festival. There is no available information regarding box office, which leads me to conclude that the movie was probably screened in festivals and DVD copies sold online, like the one I bought which accompanied a three-hundred-page book called *Los Fantasmas de Ñancahuazú* (KATZ, 2010), edited by the same Leandro Katz.

The other movie I analyze is The Last Hours of Che Guevara (THE LAST, 2016), a two-hour-long biopic about, as the name of the film suggests, the last couple of hours of Che Guevara. Directed by Antonio García Molina and Karlos Granada, starring Granada as Che, the whole film takes place in the schoolroom in La Higuera where Che was kept captive until

he was murdered. The sepia tonality and the wheezing breathing of Che lend a phantasmagorical tone to the film. The movie received awards such as the RTVA Award for Best Actor at the 2018 Picor X International Festival. It can be watched through paid online streaming. And there is no information about box office available online.

2.4.1 *El Dia Que Me Quieras* (EL DIA, 1997).

El Dia Que Me Quieras (EL DIA, 1997) carries a palimpsestic or intertextual quality. The film makes reference to a homonymous Carlos Gardel and Alfredo Le Pera tango (GARDEL; LE PERA, 1934), as well as to a short story by Jorge Luis Borges called "*El Testigo*" (1998)[94]. Besides the movie title in the beginning, the only other reference to the tango is at the end of the movie, when it is played as part of a montage I discuss later. In comparison, Borges' short story is recreated by Katz, changing words to make it more meaningful for Che's context, and it is read in voice-over by Katz in six poetic montages interspersed in the film. Both tango song and short story are key to interpret the significance of Katz' film. The combination of the two creates a puzzle, which in turn seems to imply that the film as specter is trying to relays us something.

Eduardo Grüner wonders what might be such detail "which would set in motion a whole other web of significations, 'familiarly strange' in relation to the emblematic 'Argentine-ness" allegorized by Gardel and Borges as exceptional individuals (KATZ, 2010, p.202). I agree with Grüner about the search for the unseen detail – just to refer back to Mondzain's unseen (MONDZAIN, 2009, p.30) – but I think that the relation between the song and the short story goes far deeper than Argentine-ness. Comparing them both we see that they start with a man sleeping. Borges' character is a Saxon prisoner awaiting to be murdered by Christians: "*en un establo que está casi a la sombra de la nueva iglesia de piedra, un hombre de ojos grises y barba gris, tendido entre el olor de los animales, humildemente busca la muerte como quien busca el sueño*" (BORGES, 1998, p.12)[95]. Here we have two symbolic layers we need to "excavate". The Spanish word *sueño* is ambiguous since it can

[94] The Witness, in the English translation (ARTHEN, 2007).

[95] I am using the Spanish version here because there is an important ambiguity expressed by the word *sueño*, which is not possible to convey in English. Regardless, the translation for this excerpt is "in a stable that stands almost within the shadow of the new stone church, a man with gray eyes and a gray beard, sprawled amidst the odor of the animals, humbly seeks his death as though he were seeking sleep" (ARTHEN, 2007, n.p.).

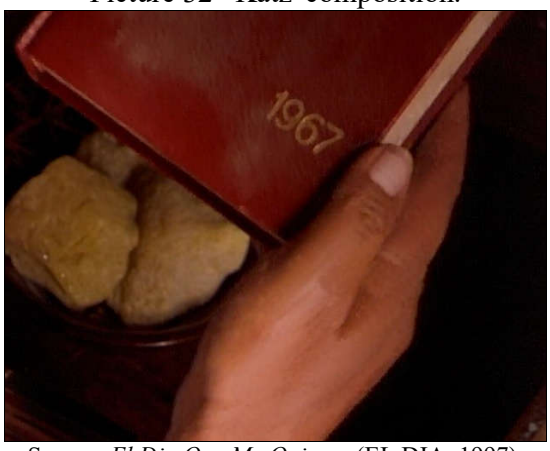
mean both sleeping and dreaming. Furthermore, Borges uses a simile to compare death to sleeping and/or dreaming.

In Gardel's tango, we also have a man sleeping, although now the semantic ambiguity is not explicit since the word used was "*ensueño*", which refers specifically to dreaming: "*Acaricia mi ensueño/ el suave murmullo de tu suspirar, / ¡como ríe la vida / si tus ojos negros me quieren mirar! / Y si es mío el amparo / de tu risa leve que es como un cantar, / ella aquieta mi herida, / ¡todo, todo se olvida*..!"[96] (GARDEL; LE PERA, 1934). Regardless, the persona takes refuge of life's pains in sleep and also, imagines how everything would be wonderful if his or her loved one would want him or her. Similarly, in Borges' short story, the man with the gray beard searches sleep as refuge from life's oppression, which allows him to dream, to set in motion images – imagination – of his Pagan childhood. Metaphorically, referring to Che's images, I understand that the combination of song and short story means both that Che's death was a refuge of a life fighting against oppression and the potency to set images in action.

Such interpretation of the intertextuality of Katz' film is particularly uncanny if we consider that Alborta's Che (Picture 11), which the movie is about, is dead but has his eyes unclosed, as if he was both sleeping and dreaming while looking through us. The ambiguity concerning Che's body was that, because of its preparation prior to being exhibited in Vallegrande's hospital washhouse, it seemed to be otherworldly alive, which caused many people to compare it to Christ, while also continuing to be dead, a corpse. Such paradoxical ambiguity is also perceptible in two of the poetic montages in the film, one in the beginning and the other towards the end of the film. In both of them, a person opens a mahogany drawer, where there are sulfur bars and a red book (Picture 32) as the voice-over reads his recreation of Borges' story:

[96] English translation: "The smooth murmur / Of your breathing / Caresses my dream. / If your black eyes / Want to gaze at me, / How full of joy life will be! /And if the solace / Of your light laughter -- / So like a song -- is for me, / It will heal my wound, And all, all will be forgotten" (KALLSEN, 2015, n.p.).

Picture 32– Katz' composition.



Source: *El Dia Que Me Quieras* (EL DIA, 1997).

> In time, there was a day that extinguished the last eyes to see Christ. What dies when one dies? What pathetic or fragile vision does the world lose? The image of a red horse in a field, the echo of a voice of Neruda[97], some rocks of sulfur in the drawer of a mahogany desk (EL DIA, 1997).

In the allegorical language of Katz' montages, which recreate Borges' short story, the sulfur can be interpreted as a metaphor for the human soul[98] – in Latin, *anima* – and the drawer, the human body. In the first montage, the hand that retrieves the book hides most of its cover. The second time, however, the hand reveals what is written on the red cover: 1967, the year Che was killed. Hence, the way I understand it, the open drawer is a metaphor for Che's death and the retrieving of the red book is a metaphor for Che's images and ideas resurgence despite his death in 1967. In this composition, red is not arbitrary. It is a color commonly associated with Marx and revolution, as we discussed earlier regarding Hall's film The Spectre of Marxism (THE SPECTRE, 1983). Red is also associated with Che images, as can be seen in several of the pictures discussed in the Introduction. Furthermore, in the very last poetic montage in Katz' film, red are also the flag and the banner the peasants carry to pay homage to Che, and the roses a girl holds at the end of the film, the latter being a reference to Gardel's tango. I return to the final montage later in this chapter.

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[97] I comment on Neruda's poem *No Hay Olvido (Sonata)* (NERUDA, n.d.) when I talk about the specter and memory in Katz' film.

[98] According to the Wikipedia, Sulfur was a symbol of the human soul for Alchemists (ALCHEMICAL SYMBOL, 2020).

Katz' film intersperses the poetic montages with interview sequences of Alborta. In one of such sequences, the film alternates between Alborta's photo of Che and footage of Alborta speaking to Katz – who is offscreen – while the Bolivian photographer talks about his reaction to seeing Che's dead body: "the body of Che Guevara impressed me very much. His gaze, because his eyes were wide open, did not give the appearance of a cadaver, but of a live person" (EL DIA, 1997). A similar perspective is brought up by Susana Ocinaga, a nurse who helped clean Che's body, in the movie Personal Che: the gaze [was what impacted me the most]. He looked at us. If we went to one side of the room, he looked at us. If we went to the other side, he looked at us. In every direction" (PERSONAL CHE, 2007).

2.4.1.1 Pathosformel in Alborta's photograph of Che and in art

This uncanny gaze of a seemingly alive dead body, transgressive, could be compared to the gazes of Korda's Che, Benjamin's Angel, and Derrida's specter. However, the reaction of Alborta and of other people present on October 10, 1967, not having witnessed the state in which the body arrived the previous day and its preparation, was to note a compelling similarity with Christ. Indeed, Alborta (Picture 33) says that "it felt as though I was photographing a Christ. I was, in fact, absorbed by the feeling that I wasn't simply photographing a corpse but something extraordinary" (EL DIA, 1997). Because of how he was affected by the sight of Che's phantasmagorical gaze, Alborta said "I really did not want to make photographs only for the press but, in looking for angles and composition, I tried [...] to do something artful" (EL DIA, 1997). As a matter of fact, John Berger was the first person to offer a thorough explanation for why did people see Che's dead body as a Christlike figure:

Picture 33– Alborta shares his memories of October 10, 1967.

Source: *El Dia Que Me Quieras* (EL DIA, 1997).

There is a resemblance between the photograph and Rembrandt's painting of The Anatomy Lesson of Professor Tulp [Picture 34]. The immaculately dressed Bolivian colonel with a handkerchief to his nose has taken the professor's place. The two figures on his left stare at the cadaver with the same intense but impersonal interest as the two nearest doctors on the professor's left. It is true that there are more figures in the Rembrandt – as there were certainly more men, unphotographed, in the stable at Vallegrande. But the placing of the corpse in relation to the figures above it, and in the corpse the sense of global stillness – these are very similar.

Nor should this be surprising, for the function of the two pictures is similar: both are concerned with showing a corpse being formally and objectively examined. More than that, both are concerned with *making an example of the dead*: one for the advancement of medicine, the other as a political warning. Thousands of photographs are taken of the dead and the massacred. But the occasions are seldom formal ones of demonstration. Doctor Tulp is demonstrating the ligaments of the arm, and what he says applies to the normal arm of every man. The colonel with the handkerchief is demonstrating the final fate – as decreed by 'divine providence' – of a notorious guerrilla leader, and what he says is meant to apply to every guerrillero on the continent.

I was also reminded of another image: Mantegna's painting of the dead Christ [Picture 35], now in the Brera at Milan. The body is seen from the same height, but from the feet instead of from the side. The hands are in identical positions, the fingers curving in the same gesture. The drapery over the lower part of the body is creased and formed in the same manner as the bloodsodden, unbuttoned, olive-green trousers on Guevara. The head is raised at the same angle.

The mouth is slack of expression in the same way. Christ's eyes have been shut, for there are two mourners beside him. Guevara's eyes are open, for there are no mourners: only the colonel with the handkerchief, a U.S. intelligence agent, a number of Bolivian soldiers and the journalists. Once again, the similarity need not surprise. There are not so many ways of laying out the criminal dead (BERGER, 2001, pgs. 90-91).

Picture 34– Comparison between Alborta's Che (top) and Rembrandt's painting (bottom).

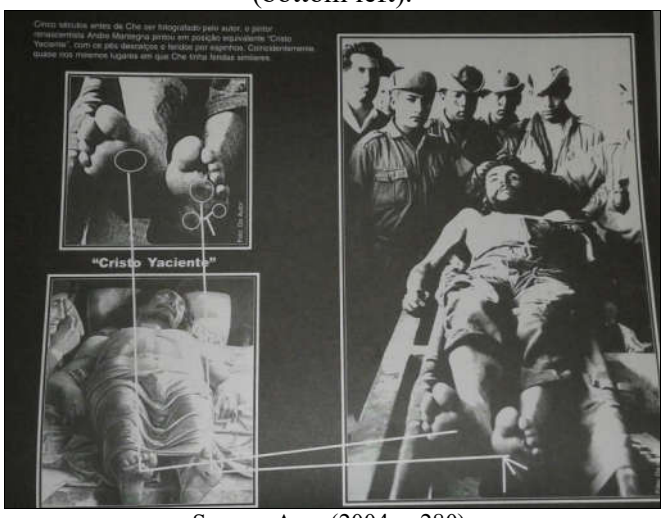
Source: Kunzle (2015, p.308).

Berger is very perceptible. Not only did he point out the similarities between Alborta's Che and the two famous paintings when no one had seen it, but he also indicated what was beyond the surface of them. As we can see, for Berger, what is beyond the mere superficial similarities – the angle, the composition and the physical characteristics of the body – is power: the power of the victors in making an example of the dead. After all, the three bodies are of "criminals", people who threatened the order – the body being dissected belonged to an executed criminal[99], Jesus was also criminalized for his messianic actions, and

[99] According to the Wikipedia, "the event can be dated to 31 January 1632: the Amsterdam Guild of Surgeons, of which Tulp was official City Anatomist, permitted only one public dissection a year, and the body would have to be that of an executed criminal. Anatomy lessons were a social event in the 17th century, taking place in lecture rooms that were actual theatres, with students, colleagues and the general public being permitted to attend on payment of an entrance fee. [...] Every five to ten years, the Surgeon's Guild would commission a portrait by a leading portraitist of the period. [...]The corpse is that of the criminal Aris Kindt (alias of Adriaan Adriaanszoon), who was convicted for armed robbery and sentenced to death by hanging. He was executed earlier on the same day of the scene" (THE ANATOMY, 2020). Traditionally, bodies of indigent people were used in autopsies. Nowadays, several countries require the explicit consent for donation of the bodies or, depending on the legal system, the explicit opting out of donation. In Brazil, the law that regulates the issue dates from 1992 and allows, under certain conditions, the use of the bodies of people whose identity is unknown. In a recent article (MAYA NETO, 2018b), I analyze the necropolitics in Barbacena's Hospital Colônia, where 1853 corpses from deceased patients were sold to medicine schools between 1969 and 1980.

Che commited the "crime" of being an internationalist revolutionary in times of Peaceful Coexistance[100].

Picture 35– Comparison between Arze's photo of Che (right) and Mantegna's painting (bottom left).



Source: Arze (2004, p.280).

However, Kunzle dismisses Berger's power insight since he believes that he is only being manichaean as a "well known leftist" (KUNZLE, 2016, p. 307). He understands that Berger contradicts himself in terms of moral opposites: "the corpse of the criminal being dissected [...] personifies evil, while the corpse of Che personifies the sacrificial *victim* of evil" and since "Dr. Tulp represents the good [...], his equivalent, the pointing Bolivian officer, the bad" (*ibid*). Ironically, it is Kunzle who contradicts himself in trying to see a contradiction where there is only antagonism between his and Berger's views. If Kunzle *seems* to be right about Berger when he says that Che personifies the "sacrificial victim of evil", who, if not himself, values the dissected "criminal" as "evil"? Likewise, if Kunzle *seems* to be right about Berger when he says that the Bolivian officer personifies "evil", who, if not himself, values Dr. Tulp as good?

Furthermore, I stressed the word *seems* above because Berger does not employ the words "good" and "bad" in his text and such words lack depth to accommodate the actual issue Berger wants to draw attention to: the triumph of the victors and the resurgence of the defeated through the arts, not unlike Benjamin's Theses on History (LÖWY, 2005). Additionally, Kunzle does hedge himself with a powerful – pun intended – argument by

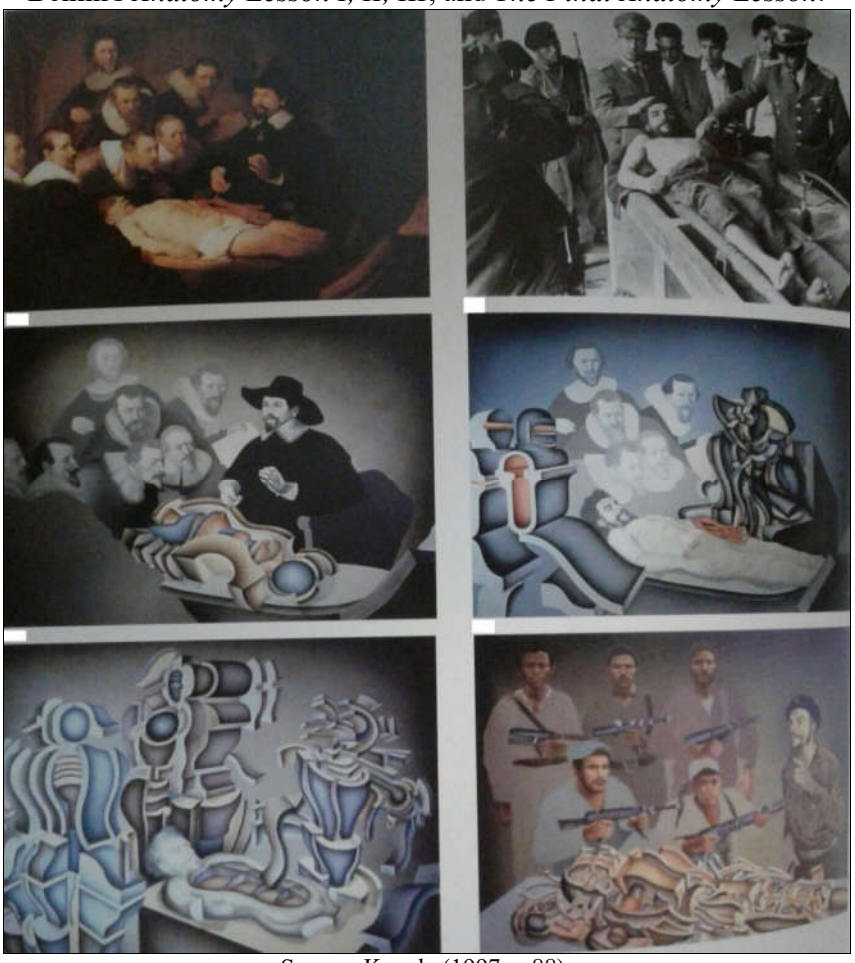
[100] Peaceful coexistance was a soviet theory that socialism and capitalism could peacifully coexist in the world, which is completely antagonist to Marx's ideas.

stating that "art history has recognized in Dr. Tulp a Christ-like figure revealing to his audience the marvels of a divine creation, the miracle of God's handiwork[101] in making man in his own image" (KUNZLE, 2016, p.307). By backing himself up with a *dominant* view of art history, it is no surprise that he sees contradiction in Berger's essay, which is precisely arguing in favor of a reading against the grain, from the perspective of the defeated.

Still on the issue of the haunting similarity between Alborta's Che and the paintings of Reimbrandt and Mantegna, Kunzle includes artistic recreations that play with the resemblance. For instance, he discusses Arnold Belkin's 1972-1975 (Picture 36) and Carlos Alonso's 1970 (Pictures 37 and 38) recreations of Alborta's Che, but his interpretation is reductionist, as we will see. Concerning Berkin's *The Anatomy Lesson* (Picture 36), Kunzle says that "here it [the robotic] is as if the role of evil has morphed: it has become, anonymous, non-human, abstract – like the immeasurably ubiquitous evil of imperialism" (2015, p.313). About Berkin's Anatomy Lesson II (Picture 36), he argues that "the Death of Che, the death of revolution is publicly dissected by a robotic – militaristic? imperialist? world press" (*ibid*). Regarding Anatomy Lesson III (Picture 36), he posits that "robotization [...] perhaps represents the absolute predominance and widespread mechanical acceptance of existing, market and machine-driven world orders" (*ibid*). Finally, about Berkin's The Final Anatomy Lesson (Picture 36), Kunzle says that "if rembrandt's Tulp is a kind of Christ figure exposing the mysteries of God's creation, here is a (Christic) Che dissecting the mysteries (or perhaps mystifications) of imperialism" (*ibid*).

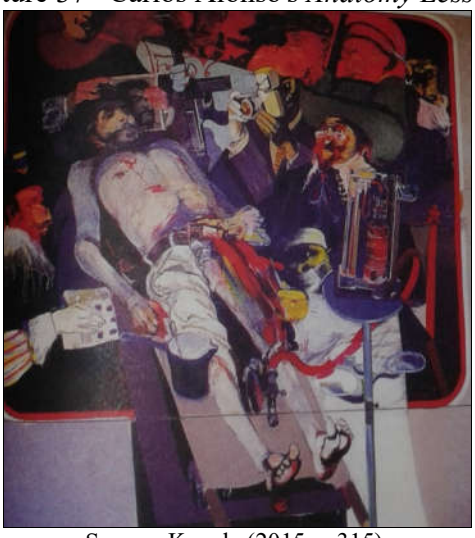
[101] Ironically, saying that Dr. Tulp is doing God's handiwork sounds awfully manicheist.

Picture 36– From left to right, top to bottom: Rembrandt's painting, Alborta's photograph, Belkin's *Anatomy Lesson I, II, III*, and *The Final Anatomy Lesson*.



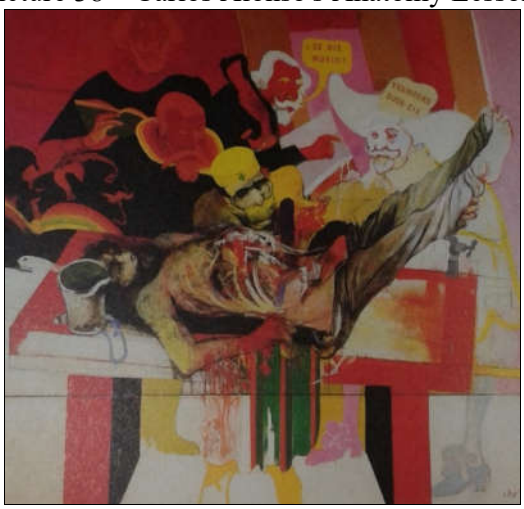
Source: Kunzle (1997, p.88).

Picture 37– Carlos Alonso's *Anatomy Lesson*.



Source: Kunzle (2015, p.315).

Picture 38 – Carlos Alonso's Anatomy Lesson.



Source: Kunzle (2015, p.315).

Concerning Kunzle's discussion of the Belkin series, I understand he gives too much emphasis to the robotic, to the already mentioned manichaean notions of good and bad, and to the previously discussed Christ-Che fusion[102]. Honestly, although I understand Kunzle's argument, I do not see Belkin's Tulp and Che relating to Christ. What I do see in the Belkin series is how craftily he brings to the fore Rembrandt's *Anatomy Lesson* resurgence in Alborta's Che, that is, how both of them haunt each other. That reminds me of Walter Benjamin's Thesis V: "the true image of the past flits by. [...] For it is an irretrievable image of the past which threatens to disappear in any present that does not recognize itself as intended in that image" (LÖWY, 2005, p.40).

In other words, it seems to me that Belkin is trying to make sure we recognize how Rembrandt's painting resurges in Alborta's photograph. He does that by gradually deconstructing parts of his paintings, from the body at the center in the first work, to almost all the figures in the third work, returning to the body at the center in the final work. Furthermore, instead of the robotization Kunzle points out, I see Belkin's abstract figures in this series more as metasemiotic slices – art inviting the spectator to have a peak at art making. If we consider the etymology of the word anatomy, "literally 'a cutting up,' from ana 'up' (see ana-) + temnein 'to cut' (from PIE root *tem- 'to cut')" (ANATOMY, 2020), we may see that Belkin chooses some figures to slice open while juxtaposing figures from Rembrandt's painting and from Alborta's photo.

[102] See the Introduction.

For instance, in the first of Belkin Anatomies, the body is sliced open to the point it defies naturalistic or realistic aesthetics. As a result, the spectator cannot identify the sliced body as Che's or as Aris Kindt's. By doing so, Belkin not only gives the spectator room to critically reflect about art making, but the haunting between Rembrandt's painting and Alborta's photo is brought to the fore. In the second of Belkin Anatomies, Che's body is juxtaposed with Rembrandt's medicine students, while the figures to the right and left of Che are almost impossible to recognize. We may infer the figure on the right is Tulp based on the hat, but its sliced open-endedness also allow the reference to the Bolivian officer from Alborta's photo. The figures on the left are impossible to identify as either from Rembrandt or from Alborta, also highlighting how both images are connected.

In Belkin's third Anatomy, almost all the figures are sliced open, with the exception of the corpse's face, which refers to Alborta's Che. The recognizability here is important since it creates a transition to the next work on the series. Furthremore, Belkin's third Anatomy is the peak of the abstract slicing up, and, as a result, it is also the most critical reflexive painting on the series. The sliced up figures, which surround Che's semi-sliced up body, are impossible to identify if from Rembrandt's painting or from Alborta's photo. It is also a very chaotic moment when many political and semiotic possibilities are open. It is the intensity of the critical reflexivity of the third Anatomy that allows the power inversion we notice in Belkin's Final Anatomy. Instead of Tulp or of the Bolivian officer, we have Che in a powerful position. And instead of Rembrandt's or of Alborta's surrounding figures, we have new ones, or shall we say, the resurgence of old ones. Belkin's last Anatomy can be understood as both a possible past that was prevented from taking place and as a potential future made possible by the dialogue between intense critical reflection and Che's spectral gaze, in Belkin's third Anatomy.

Regarding Carlos Alonso, Kunzle points out that he "was always obsessed with meat [...] which had been historically the mainstay of the Argentine economy, giving the meat barons political influence – and complicity with – repressive regimes" (2015, p.316). Furthermore, regarding the symbolism of meat and slaughter for Alonso, "butchers kill to slake their own hunger of the belly, torturers to slake their hunger for power" (KUNZLE, 2015, p.318). So far so good, but then Kunzle relates Alonso's paintings with Christian iconography of physical cruelty, concluding that "I believe Alonso stands in the tradition of this strain of religious art [...]. Alonso's Tulp parodies show Che as a sacrifice to a Dantesque kind of hell" (*ibid*).

Although I agree with Kunzle about the symbolic importance of meat, I disagree of his Christian interpretation. In both Alonso's paintings I see an expressionist aesthetic based on the intensity of the color red – red again, which reminds me of Marx's specter, of the idea of revolutions, of Katz' poetic montages, and of several Che images I discussed in the Introduction –, on exaggerated gestures of the figures surrounding Che's body, and of the abjection[103] of Che's corpse. Despite the different aesthetic in comparison to the Belkin series, Alonso's paintings (Pictures 37 and 38) also juxtapose figures from Rembrandt's painting and from Alborta's photograph, but in a rather chaotic and shocking way which, in turn, leaves spectatorial room for critical reflection. In Picture 38, for instance, we have the contrast between a very earthly and abject cadaver of Che – a reference to Alborta's photo – and the ethereal aspect of Tulp and his students – figures from Rembrandt's painting.

Likewise, in Picture 37, critical reflection is stimulated by the contrast between the upper and lower portions of the painting. The upper portion is crammed with juxtaposed figures from both Rembrandt's painting – Tulp and *assisting* medicine students – and from Alborta's photo – military men on the back and a photographer flashing his camera. In contrast, the lower portion has a lot of empty space, being only occupied by Che's feet, which protrude from the upper part, and the lower body of a modern surgeon. To highlight the contrast, the upper part is confined by a red and white frame, and the upper and lower portions are divided by a horizontal line that traverses the painting. In fact, the same horizontal line traverses the other Alonso's painting (Picture 38). In addition, the use of cartoon-like balloons in Picture 38 also leave room for the spectator's critical reflection.

Although Alonso does not create a messianic moment for Che, as Belkin does in his Final Anatomy (Picture 36), we can also see in his paintings (Pictures 37 and 38) the power issue Berger discussed. Although Aris Kindt's body does not appear, the haunting between Rembrandt's painting and Alborta's photo, expressed in the many juxtaposed figures, allows Che's body to refer also to the other dead person who was used to make an example out of. Moreover, by juxtaposing Doctor Tulp and *assistant* – pun intended – medicine students with a modern-looking surgeon, it is possible to infer that there is a power relay in both paintings (Pictures 37 and 38). The relay between the powerful, and the ensuing imagetic resurgence of the defeated, is made obvious by having Pulp reply "*vermoord door CIA* (Dutch for 'murdered

[103] The abject is a concept introduced by Julia Kristeva which is related to the uncanny. I discuss the concept a bit more when I talk about the corpse of Che in Katz' film.

by CIA')" (KUNZLE, 2015, p.317) to one of his medical assistants who ask the cause of death, in Spanish, through cartoon-like balloons.

Regarding the outworldly look of Che's dead body in Alborta's photograph and its similarity with Rembrandt's and Mantegna's paintings, I have argued, following Berger (2001), that this haunting likeness cannot be explainable solely in terms of a common Christian iconography, as Kunzle argues. What explains the likeness between Alborta's photo and Rembrandt's and Mantegna's paintings is the power of the defeated to resurge through images. Grüner (2010) keenly sees that in Berger's essay and relates it to Aby Warburg's hypotheses of *Pathosformeln*:

> regarding Freddy Alborta, we have no reason not to believe him when he assures Katz that, before taking that photo, he was totally unaware of the paintings by Rembrandt and Mantegna. Or maybe he saw them in passing, much earlier, and forgot about them: it's of no importance. Nor is it likely – although I don't want to be prejudicial: one sees that he's an educated and cultivated man – that he would know of the theories of Aby Warburg, the brilliant and heterodox German art historian who died in the 1920s. He might have read his hypotheses about "formulas of pathos", *Pathosformeln*: those enigmatic "formal" configurations which, over centuries, stylistic changes, social and political transformations, ideological-cultural or philosophical metamorphoses, *return* from the "repressed" (Warburg had definitely read his Freud, as well as his Nietzsche) and *insist,* at times through the slightest, least *details*, "subverting" the tranquilizing certitudes and images "of an era", the harmonious pretensions of a hegemonic cultural style – thereby proclaiming the existence of a *permanent conflict* (of a "state of emergency" that it is in truth a "normality" which that dominant culture would like to repress, to return to Benjamin) in the supposed symmetry and elegance of the iconographic establishment. Those *Pathosformeln* are like the *remains* of the past which, far from assuming them to be anachronistic survivals, evolutionary remoras, [...] return as *ruins* of a history that at any moment may *re-emerge*, erecting in the present moment their "flaring up in this instant of danger" (GRÜNER, 2010, p.202).

2.4.1.2 Ancestral resurgence in Katz' film

Returning to Katz' film, Kunzle's interpretation of it is also Christ-centric. Commenting on the contrast the movie presents between the clean and outworldly looking Che with the abject looking corpses of Arturo[104] and Willy[105], two of Che's fallen comrades.

[104] While Arze (2004, p.271) says that Arturo's widow recognized her husband in 2001 in one of the photos he had taken at Vallegrande from who he taught at that time to be Chino, Grüner (KATZ, 2010, p.198) identifies the two bodies as Willy and Chino, not Willy and Arturo. What we do know is that the bodies of Fernando (Che), Pacho, Aniceto, Willy, Chino, Arturo and Olo were all buried together near the Vallegrande airstrip (ANDERSON, p. 872). Although Katz identifies the third guerrilla as Chino, I prefer to go with Arze's version since it is very unlikely a widow would mis-identify a photo of her own husband. Arturo was the alias of René Martínez Tamayo: a veteran of the Cuban Revolution, he joined the Ñancahuazú Guerrilla in December 1966. He was killed during the battle at the Yuro Ravine on October 8, 1967 (VILLEGAS, 1997, p.328). Chino was the alias of Juan Pablo Chang, a Peruvian of Chinese Ancestry, he participated in APRA, in the Peruvian Communist Party, and, later, in the National Liberation Army. He arrived in Ñancahuazú in

Kunzle compares such discovery with "becoming aware that Christ's perfect body in its traditional dignified pose is flanked by horribly distorted figures of the thieves, writhing in agony upon their crosses" (KUNZLE, 2015, p.300). However, Katz' film actually plays with Christ and indigenous – pagan – references, showing an ambiguity Kunzle ignores. Through the poetic montages, Katz recreates Borges' story, which is about the last Saxon pagan waiting his execution in a stable by the shadow of the new Church, visually associating it with a Bolivian Church (Picture 39) and culturally adapting the references to ancestral deities – from the Saxon Woden in Borges' story to Tlaloc[106] and Tezcatlipoca[107]:

> On this earth the ringing of the bells is one of the customs in the evening, but this man, as a child, must have seen ferocious faces, the ones of Tlaloc and Smoking Mirror. The horrors of victory and the exultation. The procession of crude idols buried with colonial gold, the sacrificing of horses, dogs and prisoners (EL DIA, 1997).

Picture 39– Bolivian Church, probably at Llabaya, during a poetic montage.

Source: El Dia Que Me Quieras (1997).

February of 1967 and was captured on October 8. He was murdered the following day. (VILLEGAS, 1997, p.332).

[105] Alias of Simón Cuba, a Bolivian miner and leader of miners. He participated in the Bolivian Communist Party and later became a leader of Moisés Guevara's group. He arrived in Ñancahuazú in February 1967 and he was captured on October 8. He was murdered the following day.

[106] According to Wikipedia, "Tlaloc is a member of the pantheon of gods in Aztec religion. As supreme god of the rain, Tlaloc is also a god of earthly fertility and of water. He was widely worshipped as a beneficent giver of life and sustenance. However, he was also feared for his ability to send hail, thunder, and lightning, and for being the lord of the powerful element of water. Tlaloc is also associated with caves, springs, and mountains, most specifically the sacred mountain in which he was believed to reside" (TLALOC, 2020). Interestingly, the guerrilla prefered to fight in the mountains. In addition, Che and comrades were killed in a ravine.

[107] According to Wikipedia, "Tezcatlipoca was a central deity in Aztec religion, and his main festival was the Toxcatl ceremony celebrated in the month of May. One of the four sons of Ometecuhtli and Omecihuatl, he is associated with a wide range of concepts, including the night sky, the night winds, hurricanes, the north, the earth, obsidian, enmity, discord, rulership, divination, temptation, jaguars, sorcery, beauty, war and strife. His name in the Nahuatl language is often translated as "Smoking Mirror"] and alludes to his connection to obsidian, the material from which mirrors were made in Mesoamerica and which were used for shamanic rituals and prophecy" (TEZCATLIPOCA, 2020). Here we have an ancestral Aztec deity comparable perhaps to previously mentioned Ancient Greek deity Nyx.

The poetic montage dialogues with Borges' story as a resurgence of the ancestral religions defeated by Christianism, and Katz links such violence with colonialism. Hence, we can see in the aforementioned poetic montage the resurgence of the defeated, the imagetic return of the ruins of the past, an issue discussed by both Berger (2001) and Grüner (2010). Overall, the poetic montage balances the interview sequence where Alborta compares Che to Christ, creating an ambiguity within the film. As we can see, Kunzle's interpretation of Katz' film is rather reductionist.

2.4.1.3 The abjection of the corpses

But Kunzle points out an important issue in Katz' film which I would like to further discuss: the contrast between the body of Che and the corpses of Willy and Arturo. The abjection of Willy and Arturo's corpses, rather than a suggestion of their "wickedness" in not "accept[ing] their suffering and Salvation, as does Jesus" (KUNZLE, 2015, p.300), is explainable by considering the historical reports of how Che's body was in fact prepared before being exhibited.

For instance, Susana Ocinaga, a nurse who worked at the Vallegrande Hospital, talked about the instructions she received from a doctor regarding Che's corpse: "we [nurses] removed his dirty clothes and we piled them in a corner of the washhouse. [...] We washed him with a hose and soap, and we dried him with a towel. And we put on him some pajamas" (PERSONAL CHE, 2007). Similarly, Reginaldo Ustariz Arse, a medical doctor and journalist, was at Vallegrande when Che's corpse arrived tied to a helicopter ski on October 9, 1967. He photographed Che's corpse before it was cleaned (Picture 40) and when it was injected with formol (Picture 41). In addition, Urze's book also includes a graphic photo taken immediately after Che's killing at La Higuera (Picture 42).

Picture 40– Arze's photo of Che's corpse before being washed.

Source: Arze (2004, p.264).

Picture 41 – Doctors Moises Abraham Baptista and José Martines inject formol in Che's corpse.

Source: Arze (2004, p.267)

Picture 42– Che's corpse immediately after his death.

Source: Urze (2004, back cover).

In Urze's photo (Picture 40), we see Che's corpse prior to the removal of clothes and washing that the nurse Susana Ocinaga described. In fact, Che's corpse was still with the hands tied. And notice how Che's head is falling back instead of the inclined angle it has on Alborta's photo (Picture 36). In Picture 41, we can see when the two doctors inject formol into Che's carotid artery. And in Picture 42, taken by an unknown photographer inside the La Higuera schoolhouse, we see Che's corpse minutes after being shot three times – there were four bullet wounds in total, one being sustained during the battle. Che does look as a corpse in Picture 42 as opposed to the much less abject Alborta's Che (Picture 36). According to Kristeva,

> the corpse (or cadaver: cadere, to fall), that which has irremediably come a cropper, is cesspool, and death; it upsets even more violently the one who confronts it as fragile and fallacious chance. A wound with blood and pus, or the sickly, acrid smell of sweat, of decay, does not signify death. In the presence of signified death – a flat encephalograph, for instance – I would, understand, react, or accept. No, as in true theater, without makeup or masks, refuse and corpses show me what I permanently thrust aside in order to live. These body fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of death. There, I am at the border of my condition as a living being. My body extricates itself, as being alive, from that border. Such wastes drop so that I might live, until, from loss to loss, nothing remains in me and my entire body falls beyond the limit – cadere, cadaver. [...] The corpse, seen without God and outside ofscience, is the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life.Abject. It is something rejected from which one does not part,from which one does not protect oneself as from an object.Imaginary uncanniness and real threat, it beckons to us andends up engulfing us.
>
> It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjectionbut what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respectborders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite (KRISTEVA, 1982, pgs.3-4).

I do not think that the men responsible for murdering Che, for cutting his hands and for buring him in an unmarked grave with his comrades would take the trouble of making Che look less abject out of respect for the deceased or for the public. I think they did so in order to facilitate the recognition of Che Guevara[108]. After all, photos of the living Che were everywhere in the press during the 1960s. Hence, to allow people, used as they were to seeing images of Che alive, to recognize him, the Bolivian military and CIA ordered the preparation of Che's corpse probably to make it look less dead. But by doing so, a contradiction arose which they did not perceive: on one hand, they wanted to make an example out of Che, as

[108] According to Anderson, "'I told him[Sergeant Mario Terán] not to shoot Che in the face, but from the neck down,' Rodríguez [Félix Rodriguez, the CIA agent] said. Che's wounds had to appear as though they had been inflicted in battle. There was to be no evidence of an execution when the body was displayed to the press" (ANDERSON, 2010, p.850). In comparison, Urze says that it was Colonel Zenteno Anaya who ordered Sergeant Terán not to shoot on Che's face: "You, Mario Terán, cannot shoot on Che's head. We need the world to see the bodt we will show in Vallegrande is from Che, hence, his face cannot be deformed" (ARZE, 2004, p.250).

Berger argues, by making him the pinnacle of abjection as a defeated guerrilla "criminal"; on the other hand, by having the body prepared for the journalists to photograph, in order to help identifying Che, they made his body less abject. As a result, Che's body came to have an ambiguous alive-dead look, abject as someone who transgressed order but simultaneously beautifully ethereal, a spectral gaze.

That is why the contrast in Katz' film between the corpses of Che and of his comrades is so great (Picture 43). Che's body has been prepared and, as a result, became ambiguously living-dead, while his comrades' bodies were still very much dead looking, abject with no ambiguity. In Katz film, Alborta talks about how such contrast bothered him, while the camera alternates between the Bolivian photographer, video footage and photographs (Pictures 44 and 45) of the two corpses lying on the ground:

> Besides the figure of Che in that laundry room, there were two other guerrillas, but they were on the floor. It was quite upsetting to see everyone, the photographers, journalists and soldiers, moving around Che without showing any care for the guerrillas who were thrown on the floor, covered with soil and dust just as they had been picked up in La Higuera. That was quite shocking for me because they were also human beings who were dead and who deserved some consideration.[...] I remember their names because they were mentioned. They were El Chino and Willy (EL DIA, 1997).

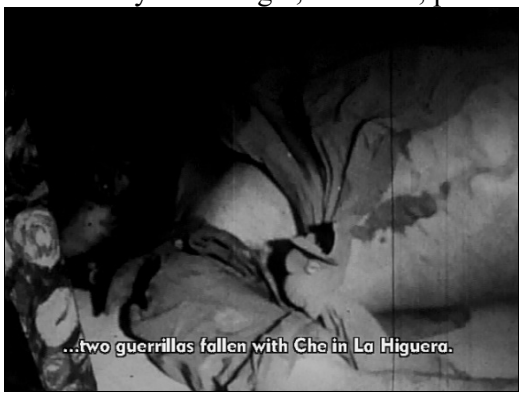
Picture 43 – The contrast between Che and his comrades' corpses.

Source: El Dia Que Me Quieras (1997).

Picture 44 – Detail of the corpse on the left, the one further from Che, probably Arturo's.

Source: El Dia Que Me Quieras (1997).

Picture 45 – The body on the right, near Che, probably Willy's.



Source: El Dia Que Me Quieras (1997).

Picture 46 – Collage I created between Arturo (left), the mis-indentified body and Chino (right).

Source: Arze (2004, p.271) and Ecured pages (2020) about René Martínez Tamayo and Juan Pablo Chang.

The attention given to Che's body, both before and during its exhibition, contrasts with how the corpses of Arturo and Willy were treated. Uncared for, they lay on the washhouse's floor during two days, waiting for an incognito burial in the dead of the night. We know that there were six bodies buried with Che, but there were only two others at the

macabre exhibit in the laundry room (Picture 43). The photos and archival footage we have of Willy's body (Picture 45) do not show his face, probably because he was executed with a rifle shot to the face. But the other corpse's face, which Alborta identifies as Chino, looks as abject as Che's body before being prepared[109] (Picture 42).

Regarding the identity of the bodies, Alborta says that they were Willy and Chino, but Arze comments on how Arturo's widow, Elsa Blaquier Ascaño, recognized him while leafing through Urze's photo archive. "She left the room saying 'it's him... it's him'. She came back later trying to hide the tears. She said that 'the picture you showed me of Chino is actually of my husband Arturo" (ARZE, 2004, p.271). Furthermore, when we compare Arturo adn Chino's photos with the body at the washhouse, it seems clear that it is indeed Arturo, corroborating what Elsa Ascaño said. Despite the beard, the shape of the eyes and nose of the body is similar to that of Arturo. In addition, Chino was partially bald since he was sixty-seven years old at the time of his death. Despite being dirty and ragged, the body still looks young, like Arturo, who was twenty-six at the time of his death.

The high ranking officers in the Bolivian military played their roles well in front of the cameras, their little tour de force to the world, affirming that Che had died of wounds sustained in the battlefield, when in fact he had been kept as a prisoner and executed without, at least, a trial. According to Anderson (2010, p.843) and Arze (2004, p.255), Willy was also alive and was executed at the schoolhouse in La Higuera on October 9. Arturo and Olo had been killed during the battle and their bodies were left in the same room where Che was kept prisoner (ANDERSON, p.842). Arze (2004, p.251) says that after Willy and Che were killed, Pacho was found alive and executed. And Aniceto, who was hurt, died in the first hours of October 9 because he did not receive medical attention from the Bolivian army and CIA (ARZE, 2004, p.247). From the seven buried together incognito in the dead of the night, the only one whose death is unaccounted for is Chino's.

[109] The increased abjection in Picture 42 lies precisely in how raw it is, in the fact that Che's body had not been cleansed of blood and dirt, and had not been injected with formol yet. In that sense, Che's unprepared body is more abject than Alborta's photo, which is more ambivalent since it carries some abjection – it is still a cadaver – combined with its supernatural undertone.

2.4.1.4 Abjection and resurgence in my short story

If the sight of the corpses was abject at Vallegrande, even that of Che's, despite its ambiguity, what was even more abject was burying the seven men in a mass unmarked grave near the airstrip in Vallegrande – where the aforementioned Memorial is nowadays located – during the dead of the night. In fact, that is the starting point of my short story *Retorno* (MAYA NETO, 2019. Appendix), part of a series of short stories I am writing about the defeated and disappeared, the victims of Latin American military dictatorships. The story begins with the extreme of abjection and loneliness, to "wake up" buried, to be able to think, but unable to see, speak or move. There is a breakdown of knowledge and identity. From the character narrator's perspective, we, as readers, temporally assume his conflict as our own. Am I dead? If not, I'll soon be since I am buried with corpses. Abject. Am I dead? If yes, than I am abject. But to whom? Not to myself, not anymore, but to those living, those I was separated from. And the wish to belong, to return to my family and friends is outside of me now. Or is it?

> It is dark. There are neither stars, nor moon tonight, only darkness. It is as if all the stars of the sky had run away scared of witnessing something terrible. But what? I do not know. I have my eyes wide open, but I cannot see anything. It is so dark that I do not know where the sky starts and where the land ends. It is all black, formless, undefined.
>
> Actually, it is not so formless. I hear footsteps. I feel hands carrying me. To an unknown location, shrouded in darkness. The owners of the hands stop. I hear a grim sound, muffled, disturbing. I start counting the thuds to try and orient myself. One. Two. Three. Now it is my turn. I feel my body being swung for a brief moment, followed by being thrown and I fall. I feel the freshness of the night's air flying through me. I fall over bodies. Four. *Coño*! It is a grave. They are burying us, but I am alive! I try to scream, but another body falls over me. Five. As each body falls, I feel the weight piling up over my chest. Six. I cannot scream.
> I cannot move either. I desperately try to move my arms, my legs, the neck, but I can't. I am trapped. I do not know if I broke something when I fell or if it is the weight of my comrades. They stopped. We are seven, then. They stopped tossing bodies. Damned they be! Cowards! (MAYA NETO, 2019).

In this excerpt we can sense the extreme of abjection: unsure if you are dead or alive, but gradually becoming aware that you are being buried in a mass grave in a secret location, so that you know they know – the people who did this –you will not be found for many years to come, maybe even never. We can also feel the extreme of loneliness: realizing that your loved ones will not be sure if you are dead or alive, and that they will be denied even the most basic right to grieve. After all, they will not have even a grave to visit – or will they?

As the story unfolds – spoiler alert – all seven *compañeros* are able to dug themselves out somehow. They seek refuge in a nearby forest and Che takes the first watch. As his comrades sleep, he sees a silvery glimmer that grabs his attention. As he gets closer, he finds out it is Anhangá, a shapeshifter spirit from Tupi ancestry that protects the woods and animals: "I squeeze my eyes and I see, in the distance, a deer. The silvery light emanates from it. [...] I get closer. It looks at me. Inside my eyes. Its eyes traverse me. Then, I remember. I and Alberto were walking through some woods and we were surprised by a silvery stag" (MAYA NETO, 2019). Interestingly, the ghostly sight of Anhangá is what prompts Che's memory. And this is actually a reference to an episode Ernesto wrote about in The Motorcycle Diaries:

> After an eternity of trekking through deep mud we recognized the stream flowing out into the Carrué, and almost immediately the trees disappeared and we reached the flat. The huge figure of a stag dashed like a quick breath across the stream and his body, silver by the light of the rising moon, disappeared into the undergrowth. This tremor of nature cut straight to our hearts. We walked slowly so as not to disturb the peace of the wild sanctuary with which we were now communing (GUEVARA, 2011, p.52).

The dead of night in my short story can be interpreted as a reference to Nyx or to Tezcatlipoca, or to any other ancestral being associated with the night. The night means both death and rebirth, ambiguous as Che's specter. And it is also a "formula of pathos", since the defeated literally resurge from the extreme of abjection and loneliness to attempt to turn the tables on the victors. The Anhangá leads Che to two other ghostly figures, Jorge Massetti and Federico García Lorca, two other victims of what Galeano has called the "armies of the night", a metaphor for the fascist goons who abducted, raped, tortured, and killed activists, making their bodies disappear without a trace during the night. However, the night also carries the potency of a power reversal. Che, aided by Massetti and Lorca, do a ritual offering of coca leaves to Pacha Mama:

> It doesn't take long and I am filled by a great sense of peace. I do not sleep, but instead feel as if I am carried by a river's thousand liquid arms to a nearby spring. She is there. I crumble and I cry, leaving my skepticism aside, I ask forgiveness for having failed. I do not ask only to her, but also to myself. And I forgive myself. And she reminds me that I did not fail, she reminds me of my victories and, at last, reminds me that the greatest victory is to keep returning even after death. I thank her and I say goodbye. Then, I return the same way I came, over a thousand liquid arms to the presence of Jorge and Lorca. To my great surprise, my hands are back where they belong. Thanks to Pacha Mama. Now I once again have hands to fight with. And now I do not have doubts anymore. I know how we will do it. *Vamonos*! (MAYA NETO, 2019).

The resurgence mentioned at the end of the story is not only the imagetic one, as I have been arguing throughout this Thesis, but it carries the potential for remembrance-

redemption action, which, in turn can definitely disrupt the continuum of power Benjamin calls the "triumphal march of the victors" (LÖWY, 2005, p.47). But even if not ultimately disruptive, the spectral gaze distends time, delaying the dominant chronological time, making critical "space" for the haunted spectator to remember. In my short story, the passing of time is lost from the start, as Che and comrades fall – in hindsight, an interesting connection with a previous citation of Kristeva about the etymology of the words cadaver. And as events unfold, we do not have any reference of time since even the moon can't be seen. All we have is the night. In other words, the spectral time distends in a way that we know time is passing, although we obviously do not know how much, but we also feel that it is not passing as chronological time would be.

2.4.1.5 References to Borges' short story and Gardel's tango in Katz' film.

In Katz' movie, the spectral time is created by interspersing interview sequences with six poetic montages that recreate Borges' short story. Although the film is only thirty-minute-long, it feels as if it lasts much more than that. But there are other spectral elements in the film. The whole film is as much about grieving as it is about memory. At the beginning of the film, Katz explains in titles how Alborta's photo unsettled him the first time he saw it: "a few years ago I got a print of this photograph and I began to fragment it attempting to understand its power. I was so impressed by certain details that I decided to look for the photographer" (EL DIA, 1997). That is why Jeffrey Skoller argues that Katz' movie can be interpreted as a work of mourning:

> The making of [the] film involved the activities of excavating and examining lost images and narratives, finding and getting people long silent to speak the memories of their experiences, and [...] there are even recreations of past moments as a way to conjure up memory. Rather than analytical or chronological, [it] might be seen as archeological. [...]
> In *El Día*... Katz uses the legacy of Che's failure in Bolivia to stand metaphorically for the failures of the larger revolutionary endeavors within the Latin America of the last forty years. With this understanding, *El Día* ... can be seen as a work of mourning (SKOLLER, 2010, p.215).

I agree with Skoller about Katz' film excavating the past and making us remember vicariously through Alborta's recollections. Beyond that, instead of accepting at face value that Albort's Che stands for failure in political terms, and Che's image can only be relevant today religiously, the film is able to return a certain ambiguity of Christ/corpse to Che, and it

makes us wonder about the risk of losing memory and the possibilities of images from the past to return.

Indeed, the risk of forgetting, and its resolution, is noticeable in comparing how Katz recreates Borges' short story. First of all, Borges' story is named *The Witness*, which reminds me of Benjamin's Angelus Novus. The danger that the Angel witnesses and tries unsuccessfully to warn us about is that by accepting the dominant view of a progressive history, we as humans run the risk of forgetting all about those who fought the powerful but lost, which could mean not only losing much needed strength to fight in our present redemptive struggles, but also forgetting all about *how* the power continuum was disrupted in the past – which could prove fatal for future efforts of trying to disrupt the power continuum definitively. I return to this issue in Chapter Two.

Borges' story is as much about the collective ancestral loss brought about Christianism – "*antes del alba morirá y con él morirán, y no volverán, las últimas imágenes inmediatas de los ritos paganos; el mundo será un poco más pobre cuando este sajón haya muerto*" (BORGES, 1998, p.12)[110] – and the individual memory loss that takes place when each person dies:

> *Hechos que pueblan el espacio y que tocan a su fin cuando alguien se muere pueden maravillarnos, pero una cosa, o un número infinito de cosas, muere en cada agonía, salvo que exista una memoria del universo, como han conjeturado los teósofos. En el tiempo hubo un día que apagó los últimos ojos que vieron a Cristo; la batalla de Junín y el amor de Helena murieron con la muerte de un hombre. ¿Qué morirá conmigo cuando yo muera, qué forma patética o deleznable perderá el mundo? ¿La voz de Macedonio Fernández, la imagen de un caballo colorado en el baldío de Serrano y de Charcas, una barra de azufre en el cajón de un escritorio de caoba?*(BORGES, 1998, p.13)[111].

Prompted by the images the living-soon-to-be-dead man remembers or dreams about his childhood Saxon gods, the narrator reflects on his own mortality, if and what will be lost when he dies. But the restless and sombre tone of the story is not very reassuring in terms of the possibilities of images of the past return. However, as I have argued before in this chapter, Katz' recreation of Borges' story makes the collective ancestral loss caused by Christianism

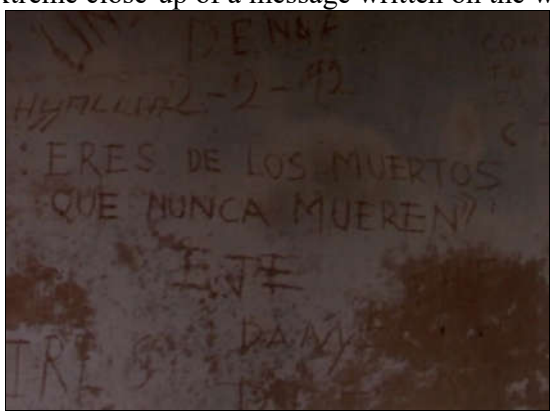
[110] "Before dawn he will be dead, and with him, the last eyewitness images of pagan rites will perish, never to be seen again. The world will be a little poorer when this Saxon man is dead" (BORGES, 2011, p.155).

[111] "Things, events, that occupy space yet come to an end when someone dies may make us stop in wonder – and yet one thing, or an infinite number of things, dies with every man's or woman's death, unless the universe itself has a memory, as theosophists have suggested. In the course of time there was one day that closed the last eyes that had looked on Christ; the Battle of Junin and the love of Helen died with the death of one man. What will die with me the day I die? What pathetic or frail image will be lost to the world? The voice of Macedonia Fernandez, the image of a bay horse in a vacant lot on the corner of Sarrano and Charcas, a bar of sulfur in the drawer of a mahogany desk?" (BORGES, 2011, p.155).

return, in the Latin American context, relating it also to Colonialism. This return itself dialogues with Borges' fears of memory loss.

But Katz goes beyond in his last poetic montage by metaphorically suggesting that the dead man's memory *can* resurge in other people. The last poetic montage starts with a shot of trees been blown by the wind, it cuts to establishing shots of Vallegrande's washhouse, a close-up of the messages written on its walls (Picture 47), and Katz' hand holding Alborta's photograph in position over the sink where Che was lying down (Picture 48). Throughout the sequence, we hear Katz' voice-over repeating the same initial lines of his recreated version of Borges' story with which he began the movie in the very first poetic montage: "in a stable or just in the shadow of a stone church, lying amidst the odor of animals, his eyes open, a man humbly seeks death as one would seek sleep" (EL DIA, 1997). Occasionally, we hear the ringing of a bell, which also refers to Borges' story.

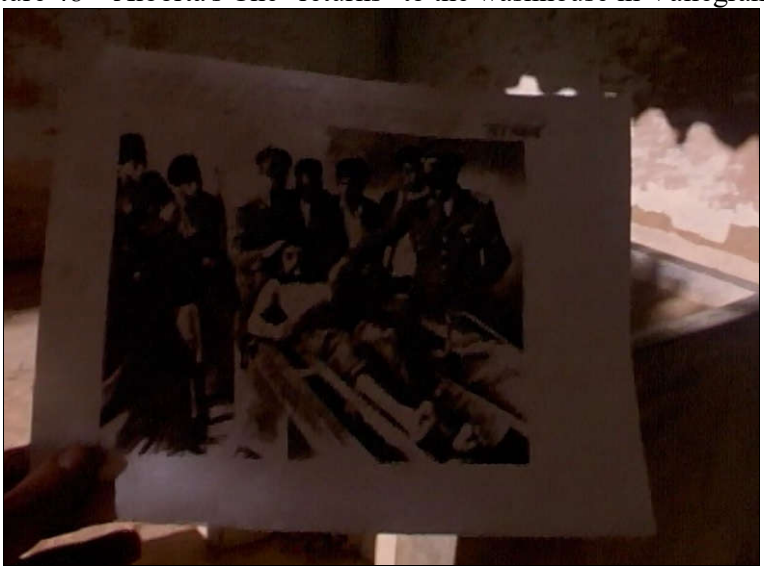
Picture 47 – Extreme close-up of a message written on the washhouse wall.



Source: *El Día Que Me Quieras* (1997).

On the washhouse's wall, we can read a message addressing Che (Picture 47): "you are that kind of dead that never dies" (EL DÍA, 1997). That is a powerful sentence that may understood as a testament both of Che's relentless capacity of resurgence and of his enduring memory. Indeed, this image can be interpreted as part of the dialogue Katz' recreation has with Borges' short story throughout the film.

Picture 48 – Alborta's Che "returns" to the washhouse in Vallegrande.



Source: *El Día Que Me Quieras* (1997).

Another instance of the dialogue between Katz' film and Borges' story is found in another poetic montage discussed earlier in this chapter, the one who refers to the echo of the voice of Neruda. We do, in fact, hear in voice-off the reading of the last stanza of Neruda's poem *No Hay Olvido*: "because I don't know how to answer: / there are so many dead, / and so many breakwaters the red sun split, / and so many heads banging against boats, / and so many hands that have locked away kisses, / and so much I want to forget" (HAYES; NERUDA, 2007). Neruda's poem, similar to Borges' story, has a bleak tone. And the poem carries the memory ambiguity of remembering and not remembering between its title, which seems to assert that there is no forgetting, and the last line.

In fact, the possibility of remembering is only hinted allegorically during most the film by glimpses of red objects and its associations: the red book, which appears in two different montages, which I have already discussed, and the man with a red flag, which appears briefly in several of the montages and which we will only fully understand at the last one. After the washhouse, the last montage continues with the tolling of the bell, followed by a close-up of the bell tower of the same church, and by alternating extreme long shots, close ups and medium shots of indigenous peasants carrying a red banner and the man on the horse carrying a red flag over a field (Picture 49). The meaning here is straightforward: these people are carrying Che's memory with them. Then, the camera cuts to a photograph of Che smiling and we hear Gardel's tango *El Día Que Me Quieras* for the first time. Then, the camera cuts to a young girl carrying red roses and facing the camera (Picture 50).

Picture 49– Red flag and banner.

Source: *El Día Que Me Quieras* (1997).

Picture 50– The girl with the red roses.

Source: *El Día Que Me Quieras* (1997).

The girl with the roses is, of course, a reference to Gardel's tango, more specifically, to its second stanza: "the day when you will love me, /The rose that decorates / Will dress itself up / In the brightest of colors. / And the bells will say / To the wind that you are mine" (KALLSEN; GARDEL, 2015). In addition, notice how the previously mentioned last montage visually and aurally references the tolling of bells and the blowing of the wind on the leaves. Furthermore, the girl with the red roses seems to be making, at the same time, an offering and a demand to/from us, the spectators. The girl's gaze that traverses us, similar to other phantasmagorical gazes I discussed in this chapter, is an expression of the demand Benjamin talks about (Chapter's epigraph), the demand of older generations to the newer generations to remember the fallen, learn from them and carry on the redemptive struggle. Hence, the girl with the red roses and the tango playing at the very end of the movie suggest that the ambiguity of remembering or not remembering in Borges' story and in Neruda's poem

may be resolved the day the spectator "wants" Che, that is, when he or she accepts the demand of carrying on redemptive struggles through remembrance-redemption actions, which I discuss in more detail in Chapter Two.

2.4.2 *The Last Hours of Che Guevara* (THE LAST, 2016).

The other movie I discuss in this chapter is The Last Hours of Che Guevara (THE LAST, 2016). What immediately calls attention in watching the film is how unique it is. Shot in sepia, which creates a sort of *chiaroscuro* atmosphere, Granada's movie is basically a one-hundred-and-seven-minute-long monologue of Che ruminating his "defeat" and what will happen after his death. The only other different sequences in the film are two radio broadcasts, one in the beginning about Che's capture, one at the end about Che's death, that create a sort of historical frame for the monologue to take place. And there is also, at the end of the monologue sequence, the killing of Che.

Although we as spectators obviously know this is a biopic, the suspension of disbelief is achieved through the visceral acting of Granada as Che, as if we were transported in time and space to the schoolhouse in La Higuera, to the hours preceding his execution on October 9, 1967. Although the film is shorter than two hours, it certainly feels as if it lasts more than that because of how it phantasmagorically distends time. Besides the already mentioned phantasmagorical atmosphere created by sepia, the long monologue is interspersed by Che's asmatic wheezing breathing and occasional bouts of coughing, which help create a very slow rhythm. Besides that, the character's and the camera's movement is limited. Since Che has his hands and feet bound (Picture 51), and since he is debilitated and has a bullet wound on his leg, he has to crawl in order to move around the setting, making it painfully slow as we watch him trying to get up and also dragging the weight of his weakened body, lending agony to the anxiety caused by the distention of time. And the camera barely moves during the film, but it cuts instead to different positions and angles.

Picture 51 – Wounded, weakened and bound Che.

Source: The Last Hours of Che Guevara (2016).

Considering that Che is the only character onscreen for much of the film, the mise-en-scène is of special relevance. The setting, for example, recreates successfully La Higuera's schoolhouse, with the rough cement walls and the dusty floor. In the setting, there are also some desks, a table, a bench, and two pictures hanging on the wall, Christ and Barrientos[112]. On the floor, the bodies of two fallen comrades make the setting look more macabre. Regarding lighting, it created areas that were brighter and areas that were shadowy, making the light seem to originate from the windows (Picture 52). The *chiaroscuro* was reinforced with the color sepia added to the film after it was shot, as we can see in the contrast between the colors on Che's clothes comparing Pictures 52 and 53. If the *chiaroscuro* creates ambiguity by metaphorically hinting that there are also unseen things regarding Che, the sepia color is spectral because it transgresses the border, not being black and white, while not being colorful either.

Picture 52 – The *chiaroscuro* effect.

Source: The Last Hours of Che Guevara (2016).

[112] René Barrientos Ortuño was a Bolivian military officer who became a dictator when he overthrew the government of Paz Estenssoro in 1964.

Picture 53– With(out) sepia

Source: Karlos Granada's IMDB page (GRANADA, 2020).

The costume and make-up do not seem to be very elaborate. Basically, Che's clothes consist of a ragged-looking military jacket and torn pants, a shirt, and a bandage wrapped around one leg. The make-up seems to consist on the beard and the disheveled hair. In turn, what really makes Granada's Che convincing is the viceral acting. We watch with anxiety and agony as Che struggles to breath, to speak, tries to get up several times and falls likewise many times, and has to crawl around the place. Furthermore, the wheezing and coughing, as well as the improvising of lines – in an informal interview with the author, Karlos Granada said that some of the monologue was improvised by him during the shooting – create a certain pensiveness, a self-reflectional mood we find ourselves immersed in.

Similar to *El Día Que me Quieras* (EL DÍA, 1997), The Last Hours of Che Guevara (THE LAST, 2016) also has some ambiguity towards Che's body. On one hand, Che is so debilitated that we, as spectators, realize that sooner or later he will die. At one point, he says that "I need to rest. I need the rest of the guerrilla. My exhaustion is so great I do not feel the pain of my wounds. I need to rest eternally. From guerrilla to minister. From minister to guerrilla" (THE LAST, 2016). The coughing and the wheezing, his wound, and especially the two dead bodies onscreen create a sense of abjection, even if they are partially covered (Picture 54).

Picture 54 – The fallen comrades.

Source: The Last Hours of Che Guevara (2016).

But we also see Che being killed at the end of the film. Che's monologue is interrupted by someone who enters the room. We only hear the noise of the door and the light coming from outside inundating Che's face. In the reverse shot, the light casts a menacing shadow on the wall where Barrientos' portrait is hung (Picture 55) – a very cunning device to show who is responsible for the execution of Che and of other prisoners. We can see that it is a soldier[113] with a rifle. Again, the camera goes back to the same medium-close up of Che, but now we watch as he turns his head and looks up to face his executioner, expressing surprise: "You? You want to kill me?" (THE LAST, 2016). Then, the camera cuts to a long shot of Che trying to get up near the corner of the room and of the two dead bodies.

Picture 55– Executioner's shadow over Barrientos' portrait.

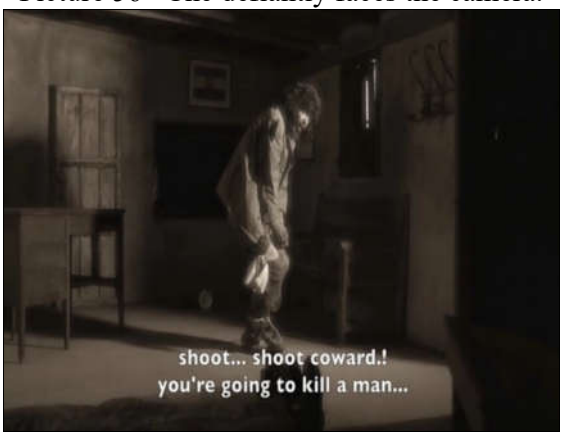
Source: The Last Hours of Che Guevara (2016).

After much struggle, Che finally manages to prop himself up using a bench for support. Then, he faces the camera (Picture 56) and, challengingly, says: "shoot! Shoot,

[113] Although the film does not reveal the executioner's identity, we know it is Sergeant Mario Terán.

coward! You're going to kill a man" (THE LAST, 2016). As we hear the shot, the camera cuts blazingly fast to a medium shot of the executioner – whose face we cannot see since he is standing against the light –, then, it cuts back to Che, who feels the impact of the bullet, then, it cuts again to the soldier, who fires a second round, and the camera goes back to Che, who falls to the ground, next to his comrades. Here, once again, the etymology of the word cadaver, as the one who falls, pointed out by Kristeva, comes to mind. Interestingly, the shot and reverse shot make us perceive that we have just assumed the point-of-view shot of Che's killer. In total, we hear three shots[114].

Picture 56– Che defiantly faces the camera.



Source: The Last Hours of Che Guevara (2016).

After the shots, Che lies motionless on the ground, next to his fallen comrades. The tension that permeated the film between life and death seems to be finally resolved with the killing of Che. However, as the camera cuts to a close-up of Che's face, although he is dead, he looks alive, with his eyes open (Picture 57). Che's body in Granada's film does not look as abject as the actual Che's body (Picture 42), but as a corpse, it is still abject. But at the same time it is abject, it has that outworldly, spectral gaze. We can, indeed, interpret the defiant gaze Che has towards the camera just before being shot, and the gaze his dead body still has, as expression of Benjamin's demand. We can also relate such gazes to those of Derrida's specter, Benjamin's Angel, and Marx' bust at Highgate Cemetery.

[114] The number of shots corresponds to Arze's description of Che's murder. However, according to him, the third shot, the coup de grace at Che's heart, was shot point blank range by Sergeant Bernardino Huanca, the same man who killed Willy (ARZE, 2004, p.256).

Picture 57– Che's dead body with eyes open.

Source: The Last Hours of Che Guevara (2016).

If the ambiguity between life and death is left unresolved, there is another ambiguity that lingers on hauntingly regarding Che's body in Granada's film: it can be interpreted both as abject – a dying/dead body – and as Jesus-like. At the middle of the film, we have a middle shot of Che next to a Jesus portrait, which is hanging from the wall, above Che. Both Che and Christ are looking in the same direction (Picture 58). And earlier on the film, when Che realizes he is going to be killed, his thoughts turn to Jesus, after seeing the portrait: "Jesus. What is it with that name that in difficult moments we remember him? I defeated him in a battle in time. He only lived thirty-three years. I, thirty-nine" – and he adds that "the men like us have to die young" (THE LAST, 2016).

Picture 58– Che and Christ (wall).

Source: The Last Hours of Che Guevara (2016).

That brings me to another ambiguity in the film: Jesus in the film may refer both to the radical Jewish messiah Jesus of Nazareth or to the Greek recreated and resurrected version, Jesus Christ. Che, in different parts of his monologue, talks about his deeds in life

and how he will be remembered. For instance, Che says that "with my death, a myth will be born and the name Che Guevara will be at the level of the greatest in history: Bolivar, Ghandi, Lenin, Jesus Christ, making the revolution in the world resuscitate stronger than ever" (THE LAST, 2016). We can see here a mixture of both messiah and martyr. In Walter Benjamin's interpretation of the Jewish messianic tradition – which I discussed in the Introduction –, the messiah becomes a collective figure that disrupts the triumphal march of the victors, freeing from oppression not only the victims of today but of all time.

Hence, the reference to other figures who inspired social and political emancipatory struggles, as well as Che's preoccupation with the success of revolution, are messianic elements. Paradoxically, the self-immolation discourse of turning his defeat into an ultimate victory refers to Paul's re-reading of Jesus as Christ, and to the Christian martyr tradition since that "through the mimesis of Christ [...] The martyr gains power over those who have sentenced him to death, actively expressing his joy over his impending death" (COPIER, 2009, p.36).

Overall, Granada's film is phantasmagorical in many ways, such as the distension of time, the living-dead Che, the somber atmosphere created by the combination of *chiaroscuro*, sepia, the recurrent issues of death and memory, and Che's spectral gaze at us when he is shot. Furthermore, the movie is also phantasmagorical in its ambiguity – dead/alive, messiah/martyr – since the specter traverses borders and de-stabilizes identities. Any careful reading of the film should, therefore, preserve its ambiguity as the spectatorial space in which we can see new things, we can unveil what others have not seen yet.

3 THE LIVING CHE

Nadie ignora que el Che es un símbolo universal, celebrado en los más diversos lugares y cantado en las más diversas lenguas. Su memoria se enciende y crece, porque ella encarna la energía de la dignidad humana, porfiadamente viva, mal que les pese a los indignos del mundo. El Che, vencido, derrota al olvido cada día.
(GALEANO, 2015).

No, el Che no ha muerto
porque el Che és más que el Che.
El Che es el mundo que late y espera y lucha,
es la vida que alienta por más vida,
es nuestra razón de ser lo que queremos ser,
es nuestra estatura moral de hombres[115]
(Francisco Fernández-Santos, apud KUNZLE, 1997, p.46)

The ambivalence of the phantasmagorical gaze[116] of Che's images lies on expressing a demand for remembrance-redemption, on one hand, and for the possibility of inaction and alienation, on the other. More than the gaze itself, it is also a matter of the context in which a given image of Che is placed and of who is looked at, and, more importantly, of the spectator's desire to respond, to look back at/through Che. This responsive gaze is not necessarily[117] oppositional, but rather a way of linking the phantasmagorical image's demand for remembrance with present emancipatory struggles. In other words, I argue in this chapter that Che's phantasmagorical gaze, depending on its recipient, acts as a portal for fragments of revolutionary time – understood here in the Benjaminian sense. Hence, seeing the fleeting image of past attempts to disrupt the power continuum through the eyes of Che in a phantasmagorical image – remembrance –, artists and activists can recreate or invoke Che through art and disruptive actions[118] – redemption.

In other words, in this chapter I am interested in artists and activists that are looked and look through Che's images. They are affected by Che's images and decide to affect it

[115] To use the word men to stand for people is very problematic, for gender reasons. There are many ways of being, including non-binary possibilities, and we must be careful not to reproduce a form of oppression while fighting another. Otherwise a very good poem, I would like to imagine a different last line: *Che es nuestra estatura moral de seres humanos*.

[116] As I discuss in Chapter One, the spectral gaze causes a haunting, an anxiety of remembering and non-remembering, which expresses a demand for remembrance and redemption. If the ghost challenges understanding, its defies the spectator to reveal what has not been seen yet – an invitation for the spectator's creativity.

[117] I say *not necessarily oppositional* because the performatic protest of the Che of the Gays expresses both a remembrance of Che and a critique of homophobia in the late 1960s Cuba, as I discuss later in this chapter.

[118] I use *disruptive actions* as an umbrella term form activism, grass-roots movements and revolutionary actions, both armed and non-armed struggles.

back through art and/or disruptive actions. This politicizing[119] responsive gaze is one way of unravelling the ambiguity of the phantasmagorical gaze, the other being alienation, which I discuss in Chapter Three.

But this chapter's significance is not only about seeing, it is also about acting[120]. In fact, vision and action are similarly interrelated concepts such as remembrance and redemption. It is not possible to perform emancipatory actions if one does not have a strategic vision of how and why to act. In comparison, the purpose of actions is not only to disrupt the power continuum at a given place and time, but to create visions – constellations of revolutionary memory time – that help inspire others to carry on redemptive struggles in their own places and times.

As examples of Benjamin's concept of time of memory, or *Jetzeit* – defined in the Introduction –, I briefly comment on two revolutionary experiences of the Twentieth Century. The idea here is to illustrate possible revolutionary images that artists and activists may see through Che's phantasmagorical eyes and decide to respond to. The purpose is not to historicize Che's image, which I already did in the Introduction and without resorting to chronologies, by the way. I am not creating chronologies in this chapter. I merely offer two examples of disruptive past actions that are significant to understand the relation of Benjamin's concept of *Jetzeit* with artistic imaginations and disruptive actions.

Hence, this chapter is structured in the following manner: a brief discussion of two past disruptive actions that are commonly associated with Che Guevara and that may inspire responsive gazes, followed by an analysis of artistic imaginations and disruptive actions that recreate or invoke Che. Finally, I discuss two movies that bring contemporary examples of artistic and activist recreations of Che. On that note, the significance of this chapter lies in presenting overwhelming evidence that Che and his images are still politically relevant in the Twenty-First Century.

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[119] By *politicizing* I mean trying to make political again, unveiling the main conflicts and power relations of where we live in, as opposed to the dominant discourse that usually tries to naturalize and de-politicize everything.

[120] The importance of not separating vision and action cannot be underscored for the purposes of this chapter – how Che's image relates to artistic imaginations and emancipatory actions. Seeing the images of past disruptive actions without acting is a way of developing a great nostalgia towards a lost past, what Benjamin calls acedia – defined in the Introduction – and what Derrida compares to Freud's concept of melancholia – discussed in Chapter One.

3.1 EXAMPLES OF TIME OF MEMORY

The gaze that traverses space and time – such as Che's, the Benjaminian Angel's, Marx' – offers glimpses of disruptive moments when the continuum of the powerful was interrupted by emancipatory struggles. However, there is a risk of not seeing or not understanding such glimpses. As Benjamin cautions in his Thesis V, "the true image of the past flits by [...]. For it is an irretrievable image of the past which threatens to disappear in any present that does not recognize itself as intended in that image" (LÖWY, 2005, p. 40). In other words, the risk in the phantasmagorical state is not only losing the hope inspired by a vision of an utopic future – in the Blochian[121] sense – but losing the crucial opportunity to take revolutionary action when conditions are favorable and losing the valuable lessons of previous disruptive attempts. After all, "time is an all important element in the conflict of contending social forces. The indeterminate phase when events can be diverted in either direction does not last long. The crisis on social relations must be resolved quickly one way or the other" (NOVACK, 2011, p. 102).

There are two examples I discuss here of revolutionary actions in the past that may be seen through Che's phantasmagorical gaze: The Russian Revolutions, and the Cuban Revolutions. They are not the only possible constellations, others can be seen through Che's images depending on who gazes. The first example concerns observing similarities between the Paris Commune[122] and the 1905 Russian Revolution, and learning from the shortcomings of both disruptive actions in favor of the October 1917 Revolution. According to Löwy,

> The dialectical image of "permanent revolution" formulated by Trotsky in 1905-6 was based on the perception of a critical constellation between the Russian revolution of 1905 and the Paris Commune of 1871. But this fleeting image that momentarily "flit[ted] by" the historian/political actor was lost. The Russian labour movement of the time did not recognize itself as implicated by the Paris Commune: both the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks – see Lenin's writings of 1905 – explicitly rejected the reference to the Commune, which was criticized for having "confused the democratic with the proletarian revolution". The joyous message the historian/militant

[121] I discuss Bloch's concepts further on in this chapter.

[122] In 1871, as France was losing the Franco-Prussian War, and the Prussian army was surrounding Paris, because the new French government of Adolphe Thiers refused to arm the Parisian workers, they took upon themselves to defend their city (TROTSKY, 1972, p.12). Besides the more pressing security concerns, the struggle escalated to incorporate other emancipatory demands: "the Commune wanted a new society in a new world. From the start, it established the separation between State and Church, defining the former as secular. Working at night was abolished and the equality between men and women was decreed. The army was replaced by citizen militias, education became free of cost and compulsory, and pensions were created for widows and orphans [there were many because of the French-Prussian War]. [...] Factories were managed by the workers, unoccupied houses were transfered to working people. And the death penalty was abolished" (JAPIASSU, 2020).

> brought “breathless” from the past fell on deaf ears. It would be a dozen more years before, with Lenin’s “April Theses” – which draw inspiration from the model of the Commune of 1871 – a new constellation could emerge, this time successfully (LÖWY, 2005, p. 41).

Despite being apart thirty four years – 1871 and 1905 – and taking place in different countries, there are some important contextual similarities between such revolutions that lead Trotsky to create the Theory of Permanent Revolution. Throtsky’s theory contradicted the dominant Marxist views at the time that it was first necessary to economically develop the proletariat, accummullating strength, to be able to attempt a revolution in a later stage. In other words, while stagism defended a linear accumulation and development of forces, Trotsky’s theory is one example of Benjamin’s time of memory, which is made of fragments of past attempts to disrupt the power continuum. The similarity between two separate disruptive experiences, the Paris Commune and the 1905 Russian Revolution, is the image that flitted by, in Benjaminian terms, that Trotsky was able to glimpse and elaborate on. Trotsky’s theory can be summarized as such:

> The theory of the permanent revolution, which originated in 1905, declared war upon these ideas and moods [stagism]. It pointed out that the democratic tasks of the backward bourgeois nations lead directly, in our epoch, to the dictatorship of the proletariat and that the dictatorship of the proletariat puts socialist tasks on the order of the day. Therein lay the central idea of the theory. While the traditional view was that the road to the dictatorship of the proletariat led through a long period of democracy, the theory of the permanent revolution established the fact that for backward countries the road to democracy passed through the dictatorship of the proleriat. Thus democracy is not a regime that remains self-sufficient for decades, but is only a direct prelude to the socialist revolution. […]
> The second aspect of the “permanent” theory has to do with the socialist revolution as such. For an indefinitely long time and in constant internal struggle, all social relations undergo transformation. Society keeps on changing its skin. [...]
> The international character of the socialist revolution, which constitutes the third aspect of the theory of the permanent revolution, flows from the present state of economy and the social structure of humanity. [...]The maintenance of the proletarian revolution within a national framework can only be a provisional state of affairs. […] In an isolated proletarian dictatorship, the internal and external contradictions grow inevitably along with the successes achieved. If it remains isolated, the proletarian state must finally fall victim to these contradictions (TROTSKY, 1978, p.132-3)

The significance of Trotsky’s insightful recognition of the similarities between both monads – The Paris Commune and the 1905 Russian Revolution – is twofold. First, the October Revolution in 1917 probably would not have taken place at all since Trotsky’s understanding of the lessons of the Paris Commune was vital to guide the Bolshevik Party and the Soviets in the transition from democratic demands towards socialist ones. Second, it was relevant for many other disruptive experiences, as the Twentieth Century offered abundant examples of revolutions taking place in agrarian or semi-agrarian countries – the Mexican

Revolution, the Chinese Revolution, the Cuban Revolution, the Vietnamese Revolution, just to name a few –, which were completely different from social-democracy's belief that revolutions were going to take place in countries with the most developed capitalist economies. In other words, Trotsky's theory of Permanent Revolution contributed with a new vision[123] of disruptive action[124].

Furthermore, Trotsky's theory expresses an internationalism that would later become anathema in the Soviet Union and in the Third International, following Lenin's death. Despite tehri many differences, we can in their commitment with internationalism a common ground between Trotsky and Che. Likewise, Trotsky's opposition to Stalinism is another overlap with Benjamin. In addition, Trotsky's insight was relevant for many anticolonial struggles, and may possibily still be relevant, to some extent, for contemporary decolonial struggles. For example, Florestan Fernandes argues that

> under dependant capitalism, the bourgeoisie cannot lead the *national* and *democratic* revolution. It takes the reforming of the internal social order to a certain point. After that, it will have to suppress the pressure that comes from below, that is, to put a stop or even distort the *national revolution* and the *democratic revolution*. Beyond the historical limit of the "order stability", any *national* and *democratic* socializing of political power and of the State will have to mean, fatally, the destruction of the bourgeois society and the transition to socialism (FERNANDES, 2015, p.70-1).

Another example of Benjamin's image that flits by, is the constellation that interrelates the Nineteenth Century Cuban Wars of Independence and the Cuban Revolution. Cuba was an economically dependent country that had fought to liberate itself from a decaying Spanish Empire, only to find itself under a new master, the United States[125]. The *Mambí* army was formed by Cuban guerrillas that fought in the patriotic wars against the Spanish Empire during the Ten Years War and the War of Independence. Many of the *mambises* were freed black slaves from East Cuba who fought uncoventionally, including the

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[123] Whenever I say "vision" in this Chapter, I am referring to a cosmovision or a collective imaginary, which is formed by the symbolical element – discourse, art [including literature and cinema], philosophy, politics – and which is interrelated to disruptive actions. Although I am using the word vision as a metaphor, much like Benjamin with his allegories, I am also aware that the dependance on a word that is related literally to sight might be interpreted as an ableist perspective. Since I could not find a suitable alternative, and since I am dealing with images, and since using a multi-sensorial language would be too challenging for me at the moment, this will have to make do for now. However, in the future, I might revisit such concept.

[124] Whenever I say "disruptive action" in this Chapter, I mean both grass-roots protests against all forms of oppression, and revolutions. In a Benjaminian sense, such actions are disruptive because they interrupt, for some time at least, the continuum of power.

[125] "Cuba's putative independence had been won at the cost of the ignominious 1901 Platt Amendment, which granted Washington the right to intervene in Cuba's 'defense' at will and ceded Guantánamo Bay to the United
States as a naval base on open-ended terms. By the time Fidel was in high school, the Platt Amendment had been abrogated, but the Americans retained Guantánamo Bay, had large stakes in Cuba's sugar-based economy, and took a proconsular role in its political life" (ANDERSON, 2010, p.218).

dreaded machete charge. Fidel Castro points out the significance of the *mambises* for the Cuban Revolution:

> That's where we say the Revolution began. For us, the great struggle began at that point [1868], and it went on for ten years! It's incredible how much resistance was put up against the Spaniards, who were both powerful and very stubborn, plus against a number of Cubans who were opposed to independence – they tended to be the plantation owners, so even though the slaves had been freed in the United States in 1862, slavery wasn't abolished here until 1886. Still, all the freed slaves in the eastern half of the island – wherever the patriotic troops reached, from Oriente province almost to Matanzas – joined the War of Independence. [...]
> There were many brilliant black officers among the leaders. I mentioned Maceo, who was born in Santiago de Cuba, a patriotic man of humble origins who possessed a remarkable gift for command, great intelligence, and a good level of culture, despite his very modest background. [...]
> In the 1895-8 war, the Cubans faced over 300,000 Spanish combatants. It was a terrible war, the Vietnam of the nineteenth century. And the Cuban combatants, the *mambises*, were forced to wage an 'irregular' war. In the view of the time, the strategy was to invade [and cripple] the rich areas of the western part of the island. The *mambises* burned everything in their path (CASTRO; RAMONET, 2007, pgs. 87-8).

As we can see, Castro relates the Cuban Revolution to the Cuban Patriotic Wars, and, therefore, the Sierra Maestra guerrilla to the *mambises'* guerrilla. Hence, in Benjaminian terms, the Cuban Revolution could also be considered a redemptive action that enabled remembrance of the *mambises* and of their cause: the political and economical independence of the Cuban people. Interestingly, Che also *sees* the Cuban Revolution as a relaying of the *mambises* struggle:

> When Maceo, along with Panchito Gómez Toro, sacrificed his life for the liberation of Cuba, Martí had already done the same a year before; the firmest and more sensible political heads of the liberation forces were no more and there were no leaders in sight at the time that could take the revolutionary war to the extremes of total liberation from all colonial powers. Moreover, those who took their place were not shrewd enough to see the implications of the yanqui plans [...].
> That is how that war of liberation, that formally ended in [18]98 and that came to a formal culmination in 1902, with the independence, did not in fact end. What we have today [1962] is its direct continuation [...]. The history and example of Antonio Maceo and of the others from that time are present and alive in ourselves as they were in [18]68 and [18]95, they who fought for long thirty years to lay the foundations of what we are now building (GUEVARA, 2004, p.1).

Both Fidel and Che see the Cuban Revolution[126] as carrying on the unfinished liberation struggle of the *mambises*, that is, as a remembrance-redemption action. One person

[126] In an earlier version of this chapter, I discussed the revolutionary experiences in detail. Because of space limitations, I decided to summarize most of the section about the Russian Revolution and the Cuban Revolution. However, I would like to save here a fragment that briefly points out the contribution of women in revolutions, an issue that is often forgotten. There were several women who engaged in disruptive actions. For example, Haydée Santamaría Cuadrado was a Cuban revolutionary who participated on the attack at the Moncada Barracks in 1953. She was a founding member of M26, member of the national directory, and helped organize the urban network that supported the guerrilla in the mountains (HAYDÉE SANTAMARÍA, 2020). She also fought in Sierra Maestra in the Mariana Grajales Squadron, along with Melba Hernández,

who probably helped the *barbudos*, the Cuban revolutionaries,to make the connection with the *mambises* was General Alberto Bayo[127]:

> While reading Donald C. Hodges's *Intellectual Foundations of the Nicaraguan Revolution* (1986), the story took a somewhat different path. Hodges tells us that Colonel Alberto Bayo Giroud had also trained expeditionary forces against two other well-known generals during the 1940s: Nicaragua's Anastasio Somosa and Rafael Leonidas Trujillo of the Dominican Republic. One also learns that one of Bayo's books, *150 Questions for a Guerrilla,* was employed as a training manual for Che and the Castros in Mexico, and that it later inspired Che to write his own famous text titled *Guerrilla Warfare.*[...] But of greatest importance is the revelation that Bayo's influential text was actually a transcription of Augusto Cesar Sandino's political-military experience in Nicaragua, which Bayo gathered after leaving Spain in 1939 from veteran Sandinista legionnaires still alive after their leader's assassination (DE LA CAMPA, 1999, p.37).

As we can see, General Bayo is an important connection between different past disruptive actions since he fought with the Republican Army against Franco, he gathered the lessons from the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, and he trained the M26[128] guerrilla in Mexico. Indeed, we can say that Bayo was a living and breathing call for remembrance and redemption action.

These are not the only possible dialectical images (LÖWY, 2005, p.41) – to use Lowy's term –, images that flit by (*ibid* p.40) or splinters of messianic time (*ibid* p.101) – to use Benjamin's. There are other possibilities as we excavate the ruins of the defeated peoples and groups that dared rebel against the powerful. And excavate we must not to forget lessons

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Vilma Espín, Celia Sánchez, Isabel Rielo – the squadron leader –, Lilia Rielo, Olga Guevara, Angelina Antolín, Rita García, Ada Bella Acosta, Normita Ferrer, Flor Pérez, Eva Palma, Orosia Soto, Juana Peña, Edemis la Gallega Tamayo and Delsa Esther Teté Puebla (LAS MARIANAS, 2020). The squadron was named in homage to Mariana Grajales Cuello, a Cuban patriot, mother of the Maceo brothers – who became generals and leaders of the war of independence –. Mariana Grajales and her family also participated on the guerrilla struggle during the Ten Years War (MARIANA GRAJALES, 2020). Those women's achievements go beyond the armed struggle against Batista's regime: Teté Puebla went on to become Cuba's first woman general, Vilma Espín organized the Cuban Women Federation, Haydée Santamaría founded and directed *La Casa de Las Américas*. Furthermore, both Vila Espín and Celia Sánchez were members of the Cuban Communist Party's Central Commitee.

[127] "Bayo had been a career officer in the Spanish army, fighting in the colonial campaign against the Moroccan guerrilla leader Abd-El-Krim and then with the Republican forces against Franco. Later, he had advised and trained men for several wars around the Caribbean and Central America and had written a book, Storm in the Caribbean, about these experiences. Now retired from the military, Bayo worked as a university lecturer and ran a furniture factory in Mexico. He seemed to be just the man Fidel needed" (ANDERSON, 2010, pgs.228. 232, 239, 240).

[128] *Movimiento 26 de Julio* was the movement founded by Fidel Castro after he was released from prison in 1955. The name of the movement is a reference to the attack on the Moncada Military Barracks on July 26, 1953. As Fidel and other leaders were exiled in Mexico, where they organized and trained an expedition against Batista's regime, the remaining members, under the leadership of Haydée Santamaría and Frank País, set up a network in Cuba's cities which would later prove instrumental in obtaining information, recruits, arms and money to support the guerrilla in Sierra Grande.

from past disruptive attempts that might be useful in our own redemptive struggles and also to rescue the defeated from oblivion.

3.2 CATASTROPHE, HOPE AND CHE'S IMAGES

The sense of urgency in Benjamin's image that flits by does not lie only in the danger of it disappearing – and with it precious knowledge about how power was disrupted in the past – but also in our own present imperative to disrupt humankind's catastrophe of the powerful ruling over the defeated. I argue that this sense of urgency caused by the realization of the many power relations in our societies may lead sometimes to a feeling of hopelessness, but what helps overcome it is to find hope in artistic imaginations and collective emancipatory actions.

The catastrophe that I am talking about should not be mistaken for an abstraction – neither should Benjamin's ideas – since it assumes very concrete and deadly forms. We live in a time when Capitalism offers many examples of catastrophes. We have, of course, the social-economic catastrophes caused by overproduction and financial speculation – the 1929 and 2008 crisis being remarkable examples – that threatens billions with unemployment, insolvency, homelessness and hunger. But there are also environmental catastrophes, such as Global Warming, which threatens the survival of a number of species, including ours. In addition, we also face biological catastrophes such as the Coronavirus pandemic[129] which is currently on full swing as I write this chapter. But we also have other types of catastrophes, more daily, but also deadly: racism, machismo, LGBTQ-phobia, xenophobia, fatphobia, poverty and exploitation. Regardless of being global or localized, the imminent danger and the feeling of urgency of a catastrophic situation affects people, causes us to wish to see a way out and to want to take collective action. The alternative is death: in Freud's essay about melancholia, he reports that many patients killed themselves; in our case, if we do nothing to

[129] In a 2008 lecture, Medical Doctor Michael Greger pointed out some of the possible causes for the rise of epidemics since 1975: deforestation and the ensuing consumption of bush meat, as well as the agroindustrial mass confinement of animals, such as poultry. He cautioned in 2008 that a terrible combination of a fast infection rate, such as Influenza's, with a high fatality rate, such as Bird Flu's, into a single infectious disease could have catastrophic consequences: "the current dialog surrounding avian influenza speaks of potential h5n1 pandemic as if it were a natural disaster – hurricane, earthquake – over which we couldn't possibly have control. The reality, though, is that the next pandemic may be more of an unnatural disaster of our own making" (GREGER, 2008).

disrupt the continuum of the powerful, we might as well be marching to our own deaths, a twisted collective *suicide*.

In times of desperation, we need hope. As I mentioned in the Introduction, Cambre points out that Che's images have the power of making "things happen or at least somehow anchor[ing] a hope that something, a change, will happen. [...] [T]his hope [...] seems to translate to any language, time, or place" (CAMBRE, 2015, p.42). She concludes, regarding the potential of Che's images, that "whenever/wherever despair rears its head, hope is reborn, resurrected anew. Those who see hope in the image, are perceiving the light that makes a window happen" (*ibid*, p.63). In her book, Cambre discusses many examples of artistic imagination and disruptive actions that set Che's images into motion. In the Introduction, I mention some of them (Pictures 15-18).

For Cambre, the reason why people struggling against some form of oppression find hope through Che's images is because the latter have the power of creating "places of hope": "when a viewer recognizes the virtual (and invisible) qualities of visible image (of Che Guevara), the possibility of the agency of the art or artifact is created, and thereby the efficacy of the virtual" (CAMBRE, 2015, p.111). Interestingly, Cambre's perspective converges with Mondzain, which I discuss in the other Chapters and in the Introduction, since there is the spectator's potential of seeing something which has not yet been seen, of acting and being acted upon the image.

What is most significant in Cambre's very rich book, in my perspective, is the capacity of Che's images to transform "that which is empirically already there with an almost alchemical 'as-if-ness,' [...] [because of] the unseen act of imagining an *other* future" (CAMBRE, 2015, p.41). In other words, what I call vision is seeing in the image that flits by – in the Benjaminian sense – fragments of messianic time and sharing it with other people through artistic and/or disruptive actions. Or rephrasing it in another way, vision[130] is seeing beyond what is visible, it is seeing what seems not to be there, it is seeing what simultaneously is and is not there, it is seeing the imaginative and emancipatory potential.

We can understand the "as-if-ness" capacity of vision through setting some concepts in dialogue. For instance, Ernst Bloch considers that humankind is "not-yet" fully human, that is, it has not achieved its full potential under capitalism and, therefore, philosophy, religion

[130] Although I am referring to vision in this paragraph, what I say is also relatable to disruptive actions, since vision and action are interrelated concepts, such as remembrance and redemption for Benjamin, and should not therefore be separated. For didatic and organizational reasons, I might refer to either vision or disruptive action at a given point in the chapter, but it should be noted that I am *never* separating them.

and art can offer us glimpses of what exists potentially:

> Bloch urges us to grasp the three dimensions of our temporality: he offers us a dialectical analysis of the *past* which illuminates the *present* and can direct us to a better *future*. The past – what has been – contains both the sufferings, tragedies and failures of humanity – what to avoid and redeem – and its unrealized hopes and potentials – what could have been. Crucial is Bloch's claim that what could have been can still be: for Bloch, history is a repository of possibilities that are living options for future action. The present, for Bloch, is characterized by *latency* and *tendency*: the unrealized potentialities that are latent in the present, and the signs and foreshadowings that indicate the tendency of the direction and movement of the present into the future. This three-dimensional temporality must be grasped and activated by an *anticipatory consciousness* that at once perceives the unrealized emancipatory potential in the past, the latencies and tendencies of the present, and the realizable hopes of the future. Above all, Bloch's is a philosophy of hope and the future, a dreaming forward, a projection of a vision of a future kingdom of freedom. It is his conviction that only when we project our future in the light of what is, what has been, and what could be can we engage in the creative practice that will produce the world we all want and realize humanity's deepest hopes and dreams.
> No Marxist has more convincingly demonstrated the importance of philosophy, art and religion for revolutionary practice.[...]
> In Bloch's view, the human being is incomplete, unfulfilled, laden with unsatisfied needs and unrealized potentials which are the motor of human self-activity. Art, philosophy and religion are the repositories of needs and potentialities struggling for expression, hence they give us clues as to what the human being is and can be. Bloch's work is a magnificent project of decoding our cultural heritage to restore to us our human potential. His concept of the "not yet" militates against the notion of an innate, ahistorical human essence, for our species has not yet become what it can be and thus has not yet realized its humanity (KELLNER, 1976, pgs. 16, 21).

Interestingly, Bloch relates the anticipatory qualities of art, philosophy and religion to that of the daydream. In fact, T. E. Lawrence, despite the many instances of racism and of Orientalism in his book, Seven Pillars of Wisdom, offers an intriguing remark regarding daydream, which is fitting for discussing both Che and Bloch: "those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of their minds wake in the day to find that it was vanity; but the dreamers of the day are dangerous men [people], for they may act their dreams with open eyes" (LAWRENCE, 1962, p.23). Lawrence indeed was a *dangerous* person, but not the kind I am interested in this dissertation since he was, after all, a representative of British neocolonial interests in Arabia. Nonetheless, his assertion is quite insightful to consider how dangerous for the status quo those who dare to dream with their eyes open – the open eyes also relate to the demand created by the phantasmagorical gaze, which I discuss in Chapter One.

Furthermore, we can relate the dangerous "dreamers of the day" to Che's beloved literary character from Cervantes' novel, Don Quixote[131]. Indeed, Che Guevara

[131] Although I initially planned to write one chapter of this dissertation about the interrelation between Don Quixote and Che Guevara, I later decided it would not have much affinity with the other chapters. However, I look forward to writing at least an article on that subject after this dissertation is complete. I am specially interested in analyzing the ambiguity between crazyness and lucidity in Quixote's behavior and speeches, which is relatable to Bloch's concepts of daydream and anticipatory consciousness.

metaphorically referred to himself in a farewell letter to his parents before going to fight in Congo: “dear old folks, once again I feel beneath my heels the ribs of Rocinante. Once more, I’m on the road with my shield on my arm” (GUEVARA, 2007, p.184). Like Quixote in the beginning of the novel, Che, in 1965, had achieved a comfortable position in Cuba – a home, a family, he had occupied ministerial positions and acted as Cuba’s foreign ambassador – but he felt the urge to leave it all in order to continue pursuing his dream: not exactly becoming a knight errant, but erring nonetheless in the world to further the international socialist cause he envisioned. If we may never know for sure why Che compared himself to Quixote, we can at least resolutely say that he was part of the dangerous group of people who dare dream with their eyes open, and dare to act to bring about their visions. Such fearlessness in face of danger can only be achieved through hope:

> ‘Where there is danger, rescue also grows’, this line of Hölderlin’s indicates simply the positive dialectical turning point for which fear of the place of death disappears. [...] Danger and faith are the truth of hope, in such a way that both are gathered in it, and danger contains no fear, faith no lazy quietism. Hope is thus ultimately a practical, a militant emotion, it unfurls banners. If confidence emerges from hope as well, then the expectant emotion which has become absolutely positive is present or as good as present, the opposite pole to despair. [...]Thus: if the mood is the general medium of daydreaming, then the expectant emotions [...] give the direction of daydreaming. They give the line along which the imagination of anticipatory ideas moves, and along which this imagination then builds its wishful road [...] Both future-orientated intentions, that of expectant emotions and that of expectant ideas, accordingly extend into a Not-Yet-Conscious, that is, into a class of consciousness which is itself to be designated not as filled, but as anticipatory. The waking dreams advance, provided they contain real future, collectively into this Not-Yet-Conscious, into the unbecome-unfilled or utopian field (BLOCH, 1996, pgs.112-3).

The danger, which Bloch says constitutes hope along with faith, can be related to what I previously said about the catastrophe. Moreover, the anticipatory quality of daydreaming, art, philosophy and religion – a not-yet-consciousness – indicates human unrealized potential, our “not-yetness” or “not-yet-become” that is relatable to what Cambre calls the “as-ifness” of Che’s images. In other words, the power of imagination – of setting image into action – is what makes possible tapping into such realm of potentiality called “as-ifness” or “not-yet-become”. The phantasmagorical gaze challenges, disturbs, the spectator, demanding something, as I discuss in Chapter One. In return, artistic imaginations are the responsive gazes of people who, looking back at Che’s images, have a glimpse of humankind’s unrealized potential. Through artistic action, those people contribute with *new* visions that change our perspective of Che and of the world(s) we live in.

In comparison, Hannah Arendt also discusses the new when she considers the human

capacity of creation. According to her, acting is the potential of creating something anew that each new human life carries, which, may seem too broad or too straightforward a concept at first, but it actually has deeper political implications: "since action is the political activity par excellence, natality, and not mortality, may be the central category of political, as distinguished from metaphysical, thought" (ARENDT, 1998, p.9). In other words, writing in a catastrophic context with abundant necropolitical examples – two world wars, the Hollocaust, and human rights abuses both by fascist military dictatorships and by bureaucratic so-called-socialist states –, Arendt's definition of action cleverly turns the common held vision of revolutionary politics, as destruction of the current order, upside down, revealing what had been hidden – [revolutionary] action actually creates anew, it creates new things in new ways, and by doing so it can potentially disrupt the existent social order and create a new society.

Returning to the issue of Che's images, action in the Arendtian sense, be it artistic or disruptive, creates anew our perceptions both of the threats in the world(s) we live in and of our greatest strength in our unequal fights against our powerful enemies: our anticipatory perception of what humankind can be, the Blochian "not-yet" that is envisioned by concrete utopia, and that gives us hope. That is why Che, as image, does not die, or, even better, why e*l Che Vive* (Picture 59), that is, Che lives. As the two epigraphs in this chapter indicate, artistic imaginations of Che and disruptive actions both recreate "the energy of human dignity" (GALEANO, 2015) and "our longing for [L]ife"[132] (Francisco Fernández-Santos, apud KUNZLE, 1997, p.46) – not life as survival, but Life with a capital "L" meaning actualizing our human potential in every way possible and without limitations imposed by oppressions.

3.3 ARTISTIC IMAGINATIONS OF CHE

As I mentioned in the Introduction, Kunzle (1997) plays with the recurrent motto *El Che Vive* but he limits the semantic possibilities to an exclusively religious resurgence: "Jesus' [Christ] death was followed by a resurrection, the belief that he was and is spiritually present among us. Che's death, too, was followed by a spiritual resurrection: *Che Vive*"

[132] Santos' line, "[*Che] es la vida que alienta por más vida*", has a verb that refers simultaneously to breathing and longing for, which reinforces the metaphor of life also noticeable in the verb "*latir*", a reference to the heartbeat. I had difficulty translating the line and opted for a simpler version since I am not translating the whole poem.

(KUNZLE, 1997, p. 87). The motto itself, however, is an act of remembrance-redemption[133]. It started to appear in spray painted walls and in Che's images as an act of defiance: to defy the authority of those that systematically murdered revolutionary leaders by insisting they are "alive" in words, images, and, more importantly in those that carry on with the present struggles. In other words, to say that *El Che Vive* is, at the same time, an act of remembrance – of not letting the memory of Che, including his sacrifice, his deeds, his theories, and what we can learn from his mistakes, fall into oblivion – and an act of redemption, as the artist and/or activist usually connects Che with present emancipatory struggles.

Picture 59 – A twelve-year-old artist in La Higuera.

Source: Kunzle (1997, cover).

In Picture 59, we can see that the young artist sets Che's images into action, imagining Che as living figure, in different poses, smoking a cigar, listening intently to someone, not just [but also] gazing at the horizon. Furthermore, the La Higuera artist has persistently repeated the motto *el Che Vive* on the two works at his feet, on the wall of his house, and in the red square at the center of his larger collage-style poster. Moreover, the young artist connects Che with the challenges he faces in his life, as a boy living in a remote area in Bolivia: "a twelve-year-old resident of La Higuera […] poses for the camera outside his home in December 1996 with drawings he has made of Che Guevara, done in homage to the man who has inspired him in his life and in his studies" (KUNZLE, 1997, publisher's page). The La Higuera artist's act of remembrance-redemption is even more meaningful if we

[133] Remembrance and redemption are key Walter Benjamin's concepts. For an in-depth discussion of them, please see the Introduction.

consider that this was the village where Che was murdered.

3.3.1 Violence towards Che imaginations

Indeed, the prospect of Che living again in La Higuera must have been too great for the Bolivian military to bear. Twice the soldiers came and destroyed Che Guevara statues in La Higuera. The threat was too great since the military were still in power. Even the simple act of creating statues of Che and putting them into a public space became a rebellious action. As Casey points out:

> The topic [Che's celebration as a laic saint] was taboo in a country controlled by conservative military leaders who wanted to expunge Che's memory from history. "They used to come into town screaming at us", said Rosado of the periodic visits La Higuera would get from soldiers after Che's death, when fear of reprisals led dozens of people to leave the town for good. […] Twice she watched soldiers storm into her little town and take away a statue some students had put there. Undeterred, the sculptors came back a third time. The fruit of their struggle – a crude, rough likeness of the revolutionary in stone – still stands in a fenced-off area at the entrance of La Higuera, where it has in recent years been overshadowed by the far bigger bust of Che and, since early 2007, by a realist-style twelve-foot full-body statue of Che in bronze that stands right in front of the students' noble little gray-painted sculpture (CASEY, 2009, p.197-8).

Picture 60– The third statue at La Higuera.

Source: Kunzle (1997, p.108).

Kunzle includes a picture of the third statue (Picture 60) and he also briefly mentions the artists' struggle against the Bolivian military: "the first [monument] of c. 1987 was removed by the military, and replaced with a sign commemorating the 'valiant soldiers who

fought against communism'[134]. Another monument was put up, and also soon removed" (KUNZLE, 1997, p.109). Kunzle also points out that the student-artists belonged to the Bolivian University Confederation, that the third statue dates from 1994 and that its paving stones form a star, a probable reference to Che Guevara's Cuban rank of *Comandante* (*ibid*). But the violence against Che imaginations is not exclusive to Bolivian dictators.

In the Introduction, I discuss the blowing up of the head of the 1970 Praxíteles Vázquez' statue of Che (Picture 4) by a paramilitary group called *Patria y Libertad*[135], and the removal of the body of the statue by a Chilean army patrol, both in 1973. Curiously, Kunzle includes a 1972 poster (Picture 61) by the "US-funded Chilean fascistic organization *Patria y Libertad*, which helped overthrow President Allende in 1973" (KUNZLE, 1997, p.95). The poster has the figure of Chilean independence patriot Manuel Rodríguez holding the Chilean flag and stepping over Che's corpse-looking head, who instead of a star pinned on his beret has the communist symbol of the hammer and the anvil, while saying: "out of my fatherland hypocritical assassins! My shadow will protect Chile" (*ibid*).

[134] This sounds, non-surprisingly, similar to the discourse of Brazilian army generals regarding the 1964 coup which created a military dictatorship in Brazil that lasted for twenty-one years. On March 31, 2020, the anniversary of the despised coup, the Brazilian Defense Minister, retired General Fernando Azevedo, declared that "the 1964 movement is a reference for the Brazilian democracy, because of what it avoided" (GIELOW, 2020). The Latin American generals understand very well the potentialities of memory politics and try to deny the memory of those who fought against oppression, while, at the same time, posing themselves as defenders of democracy when, in fact, they all too often kill democracy to maintain republicanism.

[135] "The group was formed by Pablo Rodríguez Grez[es] in 1970, and turned more and more clandestine throughout the presidency of Salvador Allende. In June 1973, the group attempted to carry out a coup against the Allende government but failed, in an event known as the *Tanquetazo*. In July 1973, it received orders from the Chilean Navy, which opposed the Schneider Doctrine of military adherence to the constitution, to sabotage Chile's infrastructure. The collaboration between Fatherland and Liberty and the Chilean Armed Forces increased after the failed October 1972 strike which had sought to overthrow Allende socialist administration. In agreement with the sectors opposing Allende in the military, the group assassinated on 26 July 1973 Allende's naval aide, Arturo Araya Peeters. The first sabotage was committed this same day. Others include creating a power outage while Allende was being broadcast. It was officially disbanded on September 12, 1973, following Pinochet's coup. Members of PyL were then recruited by Chilean security services and participated in the persecution of those opposed to Pinochet's junta" (FATHERLAND AND LIBERTY, 2020).

Picture 61– Fascist poster by a Chilean paramilitary organization.

Source: Kunzle (1997, p.95).

As we can see, the poster by the fascist organization *Patria y Libertad* was distributed a whole year prior to its attack on Vázquez' statue of Che at the Chilean commune of San Miguel. Obviously, they were already planning their necropolitical measures[136] a whole year before the coup. Ironically, the poster has a xenophobic tone since it depicts the threat as foreign – Che is Argentinian – but the fascist organization that produced it was funded by the United States. The irony goes on since Manuel Rodríguez' history is filled with instances that approximates him with Che: he made use of guerrilla warfare against loyalist troops in the mountains and set up a network of informants; he also sought help from the Argentine-Spanish José de San Martin to form a liberation army with both Chileans and Argentines (MANUEL RODRÍGUEZ ERDOÍZA, 2020). It seems that Rodríguez was more internationalist than the Chilean fascists would like to recognize.

Still about Chile, the famous Chilean songwriter and artist Victor Jara was one of the many artists that created musical homages to Che Guevara after the latter's death. Jara had many politicizing[137] songs about the peasantry, oppression and revolution, one more

[136] "The group was funded by the CIA during the first year of Allende's presidency, including via the Agency's Track II program. According to Prof. Michael Stohl, and Prof. George A. Lopez, 'After the failure to prevent Allende from taking office, efforts shifted to obtaining his removal. At least $7 million was authorized by the United States for CIA use in the destabilizing of Chilean society. This included financing and assisting opposition groups and right-wing paramilitary groups such as Patria y Libertad'" (FATHERLAND AND LIBERTY, 2020).

[137] I have struggled with finding the right word to qualify a form of art that creates critical reflection about the oppressive world(s) we live in and that invites to take action. I also have seen other colleagues face the same problem. The word that usually comes to our mouths is "political", but in a strict sense, everything is political. However, the powerful recurrently try to depoliticize the political as a way of hiding their own

remarkable than the other. Through his songs, he helped create a vision for the struggles that were taking place in Latin America at that time, as did also other members of the *Nueva Canción Latinoamericana* movement. "Zamba del Che", released in 1969, relates Che to Bolívar:

Vengo cantando esta zamba
con redoble libertario
mataron al guerrillero
Che Comandante Guevara
selvas pampas y montañas
patria o muerte su destino
[...]
Bolivar le dio el camino y
Guevara lo siguio
liberar a nuestro pueblo
del dominio explotador

A Cuba le dio la gloria
de la nación liberada
Bolivia tambem le llora
su vida sacrificada
(JARA, 2014)[138].

Jara's song is a remarkable example of remembrance-redemption action and of artistic imagination, since it highlights the relaying of the struggle from Bolivar to Che, and potentially, to the persona, since Che's death affected him or her to the point of causing to sing with a libertarian redouble. The metaphor of walking in this song, which links Bolivar, Che and the persona, is comparable to the effect of Vázquez's statue of Che with stretched arms handing the rifle on to the spectators (Picture 4). Unfortunately, just as the statue was destroyed, so was the artist who created this song. Jara was detained and taken to the infamous *Estadio Chile* – later renamed Victor Jara Stadium – where he spent days with thousands of other activists. He was brutally tortured and murdered with more than forty gunshot wounds (VICTOR JARA, 2020).

It seems that the torturers and murderers, more than killing the man, were trying to kill the art and ideas he had created. Fortunately, they failed. Jara's music is still listened today. In fact, Jara's Zamba was included in a 1997 album called *¡El Che Vive!*, along with

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privileges in a naturalized discourse. In my opinion, then, the best adjective to qualify art that challenges the dominant discourse, and dominance, is "politicizing" since it brings the political forth, it reminds us the centrality of the political in our lives – from the very first breath to the last one. In an age of immediacy and short-term myopia, we have to constantly remind ourselves that everything is political.

[138]"I come singing this *zamba*/ With a libertarian redouble/ they killed the guerrilla Che Comandante Guevara / forests, pampas and mountains / *Patria o Muerte* [is] your fate […] Bolivar led the way and / Guevara followed him / to free our people / from the exploitive rule / He gave to Cuba the glory / of a freed nation / Bolivia also cries for him / his sacrificed life" (JARA, 2014, my translation).

fourteen other musical imaginations of Che by various artists. Besides many homages by artists worldwide[139], the infamous stadium now bears his name as a constant reminder of the massacre that took place there. At the stadium, there is also a plaque with Jara's last poem, *We are Five Thousand*. Jara's last action, the poem, has a harrowing tone of a persona that is at the same time witness and victim of a fascist massacre. However, the persona is helpless, but not hopeless, a subtle but vital distinction. Indeed, the poem's last line is hopeful, in a Blochian sense: "*Lo que nunca vi, lo que he sentido y lo que siento hará brotar el momento*" (JARA apud SOMOS CINCO MIL, 2020)[140]. The last line interrelates past-present-future and refers to the "not-yet" human potential.

But it is not only in Bolivia or in Chile that artistic action faced backlash. In Brazil, Claudio Tozzi[141] created a large panel in homage to Che Guevara on October 12, 1967, only three days after Che's death. In December 1967, the artist exhibited his large panel called "Che: Alive or Dead" (Picture 62) in the *IV Salão de Arte Moderna do Distrito Federal*. DOPS agents tried to seize his work and it was also vandalized by right-wingers (Picture 63):

Picture 62 – Claudio Tozzi's panel Guevara, Alive or Dead.

Source: Medeiros (2017, p.28).

> DOPS (Social and Political Order Department) agents tried to take four works considered subversive because they portrayed the Argentine guerrilla that had been recently killed, Ernesto "Che Guevara: a billion dollars" and "Alone", by Rubens Gerchman; "He", by José Roberto Aguilar; and "Guevara: Alive or Dead", by

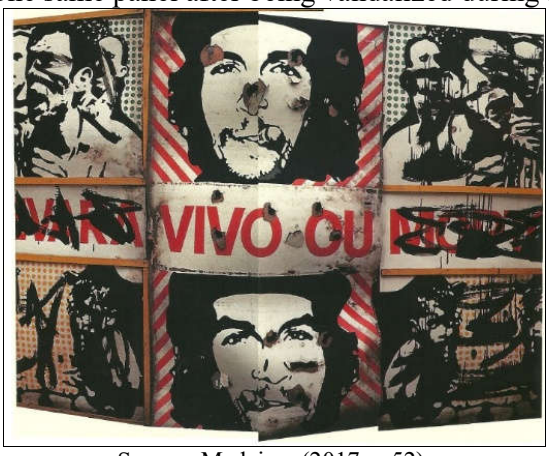
[139] Roger Waters, co-founder of Pink Floyd, musician, composer and activist, recently recreated Victor Jara's song *El Derecho de Vivir en Paz* referring to the 2019 Chilean protests against Piñera as well as to other right-wing governments in Latin America. The song is available on Youtube (ROGERS; JARA, 2020).

[140] "What I have never seen, what I have felt and what I feel will make the moment sprout" (JARA apud SOMOS CINCO MIL, 2020, my translation).

[141] Tozzi was at the time an architecture student who "actively participated in the Students' Movement in São Paulo and he also started participating in Carlos Marighella's Ação Libertadora Nacional in 1968" (MEDEIROS, 2014, p.1).

> Claudio Tozzi. Of the four panels, the last one was the most shocking because of its size, of the explicit reference to Guevara and also because it was located in a place with a high attendance.
> […]
> The images of "Struggle" and "Hunger" [the two prior works that Tozzi incorporated in this panel], the words "Guevara" and "Dead" were spray painted by a group of right-wingers. Besides that, in the struggle with the DOPS agents, some slats came off, and the images of Guevara's face and the words "Alive or" were perforated with blows which, although they look like gunshots, are not (MEDEIROS, 2017, pgs. 27, 51).

Picture 63 – The same panel after being vandalized during an art exhibit.



Source: Medeiros (2017, p.52).

But there are other examples, more contemporary to us, of backlash against artistic and/or disruptive actions related to Che. In Venezuela, an eight-foot-tall glass monument with Che's face (Picture 64) was destroyed by a paramilitary group called Paramo Patriotic Group in 2007. "The monument on an Andean mountain highway near the city of Merida was unveiled Oct. 8 by Vice President Jorge Rodriguez and Cuba's ambassador to Venezuela to mark the 40th anniversary of Guevara's death" and it was located in a spot which Guevara visited "in 1952 during his travels through South America" (GUEVARA MONUMENT, 2007). The monument was an example of remembrance-redemption action since Chávez related what he called Bolivarian Revolution to Bolivar and the war of independence against Spain, as well as to Che and Fidel, and the Cuban Revolution.

Picture 64 – Destroyed Che monument in the mountains of Venezuela.

Source: (GUEVARA MONUMENT, 2007).

And in Ireland, in 2012, a monument of Che was destroyed even before it was inaugurated. Galway's City Counselor and Labor party member, Billy Cameron, was pushing for the idea of a Che monument that would celebrate Guevara's Irish heritage and his visit to Ireland in 1963. According to Dowd (2012), "the architect Simon McGuiness and the Dublin artist Jim FitzPatrick designed […] a three-dimensional, interactive work of art that would be 'a total homage' to 'man, image and ideal,' according to McGuiness" and it would feature three glass panes in different colors with Fitzpatrick's recreation of Che (Pictures 8 and 65). Despite being approved by the Galway City Council, as the news agencies started to report the project, it was halted because of the backlash it received from the United States, particularly from individuals with connections to the Cuban-exile community in Florida (DOWD, 2012).

Picture 65 – McGuiness and FizPatrick's project for the Che monument.

Source: (CIDADE IRLANDESA, 2012).

Another contemporary example, although it is more of a disruptive action than an artistic imagination, is Spenser Rapone's Other-Than-Honorable discharge from the United States Army for wearing a Che T-shirt underneath his uniform during his graduation ceremony at West Point in 2016 (Picture 66). Although he kept the photos to himself, in 2017 he published them in his social media in support of NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick, who was suffering backlash for kneeling during the national anthem in protest against racism. Rapone had first applied unsuccessfully to West Point in 2010 and then enlisted. His war experience changed his political views:

> Rapone said his journey to communism grew out of his experiences as an army ranger [an elite unit] in Afghanistan before he was accepted into the US Military Academy. [...] He was deployed to Afghanistan in 2011 and was assigned as an assistant machine gunner in Khost province.
> "We were bullies in one of the poorest countries on Earth," Rapone said. "We have one of the most technologically advanced militaries of all time and all we were doing is brutalizing and invading and terrorizing a population that had nothing to do with what the United States claimed was a threat."
> Towards the end of his deployment, he learned that West Point fulfils a certain quota of enlisted soldiers every year. Despite his growing disillusionment about the military, he applied and got in. [...]
> "I consider myself a revolutionary socialist," the 26-year-old said. "I would encourage all soldiers who have a conscience to lay down their arms and join me and so many others who are willing to stop serving the agents of imperialism and join us in a revolutionary movement" ('COMMIE CADET', 2018).

Picture 66– Rapone's disruptive action in his West Point graduation ceremony.

Source: ('COMMIE CADET', 2018).

Rapone's photos shattered the glass of the war-veteran fetish that became part of the dominant discourse in the United States following the World Trade Center attack[142], and the

[142] There have been since 2001 a plethora of Hollywodian war movies, many of them celebrating white United States' soldiers fighting nameless hordes of fanatic terrorists. Just to name a few: Lone Survivor (2013), American Sniper (2014), 13 Hours (2016), and 12 Strong (2018). It would be interesting to analyze such

wars against Iraq and Afghanistan. After all, Rapone is a veteran of war, a former member of a special unit – the Rangers –, who also graduated at the prestigious West Point Academy, becoming a United States officer. Furthermore, to see a former U.S. Ranger wearing a Che T-shirt underneath his West Point uniform is, in my opinion, an ironical commentary on the role the United States has played in repressing revolutions, supporting coups and dictatorships. After all, United States Major Ralph W. Shelton, a Ranger and Special Forces member, was the man who commanded "a 16-man Mobile Training Team (MTT) from the 8th Special Forces Group in the Canal Zone, Panama" (FINLAYSON, 2008) that trained the Bolivian Second Ranger Battalion which captured Che. How ironical, then, to see a former Ranger paying homage to Che while wearing a United States Army uniform!

Picture 67 – Mike Prysner wearing a Che T-shirt during a disruptive action.

Source: Eyes Left (PRYSNER; RAPONE, 2019).

Rapone's daring disruptive action must have awed many right-wingers in the United States. Non-surprisingly, the Cuban-exile lobby spearheaded the backlash since Cuban-American Florida Senator Marco Rubio "called on the secretary of the army to remove Rapone from the officer ranks" ('COMMIE CADET', 2018). Since leaving the Army, Rapone has created a podcast for veterans interested in Socialism called "Eyes Left" (PRYSNER; RAPONE, 2019), a pun with the common military command "eyes right" when a commander is inspecting the troops. Besides Rapone, the podcast is hosted by Mike Prysner (Picture 67), an United States Army veteran who also became socialist because of his war experiences and

movies in terms of the role the archetypical white-male "American" hero plays in colonial nostalgia, and its ideological importance to support the idea of national identity in times of crisis.

that has been an activist for many years[143].

Overall, considering all the backlash cases against artistic imaginations and disruptive action I discuss in this chapter, we can see how dangerous Che's images are since right-wingers, fascists and military goons all want to kill Che's potential of remembrance-redemption. As such aim could not be achieved by killing the man Guevara, it actually had the opposite effect as I discuss in Chapter One, they try to vicariously kill him again through the destruction of Che imaginations.

Che's images are often the target of backlash because of their capacity to inspire hope and because artists, revolutionaries and activists see through Che's images humankind's unrealized potential. In other words, since "current struggles cast into question the historical victories of the oppressors because they undermine the legitimacy of the power of the ruling classes, past and present" (LÖWY, 2005, p.22), and since Che's images work as portals interrelating fragments of messianic time, they are considered to be very dangerous by those in power.

Another reason for Che's images be considered dangerous is their potency of creation. For instance, through Prysner and Rapone's disruptive actions, they are creating a vision for war veterans dissatisfied with the United States' dependence on a necropolitics of war. Instead of having only two options as veterans returning home: either re-enlisting, growing addicted to violence and gradually estranged from family[144], or trying to adjust to a lonely civilian life – having to face alone PTSD, the lack of psychological support, substance abuse and the risk of becoming homeless –, Prysner and Rapone have seen what seemed not to be there. In other words, they made what seemed impossible – United States veterans

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[143] Prysner's activism is well documented on the Internet. But his talk in the 2008 Winter Soldier Panel is impressive: "we were told we were fighting terrorists. The real terrorist was me. And the real terrorism is this occupation. Racism within the military has long been an important tool to justify the destruction and occupation of another country. It has long been used to justify the killing, subjugation and torture of another people. Racism is a vital weapon employed by this government. It is a more important weapon than a rifle, a tank, a bomber, or battleship. It is more destructive than an artillery shell or a bunker buster, or a Tomahawk missile. While those weapons are created and owned by this government, they are harmless without people willing to use them" (PRYSNER, 2008).

[144] Although neither Prysner, nor Rapone, explicitly relate their actions to Thomas Sankara, the Burkhinian military turned anticolonial-marxist revolutionary – sometimes referred to as the "African Che" –, I cannot but comment on how appropriate are the latter's words: "when you are bearing arms that can spit fire and death, and when you can receive orders standing to attention in front of a flag, without knowing who will benefit from this order or this arm, you become a potential criminal who's just waiting to spread terror around you. How many soldiers are going around such and such a country, and bringing grief and desolation without understanding that they are fighting men and women who argue for the same ideals as their own. If they knew! Children of workers who see their parents going on strike against reactionary regimes accept to fight for the reactionary leaders since they joined the army. So a soldier without any political or ideological training is a potential criminal" (SANKARA apud VALIENTE, 2013).

become socialists wearing Che T-shirts in disruptive actions – possible. By doing so, they not only envisioned another way for United States veterans, but they also changed our perception of the potentialities of the world(s) we live in and of Che as a resurgent image with an "alchemical as-ifness" (CAMBRE, 2015, p.41). Or, according to Arendt,

> It is in the nature of beginning that something new is started which cannot be expected from whatever may have happened before. This character of startling unexpectedness is inherent in all beginnings and in all origins. [...]The new always happens against the overwhelming odds of statistical laws and their probability, which for all practical, everyday purposes amounts to certainty; the new therefore always appears in the guise of a miracle. The fact that man [people] is capable of action means that the unexpected can be expected from him [them], that He [they] is [are] able to perform what is infinitely improbable (ARENDT, 1998, p.178).

Here we can see a convergence between what Cambre calls Che's images' "alchemical as-ifness", what Bloch calls anticipatory consciousness of concrete utopia, and Arendt's infinite improbability, that is, what I prefer to call (im)possibility. So, if the appeal Che's images have over us is greatly due to the unsettling phantasmagorical gaze and the anxiety of remembering and non-remembering that it causes, the great potency or power of Che's images – of vital importance for those in this global-capitalist society that *seem* to be powerless – is to allow the sight of what seems not to be there and to create what seemed impossible – to make the impossible possible.

3.3.2 Cosmovision

Interestingly, here we are getting somewhat close(r) to what anthropology has called a fetishistic relation to objects, that is, believing that objects have *animus* – life or spirit. The word fetish, however, is severely charged with colonialism. Etymologically, it derived from the Portuguese *feitiço*, as the European invaders referred to the beliefs of invaded peoples derogatorily in probable comparison to the European women-witches who were also oppressed and murdered. In my opinion, I consider acceptable to use the word fetish against the grain, that is, to refer to capitalism and (post)modernity, but to use it to refer to ancestral peoples and their religions is problematic. Hence, more suitable choices of words are shamanic vision or cosmovision. Both concepts, shamanic vision and cosmovision, are based on relationality and allow us to see beyond what is merely visible. According to Wilson,

> One major difference between the dominant [western] paradigms and an Indigenous paradigm is that the dominant paradigms build on the fundamental belief that knowledge is an individual entity: the researcher is an individual in search of knowledge, knowledge is something that is gained, and therefore knowledge may be

> owned by an individual. An indigenous paradigm comes from the fundamental belief that knowledge is relational. Knowledge is shared with all of creation. It is not just interpersonal relationships, not just with the research subjects I may be working with, but it is a relationship with all of creation. It is with the cosmos, it is with the animals, with the plants, with the earth that we share this knowledge. It goes beyond the idea of individual knowledge to the concept of relational knowledge (WILSON, 2001, p.176).

Although Wilson is discussing Indigenous Research Methodologies (IRM), the ancestral relationality he points out is also present in other ways of indigenous expression, including rituals and art. Moreover, when learning and/or creating knowledge, indigenous researchers are always seeing "the big picture", that is, considering how knowledge affects and is affected by others, be them human or not.

Despite the epistemological differences between the unorthodox marxists I discuss and IRM, I see some common ground in the power of artistic and disruptive actions in recreating not only our understanding of Che and his images, but also of the world(s) we live in and the struggles we face. Although I am not departing from an IRM standpoint, I see some affinity especially in terms of the interrelation between action and vision, and in Che's images' potential for seeing and acting the (im)possible. Regarding shamanic vision and indigenous art,

> what I realized from my experience with shamanism in Western Amazonia is that there is a close synesthetic relation between singing and vision. A lot of what can be seen is not material, so you have an intrinsic relation between the shaman and the ritual situations through which he can see what normally we do not see, the invisible world. This can be achieved by the ingestion of tobacco, ayahuasca – also known as *yagé* in Colombia and *cipó* in Brazil – which are visionary substances. Singing is very important for the visions, to guide the people participating in the ritual, for teaching them to see what they are searching for and, mostly, for not getting lost. […] In the Amerindian conception of how bodies and artifacts relate, the idea, emphasized through the poetic language that expresses how both bodies and artifacts are manufactured, is that they seem to be made through the same techniques. Hence, *in the indigenous conception, artifacts are like bodies, and bodies are conceived in terms of artifacts*. […]
>
> In the traditional indigenous conception, the relation between model and copy lies much more in the artifact's capacity of acting than on the imitation of the image of the model. If the Wayana people say that the *tipiti*, used to squeeze manioc, is a snake without a head, the key in this comparison is not the form, but what both the artifact and the snake can do. The snake coils around its victim and it squeezes it. The agency of the snake is what connects it to the artifact, not their form (LACLAU, 2016, *my emphasis*).

We can see in Laclau's example of the Wayana people's *tipiti* what Wilson referred when discussing indigenous knowledge as relating beyond the individual, to animals, plants, the earth and beyond. Furthermore, the interrelation with the cosmos, the invisible world, can be manifested through shamanic visions. In addition, the relation between artifacts and bodies

is food for our thought regarding the poetic language employed by many to express Che's images' humanlike qualities of energy, dignity, hope and agency. Likewise, Anzaldúa comments on the differences between indigenous and western art, and she also talks about her own writing, which she calls "the Shamanic State":

> My "stories" are acts encapsulated in time, "enacted" every time they are spoken aloud or read silently. I like to think of them as performances and not as inert and "dead" objects (as the aesthetics of the Western culture think of art works). Instead, the work has an identity; it is a "who" or a "what" and contains the presences of persons, that is, incarnations of gods and ancestors or natural and cosmic powers. The work manifests the same needs as a person, it needs to be "fed", *la tengo que bañar y vestir*.
> When invoked in rite, the object/event is "present"; that is, enacted, it is both a physical thing and the power that infuses it […]
> Western cultures behave differently towards works of art than do tribal cultures. The "sacrifices" Western cultures make are in housing their art works in the best structures designed by the best architects; and in servicing them with insurance, guards to protect them, conservators to maintain them, specialists to mount and display them, and the educated and upper classes to "view" them. Tribal cultures keep art works in honored and sacred places in the home and elsewhere. They attend them by making sacrifices of blood (goat or chicken), libations of wine. They bathe, feed, and clothe them. The works are treated not just as objects, but also as persons. The "witness" is a participant in the enactment of the work in a ritual, and not a member of the privileged classes. […]
> For the ancient Aztec, *tlilli*, *tlapalli*, *la tinta negra y roja de sus codices* (the black and red ink painted on codices) were the colors symbolizing *escritura y sabiduría* (writing and wisdom). They believed that through metaphor and symbol, by means of poetry and truth, communication with the Divine could be attained, and *topan* (that which is above – the gods and spirit world) could be bridged with *mictlán* (that which is below – the underworld and the region of the dead). […]
> An image is a bridge between evoked emotion and conscious knowledge; words are the cables that hold up the bridge. Images are more direct, more immediate than words, and closer to the unconscious. Picture language precedes thinking in words; the metaphorical mind precedes analytical consciousness (ANZALDÚA, 2012, pgs. 89-91).

Anzaldúa's words are heart-piercing, especially the last paragraph. Like she says, I keep returning to her "stories", amazed by the ritual act of reading them, allowing my unconscious self to roam free through the space she opens up with her images. Interestingly, although they have different epistemological backgrounds, both Anzaldúa and Mondzain comment on the interrelation between images and words. According to Mondzain, "images exist only through the gestures and words that describe and construct them, which may also dishonor and destroy them" (MONDZAIN, 2009, p.22) and "the name given by the voice to what is seen also designates what is seen by the eyes and what is invisibly offered to the gaze" (MONDZAIN, 2009, p. 28).

It is not only about communicating what we see in an image. Words also affect images, that is, our relation with them, since through words we articulate knowledge, understanding and memory. Hence, images – in a broad sense: night and daydreams, visions

we have in meditative trance or through substance-induced shamanic rituals, the arts and photography; in a stricter sense: Che's images – affect us through the movement between what is visible and what is invisible – not seen yet – in them and we need words to make meaning out of them. In turn, we can also affect images creatively or destructively – in a broad sense: we can become obsessed or indifferent to our nightdreams, or we can search for therapeutic ways of interpreting them, we can indulge in idle fantasizing or we can take steps to bring about what we daydreamed about, we can become afraid of or hostile to the visions we have through meditation or shamanic rituals, or we can embrace them as guidance in search of better ways of living with what surrounds us, we can be inspired by what we see in our minds or in an art work and write a poem, draw a picture or make a movie, for instance, or be moved by what other people have not seen in an art work and write an essay; in a stricter sense: we can set Che's images into action by artistically recreating them, playing with the visible-invisible in a new and creative way, and we can also perform disruptive actions while invoking Che, thus linking our present struggles with those who fought before us.

As I say before in this chapter, vision and action are interrelated, and so are other conceptual pairs such as visible and invisible, presence and absence, images and words, actions and words. Regarding the interrelation between actions and words, Arendts points out that

> Without the accompaniment of speech, at any rate, action would not only lose its revelatory character, but, and by the same token, it would lose its subject, as it were; not acting men [humans] but performing robots would achieve what, humanly speaking, would remain incomprehensible. Speechless action would no longer be action because there would no longer be an actor, and the actor, the doer of deeds, is possible only if he [or she, or they] is at the same time the speaker of words. The action he [or she, or they] begins is humanly disclosed by the word, and though his [or her, or their] deed can be perceived in its brute physical appearance without verbal accompaniment, it becomes relevant only through the spoken word in which he [or she, or they] identifies himself as the actor, announcing what he [she or they] does, has done, and intends to do (ARENDT, 1998, p.178-9).

If, thus, through disruptive action we recreate the struggles of past-present-future and the fragments of messianic time, through language – understood here as the broader *linguagem*, not the narrower *lingua* – we create visions that can situate present struggles as anticipatory and, in turn, inspire new disruptive actions. When I talk about vision, words, images and language, I am talking about a special kind of symbolic, an oppositional symbolic, not the one that programs us to obey, but one that taunts us to be free. Hence, the symbolic I discuss here is a bit different from Lacan's.

> For it is through language that we are socially programmed, that we learn the rules and prohibitions of our society, and those rules and prohibitions were and

> still are authored by the Father, that is, by men in authority past and present. [...] Our desires, beliefs, biases, and so forth are constructed for us as a result of our immersion in the Symbolic Order [...]
> If we were raised in a different culture – that is, in a different Symbolic Order – we would have different desires. In other words, the Symbolic Order consists of society's ideologies: its beliefs, values, and biases; its system of government, laws, educational practices, religious tenets, and the like. And it is our responses to our society's ideologies that make us who we are (TYSON, 2006, p.31).

Nonetheless, I agree with Lacan rearding the role of language in social programming and how different cultures have different Symbolic Orders, what I prefer to call different collective imaginaries, or cosmovisions, in the case of ancestral or indigenous communities. But in a globalized world there is more contact between cultures than in Lacan's time and, as a result, his division between Symbolic Orders according to cultures breaks down because of immigration, diaspora and counter-diaspora, as well as interculturality. Furthermore, his division between the Imaginary Order, a stage that starts before the Symbolic Order but that coexists with it, and the Symbolic Order is problematic. Since he identifies the Imaginary order with what challenges or escapes the norms of the Symbolic order, which is dominant, there seems to be no ways of actualizing the disruptive human potential:

> the Imaginary Order makes itself felt through any experience or viewpoint that does not conform adequately to the societal norms and expectations that constitute the Symbolic Order. Yet in this capacity, the Imaginary Order is also a fertile source of creativity without which we probably wouldn't recognize ourselves as fully human. One might even argue that the profound value of the Imaginary Order lies in the very fact of its not controlling our lives the way the Symbolic Order does. Ironically, it is this "lack" of control that probably offers us the only resistance we have to the ideological systems that constitute the Symbolic Order (TYSON, 2006, p.32).

Hence, the symbolic I talk about, what I call vision, is a bit different from Lacan's Symbolic Order. The visions are born from oppressions, from our unrealized human potential and from our sense of loss of something ancestral – which Benjamin identifies with the matriarchal societies[145] – but they are not limited to our unconscious, rather, they transverse the border consciousness-unconsciousness, since the words are the cables that hold the bridge of our images, to paraphrase Anzaldúa. Therefore, visions are bridges between our emotions and knowledge, between the non-verbal and the verbal, between the unrealized human potential we feel and the disruptive actions that can stop the politics of death and bring about

[145] "What is the secular equivalent of this lost paradise, from which progress is distancing us more and more? Several clues suggest to us that, for Benjamin, it is primitive classless society. In the article on Bachofen (1935) mentioned in the Introduction, he writes, with regard to ancient matriarchal communities, of a profoundly democratic and egalitarian 'communistic society at the dawn of history'. And in the essay, 'Paris, The Capital of the Nineteenth Century', he comes back to this idea: the experiences of the classless society of prehistory laid down in the collective unconscious 'engender, through interpénétration with what is new, . . . utopia'" (LÖWY, 2005, p.63).

a politics of life. Furthermore, visions give shape to our needs and longings, they shape our perception of the world(s) we live in, and they inspire disruptive action.

Imaginations of Che, or artistic actions, contribute to create such anticipatory visions. There are indeed many different images of Che, some are politicizing, others are phantasmagorical – see Chapter One – while others are alienating – see Chapter Three. I am not trying to reduce all the chaotic variability of Che's images, but in this chapter I am interested in those that inspire hopeful vision and/or remembrance-redemption action.

Furthermore, instead of calling "derivative" art that responded to already existing images of Che – which would imply a chronology and the idea of progress – I call it recreation. After all, following the already mentioned Arent, all action is creative, which includes artistic ones. Hence, imaginations of Che, as visions, not only shape our understanding of the world(s) we live in, but also of how we understand Che.

The imaginations of Che I analyze in this Chapter create some space for the spectators to have critical voices and, more than that, they seem keen – some of them more than others – in jolting the spectators into action. Extending a bit Anzaldúa's already cited distinction between indigenous and western arts, although I am aware I am not discussing indigenous art here, to put Che's images into museums is also a way of killing them, since they also need to be invoked in ritual – not the indigenous rituals, but a ritual nonetheless of making those absent present, of embodying them in those who fight today and of making their invisible energies visible into our own bodies that move, that protest, that create and fight.

In other words, while attaining their creative freedom, the imaginations of Che connect the emancipatory struggles of today with those of the past. The non-linear temporality is another characteristic of Che imaginations since, through them, it is as if Che teletransported to diverse contexts and situations, as if Che imaginations allowed us to transverse time and space to affect and be affected by the interrelated meanings between image, spectator and context. This constellational time inspires Jetztzeit, the time of memory formed by fragments of messianic time.

3.3.3 Contemporary artistic imaginations of Che

There are many artistic imaginations of Che I would like to discuss, but, unfortunately, I do not have the time and space to discuss all of them. I discuss, however, a

few artistic and disruptive contemporary actions that recreate Che and attest his political significance in the Twenty-First Century. For instance, the Polish artist Zbigniew Libera (Picture 68) recreates the famous Alborta's photograph of Che (Picture 11), bringing Che back to life. Instead of the corpse lying flat, his imagination, entitled "Che. Next Shot" (LIBERA, 2003 apud ZONE ZERO, 2016), makes Che alive smoking a cigar while the surrounding figures unsurprisingly look in different directions. It is as if this was a routinely photo shoot and the figures were caught during a break between one shot and the other. The word "shot", from the work's title, also plays with the ambiguity of gunshot and camera shot. "Che. Next Shot" (LIBERA, 2003) is part of a collection called Positives (2002-2003):

Picture 68 – Zbigniew Libera's "Che. Next Shot".

Source: (LIBERA, 2003 apud ZONE ZERO, 2016).

> In *Positives* (2002-2003) famous historical press photos are re-staged, repeating the original in terms of composition, but changing the characters and the general meaning of the captured events, making a positive version of them. Libera comments: "The series is another attempt at playing with trauma. We are always dealing with memorized objects, not the objects themselves. I wanted to employ this mechanism of seeing and remembering and touch upon the phenomenon of memory's afterimages. This is how we actually perceive those photographs [the series 'Positives'] – the harmless scenes trigger flashbacks of the brutal originals. I have picked the 'negatives' from my own memory, from among the images I remembered from the childhood*"* (ZONE ZERO, 2016).

Libera's imagination sets Che alive and, by resembling Alborta's photo so much, it actually confounds the spectator for a moment, until he or she, or they, understands this is actually a recreation, not a photo taken prior to Che being shot by Seargent Terán or by the photographer Alborta – after all, it is called "next shot", not "prior shot", but the resemblance nonetheless challenges understanding. Furthermore, by metalinguistically recreating Alborta's photo, Libera's artistic imagination makes us think about the composition of journalistic

photos and of the Bolivian army and the CIA's composition of the whole body exhibit in Vallegrande – as I discuss in Chapter One.

Picture 69 – Palestine Che.

Source: Cambre (2015, p.31).

There are also several artistic imaginations that invoke Che for different struggles. For instance, in the Introduction, I discuss Cambre's (2015) example of how the grassroots group *Alexis Vive* recreates Che in their praxis in a poor barrio in Caracas (Pictures 17 and 18). Another interesting example pointed out by Cambre (2015) is how Brazilian artist Latuff recreates Korda's *Guerrillero Heroico* (Picture 24), interrelating Che with the struggle for Palestine liberation (Picture 69). According to Cambre, "the kaffiyeh, an Arab-Palestinian scarf and Che are brought together as two global symbols of resistance against oppression and coloniality, bringing into alliance the struggles in Latin America with those in the Middle East" (CAMBRE, 2015, p.30).

Che has also been invoked by artists in support of feminist struggles. For instance, during a 2012 SYRIZA rally, among posters of several leftwing Greek organizations, there was a poster of a She Guevara with the motto "revolution is female" written underneath (Picture 70). At the time, Alexis Tsipras was not only the head of SYRIZA, but he had also become the leader of the opposition in the Greek parliament. He was running for Prime-Minister and threatening "to tear up the current bailout agreement (known as the Memorandum of Understanding) and hire boatloads more public sector wages at generous salaries", what made him "the most feared man right now in all of Europe" (WEISENTHAL,

2012). Unfortunately, after Tsipras became Prime-Minister in 2015, he adopted a much more moderate tone and SYRIZA also became more center-oriented. Nonetheless, the mass rally in 2012 mobilized ten thousand people, many of which were probably activists from different grass-roots movements, the perfect context for this artistic imagination of unknown authorship to spring.

Picture 70 – She Guevara in massive rally on June 14, 2012.

Source: Weisenthal (2012).

Another example of inkoving Che for a feminist cause is the 2017 poster of the Party of the Animals celebrating the centenary of women's right to vote in Netherlands. The artist Joost Verkamp recreates Korda's *Guerrillero Heroico* (Picture 24), replacing Che's figure with the party leader and congresswoman, Marianne Thieme (Picture 71). At the time, Marianne was the only woman leader of all the seventeen Dutch parties. Critically remarking such reality, she said that "the fact that the revolution for women's suffrage was formed by women 100 years ago but does not have the effect of using the right to stand for election does not only mean that the revolution is not only not complete, but is on its way out" (THIEME apud BOGOSAVAC, 2017).

Picture 71 – Poster of the Party of Animals for the Centenary of Women Voting.

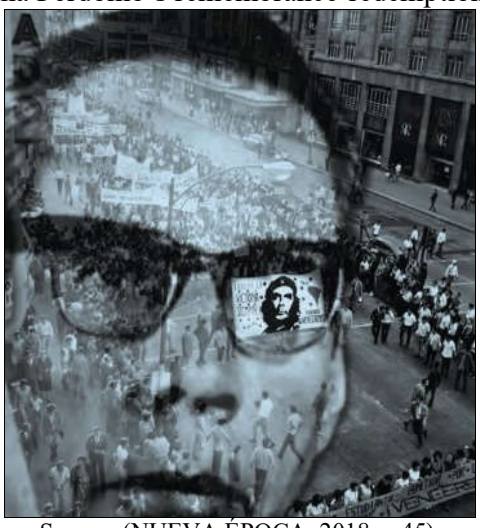
Source: (BOGOSOVAC, 2017).

Another interesting example of invoking Che for present struggles is a 2015 mural in Belfast juxtaposing Che, Thomas Sankara and James Connolly (Picture 72). The mural, whose authorship is unknown, has a citation of Sankara that also explains the juxtaposition of the three revolutionaries: "while revolutionaries as individuals can be murdered, you cannot kill ideas" (MOLONEY, 2015). All three were killed pursuing anticolonialist and/or socialist struggles: Che was shot by the Bolivian Army in 1967, Connolly was executed in 1916 by the British army for his leadership role during the Easter Rising, and Sankara was shot in 1987 during a coup d'état organized by his former colleague Balise Compaoré in Burkina Faso. Furthermore, besides sharing similar deaths, the three revolutionaries' bodies suffered similar fates: Che's body had the arms amputated and was buried in a mass unmarked grave, Connolly's body was also buried in a mass grave, Sankara's body was dismembered and also buried in an unmarked grave. Hence, the mural interrelates past and present struggles in Northern Ireland since this territory was transformed by the British from a hotbed of Gaelic-Catholic rebellions to a protestant repopulated area, following the defeat in a number of battles in the Seventeen century – the nationalist and religious tension continues to this day.

Picture 72 – Mural of Che, Sankara and Connolly in Belfast.

Source: (MOLONEY, 2015).

Picture 73 – Karina Perdomo's remembrance-redemption artistic creation.



Source: (NUEVA ÉPOCA, 2018, p.45).

Another instance of remembrance-redemption artistic action is Uruguayan artist Karina Perdomo 2018 digital art work (Picture 73) that juxtposes archival image of a 1968 student protest in Mexico with the face of Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, Mexico's president that ordered the repression of the students movement on October 2, 1968, causing four hundred deaths in what has been called the Massacre of Tlatelolco. Near the center of Perdomo's art work, a banner bearing Che's face – possibly part of the students' march photograph – is highlighted and it is carefully placed inside the eye of Ordaz. The banner reads: "*hasta la victoria siempre*" and "*unidos venceremos*". Perdomo's work was awarded the first place in a photography contest promoted by the Union of Universities of Latin America and the Caribbean to pay homage for the centenary of the 1918 University Reform in Argentina and

the fiftieth anniversary of the 1968 students' movement in Mexico (NUEVA ÉPOCA, 2018, p.45).

Another interesting example of imagination, although videogames are normally not considered art[146], is the 2013 Cuban-developed first-person shooter videogame *Gesta Final* (Picture 74) – something like Final Feats. Developed by the Videogame Study and Audiovisual Material Work Group of the Computing and Electronic Youth Club, the game "recreates different moments, organized in five levels, of the main historical events of the armed struggle between 1956 and 1959" (DIEGUEZ, 2014). The player can chose between three characters: Fidel Castro, Camilo Cienfuegos and Che Guevara. The game, which has *not* been comercially distributed, is an interesting example of remembrance-redemption action since it allows the Cuban youth to reenact some of the historical battles during the Cuban Revolution.

Picture 74– The Cuban videogame *Gesta Final*.

Source: (VIDEOJUEGO GESTA FINAL, 2015).

3.4 CONTEMPORARY DISRUPTIVE ACTIONS

Besides the artistic actions I discuss in this chapter, there are also a few disruptive actions I would like to briefly point out in this chapter, before analyzing *El Che de los Gays* (EL CHE DE LOS GAYS, 2004) and *Personal Che* (PERSONAL CHE, 2007). Since it would take too long to comment in detail all photos a simple search online for "Che protest"

[146] Although the videogame may not be considered art by some critics, it literally sets Che's image into action and allows the player to incarnate Che as a character. Hence, I understand it is worth mentioning.

generates, I created a collage with some of the many such photos available online (Picture 75). I only point out some basic information about each photo, as well as the source, as the photos themselves are pretty straightforward evidence of how Che continues to inspire disruptive actions in the Twentieth Century.

The first photo on the top right of the collage – of an activist wearing a black Che T-shirt and holding a sparkler on his hand – was taken by photographer Christophe Simon (2013) in Rio de Janeiro on November 5, 2013, the International Day of Guy Fawkes. The protest was organized by the Anonymous and by the Black Bloc. The second photo on the top row – of an activist with a red Che flag over his shoulders – was taken by photographer Estevão Pires (2016) in Porto Alegre on March 31, 2016, during a protest in support of then President Dilma Roussef and against her impeachment. The third photo on the top left of the collage – of a Thai Red Shirt activist wearing a Che T-shirt and holding a Che flag – was taken by photographer David Longstreath (2017) in Bangkok on March 16, 2010, during a protest called by the National United Front of Democracy Against Dictatorship – also known as the Red Shirts. The protesters donated each a small quantity of blood that was later thrown in protest at the gate of the Prime Minister's compound. This was a series of protests against the 2006 coup in Thailand and in favor of elections. Although the protests started peaceful in March, they became violent in April and May as the Thai military tried to repress the protests by force and were met with organized resistance.

Picture 75 – Collage I made of several disruptive actions with Che's images.

Sources: From top right to bottom left (SIMON, 2013); (PIRES, 2016); (LONGSTREATH, 2017); (GONZÁLEZ, 2019); (ROSSIGNOL, 2010); (CHILE PRESIDENT, 2019); (MAYA NETO, n.d.)[147]; (ibid); (KARITA, 2013).

The first photograph on the right in the second row – in which we see a white *Jóvenes de Pie* banner with Che' face next to another banner denouncing unemployment and hunger – was taken by an unknown photographer (GONZÁLEZ, 2019) on March 28, 2019, at a protest against then president Macri's lack of social policies as the unemployment rates soared. It was organized by several different movements. The second photograph in the same row – of an activist wrapped in a Che red flag and holding a flare – was taken by the photographer Pascal Rossignol (2010) in the French city of Lille on October 16, 2010. At the time, private and public workers, retired workers and students joined in protest throughout France against Sarkozy's pension "reform". The photo on the left in the second row – of a crowd protesting and of a man waving a Cuban flag with Che's face on it – was taken by an unknown photographer (CHILE PRESIDENT, 2019) at the Chilean city of Valparaiso on October 27, 2019. The protests began in Santiago against the rise in the metro fare but spread to other cities after the president declared state of emergency and started repressing the movement. Soon, people taking to the streets were also protesting inequality, privatisation and the general cost of living in Chile.

[147] Author's private collection. Unpublished.

The first and second photos on the right in the bottom row – of a man wearing a red Che T-shirt and of a student wearing a White Che T-shirt – were taken by me in Florianópolis on June 14 and May 15, 2019, respectively. The former was a national protest day called by labor and student unions against the pension "reform", while the latter was a massive student protest against the Education budget cuts of the Weintraub ministry. Finally, the photo on the far left in the thrid row – of a flag bearing Che, a Bolivian miner, and a pesant with chained hands – was taken by photographer Juan Karita (2013) in La Paz on May 15, 2013, during a strike organized by the Bolivian Workers' Central Union in favor of a raise of thirty percent in the pensions. As the negotiations failed and the Evo Morales government repressed the protesters, this was perhaps an early sign of an eroding political support.

Nonetheless, despite of the 2019 coup d'état, Bolivia presents a remarkable case of how the resurgence of Che helped ignite the indigenous peasants and workers' flame, which led to a number of important strikes and to the election of the first indigenous president – all of that in the same country where Che and comrades were killed and buried in unmarked graves:

> Antonio Peredo – a MAS senator, autor, former Morales running mate, and elder brother of Inti, Coco and Chato – traces the symbol's liberation to 1997, the thirtieth anniversary, a year in which a Cuban [actually, it was Cuban-Bolivian-Argentinian] forensic team announced the discovery of Che's previously hidden body. […] At a meeting he held to plan the anniversary events, devotees started sharing their stories of persecution while the women took him to their houses to see their portraits of Che and to show how they venerated him. When the bones […] were disinterred and sent to Cuba, the women made a vow, he said: "This year, El Che has come out from his clandestine existence. He will now determine the destiny of his enemies." This, Peredo explained to me, is why Hugo Banzer Suárez, who'd ruled Bolivia as a dictator for most of the 1970s and had returned to power in August 1997 as an elected president, could not stage that year's October 8 commemoration of the military's victory in Vallegrande. The people of the town would no longer accept it.
> From there, the narrative extends into the rest of Bolivia and the rise of Morales, as the indigenous masses stand up against the "neoliberal" privatization policies of previous governments. Many old Bolivian revolutionaries now link this emancipation of El Che to the protests that rocked Cochabamba in 2000, for example, when the Bechtel Corporation was forced to abandon the city water utility it took over in 1997. Or they associate it with the "gas war" of 2003, when por youths took control of the sprawling streets of El Alto and forced the resignation of President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada. After centuries of control by foreign interests, these events are seen on the left as a moment […] in which members of the Bolivia's downtrodden Amerindian majority finally took control of their country's abundant natural resources and, by extensión, their destiny. It is as if Che's spirit now arisen from its hidden grave, was finally able to spark Bolivian revolutionary consciousness, a force frustratingly dormant during his campaign forty years earlier (CASEY, 2009, pgs.198-9).

Despite Casey's sarcasm at the end, by reproducing Antonio Peredo's narrative, he unwittingly contributed to pointing out the interrelation between Che visions and disruptive actions in Bolivia, a country where Che can be both revered as a lay saint by the peasants of

La Higuera and Vallegrande, and be source of inspiration for protests and revolutionary actions. Furthermore, veiled in Peredo's words is a wish for validation of the struggle of those who were defeated in Bolivia – including his brothers – in the MAS project at the time of the interview.

3.5 EL CHE DE LOS GAYS (2004)

Another interesting example of provoticavely bringing vision and disruptive action together is Victor Hugo Robles' performatic protest called *El Che de los Gays* – the Che of the Gays. According to Cambre, Chilean "journalist and activist Victor Hugo Robles, known as the 'Che of the Gays' literally enters the frame of the image of Che we have come to recognize and inhabits the space of the face" (CAMBRE, 2015, p.171). Robles is the subject of a 2004 documentary called *El Che de los Gays*, directed by Arturo Lautaro Alvarez Roa, produced by Pamela Sierra Soto, and co-produced by the Cinema School of the Arcis University. The thirty-five-minute-long documentary accompanies Robles as he walks around his barrio, *El Cortijo*, intertwining his interview with archival footage, and the interview of his grandmother and of other activists. It was awarded the Best Documentary in the Gay and Lesbian Film Festival Zinegoak, in Bilbao, Spain, in 2005. The documentary was also exhibited in several other film festivals, such as the International Film Festival at Valdivia, Chile, in 2005, and the Twenty-seventh International Festival of the New Latinamerican Cinema at La Habana, in 2005. It is available online to be watched for free[148].

"At first, I was a homosexual that smoked marijuana, had a short hair and tried to hide my sexuality. After, I came out, I became an activist, and I created this character, *El Che Guevara de los Gays*, that led to my gay activist journalist work", Robles summarizes his journey, at the end of the documentary, and he wittingly concludes that "I do not know about my future. Maybe, I become a princess" (Picture 76) (EL CHE DE LOS GAYS, 2004). His characteristic cheekiness and satire, which are heightened in his provocative interventions, may at first glance veil the personal sacrifices that Robles have undergone because of identifying as gay and because of his activism, but the film is able to bring such conflicts forth.

[148] The film can be watched for free at http://cinechile.cl/pelicula/el-che-de-los-gays/.

Picture 76– Robles at the end of the film.

Source: (EL CHE DE LOS GAYS, 2004).

Growing up, Hugo endured heteronormative pressure from neighborsand from his family. Luzmira Monsalvez, Hugo's grandmother (Picture 77), was the only family member to support him. Indeed, Hugo points out that "my older brother, mother and father are conservative, unlike me: gay, communist, anarchist, revolutionary" (EL CHE DE LOS GAYS, 2004). But even his grandmother is torn between her love and her disapproval, especially of how much Hugo's activism exposes his life: "I do not like that he goes to protests and do such things of the gays. I always told him to be reserved about his things and he is always very open. It embarrasses me that everyone wants to know about his life" (EL CHE DE LOS GAYS, 2004).

Picture 77 – Victor Hugo Robles' grandmother, Luzmira.

Source: (EL CHE DE LOS GAYS, 2004).

On one hand, it is clear that Luzmira admires her grandson: "he is intelligent, brave, he studied journalism and pursued his career and I was the only one to help him. The rest of the family did not give one peso. He worked at night and we payed the tuition fees" (EL CHE

DE LOS GAYS, 2004). But, on the other hand, she wishes he was not gay: “I would have liked him to be masculine as his other brothers, quite masculine, quite mainly” (EL CHE DE LOS GAYS, 2004). Talking about his grandmother, Robles remarks that “I would like to arrive at any time I want, to disappear, but I can’t because I have a commitment with her, to be with her, otherwise she would be alone. And she has sacrificed so much so that I could do the things I want to do” (EL CHE DE LOS GAYS, 2004).

Picture 78 – Journalist Santiago Pavlovic.

Source: (EL CHE DE LOS GAYS, 2004).

Another conflict the film brings forth is between public acceptance of the LGBTQ cause and private violence. There is a montage of different television programs interviewing Robles. The Chilean journalist Santiago Pavloic (Picture 78) says that “it is possible that the Chilean gays are not only being more vocal in their demands and in the narrative of their existences, but apparently the Chilean society is becoming more tolerant and less conservative” (EL CHE DE LOS GAYS, 2004). In contrast, after the television sequence, the camera returns to Robles talking about how he had been recently stabbed in his own neighborhood. “A guy from the local farmer’s market was so irritated because I was looking intently that he stabbed me in the ass” (EL CHE DE LOS GAYS, 2004). As Hugo has the stiches removed at the local clinic (Picture 79), the nurse says that “if it [the stab] were one centimeter to the side, it would have cut the nerve that controls the movement in your leg” (EL CHE DE LOS GAYS, 2004). About the private-public conflict, Robles remarks in an interview that:

Picture 79– The nurse removing Robles' stiches.

Source: (EL CHE DE LOS GAYS, 2004).

> Forty years after the first protest for sexual diversity, Chile has seen many advances in the symbolic, political, cultural, and social fields. In the 1990s, Article 365 of the Penal Code, which punished sex between adult men with jail time, was repealed and in 2013 the Anti-Discrimination Act was passed after the public outcry when a young gay man (Daniel Zamudio) was killed in a homophobic attack. These two important legal advances were made possible through the arduous struggle of many lesbian, gay, and trans activists.
> In Chile homosexuality has not been criminalized since the 90s, but culturally, symbolically, and socially, direct discrimination and stigma remains, particularly for those, such as transvestites and transsexuals, who live and express their sexuality more openly (CAMBRE, 2015, p.173).

Despite the gap of eleven years between the knife attack and the interview in Cambre's book, we can see that the struggle goes beyond fighting for a legal nod of the capitalist state to the LGBTQ people, important as fighting for legal rights may be, since it also involves changing the way people see and treat one another. Another personal sacrifice the documentary brings forth is how the provocativeness and exposure of Robles' activism leads to loneliness: "to engage in activism, a public struggle, is a condemnation to loneliness. I would like to have a companion or a boyfriend but being a crazy irreverent closes that door. […] the men are not willing to commit publicly with me besides sex" (EL CHE DE LOS GAYS, 2004).

The issues I discuss above help bring nuance and insight into who is Victor Hugo Robles, the person behind the performance *El Che de los Gays*. The person as an individual and his, her or their, activism should not be separated since they are dialectically[149] complimentary to one another. Furthermore, the documentary also describes and situates Robles' activism and performance. We learn that, before creating the character of the Che of Gays, he was first a gay activist in MOVILH, the Gay Liberation Movement of Chile. There

[149] By "dialectically" here I mean "dynamically interrelated".

is a sequence with archival footage of Robles hosting the first program: “Hello. Good afternoon, lesbians, homosexuals, travesties, transexuals, heterosexuals, whereaver you are. For the right of diversity. For the right of being as we are, fighting against prejudice, we are in *RadioTierra*, *El Triangulo Abierto*” (EL CHE DE LOS GAYS, 2004). Robles is at the right in Picture 80 and the guest, on the left, is Pedro Lemebel, a member of the famous LGBTQ art group *Yeguas del Apocalipsis*. According to Chile’s National Archive,

Picture 80 – Robles, on the right, and Lemebel, on the left.

Source: (EL CHE DE LOS GAYS, 2004).

> *Triángulo Abierto* was a radical program in the 1990s that discussed avant-garde issues related with sexually diverse groups.
> It was born from an alliance between *Radio Tierra*, *Casa de la Mujer La Morada* and MOVILH in order to create eight radio programs hosted by Soledad Suit and Victor Hugo Robles, aired once a week. It was so successful that it went on for fourteen consecutive years (TRIÁNGULO ABIERTO, 2020).

After many years of activism in MOVILH, Robles had a disagreement with the other members of the organization about supporting or not a candidate during elections. Since the aforementioned article 365 criminalized homosexual relations in Chile – created in 1874, it was abolished only in 1999 –, many politicians were in the 1990s unwilling to come out and to publicly endorse the LGBTQ emancipatory struggle. According to Rodrigo Pascal, the coordinator of the NGO *Vivo Positivo*, “I met Robles in the 1990s MOVIHL and I accompanied his controversial process in the movement of rupturing the structures of what was to be considered related to the gay movement” in a way that “he was always pushing the movement beyond by questioning his role within the movement, the role of others and the role of the movement itself” (EL CHE DE LOS GAYS, 2004).

The ensuing fall out with MOVILH led Robles into experimenting with semi-impromptu interventions in cultural and political events in 1997 as a way of keeping his

activism up and of drawing attention to the LGBTQ and other emancipatory causes. It is then that the performance *El Che de los Gays* begins as Robles "replies" to the phantasmagorical gaze of Che Guevara in his university campus:

> I did not search for Che. Instead, Che appeared to me as a seditious ghost, he searched for me. My crazy story with *el Comandante* began when I studied journalism in the ARCIS University in Chile in the 1990s. In that time of various political uprisings, the university was filled with graffiti and drawings of Che on the walls. I did not know the reason why but it caught my attention and I decided to take a provocative action of painting the lips red in the biggest and most imposive drawing of Che in the central courtyard of the university. I thought that it would generate some kind of controversy or debate among the students but no one protested against nor said anything. In order to radicalize the idea, on September 4, 1997, I put a starred beret on and I went to a party against the censorhip that was being organized by a group of counterulture artists of Santiago. I ended up causing an incident in the event "against censorship" by throwing water on the actress Patricia Rivadeneira [Picture 81], the local counterculture muse. The point of my action, to provoke the provocateur, was not understood by the organizers and I was expelled from the event. I was censored in the "party against censorship". That is how "*El Che de los Gays*" was born, polemic, controversial, tense and intense. Eventually I learned why the university was filled with Che graffiti. The guerrilla's body had been found in Valle Grande, Bolivia, after thrity years of intense searching. His appearance took place on June 28, 1997, the International Gay/Lesbian/Trans Pride Day. That was the reason for the graffiti in the university, his body was being transported to Santa Clara, in Cuba, to rest in an official mausoleum. "*El Che d elos Gays*" is a political metaphor that sprung to life with poetic and symbolic energy, it is the crazy footprint of an alive Che, of a guerrilla fighter that instead of resting wants to continue fighting way beyond his own death (ROBLES apud ESPINOZA, 2017).

Picture 81 – *El Che de los Gays* throws water at Rivadenera's character.

Source: (EL CHE DE LOS GAYS, 2004).

As we can see, Robles responds to Che's phantasmagorical gaze with artistic-disruptive actions, and by doing so, he sets Che image into action – imagination – and he recreates Che. Through his remembrance-redemption performative actions, Robles not only makes Che live again, but his LQBTQ activism also gains energy from past redemptive

struggles that Che took part of. Moreover, since Robles identifies as gay, communist and anarchist, as we have seen, and since his performance queers Che, who was an international socialist and whose image also became associated with many disruptive actions, the Che of the Gays creates bridges between emancipatory movements:

> Class identity is missing in the sexual diversity movement, a political identity, of class, and of gender. Not only do we make the demand for a legal transformation but also for systemic changes, and to feel that the LGBT movement, which is a broad, diverse movement, is also a collective that should integrate more with popular social movements. We must be able to make ourselves visible, show solidarity, and intermix with broader social movement demands, which are also our struggles.
> The public interventions of The Che of the Gays seek to cross homosexuality with politics, sexual politics and civic militancy, problematizing the urgencies and challenges of postmodern societies. The Che of today would be homosexual, lesbian,
> transvestite, or HIV-positive because the struggles for sexual freedom and gender identity embody the liberatory utopias of today. The Che of the Gays faces the historically rooted violence of class, gender, and sexual identity putting his body on the stage to be martyred by intolerance, discrimination, stigma, and metaphors of HIV/AIDS (ROBLES apud CAMBRE, 2015, p.180).

Since the Che of the Gays transgresses borders between emancipatory movements, he can both create bridges between them and exercise a healthy criticism. For instance, in 2017, Robles took his performative action to the World Pride Madrid 2017. We can see on Picture 82 that, for the Che of the Gays, the World Pride Madrid should go left, not right. He later commented on the event, trying to push the movement beyond its constraints:

> The remembrance of the Stonewall revolt in Madrid, fourty-seven years later, was celebrated in a landscape where important political rights prevailed and the sexually diverse collectives were visible. [The event] was a validation of legitimate rights but that seem to be emprisoned by a touristic and idle pride, a pride promoted by the lucrative gayfriendly Chamber of Commerce of Madrid. Because of such limitations, the gay pride Madrid 2017 was collorfully made up and was sold as inclusive when, actually, money was its primary form of inclusion, that is, exclusion (ROBLES apud ESPINOZA, 2017).

Picture 82– *El Che de Los Gays* in the World Pride Madrid 2017.

Source: (ESPINOZA, 2017).

Besides a journalist, a LGBTQ activist, a communist, and an anarchist, Robles is also HIV positive and he frequently writes about the different struggles HIV positive people face. In fact, he worked for many years as a journalist for the magazine *Vivopositivo* (Picture 83) and he currently hosts the radio program *Siempreviva En Vivo* (Picture 84), at the University of Chile Radio. Interestingly, Robles brings his journalism together with his activism as complimentary ways of acting. He also covers disruptive actions, such as the protests (Picture 85) against Piñera, through his blog[150] and his Instagram page.

In Picture 85, we see the Che of the Gays taking part in the disruptive action against the president of Chile, Piñera. But much more than that, we can see through the image the constelations it forms with Che and his vision of revolutionary armed struggle, with Allende and the vision of socialism through peaceful ways, and with Jara – notice the button pinned to the portrait frame – and the anticipatory visions he sang. When posting Alfonso González' photo of the Che of the Gays, Robles quoted the visionary ending of Allende's last broadcast, hours before we was killed at La Moneda Palace, on September 11, 1973: "[Workers of Chile] carry on knowing that, sooner than later, the great alamedas will open where free men [people] will pass to create a better society" (ALLENDE apud ROBLES, 2020). In other words, Robles was actualizing Allende, that is, he was excavating Chile's history to make his the struggles of the fallen.

Picture 83 – Robles working at *Vivopositivo* magazine's newsroom.

Source: Robles' Instagram account (ROBLES, 2020).

[150] elchedelosgay.blogspot.com

Picture 84– Poster for the *Siempreviva En Vivo* Radio Program.

Source: Roble's Instagram account (RAMÍREZ apud ROBLES, 2020).

Picture 85 – *El Che de Los Gays* at the protests against Piñera in October 2019.

Source: Robles' Instagram account (GONZÁLEZ apud ROBLES, 2020).

Although the starred beret and lipstick are usually present in the Che of the Gays disruptive performances, Robles frequently changes the costumes and props according to the context. For instance, in the already mentioned action of provoking the provocateur (Picture 81), the Che of the Gays was carrying both a drum and a water canister with "AZT" written on them (CAMBRE, 2015, p.177), which is the name of a drug used in HIV treatment. In Picture 82, a sign with the words "desvio" – detour – was used as a leftwing critique of the World Pride Madrid 2017. Furthermore, as Valle points out,

> Robles crafts unique walking "body installations" that quite literally frame his subjectivity with a word or a phrase invoking either queerness or connections with Allende and the Cuban revolution: "maricueca" [effeminate man], "Te molesta mi

> amor" [My love bothers you], "¡Juicio a Pinochet!" [Bring Pinochet to trial!], "Hola Cuba" [Hi Cuba], "el pueblo unido" [the united people], and "Allende vive" [Allende lives]. The frame will sometimes be covered in pig's feet to signify one of the terms used in Chile to indicate homosexuality: somebody who likes patitas de chancho [little pig's legs]. Robles often will also display some symbol of Chilean nationalism, whether it is the Chilean flag (cut, stained with blood, or plain) or the official shirt of the national soccer selection. These symbols, associated with heteronormative performances of masculinity and femininity, are then recycled into a new utopian image of queerness (VALLE, 2017, p.224).

These props are little clues Robles includes in his performances to dialogue with demands from emancipatory movements and/or to create a witful commentary on a given issue. However, meaning making depends on the interaction between what or who is seen, the beholder and the context. Hence, even Robles acknowledges that some people sometimes do not get the significance of such details. It is also common for people to have mixed reactions. For instance, after the Che of the Gays threw water at Patricia Rivadeneira, while the event organizer ordered security to remove him, "the audience thought it was all part of the spectacular alternative show put on by the cultural producer" (ROBLES apud CAMBRE, 2015, p.178). Another example is when he handed a presidential sash with the Chilean colors to Gladys Marín (Picture 86), who in 1997 was the Chilean Communist Party's candidate for the presidential elections. Marín liked the gesture so much that she began a friendship with Robles – she is even briefly interviewed in the documentary. But "some of the old party members were incensed because the sash was a rather bourgeois or too institutional a symbol" (MOULIAN apud EL CHE DE LOS GAYS, 2004).

Picture 86 – Marín and *El Che de los Gays*.

Source: (EL CHE DE LOS GAYS, 2004).

Furthermore, the simbology in the Che of the Gays performances, what the aforecited Valle calls "body installations", is something clearly artistic. However, Robles

denies the status of art: “some people belive that because […] I care for the aesthetics of my actions, that I am an artist. But, actually, I do not care for being an artist. It does not interest me or move me. Instead, I am an activist” (EL CHE DE LOS GAYS, 2004).

Finally, although the documentary *El Che de los Gays* (2004) does not discuss the issue of homo and transphobia in Cuba, that is an issue I at least have to point out since Robles’ performance queers Che, and in doing so, critically comments on the allegded homophobia of Che and the documented homophobia of the Cuban State:

> we, the sexual diversities of today, are protagonists of a homosexual, lesbian, *travesti*, HIVpositive, mapuche and feminist Che. A Che that contradicts the history of homophobia and intolerance of Guevara himself in the 1960s in the *Unidades Militares de Apoyo a la Producción de Cuba*[151]. I talk of a new Che, an other Che.An always alive Che, never dead. [...]
> Ernesto Guevara was a prisoner of the prejudice and intolerances of his time, as well as the very Fidel Castro. Such prejudices and incomprehensions caused death and discrimination to a community that does not forget the persecution against homosexuals in the first years of the Cuban Revolution. My character does not claim that bitter history of the revolutionary process but, instead, tries to problematize, demanding a fair questioning from the perspective of leftwing gays. It is a counterface to that time of discrimination, stigma and persecution. I do not know if the living Che would like my character. There are people in Cuba who do not like *El Che de los Gays*, it bothers them, but many others value and appreciate him-her, as Mariela Castro Espín, director of the National Center of Sexual Education in Cuba. (ESPINOZA, 2017).

This is a very controversial subject. I do not think I can say that Che was homophobic or not without analyzing at least his writings, including his many diaries, in detail in search of textual evidence. What I can say at this moment is that, while there is evidence of Cuba’s public homophobic policy of UMAPs, there is perhaps not enough evidence to say that Che was homophobic or that he was the one responsible for UMAPs. One of the repeated arguments I noticed briefly reading about the topic is the connection between UMAPs and Che. However, such argument is questionable since, by November 1965, when they were created, Che was leaving the ill-fated Congo campaign and taking refuge into the Tanzanian Cuba Embassy, before going to Prague covertly. Guevara only returned to Cuba in July 1966, for a brief stay, to prepare the Bolivian campaign. Furthermore, it seems that “the creation of the UMAP camps themselves were initially proposed by Fidel Castro and implemented by Raúl Castro after a state visit to the Soviet Union and Bulgaria, where he

[151] These were forceful labor camps for the conscientious objectors – Gays, Seventh Day Adventists, Mormons – that interned them from six months to three years. They were active from 1965 to 1968 (MILITARY UNITS TO AID PRODUCTION, 2020).

learned that the Soviets ran camps for 'anti-socials'" (MILITARY UNITS TO AID PRODUCTION, 2020).

3.6 PERSONAL CHE (2007)

The other film I analyze in this chapter is Personal Che. Released in 2007 – the fourtieth anniversary of Che's death –, it was directed and produced by the Brazilian Douglas Duarte and the Colombian Adriana Mariño. The duo travelled to many different places in the world – according to its IMDB page, "the filmmakers traveled around 66,725 miles (107,383 km) to shoot the documentary. That's roughly 2.5 times Earth's circumference" (PERSONAL CHE IMDB, 2020) – and interviewed many people regarding how they subjectively related to Che's images. The eighty-six-minute documentary interweaves sequences of interviews of authors who have written about Che or Che's images – John Lee Anderson, David Kunzle, Paul Berman, Jorge Castañeda, Christopher Hitchens, and Félix Rodríguez[152] – with people from different countries that relate to Che's images in different ways. According to its IMDB page, the film's box office was US$ 31, 733 (PERSONAL CHE IMDB, 2020).

The film's title and its premise, that everyone can have a "personal" Che is both hopeful and worrying. On one hand, the movie brings many examples of how people recreate Che through imagination – image-into-action – in the Twenty-First Century, which is a powerful argument against Che's political meaninglessness. On the other hand, the film dangerously plays with the ambiguity of its title and may be interpreted as suggesting that Che can be anything to anyone – one example, in particular, is very worrying and I discuss it later in this chapter.

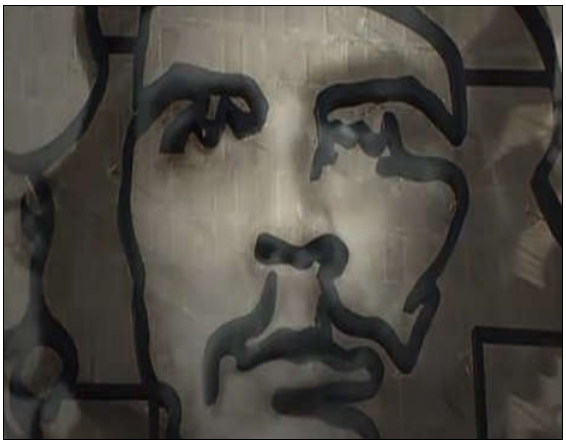
The strongest feature of the film, how people from different countries and backgrounds are affected and affect Che's images, is also its major flaw since the film risks

[152] This is the Cuban turned CIA agent who was involved both in the Bay of the Pigs and in the capture of Che. He also operated during the Vietnam War. His resume speaks for himself. He has been involved in numerous state terrorist attacks around the globe. Therefore, I find his version that he tried to dissuade the Bolivian military from killing Che highly suspicious. He is interviwed briefly in the film and there are discrepancies in his account, such as that "I was invited by the CIA in 1967 to go to Bolivia" (PERSONAL CHE, 2007). He was the CIA. According to Ryan, "he had done CIA jobs since 1961" (RYAN, 1998, p.96). In addition, Ryan does not have a high opinion of Rodríguez' commitment to historical accounts, since "Rodríguez, extrovert, soldier of fortune, and above all Cuban exile and Bay of Pigs Veteran, gives a highly dramatic account of his own involvement with Guevara on October 9, suggesting that he could have saved him but instead honored the Bolivian wish to execute him. Rodríguez, who was using the cover of a Bolivian captain at the time, even affirms that he was considered to be in command of the Bolivian contigent when Guevara was executed; no one else has substantiated this claim" (RYAN, 1998, p.134).

separating them by giving more attention to each case's uniqueness instead of possible connections between them. For instance, the movie's trailer presents the documentary's premise that "the most famous face in the world has many faces: saint [in] Bolivia, revolutionary [in] Hong Kong, idol [in] Cuba, nazist [in] Germany, inspiration [in] Lebanon, hero [in] the USA, villan [in] the USA" (PERSONAL CHE TRAILER, 2007).

The documentary does weave interviews of Che authors with those of regular people who relate to Che, trying at the same time to create transitions and to give some organicity to the film. The transitions, however, are more intertextual since they are based on visual or textual similarity to cut to a different contextual sequence. For instance, the documentary transitions from a Hong Kong disruptive action sequence to a sequence of Cuban *Pioneros* children through the interrelation between deputy Long Hair's Che T-shirt and Anthony Higgins voice-over saying that "[Che] will always be the spokesperson in image of rebellious youth" (PERSONAL CHE, 2007). The word youth, then, is the transition from one context to another. Another example is how the documentary transitions from a sequence at *Plaza de la Revolución* to another sequence of authors pointing out the context in which Korda's photograph was taken by overimposing Enrique Ávila's sculture of Che with Korda's Che, fading out the former and fading in the latter (Picture 87). But there are also many rough cuts between sequences of different countries in the film, which increase the feeling of separetedness between them.

Picture 87– Fade out fade in transition.



Source: (PERSONAL CHE, 2007).

Beyond the textual or visual surface, the documentary does not contextualize historically each political-cultural-national background where people are shot affecting and being affected by Che's images. As a result, the film gives the false impression that each way

of relating to Che's images is completely personal and ahistorical. Also, by lacking a deeper historical perspective, the film misses the opportunity of commenting on power conflicts that permeate how people relate to Che's images in each of the contexts presented. Hence, the film does not comment on, for example, how the reverence towards San Ernesto in Bolivia was politically dangerous until the late 1990s because of the influence of the military in politics, or how the conflict with Israel might be important to understand the significance of the Che play in Lebanon, or how the relation between the Cuban State and Che's images changed through time because of the Soviet Union influence in terms of bureacratization[153]. When the film does stumble upon power conflicts, they are not problematized, discussed at a deeper level of meaning, and, thus, they run the risk of being interpreted solely as local conflicts. Such are the cases of the Long Hair Hong Kong deputy and his conflict with Chinese bureaucrats, as well as the conflict between nazi militants and antifascist activists – I discuss each sequence in more detail later in this chapter.

As a result of the film's lack of contextual historicity, the lack of considering the influence of power relations in how people affect and are affected by Che's images, and the emphasis given to subjectivity, the documentary leans more towards the separateness of each case of how each person relates to Che's images. I, instead, think it would be much more relevant to identify interrelations between different people's affects for Che while, at the same time, historicizing each context and identifying how power relations influence people's affects of Che's images. Hence, I am analyzing Personal Che (2007) against the grain.

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[153] The case of Carlos Tablada, an Economics Professor at La Habana University, and of the obstacles towards his research about Che's thought is very telling of the impact of the Soviet-induced bureaucratization in Cuba: "at the end of 1971, my research center was closed and I was unable to continue my career as a professor. I kept working on my research about Che on my own, in my free time, after working to support my family. Despite Che being a taboo during the years we adopted the soviet model, I did not abandon my studies about him. [...]

To work in production and services allowed me, first, to put Che's economic system to the test, with good results; and, from 1977 on, to apply the soviet model. Hence, as a Cuban director of public companies and researcher, I was able to analyze the effects of both systems in the economy and in the people's worldview.

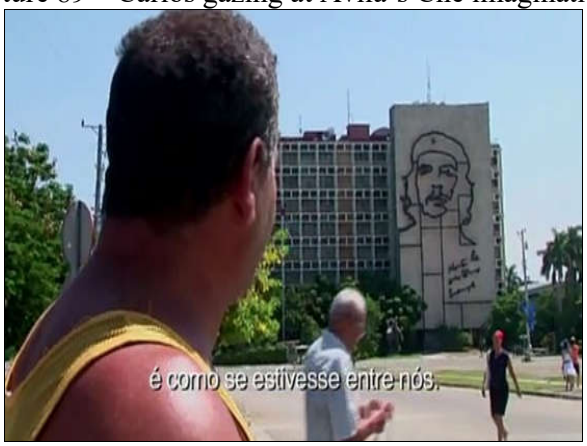
Many friends advised me in good faith, in the late 1970s, to let go of my research about Che because I was wasting my life and my time in a subject that did not have official interest. I did not give up; I kept swiming against the tide […] There is now consensus that my book, *El Pensamiento Económico de Ernesto Che Guevara*, actualizes that other Che and that it opened possibilities in Cuba for researching, without fear, Che's economical, political, social and philosophical thought. Since the publication of my book, hundreds of articles and books have been published and even professorships about Che have been created, and that was my greatest satisfaction" (TABLADA, 2008, pg. 14).

Picture 88– Carlos Valverde and Che.

Source: (PERSONAL CHE, 2007).

In Cuba, Douglas and Adriana interviewed a taxi driver, Carlos Valverde, and his family. Douglas was born in a town in the mountains and he was raised only by his mother. Driving to *Plaza de la Revolución*, Douglas talks about how Che helped him to be hopeful despite poverty: "life has not given me much opportunity of studying. […] And I had many difficult moments, and because of them I remembered him. Each time I had a difficult moment, each time I had a tough moment, I remembered him. And I kept going" (PERSONAL CHE, 2007). Interestingly, the cameraman was able to frame both Carlos and Enrique Ávila's famous sculpture of Che (Picture 88), which we can see through the car's windshield. From the audience's perspective, it is as if Carlos is speaking to Che. When they get closer to the sculpture, Carlos looks at it (Picture 89) and says that "it gives me the impression that he is still alive. One rises and sees him there, it is like he is among us" (PERSONAL CHE, 2007).

Picture 89 – Carlos gazing at Ávila's Che imagination.



Source: (PERSONAL CHE, 2007).

If Che was an inspiration for Carlos Valverde struggling against poverty in his childhood, the Bolivian sequence also brings examples of how Che's images inspire hope for the peasants in La Higuera facing the daily catastrophes that living in poverty brings. For instance, the shopwoman Luz Villaroel (Picture 90), says that "one day we took a bus. We were still one hour away and running out of oil. I said 'Che's soul, help us to get to Vallegrande'. I asked that the blood that he shed entered in the engine so we could go on" (PERSONAL CHE, 2007). She reports that the bus reached Vallegrande, despite the shortage of diesel and having a flat tire. Likewise, Guisella Montaño (Picture 91), a student, talks about how Che helps her to carry on her struggle of getting access to education: "I prayed to his soul so that I could go to another country and study to have a profession, such as a medical doctor, and return here. I think his soul is very miraculous. Thanks to God and Che I was able to go to Cuba" (PERSONAL CHE, 2007). In Picture 91, on the green wall next to the crucifix is a Che photograph.

Picture 90 – Luz Villaroel, shopwoman at Vallegrande.

Source: (PERSONAL CHE, 2007).

Picture 91– Guisella Montaño, a student.

Source: (PERSONAL CHE, 2007).

The farmer Conrado Calzadilla (Picture 92) is more openly politicized in his affect for Che. Being older, he was around at the time of the Ñancahuazú guerrilla and he explains why the peasants did not support it: "[the military] did not speak of Che. They said guerrillas are coming, they are bad, they are communist, they are going to kill you. They fooled us and that is why we did not help the *Comandante*" (PERSONAL CHE, 2007). He takes the filmmakers to his house and he compares Che to Christ in a politicized way: "Christ was a regular person like us and he sacrificed his life to free us from sin. And the *Comandante* [sacrificed his life] for liberating us from an imperialism that oppresses us to this day" (PERSONAL CHE, 2007). As we can see, there is no contradiction here between religion and politics in how these people envision Che. Disguised as a lay saint, which the Catholic Church refuses to officially recognize, Che is potentially politicizing and religious in giving hope for the peasants, the farmers, the students and the shopwomen in surviving the daily oppression of poverty.

Picture 92 – The farmer Conrado Calzadilla.

Source: (PERSONAL CHE, 2007).

Indeed, when you are a working person, when you depend on your labor to survive daily, any small setback can be your ruin: your only cow may fall sick, your small subsistance crop may be threatened by insects or disease, your dream of studying is threatened by lack of opportunity, there is not enough diesel and you may be stranded at night in the middle of nowhere, you are raised only by your mother and have to make your own way in life, or, if you are an urban worker, you might lose your job and be unable to pay your bills, running into debt, being evicted and becoming homeless. Although the Cuban Carlos, and the Bolivians Luz, Guisella, Conrado and Juana do not remember Che primarily for engaging into

a collective emancipatory struggle, they do remember and invoke Che as individuals in need of hope and strength when facing the small daily catastrophes of being poor, when facing the endless oppression of toiling and not being able to change their lives:

> Several of Benjamin's texts suggest a correspondence between modernity – or progress – and infernal damnation. For example, in this passage from the 1938 text 'Central Park', made up of fragments on Baudelaire, which has some obvious affinities with Thesis IX, he writes: "The concept of progress must be grounded in the idea of catastrophe. That things are "status quo" *is* the catastrophe [...] Strindberg's idea: hell is not something that awaits us, but *this life here and now*." In what sense? For Benjamin, in *The Arcades Project*, the quintessence of Hell is the eternal repetition of the same, the most fearful paradigm of which is to be found not in Christian theology, but in Greek mythology: Sisyphus and Tantalus condemned to the eternal return of the same punishment. In this context, Benjamin quotes a passage from Engels, comparing the worker's interminable torture – compelled, as he [or she, or they] is, endlessly to repeat the same mechanical movement – with the infernal punishment of Sisyphus. But this is not just something that afflicts the worker: the whole of modem society, dominated by commodities, is subject to repetition, to the *Immergleich* (always the same), disguised as novelty and fashion: in the realm of commodities, 'Humanity figures [...] as damned (LÖWY, 2005, pgs.63-4).

If we remember that for Bloch, philosophy, art and religion manifest an anticipatory consciousness of humankind's unrealized potential (KELLNER, 1976, pgs. 16, 21), the juxtaposition of Che's images with religious symbols, and even Che's invoking as San Ernesto de La Higuera, become less surprising. The shared concrete utopia – in the Blochian sense – of religion, art and philosophy is perceptible when Douglas Duarte provocatively asks Juana Ocinaga and her son (Picture 93), Moroni, if they know that Che was actually a communist and an atheist. Juana and her son are initially surprised, but Moroni is able to articulate an insightful yet straightforward answer: "although he did not believe in God, as a lay person, he did good things" (PERSONAL CHE, 2007).

Picture 93– Juana and Moroni Ocinaga.

Source: (PERSONAL CHE, 2007).

Being good towards other people, especially those in need, is perhaps a common trait between truly religious people – if not elitist and oppressive – and revolutionaries. After all, although not religious, Che was an artist – he wrote poetry and his journals are filled with poetic imagery – and a philosopher, but not the kind of philosopher that only interprets the world, but one that, like Marx, acted to change it. Moreover, Moroni's insight and Conrado's politicized-religious invoking of Che as San Ernesto contradict Kunzle's assumption that Che's ressurection is only religious, not political (KUNZLE, 1997, p.87).

Overall, the films tries to frame the Bolivian peasants as immersed in their own local superstitious way of relating to Che's images as San Ernesto de La Higuera. The film not only does not point out the hope connection I made between the Cuban and the Bolivian sequences, but it also does not investigate further the significance of how the Bolivian peasants treat Che's images, as if they were Che himself.

I argue that the way the Bolivian peasants of La Higuera and Vallegrande relate to Che's images carries traces of indigenous practices cloaked in the catholic iconology: they reserve a special place in their homes for Che's images (Picture 94), they make offerings of flowers and candles (Picture 27) and they believe that his spirit can alter the material oppression of their lives. Another possible indication of traces of shamanism is the popular belief that Che could shapeshift when in danger, told by Juana Ocinaga: "many people said that he had a magical book. If they [the Bolivian military] had given Che an opportunity to read his book, he would not have been killed because when he read, he became a fly or a bird" (PERSONAL CHE, 2007). As I discuss in Chapter One, there are many deities and spirits in ancestral religions which can change their forms.

Picture 94– Che amid Catholic idols in an anonymous woman's house.

Source: (PERSONAL CHE, 2007).

As we have seen, until 1997, Bolivians of the Vallegrande and La Higera region were afraid of the military's repression. If it was dangerous to disruptevely leave a Che imagination out in the public space, it is logical that people sought the relative safety of secret corners in their homes and the safety of Catholic symbolism[154] to veil their religious-political invoking of Che. Unfortunately, the documentary misses the opportunity to problematize any of these issues which are crucial for understanding at a deeper level how the Bolivian subjects shot affect and are affected by Che's images.

Besides the already discussed remembrance-resistance invoking of Che to face the catastrophes of poverty in Cuba and in Bolivia, the documentary also brings examples of artistic imaginations and disruptive actions, although the film does not politically interrelate them. Similar to the Cuban and Bolivian sequences, the documentary fails to unearth the power relations that transverse Che's images and that are, therefore, crucial for a deeper understanding of their significance.

Picture 95 – René Maya, Kunzle and the Chicano Che mural.

Source: (PERSONAL CHE, 2007).

For instance, the filmmakers accompany Kunzle as he visits a famous Chicano-Chicana mural in an East Los Angeles housing complex called Estrada Courts, known for its beautiful murals created by Chicano and Chicana artists. They meet and interview one of the community members that helped restore the mural (Picture 95). Kunzle even asks the man, René Maya, about the vandalism of the mural, and he replies that he helped repaint the words at the bottom. The filmmakers do ask René why his people restored the mural – he answers

[154] Although in a very different cultural and historical context, but also oppressive, the Iorubá forcefully brought to Brazil and enslaved cloaked their orixás in the relative safety of Catholic saints.

that “because he [Che] was telling us ‘don’t let me go like this, I am a better person. Believe in me. *Hágame otra vez*. And my people did it again” (PERSONAL CHE, 2007). However, the filmmakers miss the opportunity of asking René or Kunzle about the context and motivations of such vandalism act. Had they done so, not only they would have pointed out a deeper understanding of the political significance of this Che imagination for the Chicano-Chicana community, they could also have potentially interrelated the vandals of this Che imagination with the vicious Cuban exile community in the United States, which the filmmakers interview in a different sequence in the film. Kunzle, however, narrates the history of the Cuban-exile lobby and how the mural was twice vandalized in his 1997 book:

> Trouble began to brew with the advent of the Olympic Games, scheduled for Los Angeles in 1984. By September of 1983, Cuban exile Abel Pérez, editor and publisher of the anti-communist *20 de Mayo* Spanish-language newspaper of Santa Monica, raised objections to the Che mural before officials of the Housing Authority. He damned it as a “propaganda tool” for idolizing Che Guevara. The manager of the Estrada Courts [the housing complex] asked Charles Felix [the mural coordinator] to cover the mural within a week, but he refused. He also refused to remove the wording. By October 1983, vandals had thrown black paint at the mural. In February 1984, the Cuban exile publisher attempted again to have the mural destroyed. The Housing Authority was once more contacted. This time they checked with […] the residents of Estrada Courts […], who wanted to keep the mural.
> On 25 February 1984, the author [Kunzle] wrote to the executive director of the Housing Authority deploring the censorship […]: “when Chicano and Latin American artists paint murals that represent their point of view … [sic] and choose symbols meaningful to them, whether they are Zapata, César Chávez, or Che Guevara, that is their right”.
> By 22 March 1984, the censorship battle was won. Both the Housing Authority and the Deputy Mayor advised the author that the mural would remain intact. […] However, in the face of this consensus, the Cuban group struck again. Sometime during the night of 3 May, plastic bags filled with gray and yellow paint were hurled at the mural, defacing seventy-five percent of the figure of Che Guevara. Charles Felix once again restored the mural, but was forced because of the black and gray paint used by the vandals during the two defacements to change Che’s skin color to a much darker tone. […] Finally, there arrived a letter addressed to the author [Kunzle] as “Shifra Goldman ‘Judío’” (Jew) postmarked 17 May, Santa Monica, and signed (with no address given) “Lopez”. “What does a Jew like you know of the butcher ‘Che?’” it asked in red ink (KUNZLE, 1997, p.75).

Picture 96 – Vandalized mural.

Source: (KUNZLE, 1997, p.77).

Once again, we see how the Cuban-exile community in the United States is reactionary, especially when it comes to imaginations of Che Guevara. When lobbying failed, vandalism (Picture 96) and intimidation were employed. But, in the end, the togetherness of the Chicano community prevailed. Unfortunately, the film does not provide more information about the mural, such as the artist's name, or about the relationship between the Chicano-Chicana community and invoked images[155]. Fortunately, Kunzle (1997, p.74) provides abundant information in his book: the artist's name is Mario Acevedo Torero and, inspired by Cuban radio broadcasts of Fidel's speeches – especially one about Che Guevara –, he and members of the community painted the mural in 1978. Furthermore,

> this mural joined the approximately sixty murals 20 x 30ft. each, that were painted on the exterior walls of the housing units between 1973 and 1980. The subjects are as varied as the artists […]
> In the upper left corner of the mural, to heighten the effect of the slogan "We Are Not a Minority" which presented a new idea in 1978 – one that ran directly contrary to common usage – Torero wrote "in memoriam to the guerrillero Heroico, el Doctor Che; Día del Rebelde Internacional, XI Aniversario, Oct. 8, 1978. […]
> His portrait and its maintenance were a direct consequence of the politicization and new militancy of Chicano youth and students. […]
> Torero's source for his Che mural was a poster from World War I […]. The US poster by James Montgomery Flagg shows a nineteenth-century Uncle Sam […] appealing to the passing young man with "I Want You for US Army; Nearest Recruiting Station". […]
> The use of the term "minority" gave rise to an impassioned essay printed in 1979 in a local Chicano publication. "Each time we hear ourselves referred to as minorities we are being conditioned to believe that we must take a secondary position among others. Then we come to use the word ourselves, without recognizing the harmful

[155] In the Introduction, I discuss Burciaga's Chicano-Chicana mural (Picture 12).

> realities that go along with its acceptance. When minority programs were begun in the 1960s, they were accompanied with money. Since then, we have begun to understand […] that calling ourselves minorities was a compromise. For our human rights we must begin to awaken the rest of the people of La Raza by telling them […] you are not a minority. […] Torero chose Che because Che is an international figure, a hero of the struggles of all Latin American people who have been oppressed by class poverty and racism [and other forms of oppression, such as machismo and homophobia]. His image shows the extent of how the word America has been limited from a continent to a nation. In the mural, Che dramatized the true meaning of the word minority" (SÁNCHEZ, 1979, apud KUNZLE, 1997, p.120; KUNZLE, 1997, pgs. 74-5).

Instead of delving into the historical and intersectional context of the Chicano-Chicana movement, the filmmakers seem more interested in the personal relation of René to the Che mural, a similar approach they have towards other people in other sequences. Although René is framed by the movie as an individual, we can see traces of his commitment to his community when he says "us" and "my people" in his aforecited reply, which, in turn, dialogues with the "we" in the motto "We are not a minority". Furthermore, in the exchange between René and Kunzle, we can see how René looks at Che for hope and inspiration to face the catastrophic oppression of being Chicano and working class in the United States:

> _[Che] is saying that you can change everything in the world.
> _What would you like to be better in your world?
> _I would like to start my life all over again.
> _Start all over? [Kunzle laughs in surprise]
> _I'd like to start my life all over again because, after all of these years, I've done thirty years in and out of prisons. I don't have no job, no nothing [sic]. And I'm embarrassed, not of myself, but I am embarrassed of what I have become. Because, to me, I am a nobody.
> _Well, do you have a job?
> _No, I don't have nothing, sir.
> _[Staring at Che's eyes in the mural] I look at his eyes and I see life in his eyes. And that life is telling me that there is something better for me out there than just being around the neighborhood. There is something there to seek and I want to seek it. Through him, I believe in reality. There is reality in his eyes (PERSONAL CHE, 2007).

René's words are powerful and very contemporary, despite the mural being fourty-two years old now. Although the term "hispanic" is broader than "Chicano", according to the U.S. Federal Bureau of Prisons, 31.7% of the total inmates are hispanic, while 37.6% of the total inmate population is black (INMATE STATISTICS, 2020). Probably, being fourty-five years old at the time of the shooting of the film, he was around seventeen when the mural was created. Kunzle's questions might have made him remember his life before prison and that is probably why his answer is so pearcingly heartfelt. His answer crosses time and indicate the emancipatory struggles of the Chicano-Chicana movement in the 1960s and 1970s are still much valid today. In my perspective, when he is pointing to Che's eyes (Picture 97) and

pointing out what he sees in them, he might also be pointing to a vision of his younger self and of his future unrealized potential through the "We Are Not a Minority" mural.

Picture 97 – René and Che point at each other.

Source: (PERSONAL CHE, 2007).

Another interesting example of artistic imagination is a Lebanese play about Che Guevara (Picture 98). The filmmakers travelled to Beirut, in Libano, and interviewed the actor who played Che, Ammar Shalak, and one of the play creators, Farid Sabbagh. The film alternates interview sequences with sequences of the play itself. Although interviewing the leading actor and one of the creators gives insight into the play, the documentary does not present additional information about it – where it was performed, the cast, the musicians and choreographers – and does not contextualize it historically and politically. I had to go online and search in Farid and Maher Sabbagh's Facebook page to find more information in English about the play:

> After they started writing and composing their own music, they produced their first play "Che Guevara" which was performed for two months at the BIEL Beirut, in 2006. "Che Guevara" is a musical theatrical play, presenting the story of "Che Guevara" from the period preceding the Cuban revolution in 1954, until the death of "Che" in Bolivia in 1967, based on true events, and after 2 years of research and information gathering. This production was interpreted by Ammar Chalak, Carmen Lebbos, Pierre Dagher, Nabil AbouMrad, Pierre Jamajian, Boutros Farah, Elia Francis, Alain Aily, Joseph Sassine, Joseph Salameh and around 25 actors and singers, 20 figurants and 16 dancers, with the participation of Cuban and Lebanese musicians, and professional choir singers (SABBAGH, 2020).

In addition, there is no mention of the Israel-Lebanon war, although it started soon after the crew left the country in 2006. In the film's IMDB page, we learn in the trivia section that "soon after leaving Beirut for the Che Opera scenes, the whole country was bombarded by Israeli forces and the airport shut down" (PERSONAL CHE IMDB, 2020). Surprisingly, there is no mention of the conflict in the film. This is no trivia. The relations with Israel, the

Civil War in Lebanon – which lasted thirty years –, and the issue of Palestine are all contextual elements that would deepen our understanding of this play's significance.

Considering the impact of the thirty-four-day war on the Lebanese people – "the conflict is believed to have killed between 1,191 and 1,300 Lebanese people. It severely damaged Lebanese civil infrastructure, and displaced approximately one million Lebanese" (2006 LEBANON WAR, 2020) – it should be obvious that such event informed the reception of the play. Yet, by not taking into account the Lebanese historical and political context, the film creates a somewhat shallow perspective of the play, ahistorical and subjectively-oriented, unabling possible interrelations with the other sequences that could be construed otherwise.

Picture 98 – Che receives the *Comandante* star.

Source: (PERSONAL CHE, 2007).

The only moment the film hints at the significance of Che's image in the Arab context is when the actor Ammar compares Che to prominent Arab figures: "there are people […] that changed the course of history and transformed humanity, such as Che Guevara, Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz[156] – who followed the same principles of fighting for social justice, risking his life – and Hussein ibn Ali[157]" (PERSONAL CHE, 2007). Unfortunately, the film does not goes deeper into the comparison, especially in terms of what common ground was there between such historical figures.

[156] The Caliph Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz, unlike other Umayyad caliphs, promoted many social reforms, promoted free education and gave support for non-Arabs to converte to Islam. His measures angered the nobility and he was assassinated at age thirty-seven (UMAR II, 2020) – Che was assassinated at thirty-nine.

[157] King Hussein ibn Ali and his sons led the Arab revolt – which employed guerrilla tactics – against the Turkish Empire during the World War One, a national and colonial emancipation. He wished to unite all of the Arabian peninsula, Syria, Palestine and Lebanon under his rule but he was betrayed by his former allies, the British and the French, who instituted colonial protectorates after World War One. He eventually was defeated by the House of Saud and died in exile (HUSAYN IBN ALI, 2020).

What these three figures have in common is not only that they risked their wellbeing for just causes, it is also that they envisioned a different world and acted to try to bring that into reality. It is not surprising, then, that for the Lebanese, the three figures might inspire hope to face the catastrophes of oppression of their neighboring countries – "the country was subjected to military occupations by Syria that lasted nearly thirty years, being withdrawn in April 2005, as well as Israel for fifteen years before being withdrawn in May 2000" (LEBANON, 2020). Notice that the Syrian military occupation of Lebanon ended just one year before the play's debut.

The documentary also brings the interesting example of Hong Kong leftwing politician and activist Leung Kwok-hung, also known as "Long Hair". Like Carlos Valverde, the Cuban taxi driver, Leung's father was also absent and his mother was the only parent to support their home. Although initially a Maoist, he later became disenchanted with the bureaucratic violence of the Cultural Revolution and became a Trotskyst instead (LEUNG KWOK-HUNG, 2020). He was a member of Hong Kong's legislative council between 2004 and 2016, and he has a long history of activism in favor of democracy in China.

It might be puzzling to grasp why a leftwing Hong Kong activist protests against China, a so called socialist country. But since the Chinese economic reform of 1978, while the country's economy has become increasigly capitalist with mostly Chinese state-owned companies and foreign private-owned companies, bureaucratic power is still dominant in repressing civil liberties and in controling the All-China Federation of Trade Unions. As a result, the labor legislation is not fully enforced since the state-controlled-union federation is the one institution responsible for collective negotiation with the companies and, in turn, foreign corporations can make the most of the skilled yet cheap labor force. And those who threaten to disrupt such state of affairs are repressed.

In the documentary, while the camera frames Leung and other activists handing leaflets and calling people for two protests (Picture 99) – an instance of a disruptive action –, it eventually cuts to a close-up of Che's face in Leung's T-shirt while we hear in voice-over Christopher Hitchens comment on how Che protects Leung: "to be able to display a communist hero who is no less clearly hostile to these forms of authority ostensively so is quite a clever thing to do because what is the Chinese Communist Party going to do?" (PERSONAL CHE, 2007). If the Chinese bureaucracy tried to make Leung stop wearing Che T-shirts or any other Che image, it would be publicly revealing its true nature – it wants to

remain in power, no matter what, and that is the very opposite of the disruptiveness and potentiality of a socialist revolution.

Picture 99 – Leung calling people for two protests.

Source: (PERSONAL CHE, 2020).

Leung is a very vocal figure and he used his concil seat to support the emancipatory struggles, not the other way around. In the film, we see Leung delivering a harsh speech to his peers at the legislative council (Picture 100), protesting with his Che T-shirt at the cut of social programs:

> It is a shame for the society and this parliament. If Hong Kong had fair laws and democracy, that would not have happened. If all had voice, and not only a group of old people, we wouldn't have this absurd fiscal policy. Here in Hong Kong, poverty is relayed from generation to generation but the government prefers to rob the poor to help the rich, deciving all. Without listening to the people, without elections, elections for the Chief Executive, elections for all the parlimentary seats, there won't be justice in Hong Kong (PERSONAL CHE, 2007).

Picture 100 – Leung speaking at the legislative council.

Source: (PERSONAL CHE, 2007).

The issue of universal suffrage[158] that Leung alludes to has been the epicenter of a massive 2014 protest known as the "Umbrella Revolution", sparkled by "the decision of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of 31 August 2014 that prescribed a selective pre-screening of candidates for the 2017 election of Hong Kong's Chief Executive" (UMBRELLA MOVEMENT, 2020). The name of the movement was derived from the protesters' tactic of using umbrellas as a way of protecting themselves against police's pepper spray. In 2016, during his oath ceremony, Leung protested (Picture 101) by wearing "a black t-shirt with the word 'civil disobedience' in Chinese", holding "an opened yellow umbrella symbolising the Umbrella Revolution with many words thereon, including 'ending the one-party rule', and a paper board showing the words 'NPC 831 decision' and a cross on it" (LEUNG KWOK-HUNG, 2020). Besides Leung, five other elected candidates were disqualified.

Picture 101– Leung protesting during the oath ceremony.

Source: (SCMP, 2016).

Towards the end of the film, the camera frames Leung shouting slogans – "power to the people", "this murderous government is going to stink for ten thousand years", "the people's heroes will not be forgotten", and "down with the Communist Party's Autocracy" (PERSONAL CHE, 2007) – in a microphone and carrying a coffin (Picture 102), part of April Fifth Action, a leftwing movement of remembrance of the victims of the Tiananmen Massacre – this is clearly a remembrance-redemption action, one of the protests that Leung and other

[158] "Elections in Hong Kong take place when certain political offices in the government need to be filled. Every four years, half of the unicameral Legislative Council of Hong Kong's seventy seats representing the geographical constituencies are returned by the electorate; the other thirty five seats representing the functional constituencies are elected through smaller closed elections within business sectors" (ELECTIONS IN HONG KONG, 2020).

activists were helping promote. The camera alternates between the protest and his interview – post-protest, having a pint of beer and smoking a cigarette –, in which he talks about how Che inspires him:

Picture 102 – Leung in the remembrance-redemption action.

Source: (PERSONAL CHE, 2007).

> The first quotation I learned from him was "a true revolutionary is guided by a strong feeling of love". It is amazing. He used his passion and his willpower to change the world. He only lived in this world for thirty-nine years. The things he have accomplished are incredible. I am a marxist. He is a marxist. That is the common ground. I think I cannot compare with him because he is so great. I am not a troublemaker, I am a justice maker, or a love maker, whatever you want to call it (PERSONAL CHE, 2007).

Leung's disruptive actions against the Chinese Communist Party's bureaucracy is a good example that Che continues to be politically relevant in the Twenty-First Century, as is also the already discussed example of the Chilean Victor Hugo Robles. Although, as I have said, the documentary does not go deep into historically and politically contextualizing each subjective relationship with Che's images, unearthing the power relations that transverse such affects and that potentially can interrelate one with another, *Personal Che* (2007) is rich in its diverse research and interview material. In addition, through the filmmakers questions, I can see that they tried to be careful not to take what the subjects of the film spoke for granted. However, there is one sequence in particular that I consider very problematic.

In Germany, the filmmcrew goes to a Nazi rally and interview the leader and one of the members. Both of them are wearing Che's images, the former is wearing a pin on his lapel, while the latter is wearing a Che T-shirt (Picture 103). The problem, in my opinion, is twofold. First, being a nazi-fascist appropriation of a politicizing, potentially disruptive image, this is actually a violence towards Che image: trying to control it, to forcefully

immobilize it, to try to make it lose its critical-emancipatory quality of as-ifness or not-yetness, its politicizing potential of interrelating the struggles of the spectators with its constellations of hope. This appropriation attempt is as violent as a fetishizing attempt of transforming Che's images into comercial visibilites – which I discuss in Chapter Three – since it means alienating the image from its disruptive constellations and hopeful visions, since it means trying to make what is a subject of emancipation into an object of alienation, a mere visibility, a mere graphic surface, a beautiful yet barren open slate that is used to seduce the spectator consumption – of ideas or of merchandise – instead of reserving a critical space for him-her to affect and be affected.

Picture 103 – Nazi appropriation attempt

Source: (PERSONAL CHE, 2007).

Second, the way the Nazi appropriation is presented by the film, as just another "personal" rapport with Che's images, is problematic. In my perspective, the film could include this sequence *as long as* it problematized the issue of appropriation for neofascist purposes and also politically and historically contextualized the danger of (neo)nazism and (neo)fascism. It could be argued that the German sequence offers just another form of appropriating Che's images, a common practice in a postmodern global culture, but I would like to disagree by pointing out the violence towards Che's image and its remembrance-redemption potential implicit in such nazi appropriation. In other words, it is not only a matter of the quality of the appropriation or of being convincing in its justification, but rather unveiling its objective of making Che's images tractable, submissive to acommodate the very opposite of human emancipation.

Furthermore, in the German sequence, the camera shoots a nazi rally, escorted by riot police, and antifascist activists protesting against the former. Although Duarte tries to point

out contradictions in having Che as a nazi symbol through his questions to the nazis, the film does not establish any commentary on the antifascist-nazifascist conflict, nor does it consider that the appropriation of leftwing's methods, demands and images by nazi-fascist organizations have taken place since Mussolini[159] and Hitler's[160] time. The aim of such appropriations is not only to gain the support of workers by turning them against other oppressed groups, but to cause widespread confusion, allowing nazi-fascist organizations to pass as just another political movement in the so called liberal democracies, being entitled to freedom of expression and other political rights – until there is no more. If there is another thing that the Twentieth Century has taught us, or so I hope, is that you cannot be liberal with nazi-fascism because, when you realize your mistake, it is already too late to avoid catastrophes.

If the filmmakers commented on, or interviewed someone to give insight into the antifascist mobilization – which was probably trying to stop or make increasingly difficult for nazi-fascists to rally –, along with the shot and reverse shots the film brings of the nazi rally and of the antifascist disruptive action, the danger I am referring to could perhaps be pointed out, instead of merely implied. But the danger of such Nazi rally and Nazi Che appropriation would be clearer if the filmmakers included footage of Douglas Duarte being expelled by the Nazis. Once more, some key contextual element, not trivial therefore, is only found in the *trivia* section of the documentary's IMDB page: "initially, Director Douglas Duarte was mistaken for a neo-nazi while shooting their parade on the film – something that helped gain access to them. But after they discovered he was not 'one of them', they ran him over" (PERSONAL CHE IMDB, 2020). Why was footage of this not included? Was the camera off when it happened? Did the filmmakers think this was not relevant? Or, perhaps, they concluded that, by including footage of Douglas being ran away by the Nazi, this would problematize too much the film's assumption that everybody can have their personal Che – it would become too personal, pun intended. It would bring power relations to the fore, questioning the ahistorical and completely subjective stance of the personal Che, which

> epitomizes that fliting moment of youth in which you believe you can change the world. So, everybody can take him and interpret him as they want. Because that is a need that transcends ideology. So you can be a fascist football player in Italy and claim that Che speaks to you. And, more obviously, a marxist somewhere in Latin America claims that he speaks for you [sic]. Or be a fashionista in London and say

[159] Mussolini had been a prominent socialist leader prior to the First World War. His pro-war positions made him fall out with the Italian Socialist Party and start his own movement, funded by the Italian arms industry (BENITO MUSSOLINI, 2020).

[160] The party Hitler founded, National Socialist Party, has socialism in its name. The appropriation is obvious.

> that Che speaks for you because you are really about defiance too [gesturing ironically]. So, everybody can have their Che (ANDERSON apud PERSONAL CHE, 2007).

Although I admire Anderson's biography of Che as a nuanced and careful account, I think we have to be cautious when trying to offer a definitive take regarding a subject – Che's images – that defy definitions. In Anderson's citation above we can see an ambiguity that is characteristic of what I call the phantasmagorical state or gaze of Che's images, which I discuss in detail in Chapter One. I do not think that for everybody Che epitomizes the nostalgia – acedia – for a lost youthful dream of changing the world. In fact, as I argue in this chapter, dreaming and imagining are not naive things that young people do, but rather examples of anticipatory consciousness or concrete utopia, to use Bloch's terms, and they are a collective necessity to disrupt the dominant politics of death we are oppressively subject to. Furthermore, the allure of Che's images, what affects people, is the expression of a demand that is presently-absent and does not announce itself. In other words, the anxiety of remembering and non-remembering is a possible explanation why so many people are affected by Che's images.

Obviously, not all of them will recognize the ghost and actualize its demand. Those who do, as the examples I discuss in this and the previous chapters, reply to the ghostly gaze by setting the image into action through artistic imaginations and/or through disruptive actions. But it is also possible that other people, being affected by Che's images, and not identifying the ghost's demand, project something else in them. And such freedom is probably one of the reasons why Che's image is able to keep returning with such intensity for so long. Artists, including those that are not commited to politicizing, love Che's images not because they are an empty slate – what allure would that have? – but because they are an invitation for expression and creativity.

But it is also possible to interpret the ambiguity in Anderson's citation above, or to resolve the Che ghost's ambiguity of (in)action, by alienating Che's images from their politicizing potential. That can be achieved both by fetishizing Che's images, transforming them in comercial logos and products, and by arresting them, freezing them by force, by enforcing a hegemonic discourse that repeats, over and over again, that they are empty slates that can accomodate most anything that anyone wants to throw at them, including appropriations for capitalist and for nazifascist purposes. In that sense, what otherwise could be an expression of subjectivity and creativity becomes the very negation of such potentialities.

In summary, the ambiguity of the spectral gaze can be temporarily unraveled by remembrance-redemption actions, artistic and/or disruptive, or by alienating Che from Che's images, making them meaningless and fetishizing them. In addition, artists that did not recognize the ghostly demand can nonetheless affect Che's images artistically in their own ways[161]. But nothing is definitive as long as we live in capitalism. Artistic imaginations can be transformed in merchandise and fetishized. Disruptive actions can be defeated. But fetishized images can also have their ambiguity restored depending on who gazes and in what context. Fetishized images can also be set into action again by artistic imagination that *reads* them against the grain and acts to reinstate their potentiality. I discuss the attempts to alienate Che's images in more details in Chapter Three.

3.7 MY RELATIONSHIP WITH CHE'S IMAGES

Although this chapter is quite wellrounded and long by now, I feel it is necessary to talk briefly about my personal-social relationship with Che and Che's images. As a decolonial-marxist, having being influenced by feminist and Chicana authors, I feel that my individual perspective can strengthen my analysis. As I say in the Introduction, I grew up in a very conservative and privileged context, my father being a retired army lieutenant colonel who had been in active duty during the dictatorship in Brazil, my mom being conservative since she was influenced by her Japanese immigrant family, and the fact that I spent seven years of my life having to study in an army military school, against my will. In the Introduction, I also say that when I was a teenager, I was an extreme rightwinger who aspired to become an army officer and who was hostile to anything remotely socialist, including Che and Che's images.

But my relationship to Che's images goes deeper than that. Living with my father was really difficult, since he had OCD and Bipolar disorder. His mood changed really rapidly and he was violent, more psychologically than physically towards me and my brother, but

[161]I do not intend to reduce all posibilities concerning Che's images to either emancipation or alienation. Instead, I am trying to bring to the fore what has been largely been treated in recent years as a non-issue: that politics and Che's images do not relate anymore. That is why I chose to analyze images that bring power relations to the fore, but that does not mean that the only ways of relating to Che's images are either emancipation or alienation. As I said, there artists and other people who recreate Che in ways that go beyond emancipation or alienation and that is probably one of the reasons for the appeal of Che's images. The other reason is the haunting that Che's spectral gaze causes in the spectator, even if he or she or they does not actualize – in the Benjaminian sense – such ghostly demand.

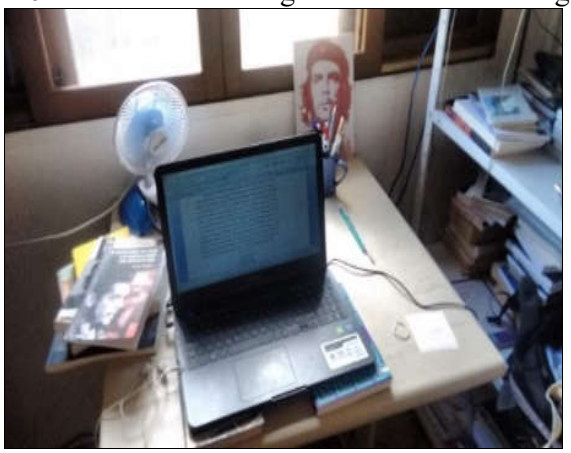
quite physically against my mother when they had altercations – when I was seventeen, I had to strike at my own father to stop his aggression against my mother, not a pleasant thing to do with your own father. He also kicked my mom and me out of our house twice, one time with my brother. All of that scared and scarred me. I, who had been a spontaneous and happy child that liked telling jokes and making people laugh, became increasingly serious and reserved, and often angry. Having to study in a school against my will, learning to like what you hate – very problematic – and being bullied for several years, also hindered my capacity to freely trust on people. I became more aloof, often antisocial, and to this day, even after many years of therapy – which helps a lot, by the way – I still have trouble in trying to mend what was broken inside and finding that the shards do not fit, I still have trouble in not building walls – like the three-meter wall my father built around our family house and that further isolated us – in my life, and I especially have trouble in unveiling to people, especially those I am not completely sure about, the so repressed side of me: spontaneous, humorous, full of wit, sarcasm, irony, and often just silly. You see, the puns I wrote throughout a Doctoral Dissertation are part of me, of who I am, of who I was oppressively denied to be. I left such trail of crumbs, the puns, to lead you here. It is quite difficult for me to write this here, not knowing who is going to read, but I am determined to trust you anyway.

To me, Che and Che's images are inspirational of never giving up, no matter what. Even when it seems all is lost and everybody else is quitting, I will never give up, just like he never did, to the last moment. I struggled with depression for many years but I always find hope, strength in me and in other people, to believe things can change, that there is potency and potentiality and that you have to see them even when they are veiled at the heart of catastrophes. And that is how Che's images inspire me to keep going, to face the inner pain of recreating myself – deconstructing the oppressive violence, strenghtening my repressed sides, destroying walls within, constructing bridges – and of being hopeful that we – as humans – can disrupt the power continuum, that we can actualize the arrested human potential in a free-from-any-oppression society. Through Che, I believe in myself, he helps me gain perspective through the inner pain, and see the joyful me that was repressed and is still there waiting to be emancipated. This is not an abstract utopia, this a concrete utopia, this is my life.

Interestingly, one thing that happened with me after I began studying Che and Che's images is that friends and my companion started sending me images of Che, and giving me objects with Che's images – gestures of kindness and affection that express their will of helping me in my research. One of them was a portrait of Korda's *Guerrillero Heroico*, the

most famous of all of Che's images, that my companion gave me in 2019 and which I keep over the table where I write this dissertation (Picture 104). He is always looking through me and I am always looking through him. On the back of the portrait, she wrote: "I wish that our friend 'Che' inspires you in this journey and cycle of your life". And he has indeed inspired me. Well, I am inspired by Che's images in general, even the ones that are not politicizing. But this one in particular has inspired me the most. As I write this dissertation, I constantly rest my eyes on him in a sort of non-verbal dialogue. And I also have written two poems inspired by him. The first one was after I participated in the May 30 protest in 2019 in Brazil against the education budget cuts, when I met one activist wearing a Che T-shirt. It was as if I had met Che in the protest:

Picture 104 – Che looks through me and I look through him.



Source: Personal collection.

Eterno retorno[162]

Ontem encontrei o Che
Seu olhar penetrante
Seu jovial semblante
Sua humanidade camarada

Quando menos esperava
Em meio à multidão
Lá estava o Che:
Vivo novamente!

Seus olhos são portais
Que nos convidam a imaginar
Para além dos confins

[162] "Eternal Return: Yesterday I found Che / His penetrating gaze / His youthful face / His warm humanity / When I least expected / Amid the crowd / There was Che: / Alive again! / His eyes are portals / That invite us to imagine / Beyond the boundaries / Of past, future and present. / Image-into-action and rebellion / Exsudes the crowd / Freed from the chains / Marchs again" (MAYA NETO, 2019).

Do passado, futuro e presente.

Imagem-em-ação e rebeldia
Exsuda a multidão
Liberta do grilhão
Marcha novamente.
(MAYA NETO, 2019).

Interestingly, we, as readers, although at first might think that the penetrating gaze, the youthful face and warm humanity are Che's, after reading the poem many times, may wonder if those characteristics are not of the person performing a disruptive action while wearing a Che image, or if they are not the crowd's. In fact, it is the crowd that exsudes image-into-action and rebellion, and it is the personal-collective disruptive action that sets Che image into action. The poem itself is an artistic imagination, one that offers a vision of Che and through Che, of how we can see beyond the visible, of how we can interrelate our present emancipatory struggles with past ones and with a potential free future. In turn, I wrote the second Che poem during the student strike in 2019 in Brazil, after one of the many meetings and actions that were taking place:

Práxis[163]
Hoje te olhei nos olhos e vi
Neles refletidos um sentimento
De cumplicidade camarada
Que se expressa sem sons
Com frases que apesar de mudas
Mudam o que sou e o que sei.

Sinto a certeza de finalmente
Compreender a sabedoria
De suas palavras sinceras
Concretamente sonhadoras, certeiras
De forças e potência singulares
Que atravessam décadas sem pestanejar.

Hoje vi a certeza estampada
Nos seus olhos e nos meus
De que não basta pensar
Simplesmente sem ação
Que não basta tergiversar
Em segurança estéril

Se é necessário assumir riscos
De fracassar e recomeçar

[163] "Praxis: Today, I looked in your eyes and saw / In them reflected a sentiment / Of warm cumplicity / That expresses itself without sounds / With sentences that, despite soundless, / Change what I am and what I know / I feel the certainty of finally / Understanding the wisdom / Of your sincere words / Concretely penciful, precise / Of strengths and potencies singular / That cross decades between blinks of the eyes / Today I saw the certainty impressed / In your eyes and in mine / That it is not enough to think / Simply actionless / That to tergiversate is not enough / In sterile security. / If it is necessary to take risks / Of failing and restarting / Countless times, with no promisses / But with haste of succeeding in / Of reaching the unreachable: / (Is it really?), human emancipation.

Inúmeras vezes, sem promessas
Mas com pressa de conseguir
Alcançar o inalcançável:
(Será mesmo?), a libertação humana.
(MAYA NETO, 2019).

The alliteration of the "s" sound helps creating a rhythm that is present throughout the poem, just like Che's praxis is present in both his thought and actions, and, likewise, the praxis of people that see hope through him. The little "if" in the beginning of the last stanza is the crucial meaningful bridge with the previous stanza, an enjambment between stanzas. Without such little vital bridge, it would not be possible to understand why praxis is necessary for human redemption, why it is necessary to act besides thinking. The poem also points out the concreteness of Che's utopia, the anticipatory element – of humankind's unrealized potential – that is probably one of the reasons why so many people turn to Che for inspiration in facing the oppressive catastrophes of their personal-collective struggles. That unrealized potential of a completely un-oppressed society is the (un)reachable in our grasp.

4 FETISHIZED CHE

"You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images"
(ELIOT, 2001, p.5).

In Chapter One, I discuss the ambivalence of Che's phantasmagorical gaze in terms of, on one hand, its ghostly demand over the spectator for remembrance and redemption and, in the other, the hegemonic discourse's affirmation that Che and socialism are irrelevant in globalized capitalism. One way of unraveling such phantasmagorical ambivalence is by alienatory violence, be it literal and overt, such as the destruction of artistic imaginations and the appropriation attempt by a nazi group – both of which I discuss in Chapter Two –, or more subtle and symbolic, such as the attempts of appropriating Che's images for capitalist purposes – which I analyze in this chapter. Be it overt or covert, the violence towards Che's images aims at symbolically "killing" Che again, that is, killing his politicizing potential by operating interrelated separations or alienations. Hence, my focus in this chapter, alienation of Che's images, dialogues with the other chapters of this dissertation since my main overall argument is that there is tension between alienation and emancipation in the global capitalist society and that such tension is perceptible as well in how people interrelate differently to Che's images.

Regarding this chapter's analysis, I discuss capitalist attempts of fetishizing Che according to the Marxist alienation theory, conceptualized here in a broad sense. There are several types of alienation I discuss, going beyond the more commonly known commodity fetish. And I discuss how the capitalist attempts of appropriating Che's images interrelate with such different forms of alienation. Indeed, whenever I say *fetish*, *alienation* or *reification*[164], I am referring to the same operation of removing the subjective element from social relations of domination, hiding them in the guise of objectivity. Basically, for the purpose of clarity at this point, let's say that *fetish*, *alienation* and *reification* constitute oppressive forms of domination and social control. In addition, based on a Marxist discussion of brands in global capitalism, I also analyze how appropriations of Che's images by transnational corporations differ from those by small and medium companies – what, as far as I know, no other author has done so far. And I also analyze the specificities of how big-studio-cinema appropriates Che's images, focusing on one Hollywoodian fictional feature

[164]Later in this chapter I discuss the specificities of each term.

film, *Che!* (CHE!, 1969)[165]. The significance of this chapter lies in the fact that, to my knowledge, no author has endeavored into an analysis of capitalist appropriation attemps of Che's images from the standpoint of decolonial marxism.

4.1 THE CELEBRATORY DISCOURSE OF IRRELEVANCE

Capitalist attempts of appropriating Che, in the forms of products or brands[166], have been discussed by a number of authors, who usually argue in favor of Che's images' political irrelevance in the Twenty-First Century. I discuss some of them, such as Llosa, Escalante and Casey, in my Master Thesis (MAYA NETO, 2017) and in the Introduction of this dissertation. Their argumentation is often contradictory since they point to the transformation of Che's images into capitalist products as ironical while simultaneously arguing that they have become empty of any meaning, as I discuss in detail in the Introduction. Overall, their main argument is that the capitalist appropriation of Che's images is the only feasible explanation for Che's imagetic resurgence.

Llosa, for instance, affirms that Che Guevara "is now a quintessential capitalist brand [...], the logo of revolutionary (or is it capitalist?) chic" (LLOSA, 2005). Similarly, Casey argues that Che "functions as a multipurpose brand" and that "Che became the quintessential postmodern icon – anything to anyone and everything to everyone" (CASEY, 2009, p.347, 133). By having the concept of brand[167] as the only possibility, he reduces the potentialities of his rich research material, be it artistic imaginations of Che, political parties and emancipatory movements that invoke Che, or capitalist attempts of appropriation. Likewise, Escalante

[165] Although I initially planned on including Soderberg's *Che Part One* and *Part Two* in this chapter, I later decided to focus on *Che!* (CHE!, 1969). One of the reasons was due the size of chapter since analyzing both parts of Soderberg's film would probably demand a whole new chapter rather than a section. In addition, Soderberg's film seems not to share the hollywoodian traits of *Che!* (1969) that would qualify it for the inclusion in this chapter, such as being financed and produced by a big Hollywood studio, for instance. In comparison, *The Motorcycle Diaries* (THE MOTORCYCLE, 2004) combined a neorealist aesthetic with a more hollywodian-style linear narrative and was likewise not financed or produced by a hollywoodian studio. In addition, I have already analyzed *The Motorcycle Diaries* in detail in my Master Thesis (MAYA NETO, 2017).

[166] Casey and Llosa are the only authors who argue Che has become a brand. I agree with Cambre (2015, p.13) when she considers that the concept of brand is inadequate to analyze the instability and movement of Che's images. As I argue later in this chapter, there are attempts by transnational corporations of appropriating Che's images to create products, but not brands, in the strict sense.

[167] Casey does not bother to define or conceptualize brand in a strict sense. Had he done so, looking for support in the authors that study capitalist brands, he would be surprised. In fact, Cambre (2012; 2015) does that and she presents evidence that the concept of brand is inadequate to study the complexity of Che's images.

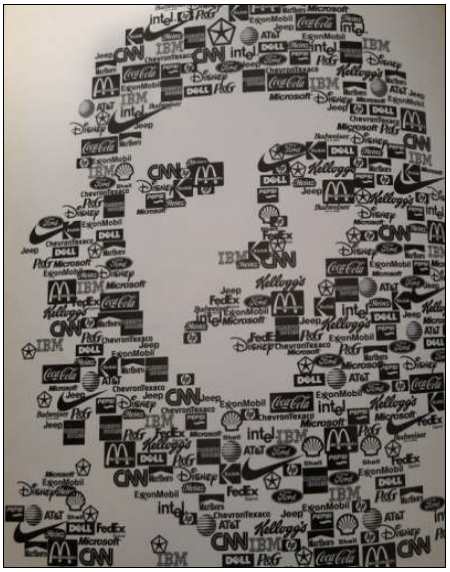
argues that Che is "an example of Marx's notion of commodity fetishism where social relationships become objectified relationships between both commodities and money" (ESCALANTE, 2014, p.83). Unfortunately, that is as far as Escalante goes in the discussion of alienation, since he is more interested in affirming the meaninglessness of Che's images.

What Llosa, Casey and Escalante have in common is that they depart from a premise of purity: such authors consider that, once some of Che's images have been transformed in capitalist products, all Che's images lose any politicizing potential. Although the alienation of Che's images does involve operations of separation, which I discuss later in this chapter, it is by no means definitive and it certainly does not exclude the images' emancipatory potential a priori. In fact, once we understand that such authors depart from the premise of purity and total loss, the lack of nuance in their analysis comes to the fore and it becomes increasingly clear that their voices are part of a celebratory hegemonic chorus of Che's – and of his images' – political irrelevance.

The word "celebratory" here is very important since it refers both to Benjamin's allegory of humankind's history as the triumphal procession of the victors carrying the cultural spoils of war over the funeral procession of the defeated, and to Derrida's critique of the hegemonic discourse of globalization that celebrated the end of history and the triumph of capitalism over socialism in the 1990s. In other words, by claiming that the capitalist appropriation of Che's images is the only way of explaining Che's imagetic resurgence, Llosa, Escalante and Casey are theoretically unraveling the ambivalence of Che's phantasmagorical gaze, precluding the discussion of emancipatory disruptive actions and artistic imaginations.

What is particularly worrisome is that such rhetoric of meaninglessness seem to also influence more nuanced authors, such as Anderson (PERSONAL CHE, 2007), who I cite in Chapter Two, and Kemp (2012). The latter has one rich chapter about Che's images, Korda's photograph, artistic imaginations, the advertisement for a Christian church, and Che memorabilia bought online. Kemp writes that he decided to buy a Che military jacket and, that decision, unfortunately, led to a very bleak conclusion of the chapter: "the stylish trendiness of the schematic matrix has become the visual message" since "the main point of Che's 'message' has effectively become obliterated" (KEMP, 2012, p.194).

Picture 105– Thomas' *American Investment in Cuba*.



Source: (ZIFF, 2006, p.56).

One interesting artwork that illustrates the power of such celebratory discourse of Che appropriation is Patrick Thomas' 2002 *American Investment in Cuba* (Picture 105) (ZIFF, 2006, p.56). Thomas' work seems to be an ironical remark towards the capitalist appropriation of Che's images and the capitalist advance over Cuba. The outline of Korda's *Guerrillero Heroico* (Picture 24) is formed by juxtaposing the brand logos of many U.S.-based transnational corporations. However, Thomas must have conveniently forgotten that the U.S. has imposed an embargo on Cuba since 1958. Although the U.S. recently allowed two "Americans"[168] to invest in a tractor factory estimated in US$5 million, the economic cost is much greater:

> the United States Chamber of Commerce estimated that the embargo was costing the United States economy $1.2 billion per year due to the legal structures that are preventing U.S. based exporters from entering Cuban markets. The Cuba Policy Foundation (CPF) has provided more extreme data. Their estimates put the cost that the embargo has had on the U.S. at $4.84 billion per year while costing Cuba $685 million per year. As of today, Cuba is estimated to have lost over $28.6 billion in trade according to Cuba's Institute of Economic Research (UNITED STATES EMBARGO AGAINST CUBA, 2020).

The numbers tell us that the United States is losing much more money than making money through its investments in Cuba. And, as far as I know, the capitalist corporations whose brand logos give form to Thomas' artwork do not operate in Cuba, except perhaps by a McDonald's store located in the U.S. military base in Guantanamo, which is a historical

[168] As a decolonial author, I am critical of the United States' appropriation of the continent's name, even if it is a colonial name. I use the adjective "American" within quotation marks to stress it is an appropriation.

embodiment of the U.S. interference in Cuba and of its neocolonial interests contradicted by the Cuban Revolution. But we have to go beyond the numbers to see the story they do not show: the social cost to the Cuban people who live in a decolonial country and who have to endure the effects of the U.S. embargo.

Another thing we can see in Thomas' artwork is the fragmentation of contemporary mass culture. Instead of a single Che image with possible interrelations, it brings forth instead a patchwork of visibilities forming just the sur-face – pun intend – of Che. Interestingly, the second stanza of the first part of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* carries two lines which are very adequate for this chapter: "You cannot say, or guess, for you know only / A heap of broken images" (ELIOT, 2001, p.5). I selected such lines as this chapter's epigraph because they touch on the issues of cultural fragmentation, crisis of modernity and systemic lifelessness which are all relevant to introduce the issue of alienation, especially the alienation of cultural artifacts.

It seems that now we are globally immersed in the position described by the persona in Eliot's lines, since cultures and identities have become increasingly fragmented. On one hand, such fragmentation is fruitful as a result of the critique and disruptive action enacted by emancipatory movements against different forms of oppression. On the other, the fragmentation also results from the increasingly complex global forms of alienation that we are constantly being exposed to. Both forms of fragmentation are different and should not be confused. In this chapter, I discuss the latter, fragmentation caused by systemic alienation, understood in a broad sense. We can perceive this confusion between the forms of fragmentation in the following paragraph of Ariel Dorfman's article about Che making into Time's magazine one hundred most influential figures of the Twentieth Century:

> Perhaps in these orphaned times of incessantly shifting identities and alliances, the fantasy of an adventurer who changed countries and crossed borders and broke down limits without once betraying his basic loyalties[169] provides the restless youth of our era with an optimal combination, grounding them in a fierce centre of moral gravity while simultaneously appealing to their contemporary nomadic impulse. To those who will never follow in his footsteps, submerged as they are in a world of cynicism, self-interest and frantic consumption, nothing could be more vicariously gratifying than Che's disdain for material comfort and everyday desires. One might suggest that it is Che's distance, the apparent impossibility of duplicating his life anymore, that makes him so attractive. And is not Che, with his hippie hair and wispy revolutionary beard, the perfect postmodern conduit to the nonconformist, seditious '60s, that disruptive past confined to gesture and fashion? Is it conceivable that one of the only two Latin Americans to make it onto Time's 100 most important figures of the century can be comfortably transmogrified into a symbol of rebellion

[169] A careful contrastive study of Che Guevara's journals points out to the man's dialectic questioning of his own values and background as a result of his journeys. I plan on writing about the subject in the future.

> precisely because he is no longer dangerous? (DORFMAN, Ariel *apud* ZIFF, 2006, p.115)

As any trap, it looks seducingly simple until you fall pray to it: Che is popular because he is no longer potentially dangerous, since his attraction consists on letting the frustrated youth attempt to assuage their lack of fire vicariously through his commodified visibility. However, as I was about to point out the several problems in this brief patchwork of incongruities, I was intrigued by what seemed rhetorical questions and decided to give the author the benefit of the doubt and search about him. I found out that Ariel Dorfman, a professor of Literature and Latin American Studies in Duke University, is also a human rights activist, a novelist, and frequently "deals with the horrors of tyranny and [...] the trials of exile", which makes perfect sense since "Dorfman served as a cultural adviser to President Salvador Allende" and was forced into exile himself (ARIEL DORFMAN, 2020). Even more intrigued by now, and smelling something funny, I was able to get ahold of the full article. I discovered that Ziff omitted the final paragraphs in which Dorfman answered his own questions unmistakably:

> I wouldn't be too sure. I suspect that the young of the world grasp that the man whose poster beckons from their walls cannot be that irrelevant, this secular saint ready to die because he could not tolerate a world where *los pobresde la tierra*, the displaced and dislocated of history, would be eternally relegated to its vast margins.
> Even though I have come to be wary of dead heroes and the overwhelming burden their martyrdom imposes on the living, I will allow myself a prophecy, or maybe it is a warning. More than 3 billion human beings on this planet right now live on less than $2 a day. And every day that breaks, 40,000 children – more than one every second! – succumb to diseases linked to chronic hunger. They are there, always there, the terrifying conditions of injustice and inequality that led Che many decades ago to start his journey toward that bullet and that photo awaiting him in Bolivia.
> The powerful of the earth should take heed: deep inside that T shirt where we have tried to trap him, the eyes of Che Guevara are still burning with impatience (DORFMAN, 1999).

The missing paragraphs completely change the interpretation of Dorfman's first excerpt. I do not know if this was a mistake or if this was a case of selective citation by Ziff (2006), but, either way, it is a red flag in what seemed to me until now a plural book. Nonetheless, Dorfman's prophetic words sound very contemporary if we consider the many crisis that have affected global capitalism since 1999, including the COVID-19 pandemic we are living in 2020. His article also provocatively touches upon several issues I will discuss throughout this chapter, such as freezing and distancing the image, nostalgia for a lost past, the interrelation between economy, images and culture, and the tension arising in trying to alienate Che's images.

4.1.1 Fragmentation and meaninglessness

Dorfman is right in observing that veiled in the rhetoric of cultural and imagetic fragmentation lies the issue of power relations. That observation might seem trivial but it is actually crucial. The moment we forget, or deliberately ignore, how the struggle between alienation and emancipation influence our relationships with images, we end up with a patchwork of random consumed visibilities of Che, disconnected and very much meaningless. Interestingly, that is the perspective of the documentary *Chevolution* (2008), unsurprisingly directed by Ziff and Luis Lopez. The documentary, much like *Personal Che* (2007), which I analyze in Chapter Two, keeps alternating between snippets of interviews of authors, activists, photographers and artists that argue in favor of Che's images'contemporary emancipatory relevance on one hand, and interviews of authors, ideologues and artists who are defend capitalist appropriation, on the other.

The fragmentation of the movie itself feels like having a stuck button on the TV remote control, when it keeps changing channels, despite your interest in, and your effort to make meaning of what appears before your eyes. It could be said that the idea behind such alternation between different voices may be of making both movies sound more democratic, but I argue that the significance of the fragmentation is more profound. By fragmenting the sequences to a minimum of time, and by zapping between them ferociously, the movies fragment possible interrelations between different sequences, especially those with conflicted views, which, eventually, may seem as nothing more as individual ways of relating to Che. In other words, power relations, the tension between alienation and emancipation in our society, become difficult to identify.

Chevolution (2008) has a historical storyline, the evolution of Che's images. As I argue in the Introduction, the problem with chronologies and with the ideas of evolution and progress is that they depart from the premise that the most complete current form succeeds the previous one, which is inadequate in analyzing the complexity and variability of Che's images. In comparison, *Personal Che* (2007), despite having far less examples of appropriation of Che's images, carries a heightened feeling of fragmentation since there seems to be no meaningful transition between sequences.

In *Chevolution* (2008), the fragmentation is especially perceptible in the sequence about the capitalist appropriation of Che's images. For instance, Anderson is recorded saying: "in a sense, Che has become someone that everyone can appropriate. Capitalists can, do and will appropriate him. The Japanese will make snowboards with his image on, Americans, Cuban, English and German will make T-shirts" (CHEVOLUTION, 2008). Anderson's words that everyone can appropriate Che remind me of a sequence I discussed in the previous chapter in which he says that "everybody can take him [Che] and interpret him as they want. Because that is a need that transcends ideology. […] Everybody can have their Che" (PERSONAL CHE, 2007).

Although he is speaking of appropriation in the first citation and of interpretation in the second, the logic behind them is very much similar: a mere observation of an almost *natural* fact, one that transcends *ideology*, that Che is available to everyone in the apparent – but false – *democracy* of mass consumption. About this issue, Casey is even more straightforward in saying that "you have this license to head out into the world and commercialize anything and we get this big globalization party" (CHEVOLUTION, 2008). What is hidden in the words of both Anderson and Casey is a con-fusion – pun intended – between, on one hand, the anticapitalist artists' unwritten agreement of distributing their imaginations free of copyright for other artists with similar aims to recreate as they want and, on the other hand, the capitalist appropriation of such artistic imaginations.

4.1.2 Fairey's appropriation

The sequence in *Chevolution* (2008) goes on with a number of people commenting on how Che's face is visible on all sorts of products – beer, soda, cigarette holders, bikinis, wallets, neck ties and baby socks –. Furthermore, the movie also brings snippets of people commenting on how Che's images are appropriated by cartoons and movies. For example, graphic designer Shepard Fairey says that "there are many things, devices, movies, cartoons, everything used as a sort of timeless hooks [sic] and I think that Che image has it" (CHEVOLUTION, 2008). After that, the movie brings one example of South Park in which Kyle is wearing a Che T-shirt, immediately followed by Ziff saying on camera: "so you have it as an object of humor, you have it being ridiculed on the Simpsons and in South Park, so, it is reinvented constantly" (CHEVOLUTION, 2008). Interestingly, the movie seems to be

conflating artistic imaginations of Che, be them remembrance-redemption actions or not, with capitalist appropriation, leaving no space for ambivalence.

For instance, Fairey says that the Che image "can exist […] as a critique of capitalism, in a pure form, for a very brief amount of time. The moment it is seen as having any value in terms of cultural currency that can be used to sell anything, it will be exploited" (CHEVOLUTION, 2008). Fairey contradicts himself by presupposing that a critique of capitalism in the form of an artistic imagination, created by a person that lives in a globalized capitalist world, can be "outside" of capitalism[170]. If the artist lived outside of capitalism, he or she, or they, would not go through the trouble of criticizing it, unless perhaps if motivated by solidarity with other peoples' plights. But, in a strict sense, to be outside of capitalism, it would not suffice to live in a socialist-inspired country since capitalism is a worldwide system, meaning that it affects even the territories without a market economy[171].

It is important to remember that capitalism is not only an economic system, but also, and more importantly, a system of dominance and alienation[172]. Hence, by presupposing an artistic imagination can be outside of capitalism for a brief period of time, Fairey is able to support his rhetoric of loss of purity, which, as I discuss in the Introduction and in Chapter Two, causes nostalgia for a lost past and immobility, leading, in turn, to the transformation of images into commercialized visibilities.

But the involvement of Fairey in the business of capitalist appropriation goes deeper. In his defense, Fairey says "that Che image had been exploited and I felt like throwing my version into the pot was both participating and commenting on 'hey, one more' [sic]" (CHEVOLUTION, 2008). Fairey is talking about his creation – or should we say "appropriation" (Picture 106) – of Korda's *Guerrillero Heroico* (Picture 24). What may seem

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[170] Critiques of capitalism and visions of emancipated humankind do exist, as I offer plenty of evidence in Chapter Two, but they are created from within global capitalism, from its conflicts and oppressive contradictions.

[171] Isleide Fontenelle (2002) points out the allure of capitalist global brands and merchandises: "in the countries where soviet socialism was in place for decades, the feeling was not different. The book *Golden Arches East* makes reference to a letter of a young East German who, when the wall came down, in 1989, went straight to a McDonald's with a frined. [...] [In his words], 'I stood outside just opening my eyes as wide as I could. I was shaking so. It was all so modern, white and [made] out of glass, the windows were so amazing, the roof was constructed in a way that's only familiar to us through western newspapers. Katje pulled me inside. I felt like a lost convict who'd just spent 25 years in prison. Katje had some money that we used to buy a Big Mac. I'm sure we behaved in such a way that everyone could see where we came from. Above all, I was in such a state of shock that I was stumbling over everything'" (WATSON, 1997, p.9 apud FONTENELLE, 2002, p.36). Fontenelle, after offering additional examples, comments: "The McDonald's, in this case, became the symbol of the so wished western modernity by that young person. [...] Indeed, I believe that the marketing images – of which I chose McDonald's as paradigmatic – are related with the ideal of happiness and well being produced in a war that was also a war of images: the Cold War" (FONTENELLE, 2002, p.37).

[172] I understand alienation in a broad sense, far beyond the merchandise fetish. I discuss the theory of alienation later in this chapter.

at first just another artist making use of a copyright-free image, for artistic purposes, to create an imagination, is in fact here just one more case of Fairey's appropriation of historical emancipatory artwork for his economic gain. I will explain why I am not calling this one imagination, but rather appropriation.

Picture 106 – Fairey's appropriation of Korda's *Guerrillero Heroico*.

Source: (CHEVOLUTION, 2008).

Without more context, we, as audience, are forced to take Fairey's pose of an anti-systemic artist that the documentary brings: "I started utilizing symbols that I thought had been seen a lot and highjacking them for my own use. My idea was to get people to question everything they are inundated with" (CHEVOLUTION, 2008). Fairey even goes so far to partially admit his economic interest, which seems to have served the purpose of making the point the filmmakers were interested in regarding capitalist appropriation: "as the creator of an image like that, you really have no choice but to either decide to participate in the capitalist aspect of it or to boycott that and have someone else profit from your creation" (CHEVOLUTION, 2008).

The problem, however, is that Fairey, according to Mark Vallen (2009), systematically appropriates historic artistic imaginations of emancipatory movements by copying art and design, throwing in his "obey" slogan or variations, and selling the resulting visibilities as artwork or in his T-shirt fashion line[173]. According to Vallen,

[173] Fairey's fashion line is now sold at https://obeyclothing.com/. However, searching the website in 2020, I could not find the examples Vallen mentioned in 2009. They must have been taken out of circulation.

> perhaps the most important falsehood concerning Fairey's behavior is that it is motivated by some grand theory of aesthetics or weighty political philosophy – but I'm afraid the only scheme at work is the one intended to make Fairey wealthy and famous. Some have, for whatever reason, imagined Fairey to be a progressive political figure, a perception certainly cultivated by the artist; but it's also not impossible to view Fairey's work as right-wing in essence, since it largely ransacks leftist history and imagery while the artist laughs all the way to the bank (VALLEN, 2009).

In his article, Vallen brings a plethora of examples of Fairey's "creations". Several of them were appropriations of emancipatory artistic imaginations: Soviet artist Vladmir Kozlinsky's 1919 *Meeting* (VALLEN, 2009), a 1968 Cultural Revolution poster (VALLEN, 2009), a 1968 Czechoslovakia's Prague Spring poster (VALLEN, 2009), 1917 Ralph Chaplin's *One Big Union* (VALLEN, 2009), a 1968 Pirkle Jones photograph of a Black Panther activist for the organization's photo essay (VALLEN, 2009), Chicano artist Rupert Garcia's 1969 *Down With Whiteness* (VALLEN, 2009), 1971 Young Lords Party *Liberate Puerto Rico Now!* (VALLEN, 2009), Cuban artist Rene Medero's 1972 poster of Che Guevara and Camilo Cienfuegos (VALLEN, 2009), Cuban artist Félix Beltran's 1971 *Libertad para Angela Davis* (VALLEN, 2009). Unfortunately, I do not have time to go over each case of appropriation but I recommend reading Vallen's article for detailed information. I would like to consider what Vallen has to say about the appropriation (Picture 108) of Medero's Che poster (Picture 107):

> Lincoln Cushing brought my attention to Shepard Fairey having plagiarized a famous artwork by Cuban poster maker Rene Mederos, who was one of the finest Cuban poster artists of the 1960s. The iconic works of Mederos first came to the attention of Americans in the early 1970s when Ramparts magazine published a series of his posters dealing with the subject of the Vietnam war.
> The stolen work in question, an untitled silk-screen poster from 1972, portrayed the revolutionaries Che Guevara and Camilo Cienfuegos as guerilla fighters in the mountains of Cuba. […]
> Fairey simply copied the Mederos poster in exacting detail, had it printed as a T-shirt for his OBEY clothing line, and sold it under the title of "Cuban Rider". Rene Mederos was not credited or acknowledged by Fairey in any way.
> Spotting Mederos' stolen poster image on the bombingscience.com website where Fairey's clothing line is sold, Cushing wrote the outlet the following e-mail:
> "Please be advised that the 'Cuban Rider' t-shirt you have listed for sale is a direct copy of a poster by Cuban artist Rene Mederos, and is an unauthorized violation of his work. I work closely with the Mederos estate and have represented them in several arrangements for use of his work. Given that your item is violating the intellectual property rights of another artist, you can do one of two things – either negotiate with Rene Mederos' estate for a fair royalty (assuming that they will grant it) or you can immediately stop production of this item and remove advertising from the public. Please let me know how you wish to proceed."
> Chris Broders, Fairey's partner in the OBEY clothing brand, wrote Cushing back to acknowledge the copyright violation, making the promise that the item would be

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However, in Fairey's commercial site the Che screen print (Picture 109) that appears in *Chevolution* (2008) is listed as "soldout". See https://obeygiant.com/prints/che-reissue/

> pulled from production and never sold again. A current check of the Bombing Science website shows that the illicit T-shirt has indeed been pulled, and in mid-August, 2007, Cushing was contacted by Fairey's bookkeeper, who asked where a royalty check for the Mederos estate should be sent. While Fairey's plagiarized version of the Mederos poster was pulled from production, the details of this controversy remained behind the scenes, until now. Fairey never publicly acknowledged – let alone apologized for – stealing the art of Rene Mederos (VALLEN, 2009).

Picture 107 – Rene Mederos' poster of Che Guevara and Camilo Cienfuegos.

Source: (VALLEN, 2009).

Picture 108 – Fairey's "creation".

Source: (VALLEN, 2009).

The problem with the Fairey's "creations" discussed by Vallen (2009) goes beyond merely taking from already existing artistic imaginations. After all, artists are used to borrowing and making references to other artists' creations. The problem is not respecting artists' unwritten understanding, as Cambre points out:

> There is a code of behavior amongst artists, particularly those working in political ways. Part of the concern artists such as Mark Vallen voice, is that with the soaring use, reuse and expropriation of images, the "relentless mining and distortion of history will turn out to be detrimental for art, leaving it hollowed-out and meaningless in the process" (Cohen) [sic]. As we have noted, this is similar to debates around the *Guerrillero Heroico*. Vallen and other artist/activists such as Lincoln Cushing, Josh MacPhee, and Favianna Rodriguez have publicly discussed the nature of plagiarism vis-à-vis subvertisement and parody. Cushing expresses the complex unwritten understanding between artists as being highly conditioned: "IF it's noncommercial, and IF one isn't claiming personal credit, and IF it's helping a progressive cause, it's pretty much OK to grab other art and use it" (online) [sic]. The model is less dominant than it was during the 1960s but has found new formulations in agreements such as those configured through CopyLeft and Creative Commons. Cushing sees the guidelines as a beginning, but feels they need to go farther to protect the history or enable the tracing of the trajectory of an artwork (Cohen) [sic].
>
> The issue for Cushing and others is in terms of a moral economy where an artist who intentionally copies artworks must not pretend to have been their originator, or attempt to deceive viewers. Not only do Cushing and Vallen advocate for a transparent process, but they also support the appropriation of existing art to maintain the spirit in which it was created. For example, if an image was created for political and nonprofit purposes, then its derivatives must remain free of copyright restrictions. Artists who would profit from an exploitation of images such as the *Guerrillero Heroico* are seen as sellouts that ally with those very forces that the image was seen to protest against (CAMBRE, 2012).

As cited before in this chapter, Fairey claims in *Chevolution* (2008) to "highjack" symbols that circulated a lot for his own use. By saying so, the artist may be making reference to "détournement", a tactic of the Situationist International of "turning expressions of the capitalist system and its media culture against itself" – as when slogans and logos are turned against their advertisers or the political status quo" (DÉTOURNEMENT, 2020). From the few examples I mentioned here, and from the many in Vallen's (2009) article, we can see that Fairey is not turning slogans and logos against advertisers or political status quo; rather, he seemed – at least at the time of Vallen's (2009) article – to be the one inserting his own "obey" logo and creating a façade of anti-system aesthetics while profiting from his "creations". In fact, following the already cited Vallen's (2009) comparison of Fairey's to right-wing appropriations of emancipatory symbols and methods – as I analyze in Chapter Two – I argue that Fairey stands far from détournement and much closer to its counterpart, "recuperation" – "the process by which politically radical ideas and images are […] co-opted, […] defused, […] and commodified within media culture and bourgeois society, and thus become interpreted through a neutralized, innocuous or more socially conventional perspective" (RECUPERATION, 2020).

4.2 ACTUALIZING ALIENATION THEORY

By now, I have contextualized enough the issue of capitalist appropriation of Che's images and the correspondent hegemonic rhetoric of meaninglessness. In this chapter, my aim is to analyze the alienation of Che's images, that is, conceptualizing alienation in a broad sense, beyond the mere merchandise fetish – which I also discuss in this chapter. But in order to be able to analyze examples of capitalist appropriation of Che's images under an open perspective of alienation, I have first to briefly revisit the Marxist theory of alienation. I also present my own Decolonial critical perspective on the subject.

As I pointed out in the Introduction and in Chapter Two, many had a rather rigid and narrow interpretation of Marx's works and concepts, being also influenced by ideas of progress and evolution. What I am arguing is that the crisis of Marxism is not only due to the ideological crisis brought about by the offensive of global capitalism and the end of the Soviet State, but also that the narrow-mindedness of dominant marxist views may have contributed to it. I am interested in offering my perspective in the ongoing debate of reassessing Marxism(s)[174], but this is a project that goes beyond the limits of this Dissertation. What I can do in this chapter, however, is to investigate how the dogmatic interpretation of Marxist's concepts, especially of the theory of alienation, might have contributed in gradually transforming Marxism(s) itself from a philosophy of emancipation into a doctrine of control, which ultimately reproduced alienation. Basically, dogmatic Marxisms dismissed alternative theories, "applied" the same set of concepts to different realities, had a static, mechanical approach to political challenges of emancipatory struggles[175], while also neglecting the importance of of ethical and aesthetical dimensions for emancipation.

4.2.1 Misinterpreting alienation theory and the crisis of Marxism(s)

[174] I sometimes use the word in the plural in a similar way of how feminist authors talk about different kinds of feminisms. The plural form highlights that Marxisms are not a monolithic thought or movement, and that they must accomodate self-critique.

[175] Throughout this Dissertation, I have been using the term emancipatory struggles or movements to encompass forms of fighting against different – but interrelated – oppressions. By doing so, I am rehabilitating the now outmoded class struggle as a concept, but being careful to position it horizontally towards other forms of oppression, not hierarchically. I return to this issue when presenting my contribution to alienation theory later in this chapter.

The marxist authors I have cited so far in this Dissertation – Benjamin, Trotsky, Che Guevara, Arendt, Bloch – became critical of dogmatic marxisms, especially that of Social Democracy and of Stalinism. In addition, some of them personally suffered for being critical of the dominant form of Marxism at their times, such as Trotsky, Che Guevara and Bloch. But even Benjamin suffered indirectly since he watched in growing despair Nazi-Fascism rise while enduring the orphanhood of a USSR turned towards itself[176]. For example, in Benjamin's Thesis X, he criticizes Stalinism for the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, between Nazi Germany and Stalinist USRR:

> At a moment when the politicians in whom the opponents of Fascism had placed their hopes are prostrate, and confirm their defeat by betraying their own cause, these observations are intended to extricate the political worldlings from the snares in which the traitors have entangled them. The assumption here is that those politicians' stubborn faithin progress, their confidence in their "base in the masses", and, finally, their servileintegration in an uncontrollable apparatus are three aspects of the same thing. This consideration is meant to suggest the high price our customary mode of thought will have to payfor a conception of history that avoids any complicity with the conceptof history to which those politicians still adhere(BENJAMIN *apud* LÖWY, 2005, p.68).

Here we can see that Benjamin is attempting to actualize Marxism, that is, to take a step back, regain critical perspective and reevaluate Marx's contributions and other people's interpretations of what Marxism should be. Benjamin points out that the reliance on a progressive view is interrelated with the dominance of the apparatus, state bureaucracy. And his words, pointing out the "high price" marxists would have to pay to "extricate" themselves, and Marxism, from the "snares", seem now prophetic, messianic, in pointing out challenges we are, in a way, still facing. And in Benjamin's Thesis XI, he offers a critique of the Social-Democratic interpretation of Marxism, particularly the replacement of alienation theory for bourgeois views of labor:

> The conformism which has marked the Social Democratsfromthe beginning attaches not only to their political tactics but to their economic views as well. It is one reasonfor the eventual breakdown of their party. Nothing has so corrupted theGermanworking class as the notion that it was moving with the current. It regarded
> technological development as the drivingforce of the stream with which it thought it was moving. From there it was but a step to the illusion that the factory work ostensibly furthering technological progress constituted a political achievement. The old Protestant work ethic was resurrected among German workers in secularized form. The Gotha Programme already bears traces ofthis confusion, defining labour as "the source of all wealth and all culture". Smelling a rat, Marx countered that "the man who possesses no other property than his labourpower" must ofnecessity become "the slave ofother men who have made themselves owners". Yet the confusion spreadand soon thereafterJosef Dietzgen proclaimed: "The saviour

[176] I am referring to the Socialism in a Single Country doctrine that became dogma following Lenin's death and the intensification of bureaucratism in the USSR. I am referring specifically to Benjamin's hope that the USSR would declare war on Nazi Germani (LÖWY, 2005, p.68).

> ofmodem times is calledwork. The […] [sic] perfecting […] [sic] ofthe labour process constitutes the wealth which cannow do what no redeemer has ever been able to accomplish". This vulgar-Marxist conception of the nature of labour scarcely considers the question of how its product could ever benefit the workers when they are beyond the means of those workers. It recognizes only the progress in mastering nature, not the retrogression of society; it already displays the technocraticfeatures that later emerge in Fascism. Among these is a conception of nature which differs ominouslyfromthe one advocated by socialist utopias prior to the Revolution of 1848. The new conception oflabour is tantamountto the exploitation of nature, which, with naive complacency, is contrasted with the exploitation ofthe proletariat. Compared to this positivistic view, Fourier'sfantasies, which have so often beenridiculed,prove surprisingly sound. According to Fourier, cooperative labour would increase efficiency to such an extent thatfour moons would illuminate the sky at night, the polar ice caps would recede, seawater would no longtaste salty, and beasts ofprey would do man's bidding. All this illustrates a kind oflabour which, farfrom exploiting nature, would help her give birth to the creationsthat now lie dormant in her womb. The sort of nature that (as Dietzgen puts it) "exists gratis", is a complement to the corrupted conception of labour (BENJAMIN *apud* LÖWY, 2005, pgs. 71,72).

Here Benjamin employs a metaphor of nature as a woman, as well as references to the womb and giving birth, all of which are problematic in terms of gender. In my opinion, that unfortunate metaphor weakens his own argument of a human relation to nature free from any form of oppression. Nonetheless, we can see that Benjamin criticizes German Social-Democracy for adopting bourgeois views of progress concerning labor and nature, which severely limited its emancipatory and internationalist potential to a mostly economicist programme, contributing to the failure of the revolution in Germany and in other European countries. But the problem, as Benjamin suggests, goes beyond since the conflation of Social-Democratic Marxism with evolutionary views turned the former into an ideological form of control, of alienation, ironically paving the way for Nazi-Fascism. Hence, the issue of alienation is not to be taken lightly. In fact, the theory of alienation is key to understanding and reevaluating Marxism in our contemporary global capitalist world.

4.2.2 The importance of alienation in Marx's work

Marx's alienation theory has been historically misunderstood, with reductionist views limiting it only to the tranformation of the workers' labour power into merchandise and commodity fetishism. Furthermore, the alienation theory in Marx's work has not received its due attention. According to Leandro Konder, "we have to point out that the Marxist alienation theory has been abandoned and its importance was underestimated by Marx's disciples" (KONDER, 2009, p.38).

One of the possible reasons for misinterpreting Marx's work is due to the late publication of the two books where he explicitly discussed the theory of alienation, *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* and the *German Ideology*. Written in 1844, when Marx was young, they were only posthumously published in 1932, leading "some marxists to believe that Marx had abandoned the concepts he used in his youth studies in favor of more scientific ones associated with his maturity" (KONDER, 2009, p.37). The same illusory division between the Young Marx and the Old Marx is criticized by Nildo Vianna (2004), who identifies conceptual interrelations between texts of different moments of Marx's life:

> The argument of an irreconciable opposition between the "Young Marx" and the "Mature Marx" is based on an ahistorical analysis. In fact, it means analysing the "Young Marx" based on the "Mature Marx", that is, there is the expectation of finding in the former all the theories of the latter in their most complete forms. But, since they are still in formation, they are labelled "non-Marxist". However, it is not the future that explains the past, but the past that helps explain the future. A thought can only be understood through its historicity (VIANNA, 2004).

Vianna is precisely criticizing a progressive view of Marx's work, that is, positing a later stage in Marx' life as the more complete period that replaces the previous one. He also excavates Marx' youthful texts and identify conceptual interrelations that Marx would work on in later periods of his life, especially the issue of alienation. One of the works cited by Vianna (2004) is Erich Fromm's book *Marx's Concept of Man* (2004), which makes a similar point in stressing how alienation remained a key concept throughout Marx's work:

> It is of the utmost importancefor the understanding of M arx to see how the concept of alienation was and remained the focal point in the thinking of the young Marx who wrotethe *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts,* and of the "old" Marx who wrote *Capital.* […] The followingpassages, one from the *Manuscripts,* the other from *Capital,* ought to makethis continuity quite clear:
> "This fact simply implies that the object produced by labor, its product, now stands opposed to it as an *alien being,* as a *power independent* of the producer. The product of labor is labor which has been embodied in an object and turned into a physical thing; this product is an *objectification* of labor. The performance of work is at the same time its objectification. The performance of work appears in the sphere of political economy as a *vitiation* of the worker, objectification as a *loss* and as *servitude to the object,* and appropriation as *alienation*".
> This is what Marx wrote in *Capital:* "Within the capitalist system all methods for raising the social productiveness of labor are brought about at the cost of the individual laborer; all means for the development of production transform themselves into means of domination over, and exploitation of, the producers; they mutilate the laborer into a fragment of a man, degrade him to the level of an appendage of a machine, destroy every remnant of charm in his work and turn it into a hated toil; they estrange from him the intellectual potentialities of the labor process in the same proportion as science is incorporated in it as an independent power" (FROMM, 2004, pgs.41-42).

Despite the unfortunate title of the book – once again, we have the issue of *man* standing for *human* –, I think that Fromm gave convincing textual evidence of how the theory of alienation is important for Marx regardless of the period of his life. Indeed, I argue that alienation was so important an issue for Marx that it probably motivated him into analysing how it was created and reproduced in capitalism. In fact, Jorge Grespan points out that fetish, one of the many names of alienation, is conceptually present throughout the three volumes of *Capital*: "the concept of fetishism is key to understand Marx's work as whole. […] He speaks of fetishism only in the first chapter, about commodity and money fetishisms, and then only in the third book. However, fetishism is an organizing idea of Marx's text as a whole" (GRESPAN, 2019).

4.2.3 Redefining alienation in a plural way

Having acknowledged the significance of alienation theory for Marx's thought, the next step is to define alienation itself. It is important to redefine alienation in a plural way to avoid economicist interpretations that focus on the transformation of Che's image into commodity and forget its social implications in terms of power relations.

According to Fromm, alienation or "estrangement" means that an individual does not experience oneself as the acting agent in one's life, but thatthe world – nature, others, and oneself – remain alien, that is, it is a social relation with apparent separation between subjectivity and objectivity, with objects superseding the subject (FROMM, 2004, p.37). We can see by now that there are several facets regarding alienation in capitalist society and it becomes increasingly complex to articulate them into a single definition. Despite the complexity, Leandro Konder contributed with a clear and plural definition based on Henry Lefebvre's classification:

> Examining the text of the *Manuscripts* of 1844, Henri Lefebvre noticed that the concept of alienation was described in different forms: a) the alienation of the worker reduced to the condition of object by the strange power that emerges during work; b) the alienation of the productive activity, that is, of work, which becomes more fragmented [as it becomes specialized]; c) the alienation of the human being towards the human kind, the reduction of the human to the satisfaction of animal needs, hindering the specifically human needs; d) the alienation of humans towards nature (LEFEBVRE, Henri *apud* KONDER, 2009, p.47).

The first facet of alienation is the economic one caused by the social relation called Capital: by buying labor power from workers and using it to produce surplus-value, capitalists

separate workers from their own labor power and from the product of labor; everything seems to become a mere exchange of commodities, of objectified elements. The second facet of alienation refers to what Adam Smith called the Social Division of Labor, that is, the growing fragmentation of work as handcrafting gave way to manufacturing and, in turn, to automated factories. As a result, the individual worker has less and less control over his or her own work, turning them from creators to appendixes of machines. Although the first facet remains the same in general terms, the second facet is affected by changes in technology and work process. For instance, some corporations have announced their intention of promoting home office after the COVID-19 pandemic, probably as way of reducing costs with workers' transportation and office equipment since now administrative people working from home will be responsible for suplying their own means.

The third facet, in my opinion, needs to be better defined since it actually involves two different subtypes of alienation[177]. One subtype is the alienation of the human being as individual from the human kind which is caused by oppressive dehumanizing – be it associated with class, race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, identity, physical and/or mental difference, among others –. Dehumanizing ideologies separate humanity in "us" against "them", those considered human and those considered subhuman[178], respectively. As expressions of power relations, alienating ideologies usually also legitimate hyper-exploitation of labor power. For instance, Quijano discusses how race intersected with class in the unpaid hyperexploitative work of indigenous and African peoples in Latin America (QUIJANO, 2000). In turn, Lugones responds to Quijano by highlighting how the non-gendering of indigenous and African peoples contributed with the colonial dehumanization (LUGONES, 2007).

There are many more examples of oppressive practices and discourses in our contemporary world: the killing of black men and women in the United States[179] and in Brazil; abuse, rape and femicide against women, and particularly against black women;

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[177] Part of my decolonial contribution to alienation theory lies in highlighting the importance of different forms of oppression and of dehumanizing ideologies for capitalism; and also in stressing the relevance of the psychological impacts of alienation. Such issues have been discussed by anticolonial, postcolonial and decolonial authors. However, the relevance here is in creating a bridge between Marxism(s) and Decolonial struggle through alienation theory.

[178] Such oppressive alienation is probably more extreme when associated with the armed and security forces. Regarding this issue, it would be interesting to contrast the film *Joyeux Noël* (2005), about the spontaneous 1914 Christmas truce between German, English and French soldiers, with the episode "Men Against Fire" of the *Black Mirror* TV series about an implant that distorts the perception of soldiers to alleviate their consciousness into commiting genocide.

[179] As I write this chapter, disruptive actions sprout worldwide in protest of the murder of George Floyd by police and against racism.

prejudice and violence towards LGBTQ people; the killing of indigenous activists and of landless rural workers; xenophobic discourse and practices against immigrants and migrants. Such examples of alienation shatter globalization's promise of sharing (post)modernity's prosperity and guaranteeing basic civil rights in the neocolonial countries. What we see is that the hegemonic globalization discourse veils in a renewed promise of sharing *progress* new and refined necropolitical ways of oppression and exploitation.

The other subtype refers to the the reduction of the human to the satisfaction of animal needs. But the way it is expressed by Konder (2009), the concept runs the risk of being narrowly interpreted in an economicist way, such as understanding that this facet of alienation is expressable only in the consumption of commodities. In fact, I argue there is also a complimentary psychological element to be considered. Beyond the legitimate guarantee of basic human rights, which should not be confused with mere access to commodities, there is also the control over our human creative potential, understood here in the Arendtian and Blochian senses. For working people, although there are also intersections to be considered[180], most of our energy is employed in working to get the money to buy commodities to reproduce our labor power, and, at the end of the day, there is not much energy left to dedicate to the public sphere of action and to the expression of our creative potential. We are also all taught from a young age to conform to standards and to think inside, rather than outside, the box. Even when creativity is socially stimulated, it is usually associated with innovations in work and productivity. In addition, dehumanizing discourses and practices have an impact on the psyche of dehumanized individuals, hurting their confidence and belief in their own creativity and potential.

The fourth type of alienation mentioned by Konder (2009) concerns human kind's relation to nature. Living in a world troubled by climate change, agrobusiness pressure over ecological reservations, land, water and air pollution, and now a pandemic that forces us to stop and think about our collective impact in the planet, the issue of alienation of humans and nature should be self-explanatory. Part of the problem comes from trying to replicate modernity's mass consumption worldwide through a capitalist global economy, which puts

[180] For instance, a working woman who is also responsible for domestic chores and taking care of the family's elderly has even less energy for herself. In addition, we can see how intersection between forms of oppression plays a role in hyper exploitation by considering the statistics of an IPEA research (RETRATO, 2011): the average income of a white woman in Brazil in 2009 was 64% of the average income of a white man, a black man's average income was 55%, and a black woman's average income was only 36%. Such economic disparity translates in the social reality in terms of an even more intense alienation, since a black woman, for example, has to accumulate jobs in order to try to reduce the economic gap in pay.

enormous pressure in all ecological systems[181] in the planet, showing once again that such (post)modern standards of living are not sustainable in a global scale and that while some people in some spaces might relish them, their privilege is based on the vast majority not being able to do so. Part of the problem is also epistemological, coming from not seeing our species[182] as part of nature and trying to exert dominance over it.

Another important form of alienation if that of mode of representation, a concept coined by Jorge Grespan. The significance of his concept lies in actualizing, in the Benjaminian sense, a holistic facet of alienation that was misunderstood by several reasons, including the late publication of books two and three of *Capital.* By excavating Marx's manuscripts for the third book of *Capital*, Grespan analyzes the use of words *Vorstellung* and *Darstellung* in the sense of a theatrical representation, leading him to propose the concept of the mode of representation as complimentary to the well-known concept of mode of production:

> Marx believed that capital, in a "mystic" way, is the opposite case [compared to Hegel's dialectics] of a "subject" that roots itself in "substance" and whose forms must be presented, because of that, according to how they unfold in the social reality of the modern world. The economic agents, who see themselves as fully free and self-determined, actually have their subjectivity conditioned by the great "subject", capital, which commands their actions in such a way that they look simply as the result of free will. Such agents can be compared, however, to actors "representing" a theatrical play in accordance with how the scenes are supposed to unfold, which are "presented" by a plot that is only partially known by them. The way how the actors see or "represent" in their minds such performance – as freedom, not acting or improvisation – is part of the plot itself. However, they are prisoners of such relentless "presentation" […]. As the plot unfolds, the same actors represent different roles at the same time and no one leaves the stage.
> They perform, in fact, the "presentation" of the "productive forces of labor as productive forces of capital"; such inversion creates in them [the economic agents] an "inverted representation", a "transposed consciousness" (GRESPAN, 2019, pgs.13-14).

Grespan's conceptualization of Marx's mode of representation is relevant to discuss how global corporations have tried to appropriate Che's images, an issue that is often forgotten by authors who discuss the reification of Che's images. I return to this issue later in this chapter. Before we start analyzing the alienation of Che's images, in order to avoid conceptual confusion, it is also relevant to discuss two other names associated with alienation: reification and fetish.

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[181] The UFSC TV's documentary *Aguavida* (2015) discusses how mass production and mass consumption puts pressure on drinkable water reservoirs. The documentary also brings interviews of an indigenous leaders who point out how oppression against ancestral peoples interrelates with alienation of nature.

[182] The economic, political and social consequences of our specism are discussed in the documentary *Earthlings* (2005), which is narrated by vegan activist and actor Joaquin Phoenix.

4.2.4 Reification and fetish

The concept of reification was introduced by Georg Lukács in 1923 as a way of actualizing, in the Benjaminian sense, "the marxist theory of alienation through its perceptible traces in *Capital*, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, *Holy Family* and to then known excerpts of *The German Ideology*" (KONDER, 2009, p.39). Furthermore, Konder points out that Lukács characterized reification as a "process through which a certain material relationship between humans is dissimulated by an 'illusory objectivity', assuming the form of a 'thing'. Thing in Latin is *res*: hence, reification" (KONDER, 2009, p.39). As we can see, reification expresses the invertion of the subjective and objective elements in a power relation and, thus, *it is not a separate concept but rather another way of expressing the concept of alienation*. Considering Lukács project of actualizing alienation to Marx's broad understanding of the concept, it is very ironical that authors such Escalante (2014) use the term reification in an economicist way, trying to reduce it back to mean only commodity fetishism.

The other term that expresses alienation is fetish. It is usually used in reference to commodity fetishism or money fetishism. Marx defines both in the first chapter of the first book of *Capital*. In summary, what Marx says is that, in the capitalist mode of production, the owner of the factory possesses the raw materials and machinery but production can only be achieved by hiring the labor power of workers, the only commodity they have to offer. In turn, the workers receive a salary that is barely enough to pay for their subsistance, making sure their labor power is reproduced – there are also several forms of unpaid work necessary for labor power reproduction, such as domestic labor. During production, the physical and mental energy of the workers is able to transform the condensed energy of the materials and machinery into products, which contain not only the correspondent value of raw materials, machinery and salaries, but also a surplus value. When the products are commercialized, the surplus value is realized. The surplus value appropriated by industrial capitalists is then partially distributed with other categories of the capitalist class, such as the commercial capitalists, the owners of land and the banks. For capitalists, hence, fetishism translates into

how profit, ground rent, capital rent and other economic indicators – "objects" – hide the subjectivity of capitalists in the social relation of alienation.

In turn, for workers, fetishism lies – pun intended – in how their lives seem to be driven by commodities, those that they need to consume in order to survive and those they create but are never able to consume. Seeing themselves as individual consumers, they are not only politically alienated from the other members of their class, but they have difficulty in seeing how – by participating in the system – they are ironically (re)producing their own subjugated condition of dispossessed of the means of production.

There is also a decolonial element in the etymology of the word fetish[183]. According to the Online Etymology Dictionary, fetish meant circa 1610 "material object regarded with awe as having mysterious powers or being the representative of a deity that may be worshipped through it", coming from the Portuguese word *feitiço*, "'charm, sorcery, allurement', noun use of an adjective meaning 'artificial'" (FETISH, 2020).*Feitiço*, a curious choice of words by the Portuguese invaders that compared the ancestral religions they encountered with the persecuted witches that were the cultural heirs of the long destroyed European ancestral religions. In anthropological terms, fetishistic religion and art are concepts charged with eurocentrism because they merely build upon the European invaders' estrangement of the invaded cultures, exoticizing them as superstitious and primitive.

Besides an expression of a colonial power relation, the prejudice towards the cosmovision of ancestral religions and of ancestral art comes from the Europeans' difficulty in appreciating the non-separation between subject and object, the non-separation between the divine and the secular, and the non-separation between mundane life and cosmogony in the ancestral cultures they came into contact. After all, European peoples formed notions of religious, cultural and national identities based on the persecution and destruction of their own ancestral religions and practices[184]. Hence, as I say in Chapter Two, I do not use the word fetish to refer to art or religion. That is why I prefer, instead, cosmovision or shamanic vision

[183] I would like to thank Professor Jair Tadeu da Fonseca for bringing this issue to my attention.

[184] This is a topic I am interested in continuing researching in the future. Therefore, I cannot offer a substantial theoretical discussion at this moment. I can only point out elements I plan on investigating further in the future. I am interested in investigating how notions of Europeaness and of Modernity not only resulted from oppressing the invaded ancestral peoples outside of Europe, but also of oppressing ancestrality inside of Europe. I think it would be interesting to create a "dialogue" between William Pietz (1996) and Marie Mondzain (2005), that is, between critical views of the colonial aspect of fetish and the Bizantine iconoclastic dispute. It would also be interesting to consider Silvia Federici's (2009) analysis of how the persecution of women witches contributed to the formation of capitalism.

when discussing the *as-if-ness* of Che's images. I am not sure how aware Marx[185] was of the etymology, but it certainly is ironical to choose fetish, a word that came to be used to alienate the colonials from the supposedly civilized European subjects, to name the alienation of European individuals under capitalism.

4.3 ANALYZING THE ALIENATION OF CHE'S IMAGES

Having conceptualized alienation in a plural way, we can now start analyzing the alienation of Che's images. Now, we are conceptually ready to go beyond the obvious pointing out of capitalist appropriations of Che's images and actually consider how they contribute to different forms of alienation, understood as power relations in a global capitalist society[186].

Authors that have a reductionist perspective towards Che's images, based on their capitalist appropriation – such as Llosa, Casey, Escalante and Kemp[187] –, barely scratch the surface of the complex alienation of Che's images. Despite their differences, they converge in denouncing the fragmentation between Che – the historical individual – and his image, and of the capitalist appropriation of the latter. The problem is that their analyses do not go deeper into discussing how the different forms of capitalist appropriation of Che compare to one another and of their societal alienatory implications. It seems they are much more interested in stressing, arguably to the point of celebrating[188], the supposedly political irrelevance of Che's image in the Twentieth-First Century.

Such authors deliberately ignore or downplay the importance of contemporary artistic imaginations that recreate Che and of disruptive actions that invoke him. Hence, I argue that they end up negating the complexity of the images they set out to analyze, violating them in the process in order to make them fit their intended conclusions. The diversity, nuance and complexities of Che's images require an open approach that is based on a plural and critical perspective, one that strives to retain ambivalence in theory itself – not only in the

[185] There is an ongoing debate wether Marx was eurocentric or not. I definitely am interested in contributing to this debate but will do so in a future research work since it goes beyond the limits of this dissertation.

[186] To fully understand and discuss globalized capitalism, it would be necessary to include other marxist authors that have discussed capitalist transformations in the last seventy years. However, that clearly goes beyond the limits of this dissertation and I plan to return to the topic in a later article or book.

[187] Regarding Kemp, what I say here is more directed to the ending of his chapter about Che, not about the whole chapter.

[188] Except for Kemp who seems to be troubled by the capitalist appropriation of Che's images.

images analyzed. By negating what threatens their rhetoric of irremediable loss and meaninglessness – artistic recreations, disruptive actions and the ambivalence of what I call the phantasmagorical gaze of Che's images – and by highlighting capitalist appropriations of Che's images, their analyses end up alienating Che's images from from their politicizing potential[189]. In other words, in the theoretical realm, such approach negates, separates and freezes Che's images, turning them into mere visibilities, in the Mondzanian sense.

Aditionally, we can understand the violence of such reductionist approach by considering its negation of Arendt's (1998) concept of action – which I discuss in Chapter Two: by precluding what Arendt calls action – the only true human activity – in relation to Che's images, such reductionist approach makes them only exist in terms of labor and work – Arendt's (1998) other concepts related with the private sphere –. In other words, such approach alienates the image of Che from the public sphere and rules that it can only be relevant in the consumerist private sphere of the individual, the alienated subject.

One aspect of the alienation of Che's images that, as far as I know, no author has discussed, is analyzing the global capitalist corporations' attempts of appropriating Che's images, contrasting them with small and medium capitalists' appropriation, and pointing out their societal alienatory implications. Most authors that discuss capitalist appropriations of Che's images focus on the commerce of memorabilia and T-shirts, either ignoring or not giving importance to global capitalist corporations' appropriations. Ziff (2006), for example, has one chapter about the issue but she juxtaposes corporate appropriation attempts – such as Magnum's Cherry Guevara, Taco Bell's Chihuahua and Smirnoff's Vodka – with small or medium capitalist ones, as if they were equivalent. Kemp (2012), as mentioned before, focus on one shirt he bought on an online Che memorabilia store. And Casey (2009), despite mentioning the Smirnoff appropriation attempt, gives more attention to the selling of Che T-shirts in different countries and to various small/medium tourist projects around places where Guevara spent some time of his short life.

[189] Although Kunzle focuses on the Che-Christ fusion and is more critical of capitalist appropriations, by considering that Che's images are only politically relevant nowaday when associated with liberal values such as "justice" and "peace", he also alienates – at least partially – the images from their politicizing potential.

4.3.1 The Che brand and global franchising operation

Nonetheless, Casey's arguments are a bit more elaborate since he develops the idea that Che has become a political and economical brand, citing as evidence Alberto Korda's 2000 lawsuit against Smirnoff's appropriation, the copyrighting of Korda's photo, and Diana Díaz[190] selling licenses for companies outside Cuba to commercialize memorabilia with his visibility on. Casey goes so far as to exaggerate that this has become a global franchising operation:

> In fact, TheCheStore.com is only part of what is fast becoming a global franchising operation – call it Che Inc. A Google Search will bring up online offerings of officially licensed products bearing the Korda image from merchandisers in the U.K., Holland, Australia and other places. How is this unfettered expansion consistent with promoting Che's values?
> Diana Díaz says the ventures are not profit-making but rather are a way to finance the global legal battle she has undertaken against the misuse of her father's image. Citing a case against a big Mexican clothing company, she said, "you know, if we use lawyers in Cuba, it's easy, but when we contract them in Mexico, it's $450 an hour". In Norway, she said, her lawyer failed to win an injuction against a conservative outfit that had satirized Che but still demanded a $25,000 fee. "So what we do is we sell licenses and with the licenses, we pay lawyers. That's how it works" (CASEY, 2009, p.324).

In an online search as proposed by Casey I found only six results of online stores claiming to offer official licensed Che Guevara products – three from the USA, one from India, and two from the Kuwait and Cambodia subsidiaries of the same online store. I also tried, but was unable, to find financial information about how much money is involved in producing and selling Che memorabilia worlwide. It seems that eleven years since Casey's book was published, the so called "global franchising operation" should be much larger than it is. Surely it would have made the cover of several business magazines and perhaps even become a case of entepreneurship studied by MBA students. Since it is not, it is clear he exaggerated, perhaps to couple the word "brand" with "franchising", two buzzwords of the capitalist corporate world.

However, Cambre methodically deconstructs Casey's brand argument. According to her, "after examining this image's role within Cuba, Cuban use outside of Cuba, and its commercial and non-commercial uses by non-Cubans, I conclude that attempts at branding products with this particular image fail, and therefore its coyprighting is irrelevant" (CAMBRE, 2012, p.64). Concerning Casey's argument that the copyrighting of Korda's photo was evidence of how Che had became a capitalist brand, Cambre counterargues that it

[190] Diana Díaz is the daughter of Alberto Díaz Gutiérrez.

was a way of protecting documents, photos and books that were considered to be part of Cuban cultural heritage, following the end of the Soviet Union: “Guevara’s widow Aleida March created the Che Guevara Studies Centre, to house photos and documents salient to Guevara’s historical legacy [and to prevent] the ‘improper use’ or ‘for commercial ends’” (CAMBRE, 2012, p.72).

Likewise, regarding Diana Díaz rights over Korda’s photo, Cambre argues that her rights must be understood in terms of Cuban copyright policy – “when an institution pays a salary for someone to occupya post that permits their production of a work, he or sheis recognized as the creator or author but the work isproperty of the institution” and that if the work “becomesiconic or emblematic, it grows to be part of the nationalheritage” (CAMBRE, 2012, p.73). In addition, basing herself on scholarly definitions of brand, she argues that Casey contradicts himself by saying that Che is a brand while also claiming that his image means many different things:

> The notions of brand, trademark and logo are oftenbandied about interchangeably with respect to the*Guerrillero Heroico* by those who would see its copyrighting as an appropriation of the image as a‘mark’ of something. For the purposes of this article, Irefer to logo as a graphic, and logotype as the lettering/ words: together logo and logotype form a trademarkfollowing the legal discourse. Brand then, refers tothe entire package of graphics, name, messaging andcommunications, visual identity, marketing strategies,and individual experiences with the business, productor service. […]
> From the beginning, Casey positions the Cuban revolution as “a top-selling cultural product, an international brand, and […] its ultimate expression: the Che-T shirt” (88). In a puzzling shift however he also writes: “Che was already available in 1968 in a wide variety of political brands” (129). Together these statements seem nonsensical: that the Cuban revolution is a brand represented by a Che T-shirt but that Che is simultaneously a variety ofdifferent political brands. If we make note of the brandliterature alone, this would be at odds with the veryraison d’être of branding. The representing of “differentpolitical brands” clouds our understanding of what Cherepresents, thus compromising clarity and credibility.Erdem and Swait’s study establishes that, “the clarity (i.e.,lack of ambiguity) of the product information containedin a brand is an antecedent to brand credibility” (192).It would seem the image is behaving in a way that isdifficult to commercialize according to a brand strategy,and therefore difficult to categorize simplistically as a
> brand (CAMBRE, 2012, pgs.68, 70-71).

By resorting to the accepted scholarship regarding capitalist brands as evidence of Casey’s misuse of the term, Cambre savvily points out to his theoretical malabarism of alienating Che’s images from any other possibility rather than capitalist appropriation. Indeed, Casey never defines logo, logotype, brand and product, confusing his reader into thinking that Korda’s photo can be all of them at the same time.

4.3.2 Global corporate branding and appropriation attempts

The way to fully understand the inadequacy of brand as explanation for Che's imagetic return is to consider the roles of branding in global corporate capitalism: to sell an image associated with a specific brand, and *to hide the corporation behind the image of the brands it owns*. Regarding the former, Isleide Fontenelle discusses the importance of corporate branding in selling an image in her Marxist analysis of McDonald's:

> The increasing importance of the brand can be explained […] by the technical advancements that allowed a homogeneity of industrialized products. […] The technical progress […] has also caused more competition since the novelty of a product soon expires as it is copied by the competition with a surprising speed. That makes the life cycle of a product to be ever shorter, demanding a constant change by the companies.
> Despite the transformations that a given company endures in terms of products or services, what stays the same is the brand. Hence, its importance is not only competitive […] but also of permanence in the market, regardless of the changes. […] After the Second World War, there is a new focus on the "image of the brand": the association of the brand not to the physical functions and features of the products or services, but with the values, ideals, dreams and desires of a society in a certain time. […] The purpose behind brands is to be able to present how the customers see themselves or how they would like to see themselves [while also presenting] an "image" of how the brand wants to be perceived by the customers. […]
> The "image of the brand" is built by a combination of images, such as packaging, symbols, slogans and jingles circulated by different media – television, radio, cinema, newspapers, magazines, billboards. […] It is a complex symbol which demans that all the different images it operates with be coherent among themselves, carefully refering to the main imagetic with which the brand wishes to be identified with (FONTENELLE, 2002, pgs.178-179).

The other role of branding in the global capitalist world is to hide the corporations behind the images of the brands they own. Unlike the street vendors and shop owners[191] that sell Che memorabilia, or even the small/medium companies that are responsible for their production, corporations operate worldwide, having hundreds of thousands of employees and cashing in billions of dollars every year. To be able to sustain their voratiousness globally, they find themselves often entangled in an alienatory web that may involve tax evasion, financial crimes, misoginy and abuse, hyperexploitative forms of labor, environmental destruction, backlash against activists, etc. Hence, brands have an important role in terms of shielding the image of the corporation that owns them from the diverse forms of alienation – legal or illegal – they consistently cause.

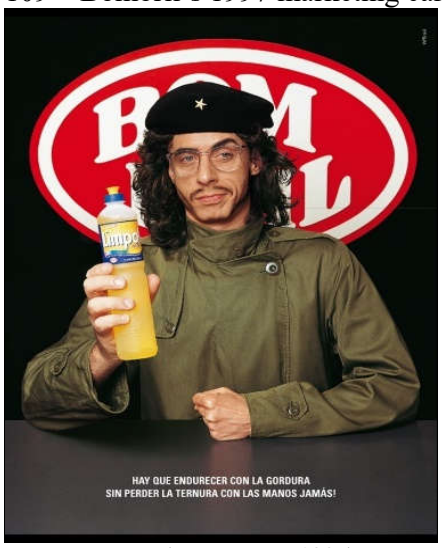
[191] Although street vendors, shop owners, artisans and owners of small "factories" where T-shirts are made by manual screen printing are not, in a strict Marxist sense, capitalist, they are often banded together with bigger companies and even with global corporations that appropriate Che's images. This lack of scholarly rigor causes conceptual confusion. We have to bear in mind that in capitalism, older forms of production coexist with the capitalist mode of production.

In other words, the relationship between corporations and brands can be considered an example of Marx's mode of representation as the corporations – the most complex subjective element in the alienationatory social relationships of our time – try to erase their vicious footprints both through the objectified images of their brands and through a corporate culture that *theatrically represents* an apparent latitude of their directors in pursuing ethical or humanitarian forms of capitalism.

4.3.2.1 Bombril S.A.

I discuss four attempts of appropriation of Che's image by corporations before analyzing the film *Che!* (CHE, 1969). The first one was a 1997 marketing campaign created by ABA Filmes for the corporation Bombril S.A. to promote the brand Bombril and the detergent Limpol. Operating only in Brazil[192], this company negotiates its shares in the stock market, had around US$ 238, 600 in revenue in 2019, employs 2327 employees and, despite its name, produces over twenty different products (BOMBRIL, 2020). The marketing campaign was created in 1997, the thirtieth anniversary of Che Guevara's death, and consisted on a poster (Picture 109) and a TV commercial (BOMBRIL, 2011).

Picture 109 – Bombril's 1997 marketing campaign.



Source: (BOMBRIL, 1997).

[192] Although this corporation is smaller than the other ones I mention in this chapter, and although it operates only in Brazil, it was controled by an Italian group between the 1990s and 2003 (SILVA, 2016). "The company is currently controled by the founder's son, Ronaldo Sampaio Ferreira, but also has minority share holders such as the investor Silvio Tini, the pension fund PREVI and the National Development Bank – BNDES" (SILVA, 2016).

On both poster and TV commercial, we can see the actor Carlos Moreno – who was the brand's official face for over thirty years – in a sort of parody of Che Guevara. The poster reads a parody of a saying attributed to Che: "*hay que endurecer con la gordura sin perder la ternura con las manos jamás!*" (BOMBRIL, 1997). In the TV commercial, Bombril's Che reads the text in an atrocious *portunhol* as a parody version of Carlos Puebla's *Hasta Siempre Comandante* plays in the background: "*Viva, Limpol, el comandante de la limpeza*. […] *Adelante, Limpol, a todos los lares de las compañeras*" (BOMBRIL, 2011). Bombril's Che urges rows of Limpol detergent bottles to march on, as he addresses the housewives, the intended public of the brand. In addition, despite its brand image of cleanliness, Bombril S.A.'s former president Joamir Alves was accused of financial crimes concerning R$2.2 billion, "the highest amount of money laundering involving a single company in Brazil" (CRISTO, 2009).

4.3.2.2Pepsico

Another global corporate attempt of appropriating Che's image was 1998 Taco Bell marketing campaign in the United States. The campaign started in 1997 with a Chihuahua as the brand's mascott. In the context of the burguer wars, the intense competition among fast-food corporations at the time, Taco Bell released its 5-minute long Television adverstisement, in which the Chihuahua wears a black beret (Picture 110), announcing G Day as July the 8th, 1998. The letter G stands for *gorditas*[193], a traditional Mexican food, and the name of the ad is a reference to D Day. Setting, costume and props all reinforce the bellicose metaphor while Peter Waller's – then president of Taco Bell – speech, celebrating Taco Bell sales, is filled with revolutionary references:

[193] According to Hernandez, "walk into a Taco Bell to order a gordita, and what you get will bear little resemblance to the traditional Mexican dish of the same name" (HERNANDEZ, 2017).

Picture 110 – Taco Bell's Chihuahua Che.

Source: (BAKER, 2014).

> Hello, Taco Bell revolutionary leaders. As commander and chief of the revolution, let me be the first to say 'congratulations on a job well done'. […] Together, we have revolutionized how people think about Taco Bell. In fact, to date, over 150 million gorditas are being enjoyed by Taco patriots all across the country, which means that we not only captured peoples' hearts and minds, but their stomachs too. […] *Hasta la vista,*whopper! *Viva gorditas* and *viva* Taco Bell! (BAKER, 2014).

Waller's speech is a marketing strategy disguised in patriotic and parodic revolutionary words to defeat Burger King, the top seller at that moment. The hideous ad also brings two sequences with mise-en-scène that makes reference to socialist inspired states, such as the former members of the USSR where, in 1998, capitalism was back in full swing. In the first one, the Che Chihuahua speaks on a microphone – in Che or Fidel style – in front of a great crowd. On the walls of the buildings, we can see large red banners with raised fists holding Taco Bell's gordita (Picture 111). And, in the other sequence, a crowd of gordita eaters march on with red flags following the Che Chihuahua and convince a man eating a burger to eat a gordita instead.

Picture 111 – Reference to socialist inspired states.

Source: (BAKER, 2014).

Taco Bell's aggressive marketing campaign, filled with a luscious variety of appropriation – of Che's image, of socialist symbols, of a Mexican traditional food – probably suited well the militaristic culture in the United States and the 1990s hegemonic globalization discourse under U.S. leadership. But Latinos and Latinas were outraged by the campaign and mobilized to stop it:

> The leader of a coalition of 50 Latino groups on Monday called for a boycott against Taco Bell […] for what he sees as ethnically offensive television commercials that use a Chihuahua that speaks Spanish. "To equate a dog with an entire ethnic population is outrageous, despicable, demeaning and degrading", said Mario Obledo, president of the Sacramento-based California Coalition of Hispanic Organizations […] and noted civil rights activist (REYES, 1998).

Following the protest, the campaign was canceled. But we can see how the adverstiment tried to create a humorous yet seductive narrative for its product, the gordita, and for the Taco Bell brand. Although the company has the same name of its brand, it is actually owned by Pepsico, along with other brands such as Pizza Hut and KFC. Employing 263 000 employess worldwide, and having a revenue in 2019 of U$67 billion, Pepsico has one hundred and sixty-four records of different forms of violations in the Violation Tracker Parent Company Summary since 2000: fourty-four recorded employment-related offenses, twenty-seven environmental-related offenses, ninety-one safety-related offenses and two consumer-protection-related offenses (VIOLATION TRACKER PEPSICO, 2020). In addition, the NGO Rainforest Action Network denounced in 2017 that

> Two years of field investigations show that PepsiCo continues to turn a blind eye to child labor, worker exploitations, land rights violations and the destruction of the last place on Earth where Sumatran elephants, rhinos, tigers and orangutans live together in the wild. This destruction continues each day in the operations of its business partner Indofood and its top suppliers.
> PepsiCo is earning billions by turning Conflict Palm Oil – a cheap and controversial ingredient – into its snacks sold across the globe. Let's be clear PepsiCo's CEO Indra Nooyi, its corporate executives and its biggest backers – Bank of America, JPMorgan Chase, Vanguard, BlackRock and TIAA – are profiting from the abuse of people and the planet.
> From Indonesia to the US, we are saying we won't stand for corporate profiteering at the expense of healthy communities and workers, clean water, standing forests, and a stable climate (TILLACK, 2017).

Once we see past the image of the brand, we can actually see the global capitalist corporations' *recipee* of growth: hyperexploit labor and externalize costs as much as possible in decolonial countries[194] in order to secure the cheapest raw materials and maximize surplus

[194] This is another interesting bridge between Marxism(s) and Decolonial struggle.

value in the country where the corporate headquarters is located in. In the case of Pepsico, its headquarters is located in the USA.

4.3.2.3 Diageo

Another example of capitalist appropriation attempt was the 2000 marketing campaign for Smirnoff's Hot Fiery vodka (Picture 112). We can see that the advertisement has superimposed Korda's Che, Smirnoff bottles, and the communist symbol of the hammer and sickle – in this case, a chilli pepper. There is not much information available about the marketing campaign, but we do know that Korda sued "the advertising agency that developed the campaign for 'spicy' vodka, the London-based Lowe Lintas […] and the picture agency that supplied the image, Rex Features" (WELLS, 2000). According to Casey, the companies settled and payed [US]$75,000, which Korda donated to Cuba's health system (CASEY, 2009, p.313).

Picture 112 – Smirnoff's 2000 Che Vodka advertisement.

Source: (ZIFF, 2006, p.121).

But behind the obvious product and brand being advertised, no one seemed to care to point out the commercial interest of Diageo – the giant beverages corporation that owns the Smirnoff brand and many more – in profiting from the visible face of Che. The London-based global corporation employs 28, 420 people and it had an estimated revenue of US$16.4 billion in 2019. According to the Violation Tracker Parent Company Summary, Diageo has fifteen records since 2000: two competition-related offenses, three financial offenses, four environmental-related offenses, and six safety-related offenses (VIOLATION TRACKER

DIAGEO, 2020). In addition, according to the NGO Movendi, “United Kingdom, France, India, Thailand and South Korea – the track record speaks for itself. Diageo conducts its business using shady, unethical and often illegal methods, bribing officials, avoiding taxation, diverting profits” (DIAGEO, 2017). Indeed a quick search in Diageo’s Wikipedia page reveals more “controversies”, including offending in 2015 “survivors of rape and sexual abuse with an advertising campaign showing a young girl crying with her makeup smeared as her sister looks at her from the doorway, and the caption, ‘Who's following in your footsteps? Out of control drinking has consequences’” (DIAGEO, 2020).

4.3.2.4 Unilever

The last attempt of appropriation by a global corporation I discuss before analyzing the film *Che!* (1969) is of the 2003 advertisement for Magnum’s Cherry Guevara (Picture 113). After the successful “Seven Deadly Sins” marketing campaign, Unilever – the corporation that owns the brand Magnum – planned a follow up: “the ‘Magnum: Sixties Nine’ promotion will feature nine flavours with names such as John Lemon, WoodChoc, Jami Hendrix and Cherry Guevara” (MAGNUM, 2003). In addition, on the other side of the wrapping, it was printed that “the revolutionary struggle of the cherries was squashed as they weretrapped between two layers of chocolate. May their memory live on inyour mouth” and the stick had the words inscripted “we will bite to the end” (BIN, 2003). Similar to the Taco Bell, Smirnoff and to the Bombril ads, the wrapping of the Magnum Cherry Guevara appropriated revolutionary words and symbols.

Picture 113 – Magnum’s Cherry Guevara.

Source: (ZIFF, 2006, p.113).

Concerning Unilever, the owner of the Magnum brand, it is a UK and Netherlands based global corporation that employs 155, 000 people and that received approximately US$ 66.53 billion in revenue in 2019. According to the Violation Tracker Parent Company Summary, Unilever has twenty-three records since 2000: five environmental-related offenses, one employment-related offense, sixteen safety-related offenses, and one consumer-protection-related offense (VIOLATION TRACKER UNILEVER, 2020). In addition, according to Barber, accusations against Unilever include "ignoring sexual harassment of Unilever tea workers in Kenya, delaying clean up of mercury poisoning in India and doubling or tripling royalty fees from partners in India, South Africa and elsewhere" (BARBER, 2017).

What we can see in common between all of the corporate branding appropriation attempts discussed above is the effort in producing "an elaborate narrative that makes use of characters, places and fictional situations" (FONTENELLE, 2002, p.179). Despite that, the corporate appropriation attempts discussed here do not lead to forging a Che brand in the strict sense. Instead, four corporations tried to appropriate Che in support of already existing brands. Another similar aspect is that all of the marketing campaigns took place around the time Che's imagetic latest resurgence, following the finding of his remains in 1997, a clear indication of commercial interest in boosting sales through the appropriation of Che's image. Furthermore, besides being responsible for employing – and alienating – hundreds of thousands of people worldwide, the corporations also have history concerning different kinds of abuses – some of which are examples of other forms of alienation. Moreover, we can say that if there are not more global corporations currently appropriating Che's images, or if those four mentioned have stopped appropriating Che's image, it is probably because of the lawsuits Korda and Diana Díaz have filed.

I am inclined to point out a specificity of Magnum's Cherry Guevara and of Smirnoff's Hot Fiery vodka: both made an association between the consumption of the product and the consumption of Che. Regarding the former, the eating of the ice cream meant that the "memory" of the "squashed" cherry revolution lived on in the consumer's mouth, what seems to imply metaphorically that Che's body was being symbolically consumed and appropriated. Regarding the Smirnoff vodka, although it did not make a primarily verbal association between the liquid and Che, it did so through juxtaposition of the chilli peper, the redness of the poster, the centrality of Che's visible face and the words "hot fiery", which seem to play with both the character of Che Guevara and how the consumer is supposed to feel after drinking the liquid. In contrast, Che Guevara was associated with the Taco Bell

mascott, not directly with the food, the gorditas. And Bombril's Che was promoting a detergent.

4.3.2.5 Twentieth Century Fox's Che! (1969)

In comparison, the film *Che!* (1969) was produced by the big hollywoodian studio Twentieth Century Fox. Concerning the studio itself, it was bought in 1985 by News Corporation which, in turn, spun out in 2013 into two separate corporations – "the 20th Century Fox movie studio and the Fox broadcast network in the US will form 21st Century Fox", while the publishing and newspaper division "will trade under the old News Corp name" (RUSHE, 2013). In 2019, Disney bought Twenty-First Century Fox and, in 2020, dropped the "Fox" name to distant its brand image from the Fox News network (DISNEY CULLS, 2020).

I could not find many records of lawsuits or abuses other than the 1949 case Shostakovich vs Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corp. The Russian composer Dmitry Shostakovich sued the corporation because of the appropriation of his and other Soviet composers' music (SHOSTAKOVICH vs TWENTIETH, 2020) in the 1948 film *The Iron Curtain*, which, as you can imagine, is anti-socialist. Here we can see a pattern of a capitalist corporation appropriating art created in a socialist-inspired country and, as such, with no copyright. In addition, in 2016, the former Fox News Channel anchor, Gretchen Carlson, sued Fox News Chairman Roger Ailes for firing her after she refused his sexual advances (GRETCHEN CARLSON, 2020).

Regarding the film, Twentieth Century Fox's commercial interest was obvious from the start since the "studio's executive director Daryl Zanuck […] was impressed by the dead revolutionary's popularity among young people, and envied the commercial success of the poster makers" (KUNZLE, 1997, p.99). Released in 1969, the film flopped in terms of box-office: US$ 2.5 million, while the estimated loss is of US$ 3.38 million (CHE!, 2020). The film also received poor critical reviews. For example, Robert Ebert in 1969 wrote that

> From the beginning, it sounded like a bad dream. Hollywood was making a movie about Che Guevera. Why? Probably because somebody smelled easy money, having been inspired by the sales figures on Che posters. That must have been the reason, because "Che!" is abundant evidence that no one connected with this stinkeroo gave a damn about Che Guevera, Fidel Castro, the Cuban Revolution or anything else requiring more than five seconds' thought.

> The most we could have hoped for, I guess, was a movie exhibiting some interest in the most influential revolution of the 1960s. The least would have been a movie that cared enough, anyway, to attack Guevera and provide some juicy propaganda. But all we get is a movie that's literally indifferent. It is impossible to determine what the film's makers thought about Guevera, if anything. The movie's dominant quality is gutlessness.
> No attempt is made to get inside the mind of this complex man, Guevera. We are told he was a medical student, suffered from asthma, was more ruthless than Castro, was the real brain behind the operation. Big deal. Castro is presented as a pretty nice guy, taking the soft line with the Russians during the missile crisis, getting worried about nuclear war. The Bay of Pigs is skipped over. The corruption of the Batista regime all took place, apparently, on some other island. The dramatic level aspires toward comic strips (EBERT, 1969).

About what Ebert calls gutlessness, it is partially due to the poor acting and to the schizophrenic script, but I argue that the film actually veils extreme right-wing propaganda and, therefore, it is not at all *indifferent*. Nonetheless, Ebert touches upon a key problem in the film, although he probably was unaware at the time of its cause. Both the script flaws and the poor acting can be associated with the tension surrounding the whole project which was particularly serious in how one of the screenwriters sabotaged the rest of the crew and how the studio sabotaged the other screenwriter[195] – I return to this issue soon. In addition, the movie was received with a lot of violence in the United States, probably by extreme right wingers:

> The hostility was not merely verbal. The film opened in New York in May 1969, with as many as 150 "Spanish-speaking people" (Cuban exiles?) demonstrating against it. In front of one theater in Los Angeles, picketeers reportedly carried signs with slogans such as "Movies are redder than ever!" in response to which UCLA's student newspaper opined that since the film was blatantly right-wing propaganda, the demonstration was in fact antithetical. A hand grenade was tossed into the lobby of one of the two New York theaters in which it premiered. Police dismantled a bomb in a theater in West Palm Beach, Florida. In Los Angeles, seven Molotov cocktails were thrown over the wall of the Twentieth Century Fox Lot (KUNZLE, 1997, p.103).

One element that jumps to our eyes when we start watching the film is the lack of cultural awareness in the casting, in the lack of linguistic nuance and in employing a western trope in the Bolivian sequence. The casting of Omar Shariff[196] as Che and of Jack Palance[197] as Fidel is awkward. Shariff was Egyptian and did not look or sound like the Argentinian Che. In addition, his accent in the film sometimes makes it difficult to understand what he is saying. Similarly, Palance was Ukrainian and definitely did not look or sound like the Cuban

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[195] For a detailed discussion of the double sabotage see Kunzle's remarkable chapter about *Che!* (KUNZLE, 1997, pgs. 98-103).

[196] Shariff had recently played the titlerole of the Russian physician in Dr Zhivago (1965), which could have made his choice for Che look ironical for the audience at the time.

[197] According to Palance's IMDB page, "Jack Palance often exemplified evil incarnate on film – portraying some of the most intensely despised villains witnessed in 1950s westerns and melodrama" (PALANCE, 2020).

Fidel. But even with such cast and with the film being shot in English, a much better outcome could have been achieved if Shariff and Palance had been coached into speaking English with Argentinean and Cuban accents, respectively. Strangely, the USSR ambassador (Picture 121) speaks English with a Russian accent[198] in *Che!* (1969), but no effort is made in trying to make Che and Fidel sound more convincing.

Indeed, even though the actors – Gael Garcia Bernal is Mexican and Benicio del Toro is Puertorican – who played Ernesto Guevara in *The Motorcycle Diaries* (2004) and in *Che Part One*/ *Part Two* (2008) were not Argentinean, their performances are convincing enough in sounding as close to him as possible. The same can be said about Mexican actor Demián Bichir's performance as Fidel in *Che Part One*/ *Part Two* (2008).

But I still think that *Che!* (1969) should have been shot in Spanish since it is about a Spanish-speaking revolutionary leader that spent most of his life in Latin America. And this is not a trivial issue since the decision of shooting in Spanish led to the Hollywoodian studios abandoning both *The Motorcycle Diaries* (2004) and *Che Part One*/ *Part Two* (2008). Both films convey variety in the Spanish spoken by the characters, a diversity of accents and of regional expressions that is indicative of cultural differences among Spanish speakers of different places. In the former, we have instances of poliglossia[199] – besides the Spanish, Mapundungun and Quechua are spoken in some sequences – and of heteroglossia – as the Argentinians Ernesto and Alberto talk with Chileans and Peruvians, they negotiate meaning regarding some regional words[200]. In the latter, we also have instances of poliglossia – the interview sequence and the Che speech at the United Nations sequence bring English and Spanish into contact – and of heteroglossia – the differences between Che's Spanish and the Cuban's Spanish reinforce the film's conflict around Che gradually asserting his leadership, while the contrast between the Cuban's and Che's Spanish and the the Bolivian peasants'

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[198] According to Gatti, "the frequently used basic formula was to avoid subtitles, making non-Anglophonic characters express themselves in English with an accent corresponding to their 'original' languages. In such formula, poliglossia (national languages) was expressed through heteroglossic forms (accents) (GATTI, 1999, p.89, *my translation*). Furthermore, while characters speaking English created a familiarity effect for the audience in the United States, other characters speaking English with foreign accents created rejection, such as the nazi comandant in the film *The North Star* (1943) (GATTI, 1999, p.90). Following Gatti's argument, it is clear now why the USSR ambassador speaks English with a Russian accent. Concerning Shariff and Palance's characters, the decision to shoot in English without Argentinian or Cuban accents was perhaps to stimulate audience's identification, but Shariff's heavy accent may have backfired the studio's decision. I am not sure if his accent is Egyptian, but it certainly is not Argentinian or Cuban.

[199] According to Gatti, "Bakhtin created the concept of poliglossia to refer to the multiplicity of national or ethnical languages present in the novel's discourse and heteroglossia to refer forms within the same language (GATTI, 1999, p.86, *my translation*).

[200] For a more detailed analysis of instances of poliglossia and heteroglossia in *The Motorcycle Diaries* (2004), see my Master Thesis (MAYA NETO, 2017, pgs. 72-73).

Spanish can indicate cultural differences that might explain the local lack of support for the guerrilla.

The lack of linguistic variety in *Che!* (1969) is even worse in the supporting cast. In fact, with the exception of Antonio, most of the guerrilla men fighting alongside Che in Cuba and in Bolivia barely say a word. They end up looking more like extras than as supporting actors. For instance, the only time Willy gets to speak, despite being onscreen in several sequences, is to offer *mate* to Che after a priest and a Cuban *Comandante* try unsuccesfully to make Che stop with the executions by firing squad (Picture 120). Arguably, Antonio[201] is the only one with more lines because he is the one to confront Che and call him a bandit (Picture 123) in the Bolivian sequence. In addition, the association of the guerrillas' muteness with their banditry[202] against Bolivian peasants reminds me of a common racist Western trope of portraying Native Americans as "persistentlyinvolvedwith warfare,fightingas tribalunits undera chief, […] being more adversely affected by alcohol than whites, and beinghumorless,taciturn,andspeakingsimplelanguages" (PRICE, 1973, p.153).

In Westerns, the *Indians* being so bad and taciturn, it was difficult to empathize with them and their destruction by white settlers was easier to justify. According to Singer, "the view of Indians as savage anduncivilized […] crystallized the image [...]as dangerous and unacceptable to thenormative lives of European immigrants whose livesappeared in films to be more valuable than those of theindigenous people" (SINGER, 2007, p.212). Although *Che!* (1969) was supposed to be a biopic about Che Guevara, it ends up functioning more as a Western in which Che and guerrillas come to be the evil that is justifiedly punished with execution by firing squad at the end of the film. The Western connection is reinforced when we consider the background of the actors who play the taciturn guerrillas.

For example, Rudy Diaz, who plays the Cuban guerrilla Willy, was of Mescalero Apache descent which "made him a go-to choice to play American Indian and Hispanic characters" in westerns (DIAZ, 2020). Moreover, regarding Woody Strode, who plays Guillermo in the film, he had "strong African and Native American ancestry. He was Cree and Blackfoot on his father's side and Cherokee on his mother's. […] The roles he was offered fell within those limited […] stereotypical […] ethnic males" (STRODE, 2020). Such type of casting is consistent with Price's analysis of Westerns since "the central figures wereusually

[201] Played by Armenian-American actor Sid Haig.

[202] I discuss the Bolivian sequence in more detail later in this chapter but, for sake of clarity, let me adavance that Che and other guerrillas harrass the Bolivian peasants, rob them and then try to convince them to join the movement.

whites while Indians were used for local color, to provide actionsequences, and as villains" (PRICE, 1973, p.154). Furthermore, Frank Silvera, the Jamaican actor that plays the Bolivian goatherd (Picture 127) that mocks Che's guerrilla at the end of the film, "because of his light-skinned appearance, [he] transcended race and ethnicity in his performances. In motion pictures, Frank Silvera was cast as black, Latino, Polynesian and 'white'/racially indeterminate" (SILVERA, 2020). I do not think that Silvera was able to "transcend race and ethnicity" but maybe his lighter skin might have increased a bit the types of role he could get. Nonetheless, Silvera played a Mexican bandit in the Western *Hombre* (1967).

In fact, the connection between *Che!* (1969) and Westerns reminded me of Marlon Brando's famous protest in the 1973 Oscar Awards ceremony broadcasted live. Instead of accepting the award in person, he invited Sacheen Littlefeather, president of the National Native American Affirmative Image Committee, to refuse it on his behalf, a protest motivated by the standoff at Wounded Knee. She was booed and given only a limited time to speak. In an interview later in 1973, Brando criticized the Hollywood industry:

> I felt that there was an opportunity, since the American Indian has not been able to have his voice heard anywhere in the history of the United States, that it was a marvellous opportunity for an Indian to be able to voice his [or her] opinion to eighty-five million people. […] I felt that he [or she] had a right to, in view of what Hollywood has done to him [or her]. And I was embarrassed that Sacheen was not able to say what she intended, I was distressed that people booed, wistled and stumped her. […] They should have had at least the courtesy of listening to her. […] I don't think people realize what the motion pictures industry has done to the American Indian. As a matter of fact, to all ethnic groups, or minorities, or non-whites. People just do not realize. People just take for granted that people is going to be presented [like that] and that those clichés are just going to be perpetuated […]: the leering Filipino houseboy, the wily Japanese, the cook or the gook, and the idiot black man, the stupid Indian, it just goes on and on and on. And people just do not actually realize how deeply these people – especially children –are injured by seeing themselves represented as savage, as ugly, as nasty, as vicious, treacherous, drunken, they grow up only with a negative image of themselves. […] [About the the ceremony] They were booing because they thought "this moment is sacrosanct and you are ruining our fantasy with the instrusion of a little reality" (THE DICK CAVETT SHOW, 2018).

Obviously, this is a critique directed to the whole of Hollywoodian Motion Picture industry at the time and not only to Twentieth Century Fox. Sacheen and Brando's powerful critique "hijacked" corporate media coverage to publicly express support for an indigenous desperate disruptive action while, at the same time, interrelating different forms of alienation. Here we can see the alienation between human beings, the alienation between artists and their work, cinema expressing alienatory fantasy, and Hollywood's economic agents' – to refer back to Grespan's conceptualization of the mode of representation – illusory sense of freedom when, in fact, they were playing according to the dominant practices of the corporations they

belonged to. But I also feel troubled that it was necessary for an established and privileged white man to act – pun intended – for people to stop and think about it.

In the film, the different forms of alienation I discussed in this chapter are also present, but more subtly. Besides the lack of cultural and linguistic awareness I already discussed, what contributed to the film becoming a flop was that each member of the cast and crew were playing their individual parts, trusting the studio and trusting that the result of their work would "portray Guevara as an idealist and complex character" – in the words of the director Richard Fleischer (KUNZLE, 1997, p. 100).

However, because of their general lack of knowledge about Che Guevara and the Cuban Revolution, they did not notice that one of the screenwriters hired by the studio, Sy Barlett[203], was sabotaging parts of the script written by Michael Wilson[204], the left wing screenwriter chosen by Fleischer to try to balance Barlett's right wing caricature of Che. According to Kunzle, the conflict between Fleischer and Barlett reached such a climax that, during a board meeting with the studio, the latter revealed he was carrying a gun, which led to him being banned from the movie set (KUNZLE, 1997, p.100). However, that was not the end of it since Barlett had planted a spy on the set – a supposedly ex-guerrilla who had fought alongside Che and Castro and who acted as technical advisor to Fleischer (KUNZLE, 1997, p.100).

When first watching the film, I was troubled by the feeling that it was a propanda movie and, at the same time, I had some difficulty in pinpointing exactly what was problematic, besides the more obvious things such as poor casting and acting, and historical blunders. Only after reading Kunzle's chapter about the film and rewatching it, I identified Barlett's device – like a ventriloquist, he made characters you would not expect bad-mouth Che. Sy slyly – pun intended – thwarted Wilson's nuanced script that "presented a kaleidoscopic Guevara for the viewer to judge" (KUNZLE, 1997, p.101). That certainly helps understand how Sy veiled his extreme right-wing propaganda by hiding it in Wilson's carefully crafted kaleidoscopic voices that give commentary on who was Guevara, with different characters facing the camera, in a Brechtian style, or speaking in voice-over about Che.

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[203] According to Kunzle, "Zanuck [the studio's executive director] selected Sy Barlett [to write the script], a personal friend and a retired air force colonel […] with close ties to the Pentagon and international intelligence agencies" (KUNZLE, 1997, p.99).

[204] According to Kunzle, "Wilson was one of the Hollywood Ten. A self-described Marxist and former Communist party member, Wilson had been jailed for his beliefs and blacklisted for years" (KUNZLE, 1997, p.100). I have not read Wilson's script. However, Kunzle (1997) has compared in detail the differences between Wilson's script and the final version of the film.

Picture 114 – The film's opening.

Source: (CHE!, 1969).

Wilson's script aimed at recreating Che in a nuanced and critical way that would invite the audience to form their own opinion of who Che Guevara was. More importantly, he aimed to do so with antithetical voices, some in favor and some against Che, in a dialectical choir through which only each member of the audience could form his or her own synthesis. Barlett was clever enough to keep traces of Wilson's script, especially the narrative and aesthetical style, in order to make his sabotage and propaganda harder to spot. For example, the film opens with Sharrif-Che's corpse in a phantasmagorical way (Picture 114) which, as I argue in Chapter One, usually implies ambivalence. As the camera zooms in to an extreme close-up of the corpse's face, we hear Sharrrif-Che's voice over dropping a modified version of an often cited Che quote:

> wherever death may surprise us, let it be welcome provided this [inaudible] battlecry reaches some receptive ear, that another hand stretch out to take up weapons and that other men come forward to intern our funeral urge with the staccato of machine guns and new cries of battle and victory (CHE!, 1969).

Picture 115– The living and the dead montage.

Source: (CHE!, 1969).

Che's whispering voice seems to come from beyond and reinforces the phantasmagorical demand in a somewhat similar way to the opening of Machado de Assis' *The Posthumous Memoirs of Bras Cuba*. Although Che is not a character narrator in the film, the opening does create the expectation for trying to solve the mystery of who was Che Guevara, the primary narrative driving force in a biopic. After that, some black and white archival footage of diverse emancipatory actions are superimposed on Che's dead face (Picture 115), hands and, later, feet; this is a form of montage which implies that people indeed have taken upon themselves to carry on his struggle. In other words, the living were answering the dead Che's remebrance-redemption call. Despite this promising start, it is not long we find out that it is the movie itself, deformed as it is, that is the living-dead.

Picture 116 – The Cuban taxi driver exiled in the USA.

Source: (EL CHE!, 1969).

Another surviving trace of Wilson's style is the chorus of antithetical voices. After the opening montage, followed by a sequence of Che's body being strapped to a helicopter and flown out of La Higuera, we see a taxi driver (Picture 116), probably a Cuban exile, speaking directly to the camera: "so he is dead? Bravo! [inaudible] he died the first day he sat foot on Cuban soil" (EL CHE!, 1969). Then, the camera cuts to a firing squad and cuts back to him as he says: "bastard! He murdered my brother and hundreds of other decent Cubans" (EL CHE!, 1969). After that, the camera cuts to another Cuba in a school also speaking to the camera: "dead? No, he is a living presence here and in every Cuban town. Let me tell you something, Che taught me to read and write" (EL CHE!, 1969). The camera cuts to a sequence of the man and other guerrilleros studying in the Sierra Maestra while Che is teaching them. The voice continues in voice-over: yes, me, a grown man, in the Sierras,

between battles, he taught me to read and write" (EL CHE!, 1969). The camera cuts back to the same man in front of the school (Picture 117) as he says: "and, now, I am a teacher. And my school is named for him" (EL CHE!, 1969).

Picture 117 – The Cuban school teacher.

Source: (EL CHE!, 1969).

Finally, another example of surviving traces of Wilson's style of narrative and aesthetics is the fragmentation of the plot by disrupting the flow of events with sequences of Che's dead body. Besides the initial montage, Che's dead body makes at least four other appearances during the film which, in Wilson's script, would probably reinforce the haunting and ambivalence. After the Barlett-studio[205] sabotage, however, it is as if the film itself became alienated from what it was supposed to be. The main trick used by Barlett-studio sabotage was presenting Che as violent and dellusional through the voices of characters that, since they are so close to Che, seem unsuspecting: his guerrilla comrades, Fidel, a Bolivian peasant, and even his own voice.

[205] I am using this hyphenated form on purpose since I do not think Barlett acted on his own.

Picture 118 – The joyful crowd.

Source: (EL CHE!, 1969).

Picture 119 – The firing squads.

Source: (EL CHE!, 1969).

For example, there is a sequence that intersperses shots of the jubilous people and the barbudos celebrating victory (Picture 118) with shots of the firing squads at *La Cabaña* Fortress (Picture 119). The cheering and marching band music of the streets is superimposed with the spaced yet recurrent sound of shots as the camera gradually gets closer from long shots to medium shots of the executed prisoners and of Fidel's face. This seems to be an ironical appropriation of Wilson's montage aesthetics since it seems to imply that both Fidel and Che were responsible for the killings. Inside the fortress, we see an impassionate Che, alienated, working efficiently to sign piles of execution orders (Picture 120). A most unsuspecting character, a guerrilla captain, tries to reason with Che: "they swore to uphold the military code. They had to obey orders. The war is over" (EL CHE!, 1969). A priest also pleas with Che: "Comandante, we are not here just to save the life of one man or two, or ten. Spare Cuba another bloodbath!" (EL CHE!, 1969). To such reasonable requests, the Machiavellian

sounding Che retorts angrily while turns on the TV which shows the crowd celebrating the revolution: "that's precisely what I'm doing. Would you rather that we unleashed this mob? Do you really wanna see a bloodbath[206]? How many thousands would they kill in vengeance before the day is over?" (EL CHE!, 1969).

Picture 120 – Alienated Che.

Source: (EL CHE!, 1969).

Another instance of Che speaking against himself in the film is in the sequence where – despite the lack of historical evidence otherwise – Che plans the Missile Crisis. In a conversation between Fidel and Che, the discuss revealing the socialist nature of the Cuban revolution and the need to have parity with the United States' military power, to which Che suggests: "if we had fifty or one hundred nuclear missiles […] but if we could convince the Russians that Cuba is the ideal missile site" (CHE!, 1969). Fidel retorts: "we could reach every major city, every industrial center in the United States" (CHE!, 1969). After, the camera cuts to black and white video footage of United States' ambassador Adlai Stevenson forcefully questioning Soviet UN representative Valerin Zorin in 1962 if the USSR was placing nuclear missiles in Cuba. The other UN members laugh as Zorin refuses to give a clear reply. Immediately after, the camera cuts to black and white video footage of United States' President Kennedy speech considering "any nuclear missile launch from Cuba against

[206] In Chapter Two, I question the perspective that Che was divided between love and cruelty. In the 2017 film adaptation of his biography of Che, Pablo Ignacio Taibo II says that there were manyc ases of torture and murder during the Batista dictatorship and that the Cuban people was claiming for firing squads, to which Fidel insisted that all the accused be trialed. "Che is named war auditor and he only revises cases to make sure that the right of defense was respected. As the years pass, there is a brutal campaign saying that Che is the butcher of *La Cabaña*" (EL CHE, 2017). The Cuban Comandante Oscar Fernandez Mell says that "he never even participated of the trials. He only participated of the appeal of nine cases, and he saved one person" (EL CHE, 2017).

any nation in the western hemisphere as an attack by the Soviet Union against the United States, requiring a full retaliatory response upon the Soviet Union" (CHE!, 1969).

This is obviously United States' propaganda. Immediately after Kennedy's speech, there is a sequence in which the Soviet ambassador is toasting to world peace with Fidel. An incensed Che barges in and shouts in protest (Picture 121) of being excluded from the agreement between Fidel and the Soviets: "so you backed down and let them take the missiles! […] Caviar? What is there to celebrate? Why aren't our Russian friends on their knees eating crow?" (CHE!, 1969). And the Soviet representative answers that "if indeed we fear anybody, it is your careless major Guevara, who does not mind setting of a holocaust[207] that neither the United States nor my government seeks. A full scale nuclear war, that could mean the destruction of the human race" (CHE!, 1969). Notice the composition of the shot, with Fidel standing further back in the middle between the Soviet Ambassador and Che, which is suggestive of the polemics surrounding the supposed betrayal of Fidel.

Only seven years after the agreement between the USA and the USSR, Barlet-studio were probably not interested in upsetting the latter and thus we have the Soviets as "not so bad guys" when compared to Che. The film's alienated Che seems to crave death and destruction so much that he breaks up with Fidel[208] and Cuba following the failure of his supposed stratagem to start a nuclear war. By now, as it is clear, the expectancy of a mysterious Che to investigate has been frustrated by the film itself – which might explain the failure of the plot in arising audiences' interest – and there is still much of the film left, including the abominable Bolivia sequence. Yes, the film gets worse.

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[207] The misuse of the word holocaust is typical of the extreme right. By doing so, they are at the same time downplaying the historical and moral significance of the actual Holocaust.

[208] Ryan – a retired United States Foreign Service officer – refers to two CIA 1967 reports he had access to that speculated on the disappearance of Che from the public: "Castro was threatened by Guevara's popularity and got rid of him. How? By putting him on house arrest, after which the Soviets took him to Algiers, said one of the variations, or by chasing him into asylum in the Mexican embassy after a wild shoot-out, said another" (RYAN, 1998, p.31). Although the CIA later (RYAN, 1998, p.34) dismissed the theory of a fallout between Fidel and Che, in 1967 that was the accepted view. Non-surpisingly, considering Barlett's background, the movie to some extent mimmicks the CIA's 1967 perspective.

Picture 121 – The Soviet ambassador, Fidel and Che.

Source: (CHE!, 1969).

Picture 122 – The loyal Antonio defending Che even after imprisoned.

Source: (CHE!, 1969).

In the same Brechtian style, Antonio, one of Che's most loyal men in the film, speaks facing the camera in defense of Che from inside a prison cell (Picture 122): "despite his ashtma and an arthritic condition, he drove himself beyond human endurance and he demanded superhuman efforts of us" (CHE!, 1969). Ironically, we learn later that Che is the one responsible for Antonio's capture. Frustrated by the lack of food, lack of support by the peasants, lack of recruits, and, most importantly, by Che's inadequate methods towards the peasants and the guerrillas, Antonio confronts Che (Picture 123) and accuses him of betraying his own guerrilla book and of becoming nothing more than a bandit:

Picture 123 – Antonio confronts Che.

Source: (CHE!, 1969).

> Yes, I am disenchanted. Not with the cause, only with you. I don't want to be around when you crack up. […] [The symptons of Che's breakdown] They are all listed here. Since the day I joined you I've carried this: "Che Guevara and Guerrilla Warfare"[209]. And I [inaudible] by heart. […] You are no longer capable of leadership. You betrayed your own code. You violated your own precepts. […] Someone has got to say it! And you are going to hear me out. You no longer even try to understand our peasants or gain their respect. You only bully them, you intimidate the villagers and then you ransack their miserable homes. To them, you are nothing more than a bandit. […] Degenerate? You are a fine one to talk. "The true revolutionary is guided by love", those were your [inaudible] words. But know your humanism blossoms from the barrel of a gun (EL CHE!, 1969).

Here, once again, we have Barlett-studio speaking through the mouth of a character close to Che. And, once again, we have the rhetoric of the supposedly hypocritical contradiction between love and violence[210]. From all the sources I have come into contact in these last five years researching about Che and Che films, I can honestly say that, to my knowledge, there is no historical evidence to support Che's vicious behavior in Bolivia as presented in the film. Following the altercation, Che is unable to listen to Antonio's truth anymore and smacks him. Che and Antonio fight until they are separated by the rest of the guerrilla. Embarrassed by Antonio's words, Che expells him from the group to reassert his

[209] Actually, the proper title of the book is *Guerrilla Warfare* only. Perhaps Antonio was not familiar with the book after all. Perhaps who wrote Antonio's lines was not familiar with the book after all.

[210] Some authors accuse Che of an irreconcilable contradiction between love and violence. For instance, Casey remarks that Che and guerrillas "drew upon idealistic, romantic visions of their cause" and a "cold capacity for violence" (CASEY, 2009, p.246), possibly implying that revolutionaries cloaked their blood thirst with beautiful images. In contrast, Kunzle offers a persuasive rebuttal of the apparent conflict between love and violence: "How far does Che's own life justify this famous assertion [the true revolutionary is guided by feelings of great love] made in a famous essay 'Socialism and Man in Cuba' (1965)? There is no armed revolutionary, no guerrilla fighter whose humanitarianism is better documented, not just theoretically, not just in the revolutionary social programs he espoused, but also in actual combat, where mercy is not always seen as a winning tactic. Che learned and taught the necessity of hating, but hating the idea of oppression, not the persons of its representatives" (KUNZLE, 1997, p. 82).

power and denies him his request of carrying a weapon. Although not explicit in the film, that is why Antonio[211] is behind bars in the previously discussed sequence.

Although there is no historical record to back Antonio up, he speaks the truth concerning the events narrated in the film. In the Bolivian sequence, which occupies the final quarter of the film, we see Che increasingly frustrated by the peasant men running away from him and his group. After preaching for hours without success to the terrified women (Picture 124)[212], exposing his group to the fire of an army patrol, he tries to assuage his frustration and anger by shooting at their saint (Picture 125) and by blaming the villagers: “these people are backwards, stupid, servile. They are hopeless chained to the past” (CHE!, 1969).

Picture 124 – Che lectures the women.

Source: (CHE!, 1969).

[211] According to Villegas, *Antonio* was the alias of the Cuba Orlando Pantoja (1933-1967). A veteran of the Cuban revolution, he was killed in the Yuro Ravine on October 8, 1967 (VILLEGAS, 1997, p.327).

[212] In Picture twenty-seven, we can see two men in the shot. There seems to be a continuity mistake since in the previous shots, there was no men in the village. Che is actually adressing the women, demanding them to tell “their men to think of their children” (CHE!, 1969). There are many similar small mistakes throughout the film, including, for instance, showing guns that were not used by the guerrilla and having Willy wear a dog tag, which only military personel use.

Picture 125 – The saint shot at.

Source: (CHE!, 1969).

In another sortie, after Che and his group are able to find the men in the village, they heard them at gunpoint and they take whatever they can find (Picture 126) – food, clothes, beverages. That is certainly one of the most revolting and blatantly propagandistic sequences of the film. Curiously, in the film, the guerrilla is doing exactly what the Bolivian army used to do.

Picture 126 – Willy steals a chicken from a villager.

Source: (EL CHE!, 1969).

But the climax of the film is at the end of the Bolivian sequence. After being arrested, along with Willy, they are kpet prisoners inside the schoolhouse in La Higuera. The same Bolivian captain that captured Che interviews Che, probably a reference to Gary Prado Salmon. The film, however, seems to conveniently ignore the CIA agent Félix Rodriguez who was at the time also dressed in a Bolivian Army captain uniform, trying to extract any information from Che. After the Bolivian captain challenges Che's guerrilla project, the latter replies: "killing me is of no consequence. Killing me won't kill the people's dream". This line

refers to the Guevara phantasmagorical citation at the very beginning of the film. And what happens next, instead of leaving an open ending for each audience member to try and answer – as Wilson wanted – who Guevara was, resolves the conflict. As a response to Che's words, the captain brings in the Bolivian goatheard (Picture 127) that had walked several miles barefoot only to let the army know the guerrilla's position. The Bolivian goatheard says:

> To free me? From what? Nobody asked me what I want. Ever since you come to these mountains with your guns and your fighting, my goats did not make milk. You frightened them. The vultures follow you wherever you go. You stink of death. Yes, I want to be free. free from you [to Che]! And you [to the Bolivian captain]. And all your kind. Why don't you just go away and let us leave in peace? (CHE!, 1969).

Honestly, I am not sure who is the most alienated character in this film: Che or the goatheard. The Barlett-studio Che is so dellusional and violent that he seems to only care about oppressing more people. And the goatheard, who, unfortunately, metonimically stands for all of the oppressed, only denounced the guerrillas because they interfered with his milk production – he just does not care about the harrassment, the sacrilege or the plundering of the villagers. Nonetheless, the goatheard's words are too much for Che, who walks in silence to meet his executioner.

Picture 127 – Che, the goatheard and the captain.

Source: (CHE!, 1969).

The movie's lack of nuance kills the expectation for the mystery of trying to find out who was Che early on, long before its ending. That is probbaly why it was a commercial failure. Barlett-studio may have succeeded in hiding extreme-right propaganda in remnants of Wilson's narrative and aesthetics, but they were still unable – like in the first script written by Barlett – to give nuance to a complex character such as Che. Kunzle seems to imply that Barlett acted independently and that the studio acted against its financial interests in giving in

to external pressures (KUNZLE, 1997, p.103). I think that the studio was probably behind the sabotage all along, coordinating it, hoping to make their appropriation of Che propagandistic while also commercially successful. If there had been a lit more nuance in the film's Che, they might have succeeded on the commercial aspect.

Wilson was conveniently fired when the shooting of the film began, leaving the way open for Barlett. Also, Barlett was a friend of the executive producer of the studio. Moreover, when Wilson learned of what was happening and threatened to remove his name from the project, which would be bad for box-office, the studio organized a private screening of a version of the film aimed at satisfying Wilson. After he agreed in keeping his name on the project, they released commercially the other version (KUNZLE, 1997, p.102). In addition, in the film, Barlett was credited as producer, which indicates that his influence in the studio and his involvement with the film might have been more complex than the screenwriter-saboteur role.

Overall, we can see that the appropriation of emancipatory images and slogans is something common to most of the examples I discussed in this chapter – the case of graphic designer Shepard Fairey[213], the four global capitalist corporations – Bombril S.A., Pepsico, Diageo and Unilever –, and Twentieth Century Fox's *Che!* (1969).

[213] At least in the period before Vallen's (2009) article was published.

5 FINAL REMARKS

> "While revolutionaries as individuals can
> be murdered, you cannot kill ideas"
> (SANKARA, 2020).

The more I study about Che Guevara and his image, more ideas I have to continue researching in new and creative ways. Writing about Che infuses me with vitality. Maybe, it is the hope I talked about. Maybe, it is the remembrance-redemption of his phantasmagorical gaze. Maybe, it is the sense of urgency in challenging different forms of appropriation of Che or his image. Probably, it is all the previous three and the commitment to learn about his life, deeds and mistakes, taking in what is relevant for the challenges of our contemporary world.

And our already troubled world has become even more complex in 2020, the year I have completed writing this dissertation. I must confess that I had envisioned the writing of my dissertation in a completely different scenario, certainly not during the COVID-19 pandemic. And, despite the growing anxiety, I was able to carry on with my research. I am especially satisfied with the significance and relevancy of my work. As I say in the Introduction, as far as I know, Cambre (2015) is the only other author to have a plural and activist perspective of Che images. Besides that, the main objective of this dissertation was achieved, which was to provide abundant evidence and arguments of Che's political relevance in the Twenty-First Century.

More importantly, I was able to offer an original answer to the question that has driven many authors into sleepless nights: why are people so drawn to Che? I came up with an open system that answers that question with no ambition of explaining each and every possibility. There is a relational movement or dialogue between Chapters One, Two and Three, that is, between the ambiguity of the phantasmagorical gaze of Che's images and the two possibilities of unravelling it: the responsive gaze of artists and activists, and the alienatory violence. However, the unravelling is never definitive as long as we live in a capitalist society. If an image of Che has been alienated into a visibility for consumption, it can also be *read* against the grain, repoliticizing it through art and or emancipatory action. Similarly, there are attempts to appropriate, for capitalist purposes, artistic imaginations of Che. Furthermore, I acknowledge that this open system does not account for all possibilities regarding Che's images, what leaves room for critical movement.

In Chapter One, I discuss the phantasmagorical gaze of Che's images in terms of a ghostly remembrance-redemption demand, on one hand, nostalgia and alienation, on the other. Such ambiguity expresses the intriguing allure of Che's images, what I call the anxiety of remembering and non-remembering. Moreover, I relate Che's phantasmagorical gaze to the specter of Marx, in the Derridean sense. The theoretical bridges in Chapter One also link Derrida's specter to ancestral deities associated with the potentialities of the night in terms of forgetting and of remembering, death and rebirth, such as the Greek goddess Nyx and the Aztec Tezcatlipoca. I also explore Derrida's interpretation of Freud's theory about melancholia, commenting on other related psychoanalytic concepts relevant for discussing the ghost and the body of Che: Freud's concept of the uncanny and Kristeva's concept of the abject. Finally, I also discuss my short story *Retorno,* about Che's resurgence after being buried in a mass grave, and the films *El Dia que Me Quieras* (EL DIA, 1997) and *The Last Hours of Che Guevara* (THE LAST HOURS, 2016).

The documentary *El Dia que Me Quieras* (EL DIA, 1997) balances interview sequences with the Bolivian photographer Freddy Alborta with poetic montages. In the Alborta sequences, the audience learns about the exhibition of Che's body vicariously through the photographer's memory. And, in the poetic montages, the film recreates Borges' short story "*El Testigo*" (1998), and Carlos Gardel and Alfredo Le Pera's tango *El Dia Que Me Quieras* (GARDEL; LE PERA, 1934). The montages help distend time. And the biopic *The Last Hours of Che Guevara* (THE LAST HOURS, 2016) carries a viceral acting by Karlos Granada as a wounded and bound Che. The wheezing ashmatic breath and the crawling, the only way the bound Che can move, also distend time. This Che seems to be in the border between life and death and, thus, worries about living through the memory of those who will carry on. There is an ambiguity in Granada's phantasmagorical Che since it allows both religious and political interpretations.

The ambiguity of the phantasmagorical gaze of Che's images can be unravelled in two ways: through artistic imaginations and disruptive actions, or through alienating Che's images. In Chapter Two, I discuss what Cambre calls the *as-ifness* of Che's images, that is, the possibility of seeing through them constellations formed by fragments of time of memory, disruptive revolutionary moments that flit by. I connect such discussion with indigenous art and religion, what I prefer to call cosmovision or shamanic vision, that is, seeing what is unseen, making possible what is considered impossible. The responsive gaze of artists and activists recreates Che in new ways, what I consider through the Arendtian concept of action

and through Bloch's concept of anticipatory consciousness. The constellations, made of images of past disruptive actions are illustrated through the brief discussion of two revolutions, the October Revolution and the Cuban Revolution, and of how they, in turn, interrelate with the Paris Commune and the Cuban Wars of Independence, respectively.

The two revolutionary constellations I discuss are only two possibilities. Depending on who gazes at Che's image and in what context, other constellations can be formed with other past disruptive actions. In this chapter, many examples of violence towards artistic imaginations of Che are offered as evidence of Che's images political potential. Furthermore, different contemporary artistic imaginations, which recreate Che in new emancipatory ways, and of disruptive actions are discussed in terms of remembrance and redemption. The examples discussed in this chapter are abundant evidence of how Che's images are not only still politically relevant in the Twenty-First Century, but also potentially disruptive towards the continuum of power.

I also analyze two documentaries in this chapter, *El Che de los Gays* (EL CHE DE LOS GAYS, 2004) and *Personal Che* (PERSONAL CHE, 2007). Both films bring many examples of artistic imaginations and disruptive actions that invoke Che. Regarding the first film, I focus on the intersectionality of the journalist and LGBTQ activist Victor Hugo Robles's performatic actions. Concerning the second film, I discuss a few examples of artistic imaginations, such as a Lebanese play, and disruptive actions, such as a Hong Kong's activist and former Council member Leung Kwok-Hung. I also discuss one example of appropriation of Che images by a Nazi group. And, at the end of the chapter, I discuss my personal relation with Che's images and briefly discuss two poems I wrote.

In Chapter Three, I discuss the other way of unravelling the ambivalence of the phantasmagorical gaze: through alienation. Before analyzing Che images, alienation is redefined in a broad sense, trying to create a dialogue among different authors in order to actualize – in the Benjaminian sense – the theory of alienation. Departing from Lefebvre's classification of alienation, I give my own contribution while also creating a connection with Jorge Grespan's conceptualization of Marx's mode of representation. In addition, I analyze some attempts of capitalist appropriation of Che images, by graphic designer Shepard Fairey, by Bombril, by Pepsico, by Diageo, and by Unilever. Finally, I also analyze the appropriation of Che images by the Hollywoodian studio Twentieth Century Fox in the form of the film *Che!* (1969).

The biopic *Che!* (1969) was a commercial and critical flop, probably because of the lack of nuance of its violent and increasingly delusional Che. The initial expectation for figuring out who the man was is lost soon before the end of the film since Che in the movies lacks nuance. In addition, the sabotage by Barlet – one of the screenwriters – and the studio helped create a schizophrenic script. Wilson's kalleidoscopic style, with dialectical montages for each spectator to form his or her opinion of Che, and with Brechtian-style performance, was appropriated to veil U.S. rightwing propaganda. In addition, the film also lacks cultural and linguistic nuance. It also feels more like a Western than as a biopic, probably because of casting actors with a background in western movies and because of the Bolivian sequence in which Che and other guerrillas become bandits that harrass and rob the peasantry, until they are defeated by the army.

Overall, for a theory regarding Che's image – a so complex and diverse "subject" of research – to work, it has to either freeze the images, alienating them in many ways, or to leave room for conceptual movement. I prefer the latter. This contribution presents explanations for the allure surrounding Che's images, for their imagetic return, for their ambivalence, and for attempts of unravelling such ambivalence – artistic imaginations and/or disruptive actions, or capitalist appropriation. In other words, the tension between the social relation of alienation and of emancipation transverses this text similarly as it does in the world(s) we live in.

To some readers, my main argument that there are alienatory and/or emancipatory relations transversing Che's images may sound too binary. I would like to add that what I do is actually trying to re-politicize how people are affected and affect Che's images, what has been lately increasingly naturalized as a non-issue, as if Che's supposed political irrelevance was a fact only to be pointed out by scholars. In addition, I am careful not to limit all imagetic possibilities concerning Che to either emancipatory or alienatory. I say, in different moments in the dissertation, that there are other possible ways of relating to Che's images, and that I am interested in investigating the power relations that transverse them. I merely chose a focus for my already long research text and, even if I had included chapters about ways of relating to Che's images that go beyond emancipation and alienation, it would not be possible to exhaust all possibilities concerning Che's images. Furthermore, it should be pointed out that the movement within the system I propose – between, for instance, politicizing imaginations of Che being appropriated for capitalist purposes and, in turn, capitalist appropriations of Che's images being recreated in disruptive ways – blurs the boundaries a bit.

There were several challenges in this research, besides the already mentioned pandemic. Some are personal and others had more to do with my research. On a personal level, I had to do a lot of soul searching – which is usually painfully liberating – as I wrote the dissertation because my life interrelates with Che and Che's images in many ways. In the Introduction, for example, I discuss my relation with Che's images from my troubled childhood until now. Educated in an extremely conservative environment, having had a chauvinist education, I was very hostile to anything associated with socialism, including Che's images. But because of different forms of activism, the influence of professors and of my friends, and of reading Feminist, Decolonial and Marxist authors, I was able to change the way I think and act, and the way I relate to Che's images. Likewise, as I point out in Chapter Two, Che's images also give me hope in the everyday struggle of living with the pain resulting from a rather traumatic childhood.

Another challenge arises from the interdisciplinarity that such a diversified "subject" of research requires. Studying Che's images is a journey through different areas, such as Literature, Cinema, Art History, Semiotics, Philosophy and Economics. I had to manage time and energy as to be fluent enough to navigate those areas while also prioritizing and deciding on what was not possible to achieve. The plurality of Che images also meant that I had to have some understanding of different critical theories in order to create meaningful dialogues between them and avoid a dogmatic perspective.

As I said before, this research has deepened my undertanding of some concepts and theories while also opening new ways of investigation. Particularly relevant for me was the possibility of creating a dialogue between non-positivistic Marxists such as Benjamin, Arendt, Ernst Bloch, Che Guevara and Leon Trotsky. Another possibility that called my attention was possible interrelations between Marxism and Decolonial Thought, what I intend on carrying on in a future research project called cosmovisions, attempting to actualize ancestral traces of history, art and politics from a non-eurocentric standpoint.

It would also be interesting to contribute in the future to the ongoing debate of reevaluating Marx and Marxism(s) through a decolonial perspective. I also look forward to writing about intersections between ancestral art and experimental western art that tries to move away from Eurocentric epistemes. More specifically concerned with Che, I would like to create a dialogue between the figures of Che Guevara and of Don Quijote, while also discussing common issues to both of them: travel, nomadism and mental health. Another project is to study carefully the several diaries written by Ernesto Guevara, identifying traces

of political, cultural and existential conflictive views that might contribute with insights into understanding his travels as ambivalent transformative journeys.

To freely refer to Sankara, who I cite in the epigraph, while individual revolutionaries, activists and artists can be killed, their ideas live on through us. As long as we remember and connect our memories of those who fought and fell with present emancipatory struggles – creating bridges between ideas and peoples –, they will not be lost or alienated from us. And even when an image, a slogan or even a method is appropriated by capitalism, we can always practice détournement and reclaim whatever that was taken from us. A good example is the Che T-shirt, considered to be the epitome of capitalist appropriation by many. I offer different examples of how people reclaim it in politicizing actions, reclaiming Che's face, turning it from a mere visibility back into an image that affects and is affected through various ways. Despite the adversities, *El Che Vive!*

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