

TITLE OF PAPER

Political rupture and artistic production in post-Crisis Argentina.

INTRODUCTION

In Argentina, throughout the twentieth century, periods of political upheaval have produced particular “reactions” that affected intellectual and artistic output. There are several contestatory forms of artistic work from the 60s, 70s and 80s, which clearly illustrate this point. During the more recent economic and politic collapse at the beginning of the twenty-first century this tendency seems to be continuously confirmed. Considering the problematic categorisation of cultural works emerging during periods of crisis (which tend to challenge existing canons, raising questions of artistic value and blurring the boundaries between art and reportage), my aim in the present paper is to critically address to what extent some of the popular productions that emerged in Argentina during the last economic crisis gained institutional recognition (within the western ideas of art).

The “latest Argentinian ‘crisis’” has its most recent antecedents during the military coup that started in 1976. Through the forceful control of the State, the Oligarchy managed to impose its political and economic agenda. However, “neither the popular resistance, the defeat of the Falklands war in 1982, nor the replacement of the military government for a democratic one in 1983, managed to modify the domain exercised by the financial oligarchy or the basics of its political beliefs, that had as an outcome a process of concentration of wealth whereas pauperism and the proletarianisation of a large percentage of population were increasing.”¹

This crisis of the neoliberal model adopted by the military ‘Junta’ was deepened during Carlos Menem’s regime. His national politics of massive privatization of the country’s natural wealth (such as YPF) illustrates “a lack of capacity to develop productive forces and to sustain stable economic relationships.”² As a result, “in the middle of this terrible political crisis, the last attempts to sustain the convertibility with external debt ended up in the ‘blockage’ of January 2001 by the IMF, [and other banks and treasures].”³ The

¹ Carrera, N.; Cotarelo, M.C.; “Argentina, Diciembre de 2001: hito en el proceso de luchas populares” en Seoane, J.; *Movimientos sociales y conflicto en América Latina*. (Buenos Aires: Clacso, 2004), p.214. Moreover, as the Argentinian economist Maria Seoane suggests: “the politics of deindustrialization that began in 1976 and was completed during the 90s, explain the brutal rise of unemployment and social inequality.”

² Seoane, M.; *El saqueo de la Argentina*, (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 2003), p.16.

³ Seoane, M.; *Ibid.*, p. 24. She stated that: “Argentina was virtually in default.”

lack of political presence of Fernando De la Rúa, and the critical social situation of Argentina, led him to declare on national television a *state of siege* on the night of the 19th of December of 2001. Immediately after his speech was over people took to the streets (particularly the damaged middle class), banging their pots and pans. That night was known as “cacerolazo” (the popular street protest taking place simultaneously in different cities throughout the country). Andrés Grimson explains that “facing the explicit prohibition to manifest publicly, the paradigmatic evocation of the military dictatorship, provoked an opposite reaction: a massive mobilization.”⁴

The events of the 19th and 20th of December 2001 were characterised by the spontaneous reaction of the people. There was no organization or political party involved, just people flowing to the streets, trying to reclaim their rightful power over the political process. There was an urgent need to express their discontent with regards the running of the country. As the phrase “que se vayan todos” (“out with the lot of them”) portrayed, many of them felt cheated, disillusioned and, more importantly, not willing to accept the same situation again. The following weeks Argentina saw five different provisional presidents at its head while people kept flowing to the streets requesting for a change to be done.

The crisis of 2001 brought a rearticulation of certain ways of interaction among individuals, as the emergence of public assemblies, the taking of factories by its workers, or the alternative ‘networks of solidarity’, exemplify. Moreover, it also encouraged a critical review of the artistic productions of the period.

The Peruvian anthropologist Juan Acha (1979), stated that Art is a socio-cultural process that consists of three basic interrelated activities: production, distribution and consumption. He argues that these activities, simultaneously, are related to a “dependent” triangle where individual, society, and culture interact. The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1995/97) proposes something similar in *Les règles de l'art*, where he develops the idea of culture as capital. In connection with this line of thought, I will start from the idea that no artistic production can be detached from the context that generates it. Therefore, in tandem with the crisis' antecedents and characteristics described, I am planning to introduce three productions that emerged in Buenos Aires during this period: within Cinema, the group called “ADOC/Argentina”

⁴ Grimson, A.; “La experiencia Argentina y sus fantasmas” in Grimson, A. (Ed.) La cultura en las crisis latinoamericanas. (Buenos Aires, Clacso, 2004), p.192.

(documentarists); within Poetry and Visual Arts, the group called “Eloísa Cartonera” and, within Music, the group called “Santa Revuelta”.

ABOUT THE WORKS’ SELECTION

“ADOC/Argentina”, “Eloísa Cartonera” and “Santa Revuelta” could be described as manifestations of popular art in close relation to the crisis of 2001. The nature of their productions (materiality and technique⁵) and their function as militant (politically-committed) works of art, challenge (to some degree) the localised characteristics of certain institutions and the power they possess to regulate and propagate ‘culture’. These institutions are traditionally directed by the people in power (i.e. the Oligarchy) and, moreover, they tend to consider a European-like production⁶ as the official culture. As Ticio Escobar suggests, “high art, exclusive and aristocratic, resists to accept within its field all those manifestations of ‘minor’ category.”⁷ In this case, it resists all those manifestations that do not adjust to the western ideas of art.

The three works selected have significant links with that ‘spontaneous reaction of the people’ during the December events. Consequently, if the 19th and the 20th represented a reaction against the hegemonic groups in power, these three works also attempt to represent a reaction against the hegemonic categorisation of cultural works. Furthermore, they also strive, as the crisis did, to rearticulate the ways in which individuals, society and culture, interact.⁸ However, as I shall try to demonstrate, they are subjective, one-sided and controversial. Other productions within this period are also related to the 2001 crisis without necessarily making a particular reference to it. As a matter of fact, there are a considerable amount of artists which continued producing their works without bearing in mind the 19th and 20th of December events.

The following works, although in dispute, raise questions of artistic value.

⁵ Following Escobar, T.; *El mito del arte y el mito del pueblo. Cuestiones sobre arte popular.*; (Asunción: Museo del Barro, 1981). When he refers to popular creations: “comprometidas con ritos y funciones cotidianas, no alcanzan ese grado superior autocontemplativo y cerrado en sí y permanecen atrapadas por su propia materialidad, su técnica y sus funciones.”, p.23.

⁶ With this respect Ticio Escobar says that: “(...) a través de mitos, la cultura oficial pretende absolutizar el arte en el que se considera representada y justificada; intenta cosificarlo y convertirlo en arquetipo absoluto, dechado ideal de toda práctica que aspire al título de arte.” Moreover, “Arte popular es un término epistemológicamente híbrido: el vocablo ‘arte’ proviene de la jurisdicción de la estética, mientras que el ‘popular’ es oriundo de los dominios de las ciencias sociales. Tanto la doble ciudadanía de sus componentes como el carácter apátrida que acaba adquiriendo el término son causantes de malentendidos y desencuentros que no pueden resolverse por la falta de un territorio propio en donde converjan esos vocablos nómadas y se sometan a los mismos códigos.” Escobar, T.; *Ibid.*; p.12.

⁷ Escobar, T.; *Ibid.*; p.23.

⁸ Following Juan Acha’s theory previously mentioned.

ADOC/ARGENTINA (“Asociación de documentalistas de Argentina”)

“ADOC/Argentina”⁹ is the name of a group of documentarists, producers and film and video teachers, that emerged during the events of the 19th and the 20th of December 2001. Since then, according to their online reports, it “has been reporting the social and political reality of the country” by using cameramen on the streets. Likewise, it “has made the first ADOC’s institutional video: “For a new cinema in a new country”, which summarizes the resistance of the people against neoliberalism and globalization. A different point of view of the events (...) that the mass media did not record and nowadays silence, since the people’s demonstrations.” In conjunction with this statement they contend that “images have become the most powerful weapons that the system has to impose its subjective project on our heads, the point is, consequently, to use these images to create a weapon of resistance.”¹⁰ For them, a clear example of these powerful images is De la Rúa’s speech on the night of the 19th of December. The single shot of the president declaring a state of siege triggered, as explained in the introduction, a whole symbolic world in a country that is still dealing with the mourning of its disappeared. On that ground, considering the will “to work for the diffusion of ‘another reality’”¹¹, one of their members declared that “if the 19th and the 20th are defined by the spontaneity of the rebellion, the way to go out to the streets to capture the images has to have this same characteristic.”¹²

This idea revisits the theme of the protest films of the 60s¹³. During that decade in Argentina a group of cineastes initiated a political compromise in the distribution and production of documentary films outside the commercial circuit.¹⁴ As part of their political agenda, they created the “Third cinema” manifesto, where the idea of “cine-acto” emerged. Accordingly, the manipulation of the reality in order to produce greater comprehension was their ultimate goal, since they “realised that the important thing was

⁹ At present, ADOC is made up of more than 100 members in the whole country, coming from the different existing groups such as: Grupo de Cine Insurgente, Grupo Boedo Films, Fundación Alumbrar, Cruz del Sur, Grupo 1° de Mayo, Cuarto Patio and other groups and filmmakers who work in documentaries independently.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Straccia, J.; *Luz y cámara para la acción* in 2do. Enfoque, http://www.segundoenfoque.com.ar/camara_accion.htm

¹² Balassa, C.; Galeano, E.; Ticach, M. and Zurro, S.; *Reflexiones acerca del cine documental Argentino de hoy*. (my own translation).

¹³ On their webpage they openly suggest this relationship with the “Third cinema”, by stating that “ADOC is supported by our teachers, who prepared the ground: Fernando Pino Solanas, Fernando Birri, Humberto Ríos, Nemesio Juárez and Juana Sapire.”

¹⁴ Refer to: Straccia, J.; “*Luz y cámara para la acción*” in http://www.segundoenfoque.com.ar/camara_accion.htm.

not the film itself but that which the film provoked.”¹⁵ The same objective is also shared by ADOC: “(...) we consider that in these films there is an establishment (and denunciation) of constructions of meaning about reality.”¹⁶ Their principal aim regarding the audience is the same: to denounce a social reality, to provoke a reaction, to promote change, to give some sort of hope for the future. However, as Bertolt Brecht once said: “reality changes; in order to represent it, modes of representation must change.”¹⁷ It will be important to question on this matter to what extent ADOC's productions are not anachronistic.

They produced four films that are directly connected with the December events: *For a new cinema in a new country* (2002); *THE MOTHERS in the people's rebellion of December 19th and 20th* (2002); *Argentina Burns* (2002) and *Assembly: To occupy is to resist* (2004). These films have a raw aesthetic deeply connected with the lack of resources during a period of economic constraints. In *For a new cinema in a new country*, for instance, one has the impression of watching more a newsreel than a finished documentary. The “Man-in-the-street interviews” take place at a fast pace, with a hand-held camera. As film theorist Bill Nichols proposes, such interviews convey a sense of participatory engagement¹⁸. We encounter here “a metaparticipant, someone actively engaged with other participants but also engaged in constructing an argument and perspective on their struggle”¹⁹. The filmmaker is walking on the streets with the protestors during “el cacerolazo”. He talks with a woman who is banging on her pan. In one shot the cameraman is present during a particular act of police repression and puts the camera on the ground, suggesting that he may also be throwing stones at the police or interacting with participants who are being shot and hit. Done in the heat of the moment in its search to capture the spontaneity of the reality, I believe that its argument development lacks the consistency that we can find in other documentaries. Nonetheless, their manipulation of reality, although controversial for its clear left-wing orientation, presents a renewal of a cinematic genre considered nearly extinct.

Ben Edwards said that, “the power and appeal of Documentary is the way it alters and plays with the way the viewer relates to and understands the subject.”²⁰ One image can

¹⁵ Solanas, F.; *Cinema as a gun* in: <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu>

¹⁶ Balassa, C.; Galeano, E.; Ticach, M. And Zurro, S.; *Reflexiones acerca del cine documental Argentino de hoy*.

¹⁷ Refer to: <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu>

¹⁸ Nichols, B.; *Ibid.* p. 51.

¹⁹ Nichols, B.; *Ibid.* p. 51.

²⁰ Edwards, B.; <http://www.brainyquote.com>

give certain ideas to the viewer, but when it is immediately followed by another, with opposite meaning, those ideas can easily change.²¹ Accordingly, one cannot help but wonder what kind of audience these documentaries are trying to address. If their intention is to reach a large audience they seem to fail, not only because the selection of images chosen require a trained eye for their understanding, but also because their distribution never received a full support by the INCAA (The National Institute of Film and Visual Arts). Nevertheless, it is interesting to notice that *For a new cinema in a new country* was selected for the Official Documentary Competition in the 24th International New Latinamerican Film Festival in La Habana, Cuba and that their works are gaining recognition among different film critics and directors within Argentina and different countries of Latin America.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the fact that: “If marginality is one of the themes that, according to the critics, characterizes the renewed fictional cinema, it is fundamental to rethink the space that cinema yields to the excluded. If it crystallises them on the margins or if it embrace them as constituent subjects.” The same thought should also be applied to these documentaries, particularly when comparing them with the way the official discourse represents (or not) the life on the margins.

ELOÍSA CARTONERA

“Eloísa Cartonera²²” is the name of an artistic, social and communitarian project founded by Washington Cucurto²³, Javier Barilaro and Fernanda Laguna in March 2003. Each one of them were working independently (before the emergence of Eloísa) on projects dealing with popular culture and aesthetic.

Santiago Vega (real name of Washington Cucurto), is known as a ‘marginal’ poet who published his first book, *Zelarayán*, in 1998. His style has proved to be quite controversial from the very beginning: even though this first collection of poems was

²¹ Erik Barnouw says that “The documentarist, like any communicator in any medium, makes endless choices. He (sic) selects topics, people, vistas, angles, lens, juxtapositions, sounds, words. Each selection is an expression of his point of view, whether he is aware of it or not, whether he acknowledges it or not.” In Barnouw, E.; *Introduction* in Bruzzi, S. New documentary: a critical introduction. (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p.4.

²² Taken from their webpage (www.eloisacartonera.com.ar): “La mujer cuyo nombre lleva el proyecto era una belleza boliviana y multimillonaria, de la que Barilaro estaba enamorado y a la que quiso rendir homenaje.

²³ In <http://www.c-y-b.com.ar/artistas/eloisacartonera/index.htm> they describe him as: “inventor de un género literario que él denominó "cumbiela", novela corta ambientada en el mundo de las bailantas de inmigrantes de países limítrofes.” Additionally, it is important to bear in mind that: “Emecé acaba de editarle su último libro, **El curandero del amor**, para enojo y envidia de bloggers y escritores. La tapa es una foto de él: el escritor y el personaje.”

awarded first prize at the second Hispano-American contest “Diario de Poesía”, during 2001 it was removed from public libraries accused of being pornographic and racist²⁴. He is literary irreverent. As the journalist Diego Erlan declares: “the Cucurto experience is an explosion of music and insolence where you can find made-up words, insults to politicians and shameless thoughts about the great masters (he says about Borges: “How am I going to believe to a blind that reads?”).”²⁵ He is currently the editor, director, and main writer of all the publications produced by “Eloísa Cartonera”.

Javier Barilaro²⁶ and Fernanda Laguna²⁷ have been exhibiting, collectively and individually, since early 90s. They are the visual artists in charge of painting the fluorescent and extravagant ‘Cumbia’ style portrayed by Cucurto. ‘Cumbia’, as I shall explain when reviewing “Santa Revuelta”, is a type of music genre generally associated with the working class.

The project started as a local specialised publisher house. The books published by “Eloísa” were made of cardboard covers and photocopies. They were home-made objects painted by the kids who collected cardboard from the streets. They were a “symbol of transformation in the middle of the crisis, a way to explore the relationship between culture and social function, between art and the everyday life.”²⁸ The material that they dealt with intended to be vanguardist, cultish, unpublished, ‘bordered’. Nowadays the project has not changed this initial aim, though its scope has grown considerably. It not only includes material from different countries of Latin America, but it also presents writers such as César Aira, Leónidas Lamborghini, Ricardo Piglia, Haroldo de Campos (Brasil), Julián Herbert (México), Sergio Parra (Chile), Cecilia

²⁴ He then published *La Máquina de hacer paraguayitos* (Ediciones Siesta) in 2000 and *Cosa de negros* (Interzona) in 2003.

²⁵ See: <http://www.clarin.com/diario/2006/12/08/sociedad/s-05001.htm>

²⁶ Exhibited in 2002 his work called *Géminis en llamas* at Espacio Tatlin in Buenos Aires. Furthermore, on that same year he showed *¿Crees en el amor?* at the new alternative art gallery “Belleza y Felicidad”. In *Ibid* they describe him as: Como artista plástico que es, pinta la "cumbia extravagante" de estética flúo y diagramación estridente, donde el recurso textual es reutilizado desde la literatura, la política, la historia del arte y la autoreferencialidad con humor efervescente y una urgencia que desdén el acabado formal en beneficio del gesto emblemático.” It is also worth noticing that: “Barilaro y Cucurto editaban ejemplares artesanales de poesía latinoamericana, cuando en la Argentina post 2001 el precio del papel subió el 300 por ciento y se les hizo imposible continuar.”

²⁷ In 2001 she did three exhibitions and each one of them were related with the December events: *La belleza y el poder* (at Montevideo, Uruguay); *Todo el año en una muestra* and *Control o no control* (at “Belleza y Felicidad”). In *Ibid* they describe her as: “Es artista plástica, escritora y dirige la galería Belleza y Felicidad. Trabaja desde hace tiempo en la integración de distintos ámbitos sociales: en 2003 fundó una subse de su galería en un comedor popular de Villa Fiorito, un barrio de emergencia, donde exponen artistas de la zona y de Buenos Aires. Por el uso del espacio, paga un alquiler que contribuye al sustento del comedor, llamado Pequeños Traviesos, que alimenta a 192 niños.” She is currently the one dealing with the institutional side of “Eloísa Cartonera” and the curator of their new art gallery.

²⁸ Taken from their webpage: www.eloisacartonera.com.ar

Pavón, Néstor Perlongher (Chile), among others. Furthermore, they have opened an art gallery called “No hay cuchillo sin Rosas”, which is the ‘cartonería’ (a space where cardboard is handled), centre of the project. In this space artists, writers and cardboard collectors (‘cartoneros’) exchange ideas and work responsibilities. “Eloísa Cartonera”, according to their members, tries to search for its own aesthetic, devoid of prejudice against its members’ social origins. Moreover, it tries to create mutual learning (between artists and cardboard collectors or street children) through the stimulation of creative skills. In other words, their main objectives were to recuperate manual work and to give jobs to a big group of ‘cartoneros’, whilst exploring new artistic paths and talents. Additionally, they started working on a new discographic label²⁹, and the acquisition of a sewing machine in 2005 is opening a new door for them within the fashion field³⁰.

The figures of ‘cartoneros’ are very iconic within the Argentinian crisis. They represent a sub-economy, usually ignored by the official discourse. The fact that Eloísa offers a space to function as a workshop, where they can ‘learn a skill’ (painting, drawing, etc.) ‘useful’ enough to remove them from that precarious situation, certainly challenges the ‘sacred’ place of art. Ticio Escobar argues on this respect that: “If language is marked by the dominant culture, which lacks the proper concepts to name all those things that are produced outside its domain, then there is no other choice than to force its own concepts.”³¹ It seems that this is exactly what the members of Eloísa Cartonera are currently doing.

²⁹ “Eloísa Cartonera Musical” is the new discographic label. Cds with a cardboard cover. They have published three titles up to June 2004.

³⁰ With this respect it is interesting to review the article written by Maria Eugenia Ludueña for *Página/12*, link: <http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/suplementos/las12/13-2250-2005-10-12.html>. In this article there is a description of Eloísa’s new works through an interview done to one of their members: “Las manos de Ramona no descansan, tampoco su cabeza. A los 50 años, madre de siete hijos, vive con ellos y su marido desde hace 31 primaveras en San Martín. “Dicen que soy artista, a mí me cuesta creerlo”, repite detrás de sus anteojos. “¿Qué es un artista? Alguien que hace lo que le gusta”, define mientras los dedos saltan prestos entre los pinceles, las témperas y el cartón, como si toda la vida hubieran hecho eso. Pero no. Ramona dice que fue del otro lado de las rejas cuando descubrió que pintar “me llena de tranquilidad y deja salir mis emociones”. Confiesa que ella es medio fiaca para leer. “Por eso estoy más metida en el proyecto de la costura”, comenta. No lo dice, porque su voz es baja como su perfil, pero la idea fue suya y los integrantes de Eloísa –eso sí lo subraya siempre– la recibieron con los brazos abiertos. Eloísa Costurera recién comienza. Realiza arreglos de costura, recicla ropa usada, tiene su feria americana y pinta remeras con el nombre de escritores de Eloísa Cartonera. Mario Bellati y César Aira ya tienen modelos propios para lectores obsesivos, que cotizan a 15 pesos cada uno. De pronto entra un señor del barrio y pregunta: ¿También pintan remeras con dedicatorias? Sí, claro. Quiero regalarle una a mi mujer. Una que diga: “Susy, mi amor”. Ramona toma nota del pedido y pone manos a la obra. Otro cliente entra a dejar unas sábanas para arreglar y se va llevándose tres libros.”

³¹ *Ibid.*; p.27. He also says that: “El arte, que ha servido a todas las épocas como medio de expresión y de propaganda, es uno de los vehículos de la ideología de su tiempo.”³¹

Their methodology, aims, and final products, question the boundaries between craft and art. However, in 2006 their work was presented in the Sao Paulo’s Art Biennial, one of the most important events of contemporary art in the world.

SANTA REVUELTA

“Santa Revuelta” (“Holy revolt”) is the name of Aníbal Kohan’s group that plays music during the ‘piquetes’ (the cut of expressways done as a way of protest by a group of independent individuals). They are known, arguably, as the music group with the greatest physical presence in popular manifestations.³²

Aníbal, Charly, Cristian, Cristina, Juan and Mariano face every event with their songs of ‘cumbia-rock’, ‘candombe’ and ‘chamamé’ style (all different kinds of music genres whose origin and popularity are related primarily with the working class). *Muerte de Aníbal Verón* (“Aníbal Verón’s death”), *Yo soy el desocupado* (“I am the unemployed”) and *Venganza proletaria* (“Proletarian vengeance”) are true hits amongst the ‘piqueteros’.³³

Their main objective is to act as a support of the fight against the injustice of the system. Accordingly, they have created ‘Artepi: Artistas y Técnicos en Piquetes Territoriales y Barriales’ (Artists and technicians in territorial and neighborly ‘piquetes’), which is an organization³⁴ that functions as a technical and artistic support within the different street manifestations.

Their choice of music genre is very distinctive since, traditionally, it was rock n’roll music and groups the ones that operated within these scenarios.³⁵ According to Aníbal Kohan: “To develop ‘chamamés’, ‘chacareras’ and ‘cumbias’ is an effort we try to do in order to connect with the workers and unemployed, but it does not have a good response within the rock n’ roll youth, who consume rock in order to differentiate themselves from the bastard and autochthonous genres.” They state very clearly that they do not

³²Commentary by Cristian Vitale for Página/12: “Sonaron en los piquetes de La Matanza, en la Plaza del Aguante de Mosconi y Tartagal, en la trágica jornada de los asesinatos de Kosteki y Santillán “y en montones de piquetes de todos los sabores y colores”, informa Aníbal.”

³³ One of the lyrics: “La mujer de mi patrón/ odia al gordo de su esposo/ y siempre me hace caída de ojos/ desde su Cherokee sport/ Ejercí venganza obrera/ en su cuerpo escultural/ venganza cuando la huelga/ sufrió asalto policial/ venganza de este gobierno/ que traiciona a Juan Perón/ Y la rota muy burguesa/ por mi forma de vengar/ gimió/ Ay negro, que no acabe/ la dureza del patrón.”

³⁴ As part of the groups that comprise this organization it can be mentioned: Matakarneros; Caballo Vapor; Emociones Perdidas; Acidos Populares; La Komuna; Karamelo Santo and Juan Palomino.

³⁵ In : http://www.segundoenfoque.com.ar/ritmos_cambio.htm Aníbal said that: “Este el país de represiones como las de Neuquén, Jujuy, Salta, Plaza de Mayo, Puente Pueyrredón. Es el país de la deserción escolar, de la desnutrición y muerte infantil. Por eso estamos.”

belong to the now well-established genre of ‘Cumbia villera’, as they consider that this genre, through its lyrics of happy burglars, drunk, lazy men, and stoned kids, implies a degradation of the working class. In Anibal’s words: “It takes some information from reality and it says that it is the plain truth. (...) Whereas, for example, the unemployed factory worker does not exist in “Cumbia villera”, only his/her will to steal and drink beer.”³⁶

Their criticism of “Cumbia Villera” and certain rock n’roll groups; their objectives; and their lyrics, suggest the existence of a new way of producing, distributing and consuming music. However, Beatriz Sarlo said that “everything seems to suggest that we Latin Americans should produce works which are suitable for Cultural analysis whereas Others (basically Europeans) have the right to create works which are suitable for art criticism.”³⁷ It is important to question whether we are really ‘condemned’ to do certain kind of works (as Sarlo suggests) or if it is, as Anibal Kohan seems to believe, the only way of producing popular art in contemporary Argentina.

CONCLUSION

As part of a work-in-progress, in this paper I only intend to present some of the characteristics of these three particular cases. The fact that these productions do not fit properly into the aesthetic western theories of art does not mean that they are not cultural productions embedded with certain historical background. Furthermore, as the Argentinian researcher Marcela López Levy (2004) suggests, “[there are] reasons to believe that long-term changes might come from the crisis of 2001 (considering the social responses to some of the most extreme and difficult circumstances faced by Argentina in the last 30 years [i.e. the last military dictatorship])”. Therefore, I believe that an in-depth analysis of these works would provide a better understanding of new forms of popular art within periods of crisis in Argentina.

Since it is a contemporary topic, I believe It will be greatly enriched from a debate with other contemporary researchers. The aim of the final investigation is that, in addition to shedding new light on the dynamics of artistic development in contemporary Argentina,

³⁶ In Anibal’s words: “Es un invento que empezó en (*la compañía discográfica*) Leader Music como un espejo para mostrar a los villeros. Decirles, ‘vos querés ser chorro, vos querés estar de birra, de frula, etc.’, y lo repiten todo el tiempo. Artísticamente, es naturalista. Toma ciertos datos de la realidad y dice esto es la realidad, naturalmente. En la “cumbia villera” no existe la fábrica con el tipo despedido, por ejemplo”

³⁷ Sarlo, B.; “Cultural Studies and Literary Criticism at the cross-roads of value” in Latin American Cultural Studies: an anthology. (London: Routledge, 2004); p.33.

it will provide a new interdisciplinary perspective whilst analysing possible redefinitions of the boundaries between high art and popular culture.