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NEOLIBERAL PANIC: THE UNTIMELY HARD-BOILED CRITIQUE OF GERMÁN MAGGIORI'S *ENTRE HOMBRES*

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ABSTRACT. This essay analyzes a recently re-published crime novel by Germán Maggiori as a case-study in recent evolutions of the hard-boiled narrative mode that respond to shifts in the political and economic discourse around consumption in the Southern Cone. Rather than evaluate the novel's value, I hope to analyze its construction in terms of loyalty to, critique of, and pastiche from the commonplaces of the hard-boiled genre as it has been practiced in the Argentine tradition. I also analyze the way masculinity and homosexual panic sets a tone for the novel that connects power and paranoia, and which alters the terms in which contemporary corruption and violence is tied to the anti-communist panic of the dictatorship years which are all-too present in contemporary institutions of law and order. Focusing on the novel's subtle instrumentalization of commerce and its recurring fixation on market values, I then argue how the novel's satirical critique of the Argentine 1990s might be relevant once again in the present day, and beyond Argentina's boundaries.

KEY WORDS: crime fiction, Maggiori, neoliberalism, hard-boiled, satire, corruption

Introduction. The Temporality of Crisis and Accidental Timeliness

Ser cobarde es una miseria íntima que cotiza muy bajo en el mercado de la calle.
Maggiori, 2001: 39.

Germán Maggiori's pitch-black satirical crime novel, *Entre hombres*, was written in 1999 at the apex of a period that could be called Argentina's neoliberal honeymoon, published by Alfaguara México in 2001 after winning a prestigious Alfaguara "internet novel" competition juried by some of Latin American fiction's biggest names (Juan Villoro, María Fasce, Alberto Fuguet, and Rodrigo Rey, as well as Spaniard Nuria Barrios). Yet this break-out first novel failed to really make a name for its author, Germán Maggiori, or even to reach a second edition: despite a few glowing reviews

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in Argentina and abroad, it passed into obscurity and circulated (largely in bootlegs) only among crime-fiction aficionados, academic contexts, and connoisseurs. It is hard to tell whether the pitch-black subject matter (major systemic corruption of all branches of law enforcement, the violent ecologies of trans* sex work, and the calculated cynicism of a political class susceptible only to blackmail) helped or hindered the novel's reception, but it certainly contributed to its cult status during those years that it was out of print, as did its slang-heavy multi-perspectival narration and its Tarantino-esque non-chronological plot structure. These formal traits largely speak for themselves, and I will not belabor any of them, as few readers would disagree with that general assessment in 2001 or in 2013; I would instead like to focus on the novel's alternation between an almost nostalgic loyalty to the hard-boiled tradition (at the level of both language and plot) on the one hand, and emphatically topical references to neoliberal economics on the other, as if the fundamental joke of the novel hinged (as does the joke of the epigraph above) on the dissonance between the structure of the perennial hard-boiled social critique and the nihilistic relativism of an unfettered free market. In 2013, when the novel was released again to more substantial fanfare and with the public championing of Ricardo Piglia, it wore its having been out of print for 12 years as a badge of honor and insider credibility alongside the estimation of critics who refer to the novel's critique as mysteriously prescient and insightful in retrospect, as if its dissonant humor were just now ripening into intelligibility. To assess the novel and the peculiar temporality of its approach to genre and humor, I would like to explore a few topics that structure the sense of the novel internally before turning to its historical subtexts and its subsequently disjointed reception.

What I refer to above as the "fundamental joke" of the novel is, to my mind, the perverse engine of the novel's tonal wit (essential to the hard-boiled tradition, of course, and debatably more important to its readers than the narrative structure or content in most cases) and also of its allegory of corruption and mutual destruction. Seemingly all reviews and interviews published around 2013 refer to a "mysterious something" or literary remainder that saves the novel from being the mere pastiche of crime-pulp clichés (indeed, a summary of its sensational plot and stock characters would make it hard to argue that it were even possible to salvage the novel from being that pastiche). In the context of crime fiction's place in contemporary Latin American letters, there is something entirely familiar in the trope of "more than the sum of its clichés"—it's something like the standard sales pitch for a crime novel written with some satirical or critical punch. What's more, this rhetoric of an ineffable or undefinable remainder of literary subtlety is par for the course in Latin American crime fiction, which is fundamentally a genre of pastiche and recycling which never truly shed its

essential anxieties about authenticity or literary value, particularly when the latter is judged by the standards of psychological realism and the post-Boom marketplace for “unique voices”. For this reason, a careful consideration of how Maggiori positions his novel relative to the commonplaces of the genre will put into relief the very subtle ways in which he inflects them with a critique of contemporary history. I consider the novel a deliberate hyperbole of the “novela negra” formula that impressed genre aficionados with its relentless negativity, its pitch-black humor sustained by a density of slang and cocaine-addled rhythms, sneaking in alongside its brash linguistic and violent pyrotechnics some discreet references to the legacies of totalitarianism in law enforcement, generalized corruption, and the impunity of the political class.

Yet after establishing this critical assessment of the novel on its internal and generic terms, I would also like to inquire as to how and why the novel came to be publishable again and intelligible again at a much later date, in 2013, on the verge of a return to pre-2001 economic and political models which have since been ratified by the Argentine elections of December 2015 (a shift echoed in other parts of Latin America, such as the weakening of Chavismo in Venezuela and the opening up of Cuba to American investment). One could argue that the twelve-year hiatus from interest in the novel had less to do with an interruption in the usual sales and reception cycle of fiction than with the distinctness of that intervening historical interlude, which were in many ways experienced by the Argentine middle class as a break from the relentless neoliberalization of Argentina’s economy since the 1980s. From this point of view, the events of the currency crisis of 2001 robbed the novel not only of its sales cycle but more crucially of its horizon of meaning and the pertinence of its critique. I will argue that the novel’s critique, its sensibility, and its message were all very much specific to a historical period that ended abruptly just as the novel was hitting the shelves, and it would be years before a post-2001 epoch could be stabilized such that there would be much demand for (or sense in) a post-mortem on the values and obsessions of the 90’s. In 2016, the novel feels like a prescient antidote against the nostalgia for the 90s that propels the resurgence of neoliberal policies in contemporary politics.

Between Men: A Pastiche of the Homosocial Boy’s Club of Crime Fiction Lore

It is hard to know if Maggiori’s choice of title is coincidental to this assertion or not, but I find the central argument of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s *Between Men* (1985) entirely relevant to the sexual politics of Maggiori’s eponymous novel. She succinctly summarizes that argument in the introduction to her next book, *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990; trans. Barcelona, 1998): “to

demonstrate the immanence of men's same-sex bonds, and their prohibitive structuration, to male-female bonds in nineteenth-century English literature" (15). The precedent set by this specific piece of cultural history was formative for queer theory as a reading practice and as a historical heuristic for understanding triangular relationships between men and women in terms of their subtexts of same-sex desire (both psychic, emotional, and sexual) and in terms of patriarchal power-plays between men. This kind of reading, with or without direct reference to Sedgwick's work or its legacies in queer theory¹, occupies a good amount of scholarship on unpacking the role of gender in the male-dominated space of crime fiction both internationally and in the Hispanophone case. I will not belabor it here except to say that the novel seems self-conscious about its hyperbole of machismo, foregrounding male competition and loyalty at every turn.

To wit, Maggiori's novel is comprised almost entirely of first person accounts and free-indirect discourse by men and explicitly addressed to other men. These narratives navigate a long sequence of male-only social spaces, referring only in passing to biologically female characters and including only one whose speech is recorded firsthand in the novel, and whose brief stints of free-indirect discourse end with her sudden murder in the novel's first section. (The critic and professor Elsa Drucaroff, specialist in crime fiction and Rodolfo Walsh, calls this innocent prostitute "the most dignified in the novel"²). Curiously, though, the many male-to-female trans* characters in the novel, some of whom recur and occupy central roles in the novel's main narrative arc about hunting down blackmail materials, are given a substantial amount of space and agency in the otherwise oppressively masculine narrative. Tellingly, the omniscient narrator (in those sections not narrated directly by a character) is quite precise and respectful in his pronoun usage when referring to these female-identifying characters, as if to offer some apology for or counterweight to the homophobic morass of the characters' thoughts and words about them, who few readers will be surprised to see systematically abused and brutalized throughout the novel.

Even more tellingly, the novel makes relatively few references to genital sexuality, breasts, faces, or other commonplaces of heterosexual desire, whereas every single woman (born or otherwise) is described at least once in terms of both the *shape* and the *market-value* of their "culo", a word which appears in every chapter of the novel. This virtual catalog of hyperboles, folk sayings, evaluative similes, and fine-grained appraisals serves as a through-line connecting all the various narrators and their perspectives,

1 For an interesting application of Sedgwick directly to an author that bears directly on Maggiori's style and tradition, see Martínez (2006).

2 See Chacón (2013).

which, in such a splintered and multi-perspectival novel, noticeably grounds the novel's semantic field. To wit, the effect of this inescapable anal sexuality is one of grounding the novel's stakes in homophobic *panic*, with each character fiercely defending his masculinity at every opportunity, as if each character were himself compromised by the sex tape that everyone is hunting. Or, to be more precise, as though there were some homology between the danger to which each character is exposed and that sexual shame to which the tape exposes its three precarious statesmen. It also bears mention here that the plot's climax hinges on the deductions and actions of the novel's deeply ironic "good cop", "el Loco Almada", whose abstinence from drugs and sex is presented as a limit-case of sublimation, channeled into an obsession with patriarchal order and violent catharsis aimed at sexual deviants. Unlike all the other characters formed by backstories in the military, the prison system, male-only gangs, or working in the torture camps of the dictatorship years, Almada has come up through the ranks of ultra-Catholic fascist vigilantism, and who, until his conversion in the last section of novel, purges his demons by torturing and killing prostitutes and homosexuals in late-night sprees, thus *embodying* homosexual panic quite literally (Maggiore, 2001: 78-9). This diffuse and persistent homophobia and concomitant fixation on [variously heterosexual] anality serves as a bridge between the novel's moral scatology (the moral abyss of the universe of the novel, troped in the cartoonishly excessive drug abuse and the ubiquity of non-consensual and/or pathological sexualities) and its political eschatology (the fragility of the political class and of law enforcement's competing fiefdoms).

Transition, Stasis, and Corruption

[There is]...a kind of paralysis...proper to democratic or to postdictatorship transition: a stagnation that materializes the moment individuals/collectives come to realize that the move past dictatorship supports the very structures it seems to overcome. However, such an experience is not equivalent to hopelessness. It is the exposure of the limit of transition: limit as stopping point, yes, but also as the opening of something more, as frontier.

Brett Levinson, *The ends of literature as neoliberal act*, 31.

It might seem a big jump to go from the novel's ubiquitous individual homophobic panics to a political and historical reading of paranoia in the novel, but it is something of a commonplace of the Southern Cone *novela negra* of the time period, evident everywhere along the spectrum from high-brow to low-brow crime fiction. Think, for example, of Roberto Bolaño's *Estrella distante* and *La literatura Nazi en América* (both 1996), Ricardo Piglia's *Respiración artificial* (1980), *Ciudad ausente* (1992), and *Plata quemada* (1999), Luisa Valenzuela's *Cambio de armas* (1982), Ariel Dorfman's *Death and the*

Maiden (1991), most of Mempo Giardinelli's copious 1990's output, or Carlos Gamerro's *Las islas* (1998). Across all of these works, the deficient and partial apparatuses of criminal justice are put to the test by postdictatorial justice and vengeance, and in every instance, proven inadequate to that task of avenging and/or exorcising fascism from the post-dictatorial state. In the examples above more firmly situated in the crime fiction tradition, this inadequacy is often narratively exhaustive and allegorically foregrounded as a procedural impossibility. Indeed, as I have argued elsewhere, the specificity of this period in Latin American history is inextricable from the specificity of its crime fiction, which cannot help but negotiate the all-too-living legacies of an illegitimate and criminal state as it depicts, and in most cases critiques, the criminal justice systems of those states that succeed them.

Yet what I find so unique and intriguing about Maggiori's particular variant on this aporic mode is the unflinchingly exhaustive way he hyperbolizes the cynicism of the *novela negra* tradition, which delights in exposing corruption as endemic or systemic, and which is ultimately something like optimistic. In Maggiori's limit-case of total and generalized corruption, it is implied that Argentina's criminal justice system has been irreversibly transformed by its decade of totalitarian culture, yet the neoliberal competition for power has turned what was once a hierarchy of brutalities into an uncontrollable Hydra of competing gangs and factions which might (if Argentina gets lucky) destroy each other mutually. Not only is the novel populated with torturers-come-detectives (Maggiori, 2001: 48) and spies who work at desks presided over by portraits of Mussolini and Hitler (2001: 69)³, but the novel even presents Geneva-Convention-violating interrogation techniques and cover-up methods as totally normal operating procedure for the cops discussing them, with all the tidiness of the North American procedural tradition.

Of course, the reference to tradition and cliché is crucial here, since the novel's characters seem to exhibit an almost stagy self-consciousness of occupying the realm of the hackneyed and speaking in so hyperbolically street-toughened a dialect as to seem cartoonish. Early in the novel, a character named Brando snaps his fingers "in his savage and anachronistic way" as he tells his band of low-lives to "scram" (*vajemos*) in a particularly self-conscious example. When bodies are to be disposed of, they are taken to a "ranch" where "Paraguayan gauchos" (2001: 26) adept in that most Argentine of obsessions, knifeplay, butcher humans and animals indiscriminately. (The nod to recent immigration from Paraguay in the novel, which might in another context be seen as a mere nod to globalized verisimilitude, seems

3 In this regard, the probably coincidental resemblance to Bolaño's near-contemporary *Nocturno de Chile* (2000) is interesting.

here to satirically undercut the nationalist and machista *topos* of the gaucho). What's more, crime fiction is the primary and dominant frame of reference, yet others float in and out with the free hand of satire: the orgy scene caught on film in the first chapter is compared first to a nineteenth century scene from the Indian Wars or from the gauchesco poetry that fictionalized them as national epic ("quedó desnuda como cautiva de aquel cacique sintético", 2001: 16), only to be compared a few lines later to a scene from "Titanes del Ring" (a homegrown *lucha libre* analogue to the North American WWF Wrestling popular from the early 70s until 1988). If anything, the knowing familiarity with which crime-fiction commonplaces and stock characters are deployed as a naturalized backdrop that needs only be sketched out minimally gives the novel a kind of "mad libs" feel every time the frame of reference veers towards banal pop-culture references or the Terminator films, just as an eerie gravitas is achieved whenever the brutality of the dictatorship years is offhandedly mentioned.

Of course, this "mad libs" feeling is largely a function of the contrast between the rigorously and predictably schematic structure of the novel's characters and events and the more free-ranging cultural references of its characters' imaginations. A contrastive parallel is set up throughout between career criminals and career torturer-policemen, and enforced by a narrative structure that ping-pongs across the "legal" divide, propelling us towards a confrontation between career criminals and [criminal] cops which satirizes the convention it meticulously follows by making the cops worse than the criminals. In ways that show the symbiotic relationship between sensational true-crime and formulaic crime fiction as well as the pop-psychological shorthand employed by both, the backstory given for each character with real agency in the novel simultaneously mythologizes and pathologizes their exceptional brutality as an adult in terms of childhood or adolescent trauma and abuse. The twist lies in the backstories of the three key detectives, whose functional equivalent to that childhood trauma was an adolescence devoted to opportunistically rising in the ranks of the dictatorship power structure as enterprising young torturers with exceptional talents which translate to their illustrious careers as crooked cops.

This homology between cops and criminals operates not only on the level of narrative structure and character development but also that of a language shared between them, as endeavors on both sides are troped with the same all-encompassing vocabulary of gambits, power-plays, and above all, "*jugadas*", bringing in another time-honored crime fiction trope: gambling as the dominant trope for crimes and actions. Indeed, a list of which settings recur in the novel is telling: the corner bar that is home to "The Friends of Fernet Club," the butcher shop and vacant lot nearby, Luci's trans* brothel, the office of Almada, Garmendia, and Diana, and the "Two

Worlds” casino. There is a timelessness to the crime-pulp clichés that evokes the hard-boiled tradition and the B-movie topoi of the casino and the members-only club, but they’re in an ironic tension with the newness of a globalized Buenos Aires, marked by frequent references to international finance, recent immigration, and both black-market and upscale imports, offering new fodder for old abuses of power. But it is the ironic dissonance between the traditional trope of crime (or mainstream entrepreneurship) as gambling and this novel’s specific concerns, so particular to the neoliberal age, to which I will now turn as the novel’s most unique and timely contribution to the crime-fiction tradition.

Monetary Fictions

Enmarcadas por la inflación desenfadada de finales de la década de 1980 (cuando todavía dominaba, frente a las explicaciones economicistas, la clave explicativa política) y la crisis de 2001 (si no anticipada, prevista en el mismo revés de la modernización), las ficciones del dinero de la década de 1990 se escriben mientras atraviesan una de las grandes ficciones económico-sociales de la Argentina, como lo fue la paridad entre el peso y el dólar, que se daría en llamar la “ficción del 1 a 1”.

Alejandra Laera, *Ficciones del dinero*, 19.

This epigraph comes from the introduction to a recent work of Argentine literary criticism that analyzes a whole crop of 90s novels (Piglia’s *Plata quemada*, Chefjec’s *El aire*, Pauls’ *Wasabi*, Fogwill’s *La experiencia sensible*, and Aira’s *Varamo*) that centrally allegorize currency in the age of neoliberal speculation and sudden exposure to world markets, or as Laera puts it, that have money as their protagonist. While Maggiori’s novel does not share with these illustrious contemporaries a central allegorization of currency, I think the periodization is useful here because it is motivated by some of the same political and historiographical concerns: how to translate into the world of fiction the experience of accelerating consumption and market exposure, this new variation on the experience that Marshall Berman explored through the Marxian trope of “all that is solid melting into air”? What happens to the substance and structure of the novel in this accelerated neoliberal dissolution? While Laera’s five novels construct a fiction around a metaphysics of unstable and internationalized currency, Maggiori’s approach is more negative, undermining the familiarity of the formulaic crime novel with globalized non sequiturs and overt references to the little ways in the master narrative of “1-to-1” were moving the ground beneath the local crime fiction tradition.

My list above of the novel’s only repeated locations was, in a sense, partial—while no individual corner store is described twice in the novel, there

are, curiously, a lot of scenes in various different corner stores which posit the most banal commerce as a counterpoint to the novel's desperate scheming, negotiating, interrogating, and killing. The first of these scenes makes more explicit than any other scene in the novel the historical shifts elsewhere expressed as a slippage or interruption of the timeless *topoi* and clichés of the hard-boiled tradition. It is the only setting to be described in such detail, because it is the only scene where nostalgia and local color are insufficient to fill in the reader's mental picture. In another key contrast, *lunfardo*, street slang, and Brando's stagy sexual bravado are all moot and powerless here, because here only the dollar reigns:

The globalization bit and all that other bullshit had succeeded in turning the ancient corner store "Bowleg's" into a[n American-style] '*drugstore*'. The sheet-aluminum sign that used to say "Candy 'n' cigs" had disappeared, and in its place was hung a lightup Lucky Strikes sign [...] Inside, piled up on the metal and acrylic display shelves, there was a whole catalog's worth of indispensable merchandise you couldn't live without: compact discs, comics magazines, Korean electronic games, anniversary cards (musical and standard), battery-powered hair dryers, potato chips and Swiss or Turkish chestnuts, mini-bottles of every type and grade of liquor, a collection of Zippo lighters and enough stuffed animals to feed all the moths in the world for various generations. Near the door, two fridges with glass doors and a Pepsi logo kept cold cans of soda and some sandwiches vacuum-wrapped against Styrofoam trays with a delicate film of polyvinyl. On a salmon-colored formica table rested a microwave and a coffeemaker next to a metal artifact about the size of an old vegetable drawer with a series of metal rollers on which spun browned hotdogs (Maggiori, 2001: 86-88).

There is no reference in the novel to economic policies or party politics, no direct references to the "1-to-1 fiction", just a senseless concatenation of its effects at street level, a kind of ethnography of street life in rapidly-changing times.

This scene might, on first read, strike the reader as gratuitous, but it actually serves as a kind of ironic counterpoint to the other corner store in the novel, presided over by the ancient and deaf Basque immigrant⁴ who has served for decades as a covert communications node. There are also, curiously, any number of idiomatic and folksy mentions of corner stores (*kioskos*) and shopkeepers (*almaceneros*) throughout the novel, such as, "he put the joint behind his ear like a shopkeeper's pencil" (2001: 88) in the mouths of

4 The word I'm translating as corner store here, "kiosco", is a Polish borrow-word, which shows how 19th and 20th century immigration from another moment of international openness and economic instability provided so many of clichés that would, by this time, be so domesticated by the national imaginary and tradition as to be contrasted with Korean electronic chachkies as economic allegory.

various characters of different ages, which underlines as shared between them all this Argentine *locus classicus* of the cornerstore. Yet the jarringly contrastive American-style convenience store, and the inner lair of the mass-media politician with his droves of media consultants, are the only two settings in the novel that would be out of place transposing the actions of the novel 30 or 50 years into the past. The convenience store haunts the rest of the novel in ways that the condensed opportunism and depravity of the villainous politician does not, however. Surprisingly, the corrupt politician (with his polymorphous sexuality played off for comic relief) is not set up as dangerous or ultimately responsible for the novel's boogeymen; he is, the novel seems to imply, simply doing his job as much as any other functionary of banal evil. The novel's two deepest concerns, judging from the number of offhand references made to them throughout, are consumption (*consumo*) and valuation (*cotización*), two buzzwords of the "1-to-1" years that clash and jar with the hardboiled street-slang inflecting every characters' speech.

One might even say that more than the caricature of the calloused political elite or any of the agents of reckless and merciless greed, Maggiori's real villains here are consumption and valuation themselves as cultural values concomitant with neoliberal economics. The drug industry and the exploitation of sex work are both troped as simply one more kind of big business, consolidated and internationalized along with all the others in a period of massive consolidation. The only local resistance to these ominous neoliberal forces that the novel seems to imagine is on the anonymous scale of neighborhoods, with patchy results. In the case of Lili's house, "the whole neighborhood was a freakshow that the neighbors swallowed without protest, as if they were OK with a retired whore selling blow in their neighborhood as if it was aspirin at a corner store" (Maggiori, 2001: 93), while in the case of Luci's brothel, "which sold the highest-valued [*cotizados*] trannies in Buenos Aires", the neighbors were driven "by the vertiginous drop in the valuation [*cotización*] of their homes" to drive it out by going to the press (2001: 183). The market-driven sensibility ratcheting up all the drug-addled mayhem of the novel is ultimately not presented as a force of nature or a foreign invader, but as a habit of mind, maybe even a generational one. Here, I think, lies the ineffable optimism and timeliness of the novel in 2016 that makes the ending so satisfying even though the final acts of violence happen offstage, as it were, tastefully elided.

Conclusions

To wit, I find the offstage ending satisfying along thematic lines exactly because it makes explicit and thematic what has been present in the novel up until that point only on the level of idiom, connotation, and incidental description. I am referring not so much to the events, but to the lead-up to the

showdown, in which the craziest of the police and the craziest of the criminals are inspired, respectively, by the rantings of a homeless ex-professor and by a mystical interpretation of the lyrics of a song by Argentine cumbia-kitsch icon Gilda. The detailed exegeses of each “mystical” text in those scenes where the two gladiators prepare for battle are, to my mind, the most fascinating and inspired in the novel: the ex-professor’s sermon on the moral danger of the contemporary era’s new [neoliberal] values embodied by the drug- and consumption-addled “*homo toxicus*”, is the most explicitly the novel ever discusses its stakes, while the bizarre reading of Gilda’s populist commonplaces are the closest any of the characters come to recognizing the limits of their airless and womanless worldview. These two characters, the fascist Almada suddenly redeemed through a zeal for clean living and the bottom-feeder Lefty obliterating his last neuron with a drug cocktail that could kill a horse, could be seen as the least sympathetic in many ways, yet they are paradoxically the best and worst examples of the *homo toxicus* at the core of the novel.

It is as though they have gone all the way through the process of adoption to the new neoliberal order and come out the other side, past the breaking point that many critics have read as a prediction of the 2001 crash, and that I would think might be yet to come for Argentina or for the world more generally. The optimism lies in the mutual destruction of all the criminals and corrupt cops—a kind of cathartic purging of the excesses of a pathological system that has overproduced violence and abuse. After the confrontation, the reader is treated to an idyllic epilogue in which the survivor (who ironically has gone by the nickname “El muerto” throughout the whole novel) turns over a new leaf and takes a break from his self-destructive life. Taking a break from hard drugs to practice a more honest trade, El muerto answers an ad in the paper to be a door-to-door salesman/confidence-man. He sells a Bible to a lonely widower, smokes a joint, loses his resolve, and quits. You could not ask for a less neoliberal ending—a charming and restorative kind of denouement, as if to assure the reader that there are more ways to go than forward, that not all that is solid will be melting into air just yet, that some forces of change might still fizzle out due to internal contradictions and instabilities. The novel is deeply Argentine in its language, its conception of the hard-boiled tradition, its frame of reference, and its cultural and political object of satire, yet it bears repeating that it was only published after winning an international first-novel competition judged by novelists whose works are all definitively pitched to (and published for) a broader Hispanophone readership. I think in many ways Argentina’s political discourse around neoliberalism and around rapid weakening of protectionism and internal economic structures positions it as a canary in the mineshaft for the rest of Latin America—and in this light, I

think it is an important document that I hope will contribute to a broader conversation about economics and cultural values outside of Argentina.

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RETHORICS OF CRIME IN ARGENTINIAN *NEOPOLICIAL* NOVELS. STYLIZATION AND PARODY OF CRIME FICTION

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ABSTRACT. The present work aims at providing an overview of the main contributions to the contemporary crime fiction in Argentina. We are talking about the so-called *neopolicial* writings that have revitalized the detective fiction genre from a thematic and formal perspective that is closer to our continent worldview. For that purpose, we will first put forward a reflection on one of the pioneers in the field of the *neopolicial* story, Osvaldo Soriano, and his novel *Triste, solitario y final*. Secondly, we will refer to a newly emerging space for detective story writing, one that follows the footprints marked by the above mentioned author and shows novel expository characteristics, not only in the reallocation of roles and places for the key pieces of the genre as are detective, police, investigation, the agent or agents of crime, crime and truth, but also in the understanding of the contemporary societal map and its growing complexity.

KEY WORDS: literature, neopolicial, parody, stylization, crime

La buena novela negra es, al mismo tiempo,
el espejo de parte de la sociedad actual.
Entraña por tanto, un elemento de testimonio e incluso de
psicología humana extraordinariamente poderoso.
Pero entonces la evasión desaparece y el lector vuelve a encontrarse
en el corazón de algunos de los problemas contemporáneos.¹
Fereydoun Hoveyda, *Historia de la novela policial*.

Crime fiction, of which models and authors came from the Anglo-Saxon literary world, arrived in Latin America in the last quarter of the nineteenth

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1 Suggested translation: "The good hard boiled fiction is, at the same time, the mirror of part of today's society. Therefore, it entails an element of testimony and even of human psychology that is extraordinarily powerful. But then, evasion vanishes and the reader finds himself again at the heart of some of the contemporary problems."

century, through the diffusion in Argentina of detective stories by Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) and police serials by authors such as Emile Gaboriau (1832-1873), Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930) and Gaston Leroux (1868-1927). Even when readers enthusiastically welcomed these first texts that reproduced a world and some crime logics from countries very different from ours, it was clearly perceived that it was an imported genre, presenting stories which ran in the dark streets of cold and smoky metropolises, led by stoic detectives; that is, far from the reality of Latin American countries.

Thus, the publication dates of the first translations of Anglo-Saxon and French detective fiction done in Latin America (according to Bajarlía, 1964; Yates, 1964, 1972); Fevre, 1974; Lafforgue and Rivera, 1977, 1981), would have occurred, approximately, in the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries. In the preface to *Cuentos Policiales Argentinos* (1997), Lafforgue refers to Poe's inaugural translations made by Argentine Carlos Olivera in 1880, which included the three foundational stories of the classic genre: *Los crímenes de la calle Morgue* (1841), *El misterio de Marie Roget* (1842) and *La carta robada* (1844). In *Asesinos de papel* (1977), Lafforgue and Rivera, mention the arrival of Poe's stories in the country towards the end of the nineteenth century, along with those of Gaboriau, Conan Doyle and Leroux, in various "youth magazines such as Nick Carter, Tit-Bits, and Buffalo Bill Magazine" (Lafforgue and Rivera, 1977: 18), while they point out the year 1915 as the date of the publication of massive Argentinian collections and sold at kiosks as *La Novela Semanal*, *El cuento ilustrado* or *La novela Universitaria*.

Anyway, this early reception does not mean that the local authors had adopted the genre immediately. As it is stated in the book *Estudio preliminar a Cuentos policiales argentinos* (1974) by the critic Fermín Fevre, the detective fiction genre spread to Latin American countries but had no direct impact on literary practices. In a certain way, in our cultural context the narrative structure presupposed by the first crime fiction novels, both in the enigma classical series and in the hard-boiled fiction, that of the criminal's punishment followed by the restoration of the social order in the end, seemed to be somewhat incongruous with the logic of our society which is rather traversed by corruption and collusion between the police, politics and justice.

Thus, in spite of the fact that the number of detective fiction readers, especially in Argentina, was always significant, together with all those who enthusiastically followed the new science fiction and the "heart" magazine-type editions (melodramatic stories into chapters); for vernacular writers of crime fiction genre this literary format never stopped being sensed as an "imported product" and somehow, as it was presented, it seemed to be ideologically incompatible with Latin American realities. That is why our writers soon had to find new ways to create detective stories truer to our Hispanic culture.

In the introduction to *El cuento policial latinoamericano* (1964), Donald A. Yates refers to it by saying “while detective fiction, as a type of ‘escape literature’ may have a peculiar charm to the Hispanic audience, everyday reality, that of a society in which the authority of the police and the power of justice are not as admired as in the Anglo-Saxon countries, tended to discourage native writers” (Yates, 1964: 5-6). In this sense and from a critical point of view that is closer to our socio-cultural area, other authors, such as Monsivais (1973), Taibo II (1987), Feinmann (1991-1996) or Padura (2001) would ratify those statements expressed by Yates. Far from the remedial figures of social order, embodied by private detectives or policemen in the North American and European series, in the context of Latin American societies “there is (absolutely) no confidence in justice” (Carlos Monsivais, 1973: 11), so those investigators, where they exist, often stir fear or rejection.

The search for vernacular models of detective fiction, more plausible in the complex reality of our culture, led many Latin American writers to develop pieces of writing which were better suited to our particular way of understanding crime, of seeking truth and of *suturing*, somehow, the social gap created by crime. This is the case of Zelaschi Perez (1960), a true precursor, when he said that “the Latin American public rejects any idealization precisely because it has an intimate familiarity with our police (...) The widespread contempt for the law makes it virtually impossible for us to create a pure detective story [...] We are forced to take alternative paths” (Zelaschi, 1960, in Simpson, 1990: 22). Our country has exceptional examples of writers who have respected, in their own way, the basic conventions of enigma writing (Borges, Castellini, the first Walsh), however, the manner in which Poe, A. C. Doyle or Chesterton structured their narrative was “artificial for us” (Simpson, 1990: 22), so the writers of the Latin American detective novel needed to readapt the genre to our own ways of telling stories about crime.

In this regard, we must go back to Carlos Monsivais, the writer who best theorizes on these necessary readjustments of the genre in our region. For the Mexican writer and journalist, there are two key aspects that define our new narrative:

1. The first has to do with the transformation of the detective fiction traditional reader, from one who is just looking for a good plot or, in its absence, for some punches and escapes for entertainment, into a critical reader in our society, history and culture. The reader of the detective fiction genre in Latin America tends to demystify the traditional formulations of the Anglophone and European series, and he even “ignores a detective process that, rejected for being unreliable, is no longer a mystery revealed but becomes a denunciation” (Monsivais, 1973: 2).

2. The second aspect relates to the position of the victim/victimizer participants. The new Latin American detective writings work on an essential presupposition, that is, “there is no confidence in Justice (...) (and) crime (...) does not have a seizable connotation: the exceptional, the unusual, is not that a Latin American person turns out to be a victim, but rather that he/she may stop being one (Monsiváis, 1973: 3).

Our *neopolicial* story writings clearly have more affinity with the hard or hard-boiled series (Chandler, Chase) than with the narrative logic of the pure enigma (Poe, Holmes). Ricardo Piglia, in the introduction to his anthology to *Cuentos de la serie negra* (1979), states that the detective in the series “does not hesitate to be ruthless and brutal, but his moral code is invariable in just one aspect: no one will corrupt him.” The thriller meets its utopia when the virtues of the individual, who is fighting alone and for money against evil, are mentioned (Link, 1992: 57). The *hard-boiled* fiction detective is immersed in the logic of capitalism: punishment of the criminal and money; re-establishment of the social fabric and payment for rendered services; and he plays and judges the world from there.

However, Monsiváis, still thinking about the series affinities, goes on to say that these two particular aspects of hard-boiled novels would be, at least partially, scarcely credible for the Latin American context, where “a police force judged unanimously as corrupt is not susceptible to any credit: if this literature aimed for realism, the accused character would almost never be the real criminal and unless he was poor, he would never be punished” (Monsiváis, 1973: 3).

The Argentine writer Juan Pablo Feinmann, states the same in his classic articles *Estado policial y novela negra argentina* (1991) and later on in *Narrativa policial y realidad política* (1996):

There are no detectives in our crime fiction stories. There are no policemen because a good cop is—in narrative terms here in Argentina—impossible to be found. The police are strongly attached to the idea of repression, and for now, and as long as crimes such as the murder of Cabezas continue further, they are not going to be redeemed from that dark and violent position. In the book *Triste, solitario y final* by Osvaldo Soriano, the detective is Philip Marlowe, assisted by Soriano himself (...). In *Manual de perdedores* by Juan Sasturain the detectives are the veteran Etchenaik and the Galician Tony Garcia (...). In short, there are no detectives... (and for the explanation) we have to turn... to the social reality (Feinmann, 1996: 2).

But perhaps it is the Cuban narrator Leonardo Padura (2001) who refers with greater precision to the existence of some “founding fathers” of what would later be called the Latin American *neopolicial*, when he says that in fact only some Anglophone authors had a prominent presence in the 70’s,

and who are still regularly being read, such as Chester Himes (1909-1984) or Donald Westlake (1933)² who concoct a detective story in which “the existence of an enigma or not can be finally forgotten and, only then, a final awareness is reached, an awareness of the fact that the essential element which has truly categorized and continues to categorize this narrative model is not the presence of an enigma but the existence of a crime that [...] does not have to be mysterious to achieve the ultimate purpose of this genre: the feeling of uncertainty, the evidence that we live in an increasingly violent world, the conviction that justice is a moral and legal concept that is not always present in real life” (Padura, 2001, in Trelles).

This proposal for a new crime fiction aesthetics, which re-signifies the figure of the “private and official detective— in favor of a predominance of marginal voices, attitudes and thoughts generated and grouped by a chaos that dominates everything, or almost everything” (Padura, 2001: 10), is perhaps the defining point for a novel that is different from the traditional writings—enigma or simply hard-boiled fiction—in Spanish-speaking countries such as Chile, Argentina, Spain and Mexico, and it means the definitive emergence of the Ibero-American or Latin American *neopolicial*—if we include other languages like Portuguese for Brazil.

The *neopolicial* seeks ways to reformulate and even subvert essential aspects that define the crime genre, such as: detective, police, criminal, crime, enigma and truth- with the purpose of readapting it to the plausible version proposed by Latin American countries contexts. In certain cases the *neopoli-*

2 Chester Himes (1909-1984) was a black writer who almost always reflected in his novels the problems of his race and of New York Harlem. His characters were either black cops or Harlem criminals, and if some of them were hard the others were not far behind. His literary style was an almost impossible mixture of wild humor, absurd violence and social criticism. Sarcasm presided over many of his intrigues or anecdotes of the story, but sometimes an unexpected bitter romanticism was offered amid the violence and dehumanization of his characters. *Un ciego con una pistola* or *Por el amor de Imabelle* are two examples of this combination of styles in his work. His work was really hard; he described the world as he saw it, without simulations or intentions to shock. His hardness and his straightforward language, in principle, might suggest the existence of possible successors, but no one like him has been so near to the description of a particular human territory and of a seemingly unsolvable problem. Donald Westlake (born in 1933) His incorporation to the tradition, but also to the renewal of hard-boiled fiction, is due to his inclusion of humor in the genre. Both in his novels with thief Dortmund as the main character, like *Un diamante al rojo vivo* or *¿Por qué yo?*, as well as in others without a fixed protagonist, as *Ayúdame, estoy prisionero!*, and *El muerto sin descanso*, Westlake offers very funny, sometimes almost irreverent stories in which he combines hard-boiled fiction together with the most joyful and happy humor, an apparently impossible combination which he creates in the most inimitable manner. In his stories, a cynical but also a loving look towards a usually violent genre is revealed, and at the same time, towards our own reality. Source. Blog Letras en negro 2009, www.letrasennegro.wordpress.com/2009/02/26/los-seis-imprescindibles/.

cial becomes an anti-genre³ in the sense defined by Oscar Steimberg (1993), because it may incorporate humor, grotesque rhetorics, intimate declarative points of view, and topics that are unimportant or that do not belong to the protocols of the gender themes—like that crime which happened in *Traslasierras*, Cordoba, in the midst of a Holy Week procession, portrayed in the novel by Lucio Yudicello *Judas no siempre se ahorca* (2010).

A differential aspect of these new writings, as I have quoted above (Mon-sivais), has to do with the absence or the displacement of the leading role of the detective actor. In fact, sometimes the detective actor simply does not exist, or he/she is just a character who is barely configured, with little impact on the overall plot development. This is the case of our emblematic novel, the initiator of the *neopolicial* fiction in Argentina, *Triste, Solitario y Final* (1973) by Osvaldo Soriano, in which the investigation vicissitudes are in charge of a journalist—auto-fiction by the same author—a character who is little talented for doing these works and a detective—Marlowe—who has become the ghost of that one created by R. Chandler. This innovative and creative sense of Soriano's work had already been noticed by Jorge Laf-forgue and Jorge B. Rivera (1982) when they commented, in relation to *Narrativa policial en la Argentina*, that “in 1973, the year of the publication of *The Buenos Aires Affair*, a ‘detective story’ by Manuel Puig (...), some equally significant titles for both the history of the genre as for the general chronology of the Argentine narrative were published. Among others, we refer to *Triste, Solitario y Final* by Osvaldo Soriano, an ingenious tribute to *hard-boiled* fiction and to the detective Philip Marlowe, a reflection of the great ‘dis-credited’ heroes who were referents for a whole generation of readers” (Lafforgue and Rivera, 1982: 358).

Thus, in his famous novel, Soriano rehearses some writings that will prelude the *neopolicial* dominant scene by proposing the adventures of an Argentine writer as a character in a detective novel. As Diaz Eterovic (2004), one of the most widely read Chilean writers today, states, “the *neopolicial* story is consistent with the emergence of such discursive format in the context of Hispanic American literature, from Osvaldo Soriano's novels onwards, because Soriano (...) imprinted the detective novel written in this

3 “Anti-genre must be understood as the piece of writing that generates disruptions on the three levels (rhetorical, declarative and thematic) while maintaining the usual genre indicators. In narrative films, for example the westerns, the indicators remain stable... But, based on these similarities, the anti-genre work disrupts the predictability in the three orders; in the case of westerns, spaghetti westerns generated this disruption in their earlier days, not only in the subject order [a non-strict hero], but also in the declarative order [the abandonment of the narrative, and the inclusion of humorous complicity and of rhetorical ‘winks’ [due to changes in the narrative pace]]” (Steimberg, 1993: 81-82).

continent with the Latin American stamp; in other words, the *neopolicial* fiction has served to reveal the reality of our countries where—Diaz Eterovic says—“crime and politics have been a tragically perfect equation” (Eterovic, Diaz, 2004).

In this way, *Triste, solitario y final* takes up the hard-boiled fiction structure to rewrite it in a parodic way and to establish some discursive operations that will be fruitful during the following decades and that are summarized as follows:

- First, the parody of the crime genre takes place when a journalist detective is introduced without the traits that characterize the investigative role in traditional series, such as: bearing arms, self-defense skills, forensic expertise, and knowledge of crime codes. In this sense the auto-fictional character -Soriano finds himself almost by chance in the middle of an action that exceeds his abilities.
- Secondly, it refers to the symbolic death operation of the emblem-figure, the detective in the *hard-boiled* series, through the gloomy image of Philip Marlowe; a sad, solitary character who is portrayed by the presenter in a poetic key passage of the novel: “Soriano entered the room and saw that his mate was sitting with his face in his hands. The candle was on the floor, as if someone had abandoned it. The Argentine man raised his light and felt that the silence of his friend was a heavy burden for that dark house, that tragedy had finally and forever embraced him from that small, soft, now rigid body that the detective had dropped on his legs. The cat’s head was hanging out of Marlowe’s knees and its eyes were open, though devoid of color. The tail was like the counterweight of an abandoned kite. Soriano looked at his mate for a long while and noticed that he faded into the gloom. He was very still. Nothing moved in that place. At last, the Argentine man approached and touched the animal with his fingertips. Then he pressed one of Marlowe’s shoulders and left the bedroom. There was still an icy feeling in his fingers” (Soriano, O. 1973: 73). Many semes associated with death are mentioned, although Marlowe is just asleep. In our view, this *figurativization* of decay will work as a background for future ‘demystifying’ strategies of detective idols that will appear in the *neopoliciales* series, especially after the 90s’.

Shortly after *Triste, Solitario y Final* (1973), Soriano writes two novels almost simultaneously. They are *No habrá más pena ni olvido* (1978) and *Cuarteles de invierno* (1980). As Eterovic (2000) also states, these novels will deepen the features of crime fictions, by completing that which was built out of parody, with the insertion of politics, corruption and the development of an ideological device in which the State plays an active part in criminal and persecutory acts, among others. Somehow, with these two novels, Soriano completes the matrix of the next detective story genre in Latin America, in which the combination of power, corruption and crime will be the essential condiment of future literary practices.

With these novels Osvaldo Soriano, whether conscious or not of founding a new space in the narrative and detective fiction literary domain, particularly in Argentina, laid the groundwork so that writers of the following generations had a key frame of reference. Thus, since the early years of the 90s' in our country, a growth process of the crime genre has started and it has not yet stopped, rather it has intensified. Particularly in Argentina and after the institutional and economic crisis of the year 2001, there has been a real 'big bang' of written works related to crime, with interchanges between the political and police powers within the framework of new crime forms. In one way or another, most of them lean on those writings by Osvaldo Soriano and his thematic, rhetorical and declarative findings (Steinberg, 1993).

The parodical rewriting model with exchanges between the mass culture and the detective fiction writings is highly valued by the *neopolicial* writers. This is evident by the inclusion of certain resources, topics, and narration perspectives in their texts that move them away from both the enigma classical series (in Poe's style) and the resources found in the traditional hard-boiled series (in Chandler's way). Thus, detective fiction plots that resort to forms taken from action films are produced, like *Santería* (2008) by Leonardo Oyola, set in Villa Puerto Apache by Costanera Sur and featuring La Víbora Blanca, almost a horror film character; or like the referrals to anticipatory science fiction by the esoteric triptych, Muishkin, Abelev and Maglier, in *El síndrome de Rasputín* (2008) and *Los bailarines del fin del mundo* (Romero, 2009), novels in which the extremes of representations are being played with. This is carried out by creating the image of three persons who must not only deal with the case they have been appointed—that of a young woman lost in the circuits of prostitution, nocturnality and body experiences— but also carry out the investigation they have been assigned while they are immersed in their own fantasies, obsessions and disturbances caused by the Tourette Syndrome.

Novels in another writing sub-field also stand out because they modify some aspect of the detective fiction matrix without using strong intertextual references with mass culture discourses, but they do accomplish operations that remind us of the journalist in *Triste, solitario y final* by combining the presence of an amateur detective and of certain processes that give visibility to criminal issues which are just emerging on mass media's agenda. This is the case of the creative novel by Federico Levín Ceviche (2009), in which the investigation plot leans on the *Sapo*. A true gastronomic detective. An actor who follows extended itineraries around bars and canteens, while eating Peruvian *ceviche* in the Abasto neighborhood. He is a detective who gains experience as such as he walks through the crime scene. The death of *El Rey*, a legendary musician of the Peruvian community, takes him along

the intricate neighborhood mazes: “Hector Vizcarra is called El Sapo and he moves inside a two-room apartment (...) El Sapo rests from an impossible tiredness: doubt” (Levin, 2009: 11). Thanks to the character of El Sapo, the reader is introduced to the Peruvian community in the *porteña* metropolis, to their rituals, their meals, their ways of exorcising death, their new ‘businesses’ (especially drugs) in order to show a whole world, the Peruvian one, within a larger one, that of the city of Buenos Aires.

In *El doble Berni* (Gandolfo and Sosa, 2008), space is invigorated by the movements. In this work the setting alternates between the city of Rosario and of Buenos Aires. Juan Lucantis, thin and colorless character investigates the death of the enigmatic painter Robert Taborda, his friend. He is not a professional detective, or anything like that. With his friend, he shares the common image of failure: “The first thing that surprised him was to recognize that the decision that pushed him to the final break with his own wife depended on having become aware, indisputably (...), of Taborda’s own failure” (Gandolfo and Sosa, 2008: 42). This murder leads his friend—Lucasti—and the reader himself, through the labyrinths of the art business, the exhibition galleries and the counterfeiting of original works of art. Berni is the one that is forged, and becomes the starting point for several deaths.

Finally, Ruth Epelbaum, the detective in *Sangre Kosher* (Krimmer, 2010), is only a low profile archivist who is overnight immersed in a dense story which involves the trafficking mafia within the framework of the old tales of the Jewish community in Buenos Aires. Ruth moves through the city in search of a girl who has disappeared. At that point of the story, one of the strongest and most recurrent hypothesis of our current police agenda is updated: the victim has been ‘taken’, ‘sucked’ by a human trafficking network with sexual objectives. However, and this is what proves to be original, the current history is linked, from the very first lines, with another hypothesis: the organization that has kidnapped Deborah, the girl, is connected with the Zwi Migdal, ancient Jewish association with prostitution.

Conclusions

As we have shown with some examples of recently published *neopoliciales* almost all of them belonging to the *Negro Absoluto* collection, which is directed by Juan Sasturain, Soriano’s work, and in particular his first and inaugural parodic-detective novel, has been continued by some authors. The result is a shift from the detective classic images, such as those of Auguste Dupin, Sherlock Holmes, Father Brown, Hercule Poirot, or the legendary Marlowe, toward characters who circumstantially have had to take on the investigative role. Thus, in recent decades in Argentina, crime fiction has innovated its writing forms. While it has been tainted by the signs of national reality, many of the stories and their subsequent adaptations to the televi-

sion and cinema format were inspired by the complex reality of Latin American cities.

The North American Hard Boiled series has been the most widely accepted for these writing exercises and as Elvio Gandolfo (2007) says, in Argentina “writers have copied or tended to reproduce a very small part (...) With some exaggeration it might be said that they have not chosen a movement, an author or a work, but a character: Philip Marlowe. One of the initiators was the one who better tackled the problem. Osvaldo Soriano embedded Marlowe, using the very name and surname, into *Triste, solitario y final* and cleverly inserted him in a very swift comic-ethical film of the silent era, portraying him fat and panting” (Gandolfo, 2007: 160).

Soriano preludes and outlines the contours of things to come in crime fiction; a space of literary practices, as we intend to describe, dominated by *parody, power, State corruption and the absence of savior heroes*, and where that functionality which every good detective story must have is updated; as Henning Mankell says, to help “to see what is happening in society” (La Nación, 2007).

Literary theory and criticism are readapting their criteria, methods and concepts to the challenges proposed by the new aesthetic objects in this emerging literary field. The *neopolicial* is one of those writing practices in which the search for expressive forms is linked with the need to tell about the complex world of crime in the XXI century. It is up to us, scholars, to be flexible and creative so that we can continue to think about literature, that dynamic object in constant reinvention.

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CORRUPTION, CRIME AND THE URBAN AND CULTURAL LANDSCAPE IN ARGENTINA DURING CARLOS SAÚL MENEM'S ADMINISTRATION (1988-1999)

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ABSTRACT. In this work, I maintain that the neoliberal policies that Carlos Saul Menem implemented increasingly entailed the production and readership of crime and hardboiled literature, as well as the proliferation of series and bulletins based on solving crimes. This change in journalistic, literary and television output was due to socioeconomic crisis, crime rate, insecurity, and changes to the urban landscape, all of which were symptoms of globalization which had intensified during the nineties. To examine my thesis, I mainly make use of historical investigations on the Menem administration by Fernando Sabsay, Luis Alberto Romero and Mónica Deleis. Additionally, I particularly use the studies on crime in Argentina by Catalina Smulovitz and the investigations by María Mercedes Borkosky de Domínguez, Beatriz Sarlo and Néstor García Canclini about the cultural market within a globalized world.

KEY WORDS: hardboiled, globalization, crime fiction, journalism

Everything that surrounds us is false and unreal, the history that was taught to us was false, the economic beliefs that they fill us with are false, the global perspective that they present to us is false, the political dilemmas that they gave us were false, the liberties that their words promise are not real (1937).¹

Introduction

The failure of Raúl Alfonsín's (1927-2009) *radicalismo* administration between 1983 and 1989 led to the early end of the president's term and the call for general elections.² This collapse arose as the result of a series of rea-

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1 Raúl Scalabrini Ortiz, *Historia de los ferrocarriles argentinos* (Buenos Aires: Lancelot, 2006), 8.

2 Luis Alberto Romero, *A History of Argentina in the Twentieth Century* (Pennsylvania, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 137. *Radicalismo* is one of the most important

sons that overpowered and accentuated financial, political and social insecurity. It demonstrated uncontrollable hyperinflation and a chaotic economy. Workers from different job sectors held continuous strikes and effected a total of thirteen general stoppages that immobilized the country. In 1988, the government implemented the “Spring Plan” to be able to make it to the next elections and control inflation. Prices were frozen, public spending was reduced, and foreign loans and investments were sought. The project was not able to recuperate stability because Domingo Cavalla, an economist from the opposing party, recommended that the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund limit their loans, which caused complete collapse.

The consequences of all of those problems were lost on the recent military dictatorship.³ One series of uprisings threatened the consolidation of the democratic system. Colonel Aldo Rico (1943-), who was imprisoned for the rebellion that he led against the Alfonsín administration in 1987, escaped from prison and tried to regain power. The following year, Officer Mohamed Seineldí led an uprising in the capital to ask for the amnesty and exoneration of the soldiers who participated in the Dirty War.⁴ In this state of uncertainty and crisis, Carlos Saúl Menem was chosen as president on the 14th of May, 1989. The term change should have occurred in December, but due to growing instability, the new government took possession on the 8th of July, six months earlier than what the Constitution had established.⁵

In this work, I maintain that the neoliberal policies that Carlos Saul Menem implemented increasingly entailed the production and readership of crime and hardboiled literature, as well as the proliferation of series and bulletins based on solving crimes. This change in journalistic, literary and television output was due to socioeconomic crisis, crime rate, insecurity, and changes to the urban landscape, all of which were symptoms of globalization which had intensified during the nineties. To examine my thesis, I mainly make use of historical investigations on the Menem administration by Fernando Sabsay, Luis Alberto Romero and Mónica Deleis. Additionally, I particularly use the studies on crime in Argentina by Catalina Smulovitz and the investigations by María Mercedes Borkosky de Domínguez, Beatriz Sar-

political parties in Argentina. It was founded in 1891 by Leandro Alem in order to secure political freedom, administrative honesty, and patriotism.

3 Alfonsín was the first democratic president after the 1976 coup d'état.

4 Romero, *A History of Argentina*, 282. The Dirty War is the term used to denote the forced entry into homes, the killings, kidnappings and torture faced by those who fought against and defied the de facto government or those who were simply suspected of such activities.

5 Romero, *A History of Argentina*, 283.

lo and Néstor García Canclini about the cultural market within a globalized world.

Months after Menem began his term, the Berlin Wall fell, in November of 1989, and soon after, in 1991, the Soviet Union dissolved, disintegrating its threat. These two events produced numerous political, economic and social transformations around the world, and they secured the expansion of the globalization phenomenon.⁶ It is necessary to briefly recount the ascension of this concept because it is central in this work since, in Argentina, it was during Carlos Menem's administration that these neoliberal concepts spread.

Last century, during the sixties, technological and economic changes arose, produced by the dollar crisis in 1971 and the oil crisis in 1973. It called for the establishment of synthetic products to replace raw materials and the search for more energy-efficient means of production. Additionally, a cost reduction was reached for technological information, and new production policies called for more technology and less manpower and materials.⁷ In the political sphere, national sovereignty decreased as a result of the power that international organizations held, specifically the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and international corporations. Towards the end of the fifties, during Arturo Frondizi's (1958-1962) administration, Argentina took part in the International Monetary Fund, but this did not stop the government from developmental politics as had occurred during Videla's administration. According to historian Luis Alberto Romero, José Alfredo Martínez de Hoz (1925-), the Minister of Economics during the five years of general Videla's de facto administration, counted on a strong personal tie with financial organizations and foreign banks and stopped producing commercial interdependence with the United States. In this way, they developed an external debt that was impossible to pay off due to the large number of requested loans, and ended up consenting to international credit organizations. The government continued to rob through the erroneous economic policies that they implemented.⁸ Additionally, during the eighties, a transfer from a united economy to a postindustrial market took place, largely connected through services and information.⁹ Resources were

6 Hernán Fair, "La globalización neoliberal: transformaciones y efectos de un discurso hegemónico", *Kairos Revista de temas sociales* 12.21 (2008): 1.

7 Daniel García Delgado, *Estado-nación y globalización: fortalezas y debilidades en el umbral del tercer milenio* (Buenos Aires: Ariel, 2000), 25.

8 Romero, *A History of Argentina*, 222.

9 Joseph Nathan Cohen, Miguel Centeno, "Neoliberalism and Patterns of Economic Performance", *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 606.1 (2006): 32-67. Barriers were eliminated to facilitate foreign investments, public organizations were privatized, and public sector employees were reduced, amongst other policies.

no longer immobilized, but rather quickly and constantly flowed from side to side. This financial method reached global predominance during the nineties with the growth of centralized financial resources, the denationalization of state entities, the deregulation of internal markets, the decrease of public expenditure that brought with it the gradual neglect of citizen needs, the opening of the economy to transnational resources, and the collapse of communism. In Argentina, like in all of Latin America, this formula was used to attain a larger part in the global market and to promote economic growth. But, as can be seen, globalization resulted in catastrophe for the country.¹⁰

Globalization and Carlos Saúl Menem's Administration

Carlos Menem rose to power when inflation was at two hundred percent. Citizens were beginning to exchange australs for dollars to avoid the devaluation of their wealth, and the most affected groups looted supermarkets due to the poverty that they endured.¹¹ To reduce the chaos inherited by Alfonsín's presidency and to try to concentrate on structural and institutional reform, Menem signed 277 pardons for military and civil leaders that had been accused of human rights violations during the previous military dictatorship. This produced repercussions that divided the country and many leftist organizations led public protests. Meanwhile, with the intention of improving relations with the United States, Menem decided to take part in the Gulf War.¹² This new tie with North America introduced new willingness by international credit organizations to consent to a supposed economic growth and to be established into the global economy.

In regards to these new policies, the government argued that "our countries, individually, cannot change even a shred of the global political and economic reality, even though it greatly affects us".¹³ Similarly, in a report, the president of the World Bank confirmed that the economic changes "are inevitable, even though they are painful. The countries that have denied change have only fallen into harsher situations."¹⁴ In consequence, to avoid massive flight of the country's invested assets and, in following the World

10 Fair, "La globalización neoliberal", 4. This combination of regulations put in place by credit organizations were known as the "Consenso de Washington". Its members declared that the "market's forces" must be respected or else economic chaos with adverse repercussions would ensue.

11 Romero, *A History of Argentina*, 288.

12 Argentina entered into this war to be a part of a coalition made up of various countries and led by the United States.

13 Carlos Saúl Menem, *Discursos oficiales del presidente de la Nación* (Buenos Aires: Dirección General de Difusión y Secretaría de Medios de Comunicación, 2000), 31.

14 Fair, "La globalización neoliberal", 7.

Bank's advice, a series of privatizations were carried out. Telephonic, gas, water, and railway companies were denationalized and were franchised to local and foreign groups.¹⁵ Menem broadcasted a new speech to justify the steps taken and said that "we are opening and sorting out the economy, by means of a political decision that also includes a path of international integration and inclusion... [This means] accelerating our plan to incorporate global changes."¹⁶

The entry of foreign capital and the "Convertibility Law" that allowed the peso to reach the value of the dollar revitalized the economy and allowed the state to cover the deficit. Additionally, gross domestic product rose, interest rates improved, consumption increased, inflation fell, and the Internal Revenue Service increased efficiency since it attained improved tax collection.¹⁷ This temporary improvement helped Menem win the general elections in 1995 and authenticate his administration. In a journal article from the same year, Minister of Economic Affairs Domingo Cavallo (1946-) said that "people have been able to purchase more cars than ever, many more families have been able to purchase an additional television, and have been able to travel to different places in Argentina and abroad."¹⁸ But this era of prosperity quickly faded due to the damaging effects of globalization. The salaries of government employees and the entry of those who were retired and pensioned were frozen, but the government awarded subsidies to foreign companies. The comparison of the dollar to the peso raised production costs and foreign firms began to lay off personnel. The affected sectors led demonstrations, as was the case with the sugar industry employees in Tucumán.

In Tierra del Fuego, many workers were left unemployed because of the closure of some transnational companies that decided to leave the country due to reigning insecurity.¹⁹ In 1996, external debt rose to hundreds of billions of dollars and the country was once again in the middle of an economic recession. The crisis made the need for more capital necessary and the vicious cycle to fix the situation with new privatizations continued. Airports, oil fields and the postal service were denationalized. New political dissatisfaction provoked violent incidents and the picketers burned tire rubber and blocked vehicular traffic in Neuquén, Salta and Jujuy. Additionally, university students and farmers held pickets in protest and the government fell back on old policies to dissolve protests by increasing fear and leaving many

15 Mónica Deleis, Ricardo de Titto, *El libro de los presidentes argentinos del siglo XX* (Buenos Aires: Beas, 1994), 456.

16 Menem, *Discursos oficiales*, 21.

17 Romero, *A History of Argentina*, 292.

18 Fair, "La globalización neoliberal", 6.

19 Romero, *A History of Argentina*, 295.

injured and dead in their wake. Teachers went on hunger strike in front of the Congress building and the General Confederation of Labor (CGT) organized a strike to protest implemented economic measures.²⁰

The problem of governmental corruption should be blamed for all of this socioeconomic unrest, since they provoked even more indignation amongst citizens.²¹ In “The Great Transformation: 1989-1999”, José Luis Romero discussed that

the right to steal was apparently a sign of membership in the highest circles of power ... [this group] transferred public resources discreetly to private fortunes. Various important individuals, representatives of the country’s most powerful lobbies or founders of new fortunes, had privileged access to government circles and sent some of the spoils to so-called black boxes, private accounts whose contents were generously distributed according to norms—not those of the state—but of rank and hierarchy. Technically speaking, the country was governed by a gang, by a coterie of corrupt and unscrupulous officials.²²

To face this wave of corruption, and especially Menem’s decision to nominate himself as a *justicialista* candidate in the 1999 elections, media outlets began a televised and journalistic campaign to explain the deterioration of Menem’s administration.²³ It accused the president and various ministers of clandestine arms sales to Croatia and Ecuador. One journalist was assassinated for accusing the Buenos Aires police of having been involved in car theft, drug trafficking and prostitution. They were implicated in the terror-

20 Romero, *A History of Argentina*, 311. This is when *cacerolazos* began to take place. Protestors would bang on pots and pans to make noise and draw attention. During this time, the term picketer or *piquetero* also came into play to describe a group of people who would block streets with tires or other barricades. Their purpose was to stop traffic and protest economic policies put in place by private companies or by the government.

21 Perhaps it was Menem, Argentina’s most widely written about president in terms of the premeditative corruption of his administration. See *Menem y su entorno: entrevistas inéditas* (1999) by Alejandra Daiha, *La década menemista* (2000) by Rogelio Alaniz, *Inside Argentina from Perón to Menem: 1950-2000 from an American Point of View* (2001) by Lawrence Levine, *El jefe: vida y obra de Carlos Saúl Menem* (1994) by Gabriela Cerruti, and *Argentina: What Went Wrong* (2006) by Colin MacLachlan.

22 Romero, *A History of Argentina*, 298.

23 In *La próxima estación* (2008), a historical political documentary about Argentina’s railroad history, the director, Pino Solanas, asked how it was possible for Carlos Menem, after all of the atrocities committed during his presidency, was elected a national senator in December 2005. Solanas said that the ex-administrator was accused of being illegally linked to the explosion of the Río Tercero military workshop, a place where they erased Argentina’s crest from weapons so they could be secretly sold to other countries, the fraud by selling Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales and telephone company Entel, the surcharges for public projects, the camouflage of foreign accounts and the destruction of the railway system.

ist attack on a Jewish community center, the capital's Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina (AMIA), on the 18th of July, 1994 as well, leaving 86 dead and more than 300 injured. Convincing proof showed that the vehicle carrying the detonator had been provided by a high-ranking official.²⁴ Additionally, the privatizations jeopardized the government. After denationalizing the postal service, it passed into one of Menem's allies, Alfredo Yabrán's, hands with heavy influence on governmental decisions. The press gave him the nickname of "the postman". This businessman was accused of tax evasion, and at the same time, many in Menem's administration and the judge were incriminated for trying to protect him. He was also blamed for the assassination of photographer José Luis Cabezas in 1997. In the end, Yabrán committed suicide when the case was made public.²⁵

This scene of crime, conspiracies, bribes, scandals and governmental indecency destroyed all hopes to improve the state of the economy. During Menem's administration, unemployment rates doubled. In 1989, the rate was at 7.1%, but ten years later, it rose to 14.5%. Not only was there a high unemployment rate, but also lingering job insecurity. More than four million people feared possible job loss. External debt grew from 60 million dollars in 1989 to 144 million in 1999, and wealth was concentrated in an increasingly small population as poverty spread.²⁶

Crime and Insecurity: Effects of Globalization

Poverty, social exclusion and unemployment provoked by the Menem administration's policies brought with it an increase in crime in Argentina. Since 1995, there had been a sharp increase in juvenile delinquency, with a large percentage of those being found guilty at under 21 years of age. According to the Lucía Dammert's investigations for the National Council for Scientific and Technical Inquiry (CONICET), during Menem's second presidency, between 1995 and 1997, juvenile delinquency rose to 7.8% annually and, in 1999, 42% of the sentences were for citizens between 18 and 29 years of age.²⁷ Between 1989 and 1996, the unemployment rate doubled in

24 Deleis y de Titto, *El libro de los presidentes argentinos*, 458.

25 Deleis y de Titto, *El libro de los presidentes argentinos*, 460. Another famous corruption case is *Swiftgate*. In 1990, the Ambassador from the United States endorsed a complaint in Argentina by food processing company Swift for having taking bribes to speed up the machine tax process. At this same time, Menem's sister-in-law was detained with a bag full of money that apparently came from an arms deal with Monzer al Kassar, to whom the government had given an Argentine passport. Cited in Romero, *A History of Argentina*, 290.

26 Fernando Sabsay, *Los presidentes argentinos: quiénes fueron, qué hicieron, cómo vivieron* (Buenos Aires: El Atenco, 2001), 429.

27 Lucía Dammert, "Construyendo ciudades inseguras: temor y violencia en Argentina", *Journal of Latin American Urban and Regional Studies* 27.82 (2001): 5-21.

Buenos Aires, mainly affecting those between 18 and 25 years of age, and 48% of adolescents between 14 and 19 years old, from families with limited resources, dropped out of secondary school. This explains the close relationship between unemployment/poverty and crime.²⁸ Additionally, in 1999, 50.7% of the population in the cities of Rosario and Mendoza, 37% of the population in greater Buenos Aires, and 34% of the citizens of Córdoba claimed to have been victims of a crime.²⁹ In “Citizen Insecurity and Fear: Public and Private Responses in Argentina”, Catalina Smulovitz noted a rise in the crime rate of 150.6 % in the nineties. Private property theft rose 241% and homicides per every 100,000 inhabitants rose 23%.³⁰

The rise in crimes and murders affected the population’s perception and prevailed a high sense of insecurity in Argentina. In a survey organized by the Centro de Estudios Unión para la Nueva Mayoría in 1998 concluded that the most worrisome problems for the people were unemployment, corruption, low salaries, crime and insecurity. The last one became the most alarming concern.³¹ People did not feel safe in the streets, and 76.1% of those surveyed in greater Buenos Aires feared being victims of a crime, and the number of those in the capital rose to 80.6%. These people were also asked why they believed that murder, robbery and other crimes were on the rise. 64.7% responded that unemployment and increased poverty were the main causes.³²

Other problems that contributed to insecurity were corruption and police abuse. Since the violence demonstrated by agents tended to leave death in their wake, the lack of faith in these officials was an important point of view. Smulovitz mentioned that, in a survey from 1998, 26% of the population and 30% of adolescents believed that military officials and retired and serving police officers were frequently the ones who were involved in criminal acts.³³ According to Dammert’s research, the justice system centered punishment in poor and marginalized areas and, as a result, they did not report the crimes committed against them. Additionally, 40% of Argentina’s population did not report crimes due to a lack of faith in the police and the judicial system as a whole.³⁴ Insecurity and skepticism in those meant to

- 28 Catalina Smulovitz, “Citizen Insecurity and Fear: Public and Private Responses in Argentina”, in Frühling Hugo, Joseph S. Tulchin, and Heather A. Golding, eds., *Crime and Violence in Latin America: Citizen Security, Democracy and the State* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2003), 129.
- 29 Smulovitz, “Citizen Insecurity and Fear”, 130.
- 30 Smulovitz, “Citizen Insecurity and Fear”, 127.
- 31 Smulovitz, “Citizen Insecurity and Fear”, 131.
- 32 Smulovitz, “Citizen Insecurity and Fear”, 132.
- 33 Smulovitz, “Citizen Insecurity and Fear”, 137.
- 34 Dammert, “Construyendo ciudades inseguras”, 11.

maintain order produced fear in the heart of society such that, the way in which crime was perceived, affected social contact, interpersonal relationships and urban structure.

Fear and Change in the Urban Landscape

The urban landscape showed radical changes that were motivated by globalization and its negative effects on cultural and economic dependency, violence, uncertainty and unease. In *Modernity and Self Identity*, Anthony Giddens analyzed the individual's identity in postmodernity and explained that "all individuals develop a framework of ontological security of some sort based on routines of various forms. People handle dangers and the fear associated with them in terms of emotional and behavioral formulae which have come to be part of their everyday behavior and thought."³⁵ In order to defend themselves from fear, the Argentine people displayed new habits to protect themselves. In large cities this could be seen in the gradual abandonment of outdoor public areas, and there was a search for security in new kinds of urbanization.³⁶ Shopping centers served as a refuge for people who were afraid of being victims of crimes in the streets or in the middle of the city. The downtown area was no longer for taking walks or having fun. In *Imaginarios urbanos*, García Canclini stated that there was a change in "the uses of urban spaces from centralized cities to multifocal, polycentric cities, where new areas were developed around shopping centers."³⁷ This means that there was a gradual desertion of historical hubs. At night, central promenades were deserted as were the Córdoba in Rosario and the Florida in Buenos Aires. The new shopping centers enjoyed advanced technology which allowed visitors to be monitored by cameras and they had security guards that constantly watched the area. They were generally built in state-owned areas and buildings. One example is the Alto Rosario in Rosario, which sits on the old railway lodgings that are now owned by private companies. Globalization continued to bring a series of cinemas, restaurants and shops that sell products made by foreign companies to the cities, all within these shopping centers.³⁸

These consumer links were also deceiving. It seemed as though they were not exclusive and were open to everyone without discriminating against the socioeconomic class of the individual. In *Escenas de la vida posmoderna*, Beatriz Sarlo discussed that those who lived in marginalized areas

35 Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), 44.

36 Dammert, "Construyendo ciudades inseguras", 14.

37 Néstor García Canclini, *Imaginarios urbanos* (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 1997), 81.

38 Ver Jon Banister, *Fear and the City* (Agingdon: Carfax, 2001), 810. Banister referred to shopping centers as fortified cells.

could enjoy a clean and modern place that they could visit on the weekends when higher income people were in different places.³⁹ Lower income citizens did not have access to the merchandise, they could just walk and window-shop. As Sarlo said, “they dream about the things they see at the market” and those who could afford the products that were offered thought that this would give them an identity. This identity was promoted through advertising, the internet and the dream of a shopping spree, all of which gave the impression that the mall is a safe paradise where consumers, especially youths, feel a certain relationship with goods in the global market.⁴⁰

Similar to shopping centers, the creation of gated communities were another product of globalization and fear of crime. They caused a change in the urban landscape. According to Dammert, a survey in 1999 revealed that less than 30% of Argentina’s population did not feel afraid in their own neighborhood. There was tension amongst neighbors and community ties were broken. Many decided to segregate themselves in urban ghettos to avoid contact with other groups that had fewer resources. On one side, this created a new form of peripheral urbanization within cities due to fear and criminal violence. On the other side, it broke substantial ties amongst members of different social classes. This is how exclusive neighborhoods or country clubs that were private, gated and secured with alarms, video cameras and private security guards emerged.⁴¹

Privatization of security had grown in front of the socioeconomic changes that globalization put into motion. In the big cities, Córdoba, Buenos Aires and Rosario; galleries, jewelry stores, cell phone companies, McDonald’s, foreign clothing stores like *Lacoste*, *Tommy Hilfiger* and *Guess*, appliance and computer companies, banks and cooperatives employed security guards who worked for private companies. In general, a pedestrian that walked through the city streets would see many guards stationed along the pavement, always located by the business’ entrances. According to Smulovitz, the number of private agents in Buenos Aires was equivalent to the number of police officers in the city, but they lacked training, and many ended up killing people or becoming a victim of crime themselves.⁴² Re-

39 Beatriz Sarlo, *Escenas de la vida posmoderna: intelectuales, arte y videocultura en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Ariel, 1996), 20.

40 Sarlo, *Escenas de la vida posmoderna*, 30.

41 Dammert, “Construyendo ciudades inseguras”, 17. See also www.sitiosargentina.com.ar/3/barrios-cerrados.humase (21 Octubre 2009), 1. Some of Argentina’s gated communities are “Las fuentes” y “Villa Olivos”, located 30 minutes from the capital’s downtown; “La soñada country” has a jacuzzi, sauna, mud hut, grill, pool with solarium, and play areas for children. Others that are closer to the capital are “Villa Pacheco” and “Valle claro.”

42 Smulovitz, “Citizen Insecurity and Fear”, 135.

ardless, private security contributed to the decrease in fear and insecurity in the classes with higher purchasing power.

In comparison with the wealthy class, people who lacked resources could not count on this kind of protection and they settled in marginalized areas or low income housing. These suburbs were the result of globalization, and in the nineties, there was an increase in these neighborhoods. A study completed by the Fundación del Banco Municipal de Rosario in 1996 shows that 10% of the population lived in 91 low income neighborhoods in extremely precarious conditions.⁴³ The layoffs carried out by transnational countries during Menem's presidency increased poverty. The affected were no longer only found in recognizable areas; globalization brought with it a newly impoverished population. In *Estado-nación y globalización: fortalezas y debilidades en el umbral del tercer milenio*, Daniel García Delgado noted that with globalization came a new group of poor that were scattered and could reside in any middle class residency, feeling "a private poverty, behind closed doors, invisible".⁴⁴

As the number of people who lived in poverty increased, low income housing continued to spread throughout the urban landscape, creating dangerous and impassable areas with inhabitants that did not have the option to join the work force. Employment was available for fewer and fewer people, who earned lower salaries and experienced increasing insecurity. Professional instability was exclusive and unemployment was expulsive. More than being an economic problem, it put their social self-identity into doubt. According to Beatriz Sarlo's point of view, being a learned Argentine in the nineteenth century "meant being literate, a citizen, having a secure job...this identity triangle was broken."⁴⁵ This means that the learned Argentine identity was formed during the nineteenth century with the desire to form a civilized nation. Ex-president Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (1811-1888) resolved to civilize the underdeveloped—the middle of the country—by means of European immigration, education, jobs, and by developing cultural and economic contact with Europe. These ideals were the motive to modernize Argentina, but with globalization, the state became subordinate to technological, economic and cultural changes, surrendering to the needs of the market, but ignoring those of the citizens. This produced an identity-crisis.⁴⁶

43 *Mundo Andino*, www.mundoandino.com (October, 2009), 1.

44 García Delgado, *Estado-nación y globalización*, 170.

45 Beatriz Sarlo, "Ser argentino", *Cuadernos de nación: Imaginarios de nación. Pensar en medio de la tormenta* (Bogotá: Imprenta Nacional de Colombia, 2001), 50.

46 Manuel Castells, *Globalización, identidad y estado en América Latina* (Santiago: Ministerio y Secretaría General de Gobierno de la Presidencia, 1999), 8.

The lack of identification, fear, insecurity, poverty, unemployment, and urban changes affected the physical wellbeing of the people. In “Mental Health and the Argentine Crisis”, Mariano Plotkin stated that the demand for psychoanalysts had increased by 30%. These patients are generally “members of the ‘new poor class’, former middle class people who, as a result of the current crisis, have recently lost their jobs and are now forced to seek free public assistance”.⁴⁷ To face these socioeconomic and psychological problems, local assemblies appeared, becoming a new part of the urban map. Neighbors would usually gather on the sidewalk to give speeches in opposition of governmental policies and those of the International Monetary Fund. Additionally, they sought ways to protect themselves from violence, tried to facilitate a food exchange for the survival of all of the community’s members, and provided psychological services for those in need.⁴⁸

These resistance groups also used urban spaces to denounce globalization’s setbacks and governmental corruption. After reinstating democracy following ‘77’s dictatorship, the people began to hold demonstrations, or *escraches*, to show up their repressors and create justice. In regards to this street art, Diane Taylor explained that it included “street signs that incorporate the photograph to mark the distance to a perpetrator’s home. When they reach their destination, they paint the repressor’s name and crimes in yellow paint on the sidewalk in front of the building.”⁴⁹ In the same way, the *escrachadas* that began during Alfonsín’s administration continued to take place during Menem’s presidency. Their purpose was to oppose the pardons that had been granted and show protest of the global policies that the state created. Fine artists designed graffiti and alternative socio-historical posters that were displayed in various parts of the city, for example “*Cárcel a Menem, asesino*” or “*Genocidas de ayer hambreadores de hoy*”.⁵⁰

47 Mariano Plotkin, “Mental Health and the Argentine Crisis”, in Mariano Plotkin, ed., *Argentina on the Couch: Psychiatry, State, and Society, 1880 to the Present* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico, 2003), 211.

48 Plotkin, “Mental Health and the Argentine Crisis”, 211-12. The writer transcribed a bulletin from a neighborhood assembly where the trauma that the negative effects of globalization had produced for the people were described: “We the members of the health commission of the assembly, are seriously taking into consideration the severe suffering that many of our neighbors are undergoing as a result of the current crisis. Many people suffer from anguish, anxiety, fear, desperation, psychosomatic diseases, and sleeping problems. These disorders, besides generating suffering, turn people even more vulnerable to the problems that we Argentines have to live through today. For those who need it we offer for a limited period of time free group therapeutic assistance...at the Fundación Redes Internacionales de Salud Mental.”

49 Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 165.

50 *Página 12*, 1 de julio de 2001, www.pagina12.com.ar/2001/01-06/01-06-11/pag04.htm (October, 2009), 1.

These performances, as Taylor called them, were used to reactivate the peoples' memory, recognize past and present errors, strengthen the future generation's memory facing the great risk of being forgotten, and broadcast the traumatic experiences from globalization.⁵¹

Journalistic Discourse: Crime Literature in a Globalized World

Until now, the structural policies that Menem implemented modified the behavioral and cultural practices of the people.⁵² Poverty, violence, ghettos within cities, fear and insecurity made the people, as the result of what was happening in the country, stay in their city, in their neighborhood, and consequently crime reports spread in their journals. In *La violencia del relato*, Damián Fernández Pedemonte, while discussing the public function of the journalistic account, said that they are of "public interest the information that helps us to better understand the behavior of different groups of people that intertwine in the city, to be able to anticipate their reactions, to be able to jointly interact with them to build a social reality."⁵³ This means that they faced the danger of being victimized, a feeling that increased during globalization. The people required information in order to plan their future actions. The growth of crime literature that occurred in the heart of society is not merely individual morbidity, but rather existed due to a need to evaluate and better understand the surrounding environment. Additionally, the theory of cultivating violence maintained that the media affected the watcher or reader via a cumulative presentation of violent themes that changed perceptions of the world as a virulent place (27).⁵⁴ An increase in the popularity of crime literature then existed because of globalization, and, at the same time, because of continued exposure to the violent cases that contributed to the rise in fear, insecurity, and citizen aggression.

In 1997, in addition to publishing current political cases, *La Capital*, Rosario's newspaper, added a weekly section called "Historia del crimen" where the director of the crime section, Osvaldo Aguirre, recreated stories of the most famous crimes in Argentina. For example, the journalist recreated the life of "Petiso Orejudo", a young child-killer in the 1910s, as well as

51 Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, 167. Protests were like a scene, a performance, which bore the personal pathological trauma and transferred it, without pathology, to the rest of the people.

52 My purpose is not to explore the flow of information and technology as products of globalization, but rather to demonstrate the demand for crime news, series and novels that required changes in the journalism, television and literary markets from the nineties through the present.

53 Damián Fernández Pedemonte, *La violencia del relato: discurso periodístico y casos policiales* (Buenos Aires: La Crujía, 2001), 104.

54 See the introduction of *La violencia del relato* for an explanation of different theories about violence.

the case of inspector Martínez Bayo, who, in 1926, killed his sister's husband for disgracing her and still ascended the ranks at police headquarters.⁵⁵

Another project related to crime literature's popularity is Enrique Sdrech's compilation. In 2000, this reporter wrote a book that included his 50 years of investigation for the *Clarín* journal about the most impactful criminal cases.⁵⁶ Worth mentioning is Marisa Grinstein's 2005 work, *Mujeres asesinas*. It was a collection of tales that blend journalism and fiction. The protagonists were women that reached an emotional breaking point that caused them to commit a crime. These stories are based on police reports that were published after discovering the homicide and recreated the lives of various girls and women that were arrested and incarcerated by the law. The first publication became a best seller, and brought about two new books as well as a famous television series by the same name.⁵⁷

More recently, in 2009, a report from Mendoza's newspaper *Los Andes* said that "currently spaces in which readers and spectators are those who make information and contribute to news about insecurity are increasing."⁵⁸ As García Canclini said, today "they read in a different way...writing and modifying."⁵⁹ This article in *Los Andes* referred to the social networks and blogs called "crime mapping," which permitted citizen participation and announced crimes that occur in a specific city. Additionally, this report said that on *Los Andes On Line*, "the ranking of the most read reports always includes a police report and within the text, there is always additional information linked for the readers."⁶⁰ This "digital convergence", a term used by García Canclini, between the correctly stated journals, the online version, the crime's cartography on web pages, and people's participation on blogs was characteristic of globalization where the integration of the press (inter-

55 La Capital, 2008, www.pagina12.com.ar/2001/01-06/01-06-11/pag04.htm (October, 2009), 1.

56 See Enrique Sdrech, *Crímenes famosos: 50 años de investigación periodística* (Buenos Aires: Grulla, 2001).

57 *Mujeres asesinas*, an Argentine crime drama series that blends fiction with reality, was produced by Pol-ka, a television production company established in 1994. It aired on Canal 13, one of Argentina's main television stations since 1960. Following the tradition of Latin American soap-operas, *Mujeres asesinas*, was adapted in other countries like Mexico, Colombia and Italy, opening the way for transnational production.

58 *Los Andes*, 2009, www.losandes.com.ar (October, 2009), 1.

59 Néstor García Canclini, *Lectores, espectadores e internautas* (Barcelona: Gedisa, 2007), 49, 81. The critic indicated that, according to the World Newspaper Association, in 2000, there were 488 million newspaper readers and in 2006, they estimated a rise to 1,400 million. Additionally, in 2006, Argentina's Sistema Nacional de Consumos Culturales not only showed that 55% of those interviewed regularly read a local newspaper, but that 55.2% of the population had read books in 2005, 19% more than in 2004 (81).

60 *Los Andes*, 1.

net, books, news, radio, and television amongst others) was exhibited and where it and permitted a cultural reorganization and access to information.

The New Soap-opera and Hardboiled Literature: Television and Literature During and After Carlos Menem's Globalization

In the same way, the journalism market changed due to the globalization of information and people's need to evaluate the violent reality of the society in which they lived, a change also occurred on the small screen. During Menem's presidency, four of five channels were privatized (Telefé, América TV, Canal 9 and Canal 13) and the state permitted television production to be determined by supply and demand concepts driven by corporate private sector laws. There was only one state channel, Canal 7, that, due to inferior technology (brightness, luminosity, color), did not receive significant ratings. But, if the same program were moved to a private channel, it would become a great success.⁶¹

Like journalism, television contributed to the airing of corruption and crime through the news programs and overexposed the viewer to a continual excess of violence, influencing the way that a person perceived his surroundings. In a 2004 study carried out by the Comité Federal de Radiodifusión, an Argentine television viewer who watched a news program was exposed to a violent act every 15 minutes. Additionally, while watching an hour long soap-opera, the viewer was exposed to a minimum of two acts of physical violence (suicides, fights, deaths, gunshots, homicides, etc.), one act of psychological violence (threats, insults, etc.), and one act of accidental violence (victims of natural disasters or general accidents).⁶² According to Jesús Martín Barbero, soap-operas were a "widely circulated genre" and were "a mirror into collective consciousness", which permitted the viewer to evaluate and detect the bad things that troubled them, amidst the same violence that I have already mentioned taking place during globalization and causing a rise in the fear of victimization.⁶³ For Carlos Monsiváis, the traditional soap-opera included crisis and needed to incorporate urban oppression and the effects of globalization and, consequently, experienced changes since the nineties.⁶⁴

61 María del Rosario Luna, "La programación televisiva argentina y el estado ausente: las empresas frente a los derechos de los ciudadanos", *Comunicar* 25.1 (2005): 3.

62 *Comité Federal de Radiodifusión*, 2004, www.comfer.org.ar (October, 2009), 1.

63 Jesús Martín Barbero and Sonia Muñoz, *Televisión y melodrama: géneros y lecturas de la telenovela en Colombia* (Bogota: Tercer Mundo, 1992), 81.

64 Cited by María Mercedes Borkosky de Domínguez, "Telenovela nueva: nuevas lecturas", *La literatura y su relación con otros ámbitos* (San Miguel de Tucumán: Universidad de Tucumán, 1999), 8.

These content changes in soap-operas can be divided into different levels. First, on a thematic level, where political (corruption), social (homosexuality, feminism), and economic (commercialization and industrialization) problems were incorporated. The representation of controversial plots that made people shudder increased, like in the series *Mujeres asesinas*, where the killer was not a man, but rather was a woman with violent tendencies. The second level would be rhetorical, where the dissolution of Manicheism was shown. On one side, characters were not yet classified as good or bad, using binary opposition, but rather became more complicated because they lived in a more chaotic, wild society that tangled with other cultures. On the other side, there existed a polyphony where the protagonists were presented from different points of view and tended to blur the lines between reality and fiction. These roles were similar to people in real life, since corruption, unemployed people who lived in poverty, and/or people who lived in gated communities for fear of violence already existed.⁶⁵

Another cultural element that was highlighted during globalization was the proliferation of hardboiled literature. This genre of literature is characterized by being a mirror of society, which allows the reader to observe the sociopolitical, cultural and economic dynamics of a specific group.⁶⁶ Corruption, poverty, violence, insecurity, fear, the structure of a globalized city, privatization's economic policies, amongst other themes, are inseparable elements in hardboiled literature. The person goes back to these themes because he can evaluate his environment, identify with them by recognizing certain elements of his surroundings that were being expressed in the text, and denounce, in some way, the negative effects of neoliberalism and the institution's indecencies. Hardboiled literature spread during the second half of the twentieth century and the classic detective genre was a constant element in Argentina's literary production since 1877. This new height coincided with Carlos Menem's presidency and the catastrophic effects of globalization and continued into the first decade of the twenty-first century. In 1994, Daniel del Valle wrote *Operación Capicúa: matar a Menem*, a novel about a plot to kill the president, where fiction and reality are confused through the plot's integration of recognizable events that occurred during Menem's presidency.⁶⁷ This text was a form of resistance and denounced neoliberal politics. The title page said that "people are tired of so much pawing, of being hungry...of the shamelessness of the shameless...People are tired of this abuse, so do not get mad when they called Menem the Boss of

65 Borkosky de Domínguez, "Telenovela nueva: nuevas lecturas", 10.

66 See Mempo Giardinelli, *El género negro* (México, D.F.: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, 1984).

67 Daniel del Valle, *Operación capicúa: matar a Menem* (Buenos Aires: Beas, 1994).

the Abusers” and exemplifies the malcontent of a society suppressed by transnational capitals, poverty and governmental abuse. In addition to Del Valle’s work, the collection *Memoria del Crimen* published by the editorial Planeta was published.

In 1994, ten crime novels came out based on crimes that occurred in Argentina: *Mi madre, Yiya Murano* by Martín Murano, *El sátiro de la carcajada* by Dalmiro Sáenz, *El comisario Meneses* by Carlos Juvenal, *Estafa al Banco Municipal* by Ricardo Ragendorfer, *Asesinato de Lino Palacio* by Miguel Briante, *Crimen en el Eugenio C* by Eduardo Gudiño Kieffer, *Memorias de un comisario* by Plácido Donato, *La matanza de Brandsen* by Sergio Sinay and *El hombre que murió dos veces* by Enrique Sdrech.⁶⁸ Hardboiled literature’s peak continued into the new millennium. In 2008, Juan Saturain, one of the genre’s most well-known authors, established the Editorial Negro Absoluto and within one year published *Los indeseables* by Osvaldo Aguirre, *El síndrome de Rasputín* by Ricardo Romero, *Santería* by Leonardo Oyola and *El doble Berni* by Elvio Gandolfo and Gabriel Sosa. Also, in 2009 *Ceviche* by Federico Levin, *Lejos de Berlín* by Juan Terranova, *Todos mienten* by Osvaldo Aguirre and *Los bailarines del fin del mundo* by Ricardo Romero were published.⁶⁹

Conclusions

The brilliance of hardboiled literature, television crime series and police reports that came out in journals and online were produced in the mid-nineties due to the negative repercussions of President Carlos Saúl Menem’s globalization policies. The reduction of national sovereignty and the setting aside of the state’s control were put into the hands of private sectors to “respect the market’s forces”. With this in mind, state companies were denationalized, salaries were frozen and external debt and unemployment soared to alarming levels. The Argentines protested. They held demonstra-

68 Martín Murano, *Mi madre Yiya Murano* (Buenos Aires: Planeta, 1994). Dalmiro Saenz, *El sátiro de la carcajada* (Buenos Aires: Planeta, 1994). Carlos Juvenal, *El comisario Meneses* (Buenos Aires, Planeta, 1994). Ricardo Ragendorfer, *Estafa al Banco Municipal* (Buenos Aires: Planeta, 1994). Miguel Briante, *Asesinato de Lino Palacio* (Buenos Aires: Planeta, 1994). Eduardo Gudino Kieffer, *Crimen en el Eugenio C* (Buenos Aires: Planeta, 1994). Plácido Donato, *Memorias de un comisario* (Buenos Aires: Planeta, 1994). Sergio Sinay, *La matanza de Brandsen* (Buenos Aires: Planeta, 1994). Enrique Sdrech, *El hombre que murió dos veces* (Buenos Aires: Planeta, 1994).

69 Osvaldo Aguirre, *Los indeseables* (Buenos Aires: Negro absoluto, 2008). Ricardo Romero, *El síndrome de Rasputín* (Buenos Aires: Negro absoluto, 2008). Leonardo Oyola, *Santería* (Buenos Aires: Negro absoluto, 2008). Elvio Gandolfo y Gabriel Sosa, *El doble Berni* (Buenos Aires: Negro absoluto, 2008). Federico Levin, *Ceviche* (Buenos Aires: Negro absoluto, 2009). Juan Terranova, *Lejos de Berlín* (Buenos Aires: Negro absoluto, 2009). Osvaldo Aguirre, *Todos mienten* (Buenos Aires: Negro absoluto, 2009). Ricardo Romero, *Los bailarines del fin del mundo* (Buenos Aires: Negro absoluto, 2009). See www.negroabsoluto.com (October, 2009), 1.

tions, strikes, critiques, pickets, political protests, and *escraches* to denounce the government's corruption and the hunger suffered by the people. Additionally, the structural policies produced a growing divide between the rich and the poor and caused changes to the urban landscape. These modifications were translated into the appearance of malls, the decentralization of cities, gated communities for those who had buying power, private security guards as a part of the urban landscape and neighborhood associations that existed on the streets of different districts.

At the same time that the urban landscape was changing, the poor physical and psychological wellbeing of the people was amplified. There was an increase in crime and 70% of the population felt insecure, with strong fears of being victimized. People needed to be informed and evaluate the danger that surrounded them. They threw themselves into reading the political journal sections and participated in the process of spreading the news of violence to others through web pages and blogs. Television also adapted to globalization. The majority of the channels were privatized. The news programs announced crimes and exposed the viewer to violent acts in the different kinds of programs that were shown. The change originated in soap-operas, which allowed viewers to identify with the characters and the lives that they themselves were living. The same occurred in literature. During the nineties, hardboiled literature incorporated all of globalization's downfalls. For this reason, it is considered a portrait of society that contains all of the changes that provoked globalization and the disgust that it caused, allowing the reader to recognize and evaluate his surrounding environment.

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EVOLUTION OR ETERNAL RECURRENCE? SOCIAL COMMENTARY IN EDUARDO MENDOZA'S DETECTIVE SERIES

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ABSTRACT. Eduardo Mendoza's nameless detective has appeared over the last thirty-six years as the main character of five different novels. During this time, the character has evolved from an incarcerated mental patient to, after his discharge, being the only legal worker in a local Chinese restaurant and raconteur detective, and Spain has evolved from the political, socio-cultural, and judicial labyrinth entanglements of the Franco dictatorship. Doubtless, each of the five novels demonstrates that, while similar in nature, each also corresponds to the historical "moment" in which it was created. That Spain has changed is unquestioned: by 2015 the Franco dictatorship is firmly over, Spanish currency is the euro instead of the peseta, one can openly criticize the government and individual politicians themselves, immigrants have changed both the demographics and cultural norms of the Peninsula, and Spain is no longer an isolated country more closely aligned to Africa than to its neighbor, Europe, to the north. However, Spain is still very much the same as before: corrupt politicians remain in many positions of power, Spain is still questioning its identity as a European member (and the fervor in Catalonia for independence has not abated) and small mom-and-pop shops are still the norm for every-day shopping needs. That is, in spite of all the changes inherent in, and arising from, a society transitioning from a repressive dictatorship to an established and stable form of representative government, Eduardo Mendoza best demonstrates both the evolution and the *eterno retorno* nature of Spanish society by employing the same oligophrenic detective in each of the works—a character who, while also evolving over the nearly four decades of the series, still finds himself in essence on the fringes of the society about which he, as insightful as ever, comments.

KEY WORDS: detective fiction, Mendoza, eternal return, immigration, mimeticism, post-Franco Spain

Eduardo Mendoza's nameless detective—called by many critics as simply "X" and by others as "Ceferino", the alias with which he first presents himself¹—initially appeared in *El misterio de la cripta embrujada* (*The Mystery of the*

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1 In an interview with Óscar López in October 2015, Mendoza emphasizes the anonymous nature of the character: "Sin nombre, desde luego. Porque no lo tiene, nunca lo

Bewitched Crypt, 1979), being temporarily released from a Barcelona psychiatric asylum in order to solve the disappearance of a girl from a local boarding school. Recognized for his eccentric personality and his ability to circulate among and communicate with baser members of society, the protagonist has received much critical acclaim over the last thirty-six years, during which time Mendoza has published four additional works with the main character: *El laberinto de las aceitunas* (1982), *La aventura del tocador de señoras* (2001), *El enredo de la bolsa y la vida* (2012), and *El secreto de la modelo extraviada* (2015).² The first two novels end with the narrator returning to his incarceration in the mental ward, but at the beginning of the 2001 work the aforementioned psychiatric institute is slated for demolition to make way for additional housing during the real-estate boom, all the patients are suddenly declared cured and promptly discharged, and he takes over the management of his brother-in-law's dilapidated beauty salon. In 2012, the anonymous detective once again appears as the main character, still in charge of the beauty parlor, and becomes involved in finding his friend and former psychiatric-ward companion, the disappeared Rómulo el Guapo. True to past form, he employs much artifice and humor in his parodic quest. However, unlike in previous works the character now appears to possess a level of unforeseen sagacity and maturity not present in the previous novels. By the end of this narrative, in fact, the reader senses that much has changed and he may, someday, become a somewhat productive member of society. In the 2015 narrative, X is still working at the Chinese restaurant; in fact, he is the one who has the legal papers keeping the establishment open since he does not pertain "al abultado colectivo de los sin papeles, como le sucedía al resto de los trabajadores de la empresa así como a los socios capitalistas, los proveedores y buena parte de la clientele" ("to the massive group of illegals, as was the case with the rest of the workers in the business as well as the capitalist partners, the suppliers and a large part of the clientele", Mendoza, 2015: 9). While remaining true to the extensive use of hu-

ha tenido...Aunque alguno ha salido alguna vez por ahí...Hay quien le pone algún nombre. Sobre todo, los que hacen trabajos académicos [...] Pero no tiene nombre [...] Es un personaje anónimos. Esto forma parte del personaje" ("Without a name, of course. Because he does not have it; he never has had it...Although one has appeared from time to time...There are those who give him a name. More than any, those who write academic papers [...] But he does not have a name. [...] He is an anonymous character. This forms part of the character").

- 2 In English, *The Labyrinth of the Olives*, *The Boudoir Adventure*, *The Entanglement of the Stock Market and Life*, and *The Secret of the Missing Model*. Subsequent references to these works in this essay will be, respectively, *La cripta*, *El laberinto*, *El tocador*, *El enredo*, and *La modelo*. All translations of titles and quotes within this essay, unless otherwise indicated, are mine.

mor, *La modelo* is unlike the other novels in the series in that it is divided into two main sections, each with its own investigation: a recounting of an investigation that originally occurred in the 1980s which X “decide que lo resolvió mal. Y entonces [in the second part] vuelve a buscar a los protagonistas de ese caso, y los va reencontrando” (López “decides that he resolved poorly. And then [in the second part] he returns to seek out the protagonists of that case and goes about meeting them again”). In Mendoza’s latest novel, then, the reader is exposed to “los cambios en los hábitos y las formas de vida, los valores, y desde luego las transformaciones de la propia ciudad” (Rodríguez Fischer, “the changes in habits and forms of life, values, and of course the transformations of the city itself”) between pre-Olympic and current-day Barcelona in the juxtaposition of these investigations. In this essay, I compare and contrast the presentation of both X and Spain, vis-à-vis Barcelona, throughout the series to show that X’s evolution is not due simply to having aged and managed to survive thirteen years in the outside world, nor to his being cured by the renowned psychiatrist Dr. Sugrañes; instead, X’s transformation parallels, in large part, Spain’s evolution from “una sociedad pre-posfranquista” (“a pre-post-Franco society”), in the words of X, to one in which Barcelona—“la Meca del turismo internacional, salvo para los islamistas, que ya tienen su propia Meca” (Mendoza, 2015: 271)—questions both its inclusion as a part of Spain and Eurozone economy. That is, an examination of Eduardo Mendoza’s detective series reveals a main character and a society profoundly changed through narratives that reflect the ongoing evolution of Spanish norms and behaviors.

Various critics have noted over the years the presence of social commentary in these novels by Eduardo Mendoza. David Knutson, for example, states that “Mendoza writes his city with the bleak, hopeless outlook that is typical of the detective novel, focusing on people who must struggle to survive in a society that reserves its privileges for a select few” (Knutson, 2006: 52). Kalen Oswald examines the “social criticism inherent in the novels” (Oswald, 2002: 48), proposing that “The interaction of X with the other characters and his observations of the space in which he moves give significant insight to many problems and insecurities prominent in Barcelona during the Transition and the beginning of the Socialist ‘Cambio’” (Oswald, 2002 :49). Chung-Ying Yang notes that “Mendoza integra en su obra el cuadro crítico social, la acción violenta, los personajes duros y marginales que afirman la presencia de la novela negra americana” (“Mendoza integrates in his work social criticism, violent action, hard and marginal characters that affirm the presence of the American hardboiled”, Yang, 2000: 162). Tiffany Trotman has observed that “Eduardo Mendoza uses his works as an instrument of social critique built upon parody and an ironic inversion of the North American detective novel” (Trotman, 2013: 19). And, most re-

cently, César Coca (2015) has argued that “la habitual galería de personajes de Mendoza [...] son un retrato de un tiempo y una sociedad” (“the habitual gallery of characters by Mendoza [...] are a portrayal of a time and society”). Thus, the critical establishment frequently posits, but fails to examine thoroughly, the social commentary of this parodic hardboiled series.

At the same time, that Mendoza’s detective is different from the typical literary character of detective fiction is reflected in the critical establishment’s evaluation of him from the beginning. Knutson’s valuably summarizes the early reception of the character by noting that: “Samuel Amell distinguishes [*La cripta* and *El laberinto*] because they completely enter the tradition of the *roman noir*, the hard-boiled detective novel... Genaro Pérez notes that these [same] novels can be considered as a ‘variation’, an inversion, and a ludic and parodic deconstruction of said subgenre. [...] These two novels [...] can be considered among the best of the subgenre in contemporary Spanish narrative” (Knutson, 2006: 47). Additionally, Hector Brioso Santos calls Mendoza’s narratives “picarescas”, while Trotman describes them as “carnavalesque”. José Valles Calatrava (2012) says that *La cripta* and *El laberinto* “tienen ecos del relato gótico y picaresco y utilizan como investigador a un loco innominado, ratero y bebedor de Pepsi-Cola. El intento de parodia del género a través de la esperpentización de personajes y presentación de la sociedad española y el lenguaje abarrotado, de frases largas y estructuras sintácticas complejas, con frecuentes contrastes y concatenaciones, son las características determinantes de su obra” (“have echoes of the picaresque and gothic story and utilize as an investigator an unnamed madman, pickpocket and drinker of Pepsi-Cola. The parodic intent of the genre through the *esperpento* quality of the characters and the presentation of the Spanish society and crammed language of long sentences and complex syntactical structures, with frequent contrasts and series of circumstances are the determinant characteristics of his work”). Robert Spires at his turn simply affirms that “Mendoza deserves major credit for providing an alternative mode of novelistic expression [to the ‘new novel’ of the 1960s and the self-referential fiction of the 1970s]” (1996: 77). And Jiri Chalupa argues that “El protagonista de su trilogía posee una increíble capacidad de mimetismo e improvisación y sabe imitar, cuando se lo propone, el modo de hablar de casi todas las clases características que componen la sociedad de sus tiempos” (“The protagonist of the trilogy possesses an incredible capacity of mimeticism and improvisation and knows how to imitate, when he proposes to do so, the manner of speaking of almost all the characteristic classes that compose the society of his times”, 2007:104). In sum, doubtless is the fact that Mendoza’s protagonist—if he can be called such since more seems to happen to him than due to his actions—evolves over the thirty-six years encapsulated in the series.

An examination of the various titles of the series themselves reveals Mendoza's portrayal of Spain's democracy as both simultaneously evolutionary and of an *eterno retorno* ("eternal recurrence") nature. David Gómez-Torres (2004) notes the labyrinth construct of *La cripta* and *El laberinto*, saying that "La otra versión del laberinto son los laberintos-enigmas que el 'detective' tiene que resolver en ambas novelas; en principio la desaparición de una niña en una y las apariciones y desapariciones de una maleta con dinero en la otra" ("The other version of the labyrinth are the enigma-labyrinths that the 'detective' has to resolve in both novels; in principle, the disappearance of a girl in one and the appearances and disappearances of a suitcase with Money in the other"). Yang expands on this point, postulating, however, that in these two works the labyrinth is more than merely structural: "Todos los personajes se ven inmersos en una red laberíntica, en busca de su propia verdad, pero son incapaces de salir" ("All the characters are seen immersed in a labyrinth network, in search of their own truth, but are unable to leave", 2000: 162). While Spain, as a country, is ultimately able to come out of the political, sociocultural, and judicial labyrinth entanglements of the dictatorship, it should be remembered that at the time of the publication of *La cripta* King Juan Carlos had only recently taken the throne, after having sworn allegiance to Franco's Movimiento Nacional only ten years prior. Additionally, *El laberinto* appeared in print in June 1982, little more than a year after the events of 23-F, a key turning point in the labyrinth evolutions of the Transición, which many historians do not consider complete until the election of Adolfo Suárez in October 1982, or even 1985 or 1986 with Spain's entry into the European Economic Community and NATO. Suffice it to say, both of the first two novels were written before Spain had settled firmly into a democracy and while Mendoza was still living in New York, working as an official translator at the United Nations.

In another place I comment on various cultural phenomena as present in *La cripta embrujada* and *El tocador*. More specifically, I argue that "The construction of X's personal identity in the 1979 novel [...] parallels the ongoing identity-construction simultaneously occurring in Spanish society in that both are, at the time, in a state of flux, feeling their way after having been tentatively freed from the repressive confines of institutionalization, and searching for what will provide the most favorable solution to their immediate needs" (Oxford, 2007: 62). By some twenty years later, however, society in Spain had matured such that the reforms of 1986 had resulted in a shift of the burden of mental healthcare away from the state, "the 1970s search for identity [in *La cripta*] seemingly has morphed into a 1990s perception [in *El tocador*] of the inherent corruptness of politicians" (Oxford, 2007: 64), and Barcelona was partaking in the real-estate boom at least tangentially related to the 1992 Olympics. Given Mendoza's proclivity of cul-

tural commentary in the early novels of the series, it is only natural that he would continue such in the later narratives. In fact, in his interview with Óscar López, Mendoza admits that *El secreto de la modelo extraviada* “es una visión fugaz y poco profunda de este fenómeno de los cambios de Barcelona, que me interesa como interesan las cosas de este tipo. Y porque creo que es interesante, que es importante, cómo evolucionan las cosas” (“is a fleeting and superficial vision of this phenomenon of the changes in Barcelona that interests me as things of this sort interest me. And because I believe that it is interesting, that it is important, how things evolve”).

Doubtless, X’s evolution mirrors that of Spain’s; as Spain distanced itself from the dictatorship, it began to enjoy the boom years of the late 20th/early 21st century. In fact, in spite of the more recent economic turmoil in the country, it should be remembered that in 2001 the International Monetary Fund issued a statement in which it said that “Among the larger euro area economies, Spain has shown the most sustained dynamism over the past five years. And even in the current adverse global setting, output and employment have continued to expand more rapidly than the euro area average” (“Spain”). As a reflection of the housing boom, Mendoza’s detective is freed from physical incarceration at the psychological institute in *El tocador* (2001) and, in the words of Stewart King, “Al abrazar una vida tranquila y sin complicaciones como peluquero [...] nuestro héroe se niega a asumir la masculinidad dura promocionada en la novela negra” (“Upon embracing a tranquil and uncomplicated life as a beautician [...] our hero refuses to assume the hard masculinity promoted in the hardboiled novel”, 2005: 207). While *El enredo* (2012) opens up with the protagonist still in charge of the beauty salon, he now faces almost weekly visits from the bank demanding payment on the outstanding credit³ and is amazed by the constant stream of people entering and leaving the Chinese variety shop across the street. In fact, one of the more overt social commentaries in this work concerns the proliferation of Chinese boutiques and the recent economic downturn in Spain; as the author explains (in jest?) in one interview, “Los chinos me parecen el misterio más grande de nuestro tiempo. Dominan el mundo unos que venden bombillas que se funden antes de enroscarlas” (“The Chinese seem to me to be the largest mystery of our time. They dominate the world those who sell light bulbs that burn out before they are screwed in”). Later, in the same interview, Mendoza also states that “[en España] Hemos sido

3 On 8 June 2012—*El enredo de la bolsa y la vida* appeared in bookstores on 8 April 2012—Reuter’s provided an overview of the ongoing, near collapse of Spain’s banking system, noting that “Spain’s banks are suffering a hangover from the effects of a near-decade building boom that ended in 2008 leaving lenders saddled with around 300 billion euros (\$374 billion) in loans to housebuilders [sic], equivalent to nearly one third of the country’s gross domestic product” (“Timeline”).

siempre un país pobre y cutre, un país de bohemios y pícaros, y nos habíamos olvidado” (“Eduardo”; “[in Spain] we have always been a poor and seedy country, a country of bohemians and rogues, and we have forgotten that”), a statement foreshadowed by Hart’s assertion that “Most of the humor in [*La cripta*] is based on this theme: that Spain is basically shabby and second-rate as far as countries go, and that even its problems are of a second-rate variety, solvable by a *chapuza* here and another *chapuza* there” (Hart, 1987: 102). Little has changed in that regard in the 2015 narrative, a novel that “nos submerge en una Barcelona ‘capital mundial del baratillo y la idiocia”’ (Santos; “submerges us in a Barcelona, ‘world capital of junk shops and idiocy”’). That is, Spain’s society once again is portrayed in this latest novel as a complex construct, further demonstrating that the various narratives of the series, while similar in nature, each correspond to the historical “moment,” socioeconomic, and societal transformations in which it was created.

Reflecting such changes, each novel’s ending also reveals important aspects concerning the parallel evolution of Spain and the detective over the thirty-six year period. *La cripta* ends with X having solved the disappearance of the girls from the boarding school but being transported back to the mental institution in spite of the authorities’ initial promises to the contrary. X, however, has learned to adapt to the restrictions increasingly imposed by the authorities throughout the course of the narrative: “Yo iba pensando que, después de todo, no me había ido tan mal, que había resuelto un caso complicado [...] y había gozado de unos días de libertad y me había divertido” (“I was going along thinking that, in spite of everything, it hadn’t gone so badly for me, that I had resolved a complicated case [...] and that I had enjoyed a few days of freedom and I had had fun”, Mendoza, 1996: 187) and that “ya habría otras oportunidades de demostrar mi cordura y que, si no las había, yo sabría buscármelas” (“there would be other opportunities to demonstrate my sanity and that, even if there weren’t, I would know how to seek them out”, Mendoza, 1996: 188). *El laberinto* similarly ends with X having solved the crime and being re-incarcerated in spite of the authorities’s promises of freedom, but the abundant allusions to remaining vestiges of Franquismo reflect many people’s concern at the time about Spain’s ability to transition successfully to a less authoritarian society:⁴

4 See, for example, Gunther, Montero, and Botella. It should also be noted that the attempted coup of 23-F only the year prior to the publication of *El laberinto* was made possible by the political vacuum created with the collapse of the Adolfo Suárez centrist government.

me arrastró [...] el comisario Flores [...] y salimos a la calle por una puerta lateral. No me esperaba allí una ejecución sumaria, sino el mismo coche-patrulla. [...] Y no pude por menos de preguntarme, [...] que cómo podía uno encarar el futuro con confianza y rectitud de miras si el pasado era una madeja entreverada de grietas y sombras, valga el símil, y el presente una incógnita tan poco esperanzadora. [...] Sabiendo que era inútil ofrecer resistencia, dejé que me cogieran por los tobillos y las muñecas, que me columpiasen dos o tres veces y que me lanzasen por los aires” (“pólice chief Flores drug me [...] and we went to the street through a side door. A summary execution wasn’t awaiting me there but the same patrol car. [...] I couldn’t help but ask myself [...] how could one face the future with confidence and forward looking if the past were a skein intermingled with cracks and shadows, pardon the comparison, and the present an unknown with such little hope. [...] Knowing that it was useless to offer resistance, I let them grab me by the ankles and wrists, swing me two or three times and launch me through the air”, Mendoza, 1982: 313-314).

El tocador, meanwhile, ends in a more upbeat mood, with X solving the crime in question—the murder of an important businessman—being invited by the imposter daughter of the businessman to go visit her in New York and by a neighboring lady to go on a vacation with her to Benidorm. This novel is much more open-ended than the previous two, with an imminent change in X’s life apparently at the point of occurring: “ya llevaba invertidos en la peluquería ilusión, tiempo y esfuerzos sobrados y si finalmente me decidía a cambiar también de residencia, las habilidades de Cañuto podían resultarme de mucha utilidad” (“I already had invested excessive dreams, time and efforts in the beauty shop, and if I finally were to decide also to change residence, Cañuto’s skills could turn out to be very useful to me”, Mendoza, 2001: 350). The ending of *El enredo* reverts once again to X being resolute in the face of unfortunate circumstances. He is, however, and in spite of obvious, lingering psychiatric issues, still free from the institute but now working in the Chinese restaurant which has displaced the formerly languishing beauty parlor, determined to spend the remainder of his life in that employment. *La modelo* closes with X correctly ascertaining who are the guilty parties of the 30-year-old crime and his subsequent return to the Linier house, which he had visited in the course of his original investigations three decades prior. There, the maid informs him of the corruption and downfall of the Liniers, and their vacating of the premises, a moment when the neighborhood mutt “mordió a la señora en la pantorrilla y se escapó hacia el parque a toda velocidad” (“bit the lady on the calf and escaped toward the park at full speed”, Mendoza, 2015: 314). Interestingly, while critics such as Knutson (2006: 56-57) have interpreted various novels of the series to contain certain Aesopian morals, this most recent work overtly ends with a warning about the dangers awaiting those corrupted by power: “Dicen que en muchas cosas los perros son como las personas, y en lo de

morder, tienen toda la razón” (“They say that in many things dogs are like people, and in the matter of biting, that is entirely correct”, Mendoza, 2015: 314).

Late in *El enredo* the reader learns that X has fathered a child with Emilia, the young lady with whom he collaborated in solving the crime in *El laberinto*. Quesito, the thirteen-year-old child in question, has grown up hearing stories from Rómulo el Guapo concerning X’s exploits as a detective. When she receives a letter from Rómulo alluding to his own disappearance, she goes in search of X and manages to recruit him into searching for her missing father figure. Upon hearing her story, and even before learning her true identity, X’s “paternal” instincts kick in; he advises her to study hard, to stay out of trouble, to eat healthy, nutritious food, and to make something of her life. Upon seeing her leave the beauty salon “con paso lento por el calor y desgarrado por su edad y complexión, un vago sentimiento de conmiseración me impulsó a llamarla” (“with slow steps due to the heat and clumsy due to her age and build, a vague feeling of commiseration led me to call her”, Mendoza, 2012: 33). In spite of X’s reluctance to involve her in the search itself, over time she becomes more and more important to the investigation. Once the real terrorist is apprehended and Rómulo is out of danger of being detained as an accessory, X snoops in Quesito’s purse and discovers her true identity and home address. The next day he goes to confront Emilia, but Rómulo appears and interrupts their conversation. Unsuccessful in his attempt to kill X and Emilia in order to protect his criminal misdeeds, Rómulo flees. Quesito, appearing out of hiding after having overheard all of the conversations, is so distraught that she also runs off, blaming X for destroying her life. X, however, is convinced that Quesito is in need of a father figure in her life and declares that “yo había decidido no hacer ningún tipo de mudanza, ni entonces ni nunca, por ningún concepto. Porque confiaba en que algún día, ni hoy ni mañana, ni en un año, ni siquiera en dos, pero algún día, Quesito recapacitaría sobre lo ocurrido, vería las cosas con otros ojos y depondría su enfado, y si entonces quería venir a decírmelo o a decirme cualquier otra cosa, era importante que supiera dónde me podía encontrar” (“I had decided not to move anywhere, not then or ever, under no circumstance. Because I trusted that someday, neither today nor tomorrow, nor in a year, not even in two, but some day, Quesito would think about what had happened, would see things with other eyes and would throw off her anger, and if then she wanted to come to tell me about it or to tell me about any other thing, it was important that she know where she could find me”, Mendoza, 2012: 267).

Society’s evolution is also apparent in the types of crime/mysteries with which X is involved throughout the series. In *La cripta*, for example, direct incrimination of the government itself is still a risky adventure; instead, it is

an oligophrenic detective who rubs shoulders with the dregs of society to investigate the disappearance of a girl from a local boarding school. However, X soon discovers that the only way to solve this mystery is by unraveling the temporary disappearance some ten years prior of another girl at the same institution, the resolution of which reveals the cause of the kidnapping to be an attempt by shady investors to collect on a debt for dentistry equipment. By 1982, Spain had matured enough such that more overt criticism was possible and the government could be included as a culpable entity, and *El laberinto* involves X traveling to Madrid to pay a ransom for the Spanish Minister of Agriculture. While both the economic and political elements are also apparent in *El tocador*, for the first time in the series there is an actual murder which X is intent on solving, and the novel ends with a massive shootout between all the suspects involved. Only the mayor and X survive. The more immediately apparent social commentary has to do with the corruption of local officials; the mayor of Barcelona, in fact, survives the massacre because “La bala le entró por el culo y le salió por la boca. [...] no parece tener afectados los órganos vitales” (“the bullet entered through his butt and exited through his mouth. [...] it doesn’t seem to have affected the vital organs”, Mendoza, 1982: 334). *El enredo* contains the most complex crime of the series with the even more dire economic situation that Spain is suffering in 2012 omnipresent in the background. The mystery in question involves X’s solving the disappearance of Rómulo el Guapo, but along the way, he discovers that Rómulo has become involved with the international terrorist Alí Aarón Pilila, who has recruited Rómulo to assist him in assassinating German Chancellor Angela Merkel during her visit to an economic summit in Barcelona. To forestall such, X hires 160 Chinese immigrants to create a distraction at the airport, during which time X himself kidnaps Merkel and prevents the assassination. Again, however, the political element borders on the farcical as Merkel allows herself to be kidnapped, believing X to be the long-lost Spanish boyfriend from her youth.

Immigration is also presented in various novels of the series as another aspect which has affected and changed Spanish society tremendously, and it also appears to be a target of criticism by Mendoza in the 2001 and 2012 novels. As Luis Rosero-Bixby et al. (2008) note: “According to census and population register data, Spain hosted [a total of only] 350,000 foreigners in 1991, 1.5 million in 2001 and 5.6 million in January 2009; that is, the relative weight of foreigners in the total population increased from 0.9% in 1991 to 12% in 2009.” In the words of Tom Worden (2010), “at the beginning of the 1990s the population was made up almost entirely of Spaniards, with immigrants accounting for less than 1% of residents” but by 2011 immigrants “account[ed] for 12% of the population.” In *El tocador*, it is the African immigrants who are being portrayed; true to census data, that group

is the largest in Spain at the time, with 15.8% of all immigrants in Spain originating from Morocco in 2001. By the time of the publication of *El enredo*, however, the Chinese were the fastest growing immigrant group in Spain. As Suzanne Ma (2012) notes: “Nearly 18,000 new Chinese immigrants arrived in Spain in the three years ended December 2010 [...]. From 2007 until the end of 2011, legal Chinese workers increased 41 percent, while employed Moroccans and Ecuadoreans—the largest non-European immigrant groups—fell 23 percent and 52 percent, respectively, according to the labor ministry.” In fact, data from the 2001 Spanish Census indicates a total Chinese population of only 27,595 persons while the January 1, 2012 data indicates a projected total of 167,531 Chinese individuals, an increase of more than 500% in one decade. Clearly, however, by the time of the writing of *La modelo* the foreign immigrant population of Spain was in decline: a June 2014 press release from the Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas notes that as of 1 January 2014, the foreign-born population of Spain was down to 4.6 million, of which there were 164,555 Chinese (down from 169,645 just one year earlier), and in 2013 alone, there was a negative migratory balance of slightly less than 267,000 individuals leaving Spain (“Population”). Such patterns of influx and departures of new cultures, language, and business environments certainly parallel the descriptions by Mendoza of Spanish society of each of the novels and reveal an environment different from the one that X encountered on leaving the mental institute.

Perhaps the most direct comparison of the changing landscape and society of Spain and Barcelona is contained within *La modelo*, as this novel is an examination of a mid-1980s crime that X re-examines some thirty years later. While no specific year of the assassination of the model is given, textual references indicate that such must have occurred within the 1986-1987 timeframe: Terry Venables is the club manager of Barça (138) and the owner of Casa Cecilia dozes off while watching “Los ricos también lloran” (“The Rich Also Cry”, Mendoza, 2015: 94).⁵ In both novels X is employed at the same Chinese restaurant, but the ownership of such has changed in the 2000s to a group of illegal immigrants. In the 1980s the crime scene is a residential building with a porter who, by 2010 and in accord with societal norms, has long lost his job and his apartment converted into an aroma-

5 Venables managed the Barcelona soccer team from 1984-1987. “Los ricos también lloran,” a popular telenovela produced in Mexico, first aired on Spanish TV in 1986 (Villagrasa). These two facts firmly plant the events of the original investigation with the 1986-87 time period in spite of the multiple references to the ongoing jogging fad—which only took off in Spain in the 1990s and is referenced to as “footing” in the novel, something that Comes Fayos notes as a “neologism [arising] at the beginning of the 2000s”.

therapy shop (214).⁶ While X has a cell phone of which he makes extensive use in *La modelo*, in the 1980s he was forced to resorting to making telephone calls in public telephone booths or other locations where he could borrow the fixed device; in the more recent investigation X goes to find a contact using the location that another person names after a Google search on her android cell phone (Mendoza, 2015: 253). Cable television has overtaken the airways in the third millennium—even la señorita Westinghouse has her own politically based show—while in the decade following Franco’s death the most prominent was “un televisor con antena de cuernos” (“a television set with rabbit ears”, Mendoza, 2015: 99). In the more contemporary section of the novel, Mendoza reflects society’s evolution through a myriad of cultural references: X promises to get his sister’s debtor to repay the loan “más los intereses que fija el Banco Mundial Europeo. Ya sabes cómo las gastan en Bruselas” (“plus the interest that the European World Bank establishes”, 2015: 209). The aromatherapy shop owner has built her business by using Facebook (217). The gym club membership files have all been digitized (233). Gay marriage has been legalized (268), and Barcelona’s tram system, Trambaix, originally started in 2004, X now uses as an enticement to lure la señorita Westinghouse into assisting in the latest investigation because she will need to travel on it in during the investigation and it “va de maravilla” (“goes marvelously”, 270).

Conclusions

Mendoza’s portrayal of Spain over the thirty-six years of the series has been both stable and varied: stable in that it is a verisimilar portrayal of the society at the time of the novel’s publication; varied in that Spain evolves tremendously over those thirty-six years. That Spain has changed is unquestioned: by 2015 the Franco dictatorship is now firmly over, Spanish currency is the euro instead of the peseta, one can openly criticize the government and individual politicians themselves, immigrants have changed both the demographics and cultural norms of the Peninsula, and Spain is no longer an isolated country more closely aligned to Africa than to its neighbor, Europe, to the north. However, Spain is still very much the same as before: corrupt politicians remain in many positions of power, Spain is still questioning its identity as a European member (and the fervor in Catalonia for independence has not abated), small mom-and-pop shops are still the norm, and Dr. Sugrañes is still being lauded as the renowned psychiatrist of

6 *El Digital D Barcelona* reported in 2014 that “Cada vez es más común ver fincas que sustituyen a los porteros por conserjes [...]. Este hecho está propiciando que el oficio del portero de toda la vida esté en peligro de extinción” (Pina García).

his day. That is, in spite of all the changes inherent in, and arising from, a society transitioning from a repressive dictatorship to an established and stable form of representative government, Eduardo Mendoza best demonstrates both that evolution and the *eterno retorno* nature of Spanish society by employing the same oligophrenic detective in each of the works—a character who, while also evolving over the nearly four decades of the series, still finds himself in essence on the fringes of the society about which he, as insightful as ever, comments.

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AN ALTERNATIVE DISCOURSE: CRIME, CRIMINALS, AND VICTIMS IN *MUNDIAL '78: LA HISTORIA PARALELA*

KIMBERLY LOUIE*

ABSTRACT. *Mundial '78: la historia paralela* is an important cultural documentary that exposes the Argentine dictatorship's use of an international monumental sporting event to hide torture, kidnappings, and assassinations of its citizens. In order to analyze the film, this study examines the evolution of new journalism, nonfiction narrative, and hardboiled fiction in order to demonstrate how discursive strategies found in these styles are used in the film. Emphasizing the severe social critique the film makes about the Argentine dictatorship (1976-83), it becomes evident that this is an alternative discourse to the official story told by the government. It serves, in the end, in the construction of a national memory that refuses to forget about the crimes against humanity committed by this dictatorship.

KEY WORDS: Latin American documentary film, hardboiled, nonfiction narrative

Hosting a monumental world-sporting event brings international recognition to the country, its society, and its government. Putting the country's best face forward is paramount while in the spotlight as it offers an unusual platform to communicate with the entire world. Abusing the forum to hide genocide or other humanitarian crimes has been seen throughout history by corrupt governments. As *Mundial '78: la historia paralela* (2003)¹, by Argentine directors Gonzalo Bonadeo, Diego Guebel, and Mario Pergolini, begins, one is quickly reminded of the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games. Hitler utilized this international setting to portray a stable and strong country that was not involved in crimes against humanity.² Likewise, the Mexican gov-

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1 *Mundial '78* aired for the first time on *Telefé* on June 28, 2003. Miriam Molero states the next day in *La Nación* that the film, "se distingue de las miradas ofrecidas con anterioridad [...] este documental es la madurez con que abordó cada uno de los aspectos de la época y la adultez con que organizó los testimonios, desde la abuela de Plaza de Mayo Estela de Carlotto hasta Juan Alemann. [...] la investigación fue lograr, a lo largo de una hora televisiva, que el espectador se acercara a una verdad equilibrada, liberada de la visión maniqueísta del blanco y negro" ("Adulta historia").

2 To begin his book, *Hitler's Games: The 1936 Olympics* (1986), Duff Hart-Davis opens: "In staging the eleventh modern Olympiad in Berlin on a colossal scale, Adolf Hitler, Chancellor of the Third Reich, exploited a unique opportunity to the full. By acting as

ernment killed student and civilian protesters before hosting the Olympic Games in 1968.³ Furthermore, the Argentine military regime (1976-83) took advantage of the 1978 World Cup to deny any involvement in the torture and genocide of its citizens, extending its time in power, as some believe.⁴ Therefore, it is absolutely relevant and intuitive for the directors of *Mundial '78* to highlight this event in their documentary in order to enter into the discussion surrounding the humanitarian crimes committed during the dictatorship and in particular about the *desaparecidos*, disappeared, and the tortured. This study analyzes this documentary, a highly important cultural work, under the framework established by new journalism and hard-boiled fiction in order to demonstrate the way in which this particular form of nonfiction reveals crime, the criminals, and in essence prosecutes those involved, illustrating a larger social critique of the government. As an alternative discourse to the official story, this documentary exposes crimes committed against humanity and reveals the power that an international sporting event has on hiding the atrocities.

host to 52 foreign nations during the first two weeks of August, 1936, he was able to persuade the world that New Germany, which he himself had raised from the ashes of the Weimer Republic, was a well organised, modern and above all civilised society. Visitors who went to the festival came away enormously impressed, not only by the Olympic preparations, which were on a scale never seen before, but also by the fact that Germany seemed a perfectly normal place, in which life went on as pleasantly as in any other European country. Many of them concluded that the tales they had heard about persecution of Jews, Catholics and political dissidents must have been grossly exaggerated" (Hart-Davis, 1986: 9). The ability to hold a forum that shielded the reality of Germany from the international public was clearly accomplished, much like one will see with Argentine World Cup. Additionally, the censorship of newspapers would be absolute under the Hitler government. According to Christopher Hilton, "[in] the winter of 1935 [...] Hitler held Germany in an iron grip. All news was heavily censored so that an ordinary citizen had no informed perspective about anything. German cultural and artistic life, once so wonderfully vibrant and challenging in so many spheres, lay dead; in its place Hitler put forth his hatred of Jews and communists" (Hilton, 2006: 27). Controlling the media is a crucial component to the success of the Argentine World Cup.

- 3 While there seems to be some debate among historians about the connection between the student massacre in the Plaza de Tres Culturas in the Tlatelolco region of Mexico City and the Olympic Games, Kevin B. Witherspoon argues that there are at least five significant ties between the two: "1) timing; 2) student rhetoric; 3) the security force that repressed the students was raised for the Olympics; 4) heightened media coverage; 5) the perception in international circles that the students were protesting the Olympics" (Witherspoon, 2008: 119).
- 4 Osvaldo Ardiles, midfielder for the Argentine team in 1978, communicates this message at the end of the documentary. More information about this player's testimony will be discussed later the study.

The 30,000 people that were disappeared during the Argentine dictatorship is a genocide. While the government officially recognizes 10,000, many sources augment that number to be three times larger. The massive scale of disappeared and their subsequent assassination is a case of an enormous crime against humanity. The criminals in this case are the military men of the dictatorship and the victims are those that were tortured, kidnapped and killed, and their families. Those that survived the torture have revealed their stories in many forms of testimony; amongst those, the media outlet of documentary. Similar to hardboiled fiction, nonfiction narratives have developed a new artistic arena capable of providing an emotional, yet objective, forum for investigative journalism. As seen in the great Spanish American narratives, *Operación masacre* (1957) by Rodolfo Walsh and *La noche de Tlateloloco* (1971) by Elena Poniatowska, evidence gathered through investigative journalist practices is later turned into narrative pieces that use fictional literary devices to create the story and are often classified under the heading of new journalism. Documentary film has developed out of this style and while not considered to be fiction, does implement similar strategies.

Due to this similarity, one is able to analyze documentary film in much the same way as fiction, in this case, hardboiled fiction. Detective fiction in its original framework had a classic formula. According to Ilan Stavans, the formula includes four principle components:

SUSPENSE, which the writer achieves through a slow and calculated revelation of information... THE USE OF TRADITIONAL DISCURSIVE TECHNIQUES, [in which] Detective narration is similar to the coherent, linear, conservative presentation of its plot, and it rejects the unconventional... THE CASE OF TYPICAL AND MANNEQUIN-LIKE CHARACTERS, which includes a reluctant, antisocial, but intelligent and suspicious detective, a sidekick (or a few) who seek the services of the investigator, usually a layperson or a scientist... MORALITY AND INTELLECT [in which] Reason always triumphs over irrationality and order over disorder (Stavans, 1997: 43-46).

While this work of Stavans deals primarily with Mexican detective fiction, one finds similar attributes given to the classical formula by other scholars.

One such scholar is Osvaldo Di Paolo, who has written extensively on this genre and the *novela negra hispanoamericana* (hardboiled Hispanic American fiction).⁵ Di Paolo and Nadina Olmeda state in *Gemidos* that the parameters of the *novela policial clásica*, “se centra en la intriga y el desencubrimiento de un crimen y se reduce al juego de la inteligencia. La narración gira en

5 Di Paolo has also written on crime films in his book *Cadáveres en el armario: el policial palimpsestico en la literatura argentina contemporánea* (2011).

torno al ‘misterio de cuarto cerrado’ derivado de un crimen, con el propósito de esclarecer sus motivos y la manera en que fue consumado, siempre dándole relevancia a la búsqueda de quién lo perpetró y cómo se efectuó el homicidio” (Di Paolo and Olmeda, 2015: 47). This classical formula shifts in the late 1950s with the emergence of texts defined as new journalistic. Often considered the first text of new journalism, *In Cold Blood* (1965) by Truman Capote, was in essence a narrative created out of investigative journalistic practices. It was, therefore, based on gathered evidence, but written as a novel. However, as critics began to explore this area of nonfiction writing in greater detail, extending the analysis south to Latin America, it becomes, and is generally agreed upon, that in fact Walsh’s *Operación masacre* (1957) precedes Capote’s text by nearly a decade (Di Paolo and Foster, 2013: 42).

David William Foster discusses the importance of this text in his article “Latin American Documentary Narrative” stating that Walsh’s text “is easily considered the most authentic example of documentary narrative in Latin American fiction [that] blends true materials gathered in his investigations and narrative strategies to make a rhetorically effective presentation of an actual event (Foster, 1984: 42). Conversely, as Di Paolo and Olmeda explain, in *Operación masacre*:

se evidencia la primera ruptura con el policial clásico. La obra de Walsh gira en torno al fracaso de un contragolpe militar a la dictadura de la llamada Revolución Libertadora en 1956, donde en un terreno descampado de José León Suárez [...] son fusilados varios civiles bajo la sospecha de formar parte de un alzamiento. Este rompimiento con el policial clásico—dónde se estructura la narración del crimen por medio de la lógica y la razón— constituye un elemento imprescindible para comprender su evolución hasta nuestros días. Se comienza a introducir elementos que reflejan la problemática social, política y económica en el mundo hispano, dando lugar a una nueva etapa en la evaluación del género policíaco: la novela negra (Di Paolo and Olmeda, 2015: 51).⁶

As indicated in both the evolution of detective fiction and nonfiction narratives works like Walsh’s and Capote’s changed the formula for writing about crime.

6 Amelia S. Simpson states about detective fiction from Latin America, “[in] the hard-boiled model there is more action than puzzling, violence and sex are less subject to censorship, the theme of organized crime is introduced, and a critical and often cynical view of society predominates. The conservative, aristocratic ideology of the classic model that presents the individual criminal act as an aberration in a basically stable, secure society contrasts sharply to the antielitism of the hard-boiled model with its distrust of institutions and its view of crime as all pervasive” (Simpson, 1990: 12). This idea of a cynical view of society that distrusts its institutions will be found throughout and reiterated again at the end of this study.

Documentary, therefore, serves as a visual depiction of, which includes, but is not limited to, an event, a person, or a crime. *Mundial '78* focuses on the latter by exposing the alternative discourse to this historical sporting event. This alternative discourse then can be understood as coming from the margin, the private, and the unofficial story. It utilizes the “official” story told by the Argentine government parallel to the marginalized voice in order to illustrate that what was being told to the world was in fact, a propagandistic lie. It is, as the title indicates, the private versus the public story.

The images used to represent the public side of the story are typically found through the use of archival footage, of the games themselves, the protests in the Plaza de Mayo, the speeches given by Jorge Rafael Videla, advertisements, and other media coverage of the event and through the testimony of Juan Alemann and César Luis Menotti, and the soccer players. In contrast, the images used to illustrate the private side of the story are testimonies, some archival footage, and recreations. The latter are used because there is no concrete visual evidence of the prisoners or their experiences in the ESMA (Escuela Superior de Mecánica de la Armada), which was one of the most brutal detention centers in the country where an estimated 5,000 people were killed (*The Disappeared*). Conversely, it is this detention center that is the focus of the documentary.

The only footage of the ESMA that can be used comes from images of the outside of the building. However, the use of archival footage is one of the most important and effective discursive strategies implemented by the directors. As the documentary begins, one sees footage of Jorge Rafael Videla, President of Argentina (1976-81), speaking before the games and various shots of the crowds inside the stadium, el Estadio River Plate, celebrating goals, jumping frantically, which are all shots intended to invoke emotions in the spectator. Juxtaposed to this footage is the background music, an ominous and energetic music with heavy electric guitar sounds that is employed to create suspense.

This type of suspense, while it would follow traditional literary suspense, is in some ways similar to that found in detective fiction. As the omniscient narrator, a voice over of Enrique Pinti, informs the viewer that the purpose of the film is to prove that the Argentine dictatorship used the World Cup to hide torture, kidnappings, and assassinations, one is prepared to hear the evidence. This is also indicative of Stavans second component to detective fiction, namely, that there is the use of traditional discursive technique. Stavans states: “The rejection of experimentation and the simplicity of discourse are also visible in the selection of narrative voice: nearly always third person, omniscient, or attached to one character, so the writer may achieve ‘objective’ perspective of the action” (Stavans, 1997: 45). The narrator functions as a character in the story, the detective. The detective’s role is to re-

veal the information to the spectator slowly as to maintain suspense, but also in order to arrive at a deductive, logical conclusion. The latter, while previously stated, still needs evidence.

As evidence is revealed, it is accompanied by music that is meant to influence the spectator. As aforementioned, the ominous sounds introducing Videla, other military, and the footage of the games themselves, will then subside and is often followed a slower, yet still dark style music that introduces one of the frequent sentiments found in the film, specifically, that people who celebrated the Argentine victory, were also subjected to the violence in one way or another. That is to say, the linear movement of the film towards the deductive conclusion is offset, or regresses, at times to allow for the official discourse to report its side of the story.⁷

The first instance of this regression appears early in the documentary as Claudio Morresi provides his testimony, an Argentine soccer player after 1978, who is sitting at the top of the bleachers in a now empty and quiet Estadio River Plate. He explains that he was at the 1978 World Cup as a spectator and remembers Videla present in the crowd. His brother had disappeared two years earlier and his fate was not exposed until 13 years later when the family found out six gunshot wounds killed him. The placement of this particular testimony allows for the documentary to extend to a larger audience by making the connection that those that were affected by this historical event, were not solely the victims in the ESMA. Many of the people that watched and participated in the World Cup 1978 were linked to the atrocities of the government. The idea of regression occurs because the spectator is being led towards the conclusion, but is interrupted by emotional testimony that reminds one as to the reasons why the event is so important. In this case, it also represents the contradictory experiences many had: happiness of the games shadowed by the despair for their loved ones.

However, the first testimony of the documentary is that of Graciela Daleo, an ESMA survivor, who starts her story by talking about the day of the final game between Holland and Argentina. With a 2-1 victory, almost everyone erupted in celebrations, including the military men at the ESMA. One of these men is Jorge “El Tigre” Acosta, captain of corvette and in charge of this particular detention center, describes the narrator. Daleo tells of how Acosta walked into where the prisoners were being held to tell them

7 Stavans describes the notion of suspense in detective fiction as not necessarily pertaining to fear and anxiety, but rather explains that the detective genre “is composed of progressions and regressions, at once centripetal and centrifugal, movements forward and backward that keep the tension in equilibrium. The writer premeditates them, plays with our logic and our conscience” (1997: 44). In this case, the documentary plays more on the viewer’s conscience as it continuously attempts to evoke emotion while revealing the progression of the crime.

they had won. She explains that from her point of view, no one was winning anything, as she knew that people were being tortured and families were looking for their loved ones. It was horrible to hear the sounds of celebration because neither she nor any other prisoners belonged to that world of joy, which they heard because the ESMA was only 1,000 meters from the stadium. Here the documentary implements a topographical map to show just how close the stadium was from the prisoners. As what may be considered psychological torture, some of the military men took some of the prisoners out with them to celebrate in the streets of Buenos Aires. Amongst the cheers, as the reenactment demonstrates, she stuck her head out of the sun roof of the vehicle and she recalls that she had never felt so alone, she knew that if she disappeared right then and there, no one would even notice.

In order to visualize her experience, the documentary implements recreations. Bill Nichols explains “[reenactments] vivify the sense of the lived experience, the *vécu*, of others. They take past time and make it present. They take present time and fold it over onto what has already come to pass. They resurrect a sense of a previous moment that is now seen through a fold that incorporates the embodied perspective of the filmmaker and the emotional investment of the viewer” (Nichols, 2008: 88).⁸ As a discursive strategy of documentaries, reenactments allow the filmmaker to capture that that has no visual evidence. As a form of new journalism, these reenactments, in particular ones about the ESMA, create another level of emotion in the viewer, typically that of sympathy for the victim. As Daleo explains her story, the spectator is taken into a dark room with only metal beds and people tied to them. The slow ominous music again creates suspense, as one visually perceives the darkness of the dungeon like room while hearing the voice of Daleo.

As the suspense subsides, Daleo concludes her testimony and the documentary shifts immediately back to the official side of the story. As the narrator lays the groundwork for the next testimony, the spectator is given the information that in order to have near complete control over the organization of the event, the government created Ente Autárquico Mundial (EAM) (Self Sufficient Entity). The first president of EAM the general Omar Actis was assassinated, the circumstances are still unexplained and his death was ultimately attributed to terrorists, and the presidency was given to his successor Carlos Lacoste. The narration continues and speaking as an authori-

8 Regarding reenactments, Kristen Fuhs describes that “[like] reenactments in documentary, facts are presented and reconstructed at trial in order to produce a particular, and persuasive view of reality” (Fuhs, 2012: 53). This persuasive view of reality is another element to reenactments in *Mundial '78* as they intend to persuade the spectator of the case against the military.

tative voice,⁹ Juan Alemann, former Secretary of the Treasury Department, explains the economics behind the games. Lacoste spent a total of 700 million dollars on the event building new stadiums throughout the country.

The testimony of Juan Alemann, as it represents the official side of the story, serves as an entry point into the characters of detective fiction. Stavans describes that “[from] moral and psychological perspectives, the characters are archetypal caricatures of good, evil, reason, stupidity, or violence” (Stavans, 1997: 45). In *Mundial '78* there are images of clearly evil and violent characters, such as Videla, Massera, Lacoste, Kissinger, and other military men, and then there is testimony from Alemann. While the testimony from him in this particular documentary may not reveal the entire side of evil with which he has been associated, he formed a part of the governmental structure that is on trial in this case.¹⁰ The characters that represent good, conversely, are the victims that were subjected to the evil characters, including many of the players, the mothers of the disappeared, and the ESMA survivors. The detective, or narrator, is the character of reason as he reveals information that deductively arrives at the conclusion that the military dictatorship is guilty of exploiting the games to hide their corruption and violence.

As a figure of the dictatorship, Alemann’s testimony is an important voice. The significance of his discourse is to emphasize the economic impact of hosting a world event such as this. It is not just about the stadiums that were built, but also more importantly, the international forum the military government had access to and exploited. Large amounts of money were used in creating propaganda that alleged there were no secret detention centers, no tortures, no killings, basically, no internal conflict. For example, some of the slogans were: “Mostramos al mundo cómo somos los argentinos” and “Los argentinos somos derechos y humanos.” The documentary flashes these propagandistic images in order to provide evidence of the direct manipulation of the media that hid humanitarian atrocities. Despite the Netherlands call to boycott the games, in the end, not a single team re-

9 Mikhail Bakhtin explains that the authoritative word “demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own; it blinds us, quite independent of any power it might have to persuade us internally; we encounter it with its authority already infused” (Bakhtin, 1981: 342). This indicates, additionally, that it does not permit the possibility for other interpretations (1981: 344).

10 Some of Alemann’s claims about the dictatorship will be revealed further in the study when the disappeared children are highlighted. It is important to note that Alemann in this documentary is a figure of someone that opposed the games due to the economic costs. In the archives of *El País*, published on February 16, 1978, the article states that Alemann accused the EAM of incorrectly informing the government of the cost of the World Cup, which had been reported at 100,000 million dollars. Alemann knew the cost would be much more substantial, 700 million dollars (“El Mundial costará”).

moved themselves from the competition (Stevenson). It was rumored at the time that Johan Cruyff, playing for Holland, and West Germany's Paul Breitner both refused to take part, but 30 years later the former revealed his actual reasons for not participating (Stevenson, 2010). Cruyff states that he and his family were kidnapped a few months before the game, which changed his perspective on life, resulting in his absence from the World Cup (Keeley, 2008). The fact that no one boycotted the games reflects the absolute control of the media that Argentina accomplished.

There was at one point a media campaign against Argentina, as the documentary highlights, led by Pierre Grenet. The dictatorship understood this as a campaign *anti-argentino*, which the narrator reveals over images of the anti-Argentina propaganda, such as, a gun shooting a bullet through the globe with a goalie catching a soccer ball on the other side or a soccer ball sitting on top of rifles. Therefore, Admiral Emilio Eduardo Massera, in charge of the ESMA, established a series of offices, *la pecera*, inside the building to combat the media coverage from the exterior of the abuses occurring in Argentina. One of the prisoners forced to work in those offices was Raul Cubas. Cubas is an ESMA survivor, a caricature of good, and was assigned to checking all of the international news coverage. During his testimony he explains that he had to attend a press conference with Coach César Luis Menotti, who was back then and is now openly affiliated with the communist party, to get a quote. After debating whether or not to tell Menotti he was a disappeared, his fear kept him silent. Fear and silence are two of the most prominent elements seen in cultural productions dealing with this Argentine dictatorship and others repressive regimes in Latin America.

According to Susana Kaiser, there was a reason some of the tortured were let free: to spread the word and install fear in the populace (Kaiser, 2005: 44). Likewise, intertwined in fear is silence. Kaiser explains that the “imposed social silence was one of the mechanisms to strengthen terror. [...] Silence intensified feelings of panic and was adopted by people as a condition for survival—their own or that of the missing persons (in the case of relatives of the disappeared)” (2005: 65). Throughout much of the testimonial work now available from people who lived through the dictatorships, the impending threat of death resulted in a society gripped by fear and silence. It was due to Cubas’ fear and thus silence that he could not speak to Menotti about the fact that he was a disappeared person. However, he was able to appear in a photograph from the interview with Menotti that then appeared in *La Nación*, which the documentary shows. This was his way of hoping people would see him in the photo and they would know that he was still alive. Cubas explains, similar to Daleo, that even though he is there, in reality, he does not belong to this world (*Mundial* ‘78).

The feeling of not pertaining to the outside world is found again in the testimony given by Estela de Carlotto, president of the Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, as she speaks about her experience. She explains that as her family and friends gathered in her house to watch the final game and celebrated goals and the win, she and her husband were crying. Every goal, every cheer, meant that people had forgotten that others were being tortured and had gone missing and parents and grandparents were looking for their family members. The cheers were louder than the cries of the tortured. Estela de Carlotto and her husband's pregnant daughter, Laura, was disappeared in 1974 and at the time of the documentary, had still not found their missing grandson, Guido. There is an estimated 500 missing children, of which 119¹¹ have been found to date, amongst those Guido, who was the 114th disappeared child to be located in 2014.¹² Naturally, one finds contradictory "official" reports of the number of kidnapped children, as is the case in the in *The Disappeared* where the military men claim there are only 8: 2 by police and 6 by the terrorist themselves.¹³

Alongside the testimony of de Carlotto, the documentary offers a myriad of voices. Some of those are the actual *fútbol* players for the 1978 Argentine and Peruvian teams. The Peruvian players highlight a crucial aspect of the story. The narrator prepares the spectator for more testimony, revealing that 27 years later many Peruvian players doubt the transparency of what events surrounded this game. It was in the semi-final game that Argentina needed four goals to proceed to the finals. Argentina easily won by beating Peru 6-0. There are, therefore, suspicions of a scandal that the Peruvian

11 One can see a complete list of the grandchildren found on the Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo website. <https://www.abuelas.org.ar/caso/buscar?tipo=3>. Ignacio de los Reyes also has an article on the 119th grandson found, Mario Bravo, who was actually able to meet his 59 year old mother. http://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias/2015/12/151201_argentina_nieto_119_mario_bravo_sara_irm.

12 De los Reyes also has an article on this monumental moment for Estela de Carlotto, a prominent figure of the abuelas who has dedicated her life to finding justice and the missing people. http://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias/2014/08/140805_argentina_estela_carlotto_guido_búsqueda_nieto_irm.

13 Alejandro Dandan explains the case against Alemann: "Alemann no está imputado por apropiación de niños, pero la fiscalía trajo a la audiencia el tema al rescatar una entrevista que, sin embargo, permite ver las oscuridades de su alma. 'Hubo 200 y pico de casos de mujeres que tuvieron hijos en cautiverio y después las liquidaron—dice Alemann en ese texto. De esos, unos 200 los entregaron a los jueces y quedaron menos de 30 casos que se distribuyeron entre familias de militares. Eran chicos que sobraban, porque esos guerrilleros constituían parejas y mientras peleaban tenían hijos. Era una irresponsabilidad. Pero no hubo robo de chicos. Hay que tener estómago para hacerse cargo del hijo de un guerrillero.'" ("El caso"). This reiterates the "official" side of the story in that there was no kidnapping of children and illustrates a more sinister side of Alemann. http://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias/2014/08/140805_argentina_estela_carlotto_guido_búsqueda_nieto_irm.

team was paid off to lose the game. In order to collaborate this claim, the documentary implements testimony from Juan Carlos Oblitas, from the Peruvian team in 1978, who says this experience was unlike anything ever before. He explains that Videla and Henry Kissinger, former Secretary of State to the United States, psychologically played them before the game began as they visited them in the locker room. Here, the documentary implements news coverage of Kissinger and Videla speaking to the players.

As the discourse continues, Oblita's testimony discusses further doubts that he has about the legitimacy of the game stating that he suspects two Peruvian players in particular, Ramón Quiroga, the goalie, and Rodulfo Manzo, a defender, because they had won so easily. Quiroga, who also gives testimony and is actually an Argentina-born Peruvian player, denies the allegations saying that Peru was playing with many injured players. To confirm Oblita's statements, the documentary uses archival footage of the game to show the ease with which Argentina scored goals. Moreover, one sees a newspaper clipping that shows Argentina gave an extraordinary credit for grain to Peru 15 days after the game.¹⁴ Menotti denies the allegations of an illegal transaction stating in an interview that Peru was simply playing without their best players and with others injured.¹⁵ While he agrees that the military men of the dictatorship should be investigated, he does not think the World Cup is an appropriate platform. However, some of the Argentine players featured in the documentary, Julio Ricardo Villa, a midfielder, and Ubaldo Fillol, the goalkeeper, point out that they are left to speculate as to

14 The newspaper, *El País*, reports Videla gave a loan and 14,000 tons of grain to Morales Bermúdez, the Peruvian president in 1978 (Rebossio). http://deportes.elpais.com/deportes/2012/02/07/actualidad/1328602917_850215.html. According to Wright Thompsons' article, "While the World Watched", investigators have found that Argentina gave Peru 50 million dollars in aid and FIFA (International Federation of Association Football) opened an investigation into the games after a Peruvian senator gave testimony before an Argentine court in 2012, which is ongoing. http://espn.go.com/espn/feature/story/_/id/11036214/while-world-watched-world-cup-brings-back-memories-argentina-dirty-war.

15 Eduardo P. Archetti discusses the World Cup 1978, "[d]emocracy returned to Argentina in 1983. All of the members of the junta and many prominent figures were arrested and brought to justice. The atrocities were open to public scrutiny. It was obvious that Menotti and the players could no longer remain silent. The majority chose Menotti's explanation: they represented the people, and they played for the people" (Archetti, 2005: 143). The author continues to discuss figures such as Ricardo Villa and seems to reference some of the testimony found in *Mundial '78* telling the story of a survivor that was taken out of the ESMA to the streets to celebrate and stuck her head out of the sun roof (2005: 145). This chapter is from a book, *National Identity and Global Sports Events: Culture, Politics, and Spectacle in the Olympics and the Football World Cup* (2005), which also has a chapter by Allen Guttman on the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games and another one by Claire and Keith Brewster discussing the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico. See bibliography for more details.

the veracity of this particular World Cup game. Finally, Juan Alemann also discusses the bomb explosion that occurred in his house precisely at the moment of the fourth goal. Alemann references Massera as the possible culprit to the crime since he was known for bombs, even though they were usually used against the “subversives”. Therefore, one notes that there are many suspicious elements surrounding that game.¹⁶

The knowledge that the game may have been thrown and the knowledge of the governmental cover-up of the crimes provoked Julio Ricardo Villa to meet with one of the mothers of the disappeared 22 years after the World Cup. He felt it was the right thing to do since their cause was virtually ignored during the games.¹⁷ During the dictatorship, the Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo begged the international media to help them out with their struggle. This documentary employs one of the most iconic media coverage of the Abuelas in the Plaza de Mayo where one of the mothers is begging the journalists to help them out saying they are their only hope. In *Mundial '78*, it seems that this footage was taken during the games, but one finds in *Mala junta '76* (1999) that this is actually footage recorded in May 1980. This raises an interesting aspect to the portrayals in documentary film, where images are taken from a different moment and used as part of the discourse in another. This intentionally influences the spectator to sympathize with the mothers, which in a sense, is less objective than traditional journalism and more representative of new journalism and the emotional side of the story. In terms of the Hispanic hardboiled tradition, the effect of this footage aligns precisely with the overall social implications.

The social implication is one of severe criticism of the Argentina military dictatorship, its abuse of power, and the exploitation of an international sporting event. As the narrator clearly supports the alternative discourse, the spectator is encouraged to understand and side with the victims in this case. Mas'ud Zavarzadeh sustains in “Tales of Intelligibility” that in order for the spectator to grasp the political meaning of the film, he or she must understand the framing ideology (Zavarzadeh, 1991: 19). As has been

16 The article, “It WAS a fix: Peruvian senator reveals his country did throw a key 1978 World Cup game against Argentina”, claims that the “former Peruvian Senator Genaro Ledesma has confirmed that the shock result was agreed before the match by the dictatorships of the two countries. Mr. Ledesma, 80, made the accusations to Buenos Aires judge Roberto Oyarbide, who last week issued an order of arrest against former Peruvian Military president Francisco Bermudez. He is accused of illegally sending 13 Peruvian citizens to Argentina as part of the so-called Condor Plan, through which Latin American dictatorships in the 1970s cooperated in the repression of political dissidents” (Roper, 2012).

17 This information is part of Villa’s testimony in the documentary, but is also seen in a conversational interview between Villa and Tati Almeida (“Una madre, un futbolista”). <http://edant.clarin.com/diario/2000/06/26/d-01202.htm>.

shown throughout this discussion, the framing ideology is that of the military and the political right. In addition, by specifying the private discourse of the story, it is clear that this is also understood as the story of marginalized. As Zavarzadeh points out, the marginalized sector is attempting to reestablish order in the dominant ideology (1991: 153). Although this can never be achieved, what a film such as this does in fact accomplish is a closing of the “gap” between the dominant and marginalized ideologies. It is as close to the power center as one can achieve constructing an alternative discourse to the official story about not only the World Cup ’78 but also about the entire military dictatorship.

Often times, the marginalized are the focus of social documentary narratives and film. According to Julianne Burton, “[a] commitment to political transformation has indeed motivated much of Latin American social documentary production over the past four decades. Many filmmakers have found themselves acting, through the agency of their films, as advocates and accusers, agitators and dissenters—if not voluntarily, then compelled by the contradictions of their situation” (Burton, 1990: 27). In the case of *Mundial ’78*, the directors have designed a discourse that is accusatory as it presents a legitimate case for the victims, not only through victim testimony but also by the research that went into finding archival footage, speeches, and newspaper clippings that demonstrate the official discourse as ultimately false. Naturally, as seen throughout the film, there is also a sense of agitation as some, in particular, Coach Menotti would disagree that this fits the forum to chastise the military dictatorship. Finally, as one returns to the notion of dissenter, again there is an instance of the margin receiving a voice through documentary narrative. Furthermore, extending past the documentary nature of the genre and revisiting the Hispanic hardboiled novel, this overlap is apparent. Amelia S. Simpson argues that it is precisely because of its “critical view of society” that the hard-boiled model “appears to be a more meaningful and adaptable form of detective fiction” (Simpson, 1990: 22).

Conclusions

Throughout the documentary, it has been evident that the formula of detective fiction is useful for understanding the film. The detective, or omniscient narrator, revealed the crime slowly through suspense and the presentation of characters deductively arriving at the truth. It was seen that reason triumphed over irrationality (Stavans, 1997: 45) and at the end, “truth and good dominate” (1997: 46), which illustrates the fourth component of Stavans detective fiction formula, morality and intellect. The nonfiction, new journalistic quality, which allows for objective investigative journalism to evoke the emotional side of the story through literary devices, creates a film considered to be hardboiled detective fiction. Adhering to the strong social

critique of this genre, it is evident that *Mundial '78* condemns the Argentine military dictatorship (1976-83) that used an international sporting event to hide the torture, kidnappings, and assassinations of its citizens. It shows how this singular event means two very different things for the Argentine society: one of great glory for some, who were proud of their country's success in the sport, and another sinister side that dehumanized, violated human rights, and marginalized a specific sector of the population. This is how Argentine society is dealing with the crimes of the dictatorship and aiding in the creation of a national memory that will assure that this type of tragedy will never happen again.

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HARD-BOILED NOVEL AND REWRITING OF THE STORY IN *LAS ISLAS* BY CARLOS GAMERRO AND *SEGUNDA VIDA. LA GUERRA NO SIEMPRE TE CONVIERTE EN UN HÉROE* BY GUILLERMO ORSI

MARCELA MELANA*

ABSTRACT. In this article we attempt to compare two novels that belong to the hot-boiled genre regarding the Malvinas War. Our objective is to contrast the two ways of bringing back the memories of the war and some of its consequences from the fictional novel in *Las Islas* by Carlos Gamerro (1998) and *Segunda vida. La guerra no siempre te convierte en un héroe* by Guillermo Orsi (2012). We will start from the idea that the crime novel is the narrative genre par excellence, since it is structured according to conflict and enigma categories. According to Daniel Link (2003), the crime genre is seen as a model of the functioning of all plots which contain, as others cannot, such categories and allow it to develop. In this way, the problem of the truth, closely related to the issues mentioned before, allow the narration to continue as the initial mystery is uncovered. Regarding the memories of the Malvinas War, the literature still questions the way in which this experience should be told, thirty years after. That is why we consider that the comparative methodology, in this corpus of novels, may be adequate to make visible the processes that make up the memories of a military epic achievement, to reveal the power mechanisms, and to order, at the same time, its representation.

KEY WORDS: hard-boiled genre, Malvinas War, survivors, history, identity

All the syllables that were once omitted, come back.
Rodolfo Fogwill

Introduction

Several critical studies regarding novels about Malvinas War¹ and its survivors show that most of them have been studied together with works that

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1 Military conflict between Argentina and Great Britain in 1982 because of the quarrel about the Malvinas Islands sovereignty, Georgias del Sur and Sándwich de Sur. The clash between two nations with differences in their military power lasted from April 2nd

state the problem of the military dictatorship that took place in 1976 in Argentina. From that approach the topic of totalitarianism is illuminated- illegal repression, people missing, political prisoners, etc.- including the military conflict with Great Britain due to the islands sovereignty, as one aspect among others which are considered state terrorism.

According to some critics, such as María Teresa Gramuglio (2002) literature was present among the discourses against the dictatorial power, especially, in the early 1980s, and the democracy accession brought reconsiderations about the recent history of the country and the way in which it could be told. Besides, she affirms that the novels about Malvinas tended to reject an epic discourse about the situation because the nature of the events- almost unbelievable- led to a satiric, exaggerated vision, different from what happened with the literary works about people missing during the dictatorship mentioned before.

Meanwhile, Martina López Casanova (2008) studies a corpus of novels about Malvinas so as to revise the way in which romance literature has been representing, from different ideological and aesthetic framings, the state terrorism, and exploring, at the same time, how such war is represented; namely: how the Malvinas event is told, understood and evaluated within the literary discourse. The author concludes that the different works studied have similar visions since they show the problem implied in the way in which what seems to be unexplainable about such war should be narrated.

In this article we will try to compare different ways to construct the memories of the Malvinas War and some of its consequences from fiction, according to hard-boiled novel genre. To do this we will analyze the following novels: *Las Islas* by Carlos Gamerro (1998) and *Segunda vida. La guerra no siempre te convierte en un héroe* by Guillermo Orsi (2011). In our study we will start from the vision that literature brings up questions about how extreme experiences should be told, in this particular case of the recent history in Argentina-Malvinas War and its projections in time. Likewise, we understand that in both works the presence of the crime genre, as a structured discourse on the solution of an enigma, is an adequate plot to make visible the processes that make up the memories of a military epic achievement, to reveal the power mechanisms, and to order, at the same time, its representation.

To delimit the relationships established among novel, crime genre and recent Argentinian history, we will first analyze some aspects about the structure of the genre; following we will deal with the problems on the nar-

to June 14th in that year, day in which the Argentinian troops surrendered. Our country is still claiming its rights on the islands in international organisms.

ratives of the past. Finally, we will study how the categories showed operate in the novels of our corpus.

Architecture of the Crime Genre

The crime novel is a story about the crime and the truth; in this way, it reveals the way in which the whole narration works, by singularly articulating enigma and conflict categories, absolutely essential in crime novels (Link, 2003). In this way, the crime genre goes through a wide variety of discourses, it relates journalistic issues with political, moral, religious and social issues, and it gives new meanings to diverse expressive forms.

In crime stories, the truth is adjusted from a double discursive/referential game, in which the information from the crime world, evident or believable, is adjusted to the story regime. That is to say, while the crime case is similar the ones belonging to press series, the enigma resolution and the closeness to the truth belong to the discourse order and they only exist within it. This double game seems to bring the crime genre closer to the nonfiction logics.

Both in the classic or mystery series, linked to the English crime tradition, and in the hard-boiled novel, which comes out after the United States crisis in the 1920s, the character in charge of understanding and revealing the truth to the reader is the detective. So we can say that the detective provides a meaning to the brutal reality of the events, transforming things in signs, correlating information that isolated has not value. In this way, the inviolable and dark signs can reveal their truth through a clear mind which puts together the unconnected and fortuitous parts which are hidden by reality. However, according to Žižek (2002) there is an important difference between the two traditions precisely because of the way in which the figure of the detective is constructed:

the classic detective [is differentiated] from the hard detective in the hard-boiled novel according to the exteriorization position (...) The classic detective is not compromised with the story he/she is investigating, he/she is apart from the interchanges that take place in the group of suspects; on the contrary, the hard detective, as it is Marlowe, is trapped in the libidinous circuit of the people who are investigated: it is this commitment which defines his subjective position (Žižek 2002: 88, in Mattalia, 2008: 54).

Crime novels are also defined by the presence of the Law, that is to say, the guarantee of the existence of the state. The Law is related to two well defined characters from the beginning of the story: the police (institutional character and generally collective) and the detective (individual character). These actors act as a reference frame to organize the logic games of the investigation. In some moments they are close and mutually collaborate; in

other moments, they move away, whereas the state and its security institutions seem not to be able to solve the case. In light of this, the detective puts up the legality of his/her practice, only subjected to values of his/her own consciousness. In this way, the crime story “stabilizes a series of functions—the criminal, the enigma, the investigation, the enigma solution- promoted by two main characters: the criminal and the investigator, whatever character they take on (crime detective, doctor, journalist)” (Mattalia, 2008: 26).

The decisive aspect in the characterization of the genre may be the presence of a death, as a consequence of a crime, that is to say, a social anomaly; something that disturbs the order of a community (cultural, historical, geographical) and needs to be explained. This is how a discursive web which links crime and truth is articulated; a truth which sometimes cannot be reached by the state control structures and surveillance and which justifies the presence of a particular agent we have mentioned before: the detective.

In this way, discourse and truth are closely related through the expository work that the crime plot should have. A story is told by a series of guidelines stereotyped by the genre itself—at least in the two main traditions of mystery and hard-boiled. Likewise, according to Tzvetan Todorov’s (1974) considerations we can say, in general terms, that every crime novel articulates two narrations: the narration of a death which had already happened and that the enunciator displays in the first pages of the story; from this death there is only a body as a sign to be interpreted, and the narration of the investigation, which implies the concrete expository work showed in the text, that is to say, the moment to put a sign to an explanation to the readers, with the aim of justifying the presence of such crime.

On the basis of the mystery novel we can find a duality which guides us in its description. This novel is made up of two stories: the story of the crime and the story of the investigation. In their purest form, these two stories do not have a common link. The crime story has concluded before the second starts. And in this one, that is to say, the investigation story, a few things happen, the characters do not act, they learn. What is more, we can characterize these two stories by stating that the crime story tells “what effectively happened”, while the investigation story explains “how the reader (or the narrator) is aware of the events” (Todorov, 1974: 63, in Link, 2003). It is about two stories, the first is absent but it is real (crime story), the other is present but it is trivial (investigation story). The presence and the absence explain the existence of the two stories in the continuity of the plot (63).

From this point of view, the hard-boiled genre is different from the mystery series because of the way in which these two stories are related. While in the mystery series the second story starts when the first has finished; in the hard-boiled series the two stories have common links, and they also happen at the same time. The crime story goes on while it is being investi-

gated. The reader and the detective are in the same scenario and they are spectators who take part in the revelation process of the case.

To sum up, the crime genre is a “Reading machine” (Link, 2003), in which the events have new meanings from imaginary aspects subjected to the crime logic that the genre boosts to show registers other than real: violence, organized crime, corruption in all levels of contemporary society, etc.

Past Narratives

Some of the categories taken from the theoretical approach about novels related to history will allow us to study the works in our corpus, since, as we have anticipated, both address issues closely related with historical Argentinean events of the last decades of the 20th century and the first of the 21st century.

To begin with we will say that the traditional historical novel has been first studied by George Lukács (1937, 1976) based on Walter Scott’s works. The novels framed in the Romanticism or the Realism provide evidence of a descriptive style with a psychological deepening, and we find them associated to social change processes, especially, to the emergence of the national states and closely related with projects about identity in the 19th century. According to this author, the historical novel is born and it suffers modifications because of the bourgeoisie emergence and decline processes, and in this way, it notices about the historicity of the genre.

In this kind of novels the fictitious elements added to the historical representation should maintain the coherence of the documented story; in fact, the limits between history and fiction are remained clear, and the fiction can only fulfill the empty spaces of the official history.

In line with its historical dynamic, the historical novel has experimented consecutive changes, in the last decades of the 20th and 19th century, to finally become what is called the New Historical Novel, Contemporary Historical Novel, among others. These new narrative modalities are characterized by a critical rereading of the past which is brought into play through the rewriting of the history and, in this way, the reproductive ability of the historiographic discourse is questioned, especially, concerning the official versions.

So, we should do some observations regarding the discursive nature of the history and its proximity to literary fiction. In this aspect the work of Hayden White is highlighted since he started the discussion about the fictional statute of the history in his work *Metahistory* (1975). Framed in the context of ideas generated by the “Linguistic Change”, plus the academic tradition of the United States during the fifties, this author expressed his ideas from the elaboration of rhetoric taxonomy of tropes: metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony. From the use of these strategies which are

appropriate for fiction emerge the possible ways to tell a story, as kinds of “events configurations” available for the historian in the culture he/she shares with his/her audience. Although the events are “neutral”, when he/she decides to insert them in a narrative plot, they are not.

From this view, historical documents are a conglomeration of multiple possible texts that must be interpreted. Likewise, the relationship established between the past and the historical works obtained from the study of the documents is “paradoxical” White (2003) adds, since “the more we know about the past, the more difficult it is to generalize it” (122). The past is seen as unfinished, to the extent that, from the changing perspective of the present, the perception made about it is not definite but it varies, since it can be rejected, enlarged, etc.

From this approach, it is necessary to consider that the perspective from which the past is dealt with is always ideological because it implies a selection and interpretation of the events and a way to represent them. A comprehensible past story is constructed from the decision of abandoning certain control of the events that could have been included in this story. Another characteristic of these novels emerges because of its close relationship with the political aspect, since they adopt a position regarding the documented history. In this way, the historical moment is selected, organized and interpreted from a specific ideological perspective, which questions or legitimates the hegemonic discourse supported by the historiographic discourse.

Besides, we should highlight that not only does the novel with historical matters imply a way of rewriting the History, but also a way of reading it. There is a supposed “reading agreement” made by readers Jauss (1972) claims that the reading contract regulates the process of making sense from the natural norms established by the genre as a convention, based on a “pre-comprehension” or pre-concept of what this narrative modality implies.

Las Islas and Segunda vida. La guerra no siempre te convierte en un héroe

As well as José Pablo Feinmann in *Estado policial y novela negra argentina* (1991) and later in *La narrativa policial y novela negra argentina* (1996) we consider that in the current crime narration there is not a character representing a classic detective due to the repeated corruption acts that join the police and the politicians in Argentina. So, the idea of the presence of a detective connected with the state structures disappears, and an independent subject assumes the pursuit of the truth and the solution of the enigma, by vocation or even by chance.

In this way, the novels we will analyze are based on the absence of a classic detective character. The plot constructs itself from the accounts of the

characters. “El Porteño²” in *Segunda Vida* (2011) says: “I can’t talk about you without telling this story, without reading at least up to the last pages, without coming back—in my way, the only one possible—to Malvinas” (229). While the main character of *Las Islas* (1998) understands at the end of his memory that “when I noticed that (...) I knew it: I was the only survivor who can tell what had happened” (572).

We can see that although there is not a detective, we can find a meaning in the story; the problem of the truth still exists, the difference will be the way in which the mystery will be cleared up, since it is about the formulation of questions that, as they allow the narration to continue, they delimitate a way to link the literature reading and writing processes as a way to explain the new configurations of Argentinian criminology.

In *La Invención de lo cotidiano I Artes de hacer* Michel De Certeau understands the city as a text that can be read in its many everyday manifestations and in this way he distinguishes between the ones who see the city from the cupolas of the highest buildings and the ones who walk in the lower part: “the crowd”. So he asks to himself: “To which erotica of the knowledge is the ecstasy of reading such a cosmos linked to? As I enjoy it violently, I ask to myself where this pleasure of ‘seeing the whole’, dominating, totalizing the most enormous human text is originated” (De Certeau, 1990: 104).

This distinction separates the ones who can enjoy the “visual and Gnostic impulse”, the ones who are risen and look from above, and they get “the fiction of knowledge” from the ones who are in the lower part, the ordinary people living in the city. The ones who are in the lower part are the walkers, whose bodies obey “the bold and thin print in an urban ‘text’ that they write without being able to read it” (De Certeau, 1990: 105). This is very important in the novels analyzed since it is possible to observe how these categories we have mentioned operate. Firstly in *Las Islas* (1998) the presence of two imposing and dominant tween towers (similar to the ones knocked down in New York in 2001) in Buenos Aires landscape is highlighted. Both buildings belong to the businessman Fausto Tamerlán and they literally guard Buenos Aires city from the exclusive spot of Puerto Madero, a privileged center of the neoliberal rage in the 1990s in Argentina, at the peak of Menem’s ruling period.³

That is why the most significant of these towers is their function as Foucauldian “panopticon” (1976), both are visual mega-devises built with transparent glasses and glass walls with secret doors and many mirrors that

2 Nickname given to the main character of the novel. It refers to an informal way of addressing people living in Buenos Aires.

3 This expression refers to the two presidential ruling periods of Carlos Saúl Menem between 1989 and 1999.

endlessly multiply the vision of what happens within the company (Gamerro, 33). That is to say, to be above implies having knowledge—apart from the businessman, only a few have this privilege and all wish it, a knowledge which means power, which controls the others, the ones who work for him, the subordinates. So, in Tamerlán's interpretation we can clearly see the symbolic dimension the character plays as a totalitarian subject, when he affirms:

Mirrors have their own power. They are primitive and elemental. The presence of a camera can be uncomfortable, it can fuel fear, but it cannot bring terror. Mirrors can. Even if you know that behind the mirror, behind what you see-yourself- there is always somebody else. The master watches us through our eyes (Gamerro, 34).

These literary representations can be read as representations of the violence and repression related to the military dictatorship that ruled in Argentina between 1976 and 1983 and caused terrible ideological, cultural and economic disasters in our country. Among the events that took place during those years we can find the war against Great Britain because of Malvinas sovereignty. In the novel *Segunda Vida. La guerra no siempre te convierte en un héroe* (2011), the spaces operate differently, there is not surveillance to watch the people living in the lower part, however there are intelligence and espionage webs with police officers moving around the streets recognizing people: the criminals. In particular, the look detects some of them, it is selective, it is aimed at a group of criminals, the ones that besides being criminals—they are charged with minor robberies- they are also ex-soldiers of a war without political and social legitimation from the country which started it.

Conclusions

It can be stated that both novels are closely related to the hard-boiled genre, as a complex text with many meanings in which we can read, besides the problems related to the current crime issues, deep political, historical and social questionings. Such is the case of *Segunda vida. La guerra no siempre te convierte en un héroe* (2011) y *Las Islas* (1998) which—although they were written in different decades- contribute to unmask the deep social differences caused by the neoliberalism in the 1990s in Argentina, the corruption in certain official areas (police-militar institutions and connivance of the ruling political forces, as well as the judicial power), in a corrupt society. Both novels constitute a particular way of representing issues linked to the current socio-historical and political problems in Argentina and the importance they are given, in the middle of strong social convulsion processes, to certain characters that have remained invisible during a long time: war veter-

ans. These soldiers that have been called in different ways through the time, from “the guys of the war”, ex-service-people, ex-soldiers, to veterans, finally understand and accept—as they tell their versions of the story—the “new life” they have. Without doubts, this involves feeling guilty of being alive with their “ghosts”.

Once more, Argentinean society, facing a generalized crisis process—as it was the military dictatorship in 1976, and as it was, within the frame of the books analyzed, in the 1990s and the 2001 crisis—is thrown into confusion and experiments deep changing processes, it needs—as well as these veterans—a second chance. As the main character of *Segunda vida* (2011) says: “Dolores, the whole country has dashed, not only the General Belgrano cruiser. Look at the streets, this bar, all shipwrecked people” (Orsi, 308).

However, 30 years after the Malvinas War, there are still many questions, may be because the problem may still be how the story should be told. In this view, the hard-boiled literature is a privileged aesthetic to rewrite stories that had remained in the memory, in the letters, in the soldiers and writers’ notebooks, and make visible complex sociohistorical and cultural process that Argentineans have lived.

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