

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 Laurence 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 Rio 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 Kassab, 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 Ateneo, 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 Fruhling 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.htm#e (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 Secretaria 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, Yíya 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 Yíya 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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