

Art and Geopolitics

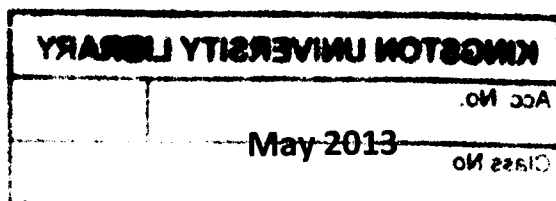
Politics and Autonomy in Argentine

Contemporary Art

Juan RINALDI

**Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy in Philosophy**

**Kingston University, Centre for Research in Modern European
Philosophy**



All of the images in this thesis cannot be digitised
due to 3rd party copyright restrictions.

CONTENTS

CONTENTS	2
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	4
ABSTRACT	5
ILLUSTRATIONS.....	6
INTRODUCTION	8
Adorno, Social Theory, Monopoly Capitalism.....	8
Art and Geopolitics.....	13
Chapter Structure.....	14
CHAPTER 1	
SOCIETY AND STATE: THE PROBLEM OF SPATIALISATION IN ADORNO'S SOCIAL THEORY	20
Part 1: Society.....	20
Socio-historical Development	21
Levels of Integration.....	23
Integration and Differentiation: A Reified Dialectic?	26
Consciousness, Organisation and State	29
Industrial Society? The Spatial Problem of International Capitalist Relations	33
Part 2: The State.....	36
Nation, State and its Apparatuses.....	36
State as Form.....	39
Individuation and the Nation State	42
States as Monads: Homogeneity, Heterogeneity and the Global Horizon	46
CHAPTER 2	
BUREAUCRATIC AUTHORITARIANISM AND THE DESTRUCTION OF THE SOCIAL	51
Dependency Theory and the Historical Specificity of Monopoly Capitalism.....	54
Bureaucratic Authoritarianism and the Specificity of Latin American Social Formations	62
Political Aspects of the Southern Cone Industrialisation.....	69
Social Heterogeneity?	73
The Limits of Monopoly Capitalism: Overaccumulation, National Debt and the Financialisation of the World Capitalist System	80
Argentina's Dependent Development	85
The Destruction of the Social	89
CHAPTER 3	
THE POLITICAL MEDIATION OF ART AS COMMODITY FORM: SKILLING, DESKILLING AND PRECARISATION.....	97

Monopoly Capitalism and Commodification	100
Deskilling – Reskilling in Art	103
Reproducibility – Un-reproducibility.....	107
Immateriality, Dematerialisation, Re-Materialisation	111
The Return to Craft.....	113
CHAPTER 4	
POST-CONCEPTUAL ART AND ITS GEOPOLITICAL DIFFERENTIATION.....	120
Argentina 1960s – 1970s.....	120
Discontinuity	122
Environment.....	127
Two Political Genealogies of Contemporary Argentine Art.....	131
Genealogy I:.....	131
<i>The Helicopter</i> (1967)	131
<i>The Happening of Total Participation</i> (1966)	134
<i>The Ghost Message</i> (1967) – <i>Tucumán Arde</i> (1968)	140
<i>Sobre</i> (1969)	147
A ready-made reversal: <i>El Siluetazo</i> (1983) and the mark of precarisation	150
Genealogy II:.....	159
<i>To Induce the Spirit of the image</i> (1966)	159
<i>The Working Family</i> (1968)	166
<i>Recolecta</i> (1990)	173
Art, Commodity Form and Political Subjectivities	177
CHAPTER 5	
THE PERSISTENCE OF A PERIPHERAL CONDITION.....	180
Medium specificity, conceptuality and the peripheral condition: the work of Pablo Siquier.....	182
Style	191
Contemporary Art and Geopolitics: The return to painting as anti-art material	193
Global City Functions: <i>Buenos Aires Adrift</i>	200
The Architecturalisation of Art: Marginality and the Public Space	206
CONCLUSION	214
Siquier’s Meaninglessness.....	214
A Brief Excursus: The ‘Return to Craft’	216
Art and Geopolitics.....	219
BIBLIOGRAPHY	221

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my Director of Studies, Professor Peter Osborne, for his supervisory role, and for his help, advice and support throughout the development of this project.

I am grateful to Dr. Stewart Martin for his comments and suggestions during the early stages of this thesis.

Thanks to Professor Francisco Dominguez for his comments on chapter 2 which allowed me to clarify some ideas in relation to the Latin American context.

I would also like to thank the Centre for Research in Modern European Philosophy for sponsoring my research trip to Buenos Aires during May of 2009. During that trip I had the chance to interview the artist Pablo Siquier, who generously spent time with me to discuss his work.

Special thanks go to Rosario Padorno for her help in gathering information and bibliographical material from Buenos Aires, and for her support and encouragement throughout the research.

I am also grateful to Diego Iudicissa for discussions on Chapters 4 and 5, and Dario Moretti for discussions on Chapter 1.

Finally I would like to thank Britta Möller for her comments on the different chapters of the thesis; and for her patience, support and love during all these years.

ABSTRACT

This thesis critically analyses the implications of a now global capitalist modernity for Theodor W. Adorno's theory of art. The thesis takes as its starting point the sociological presuppositions at play in his social theory and problematises the spatial and historical dimensions in which they are embedded. The analysis of the process of homogenisation of social relations that Adorno presents as a constitutive feature of societies during monopoly capitalism brings to the fore the centrality of the state as administrator. This thesis claims that there is a spatial contradiction in Adorno's definition of society, given that the interconnectedness of capitalism as a system is negated by the restriction of that definition to industrialised societies. In other words, there is a universalisation of the particularity of industrialised societies underlying Adorno's social theory, that hides a functionalist understanding of the state and disavows its constitutive character for capitalist social relations. The introduction of an analysis of the particularity of the state in Latin American societies serves as a counterpoint to the societies analysed by Adorno. Latin American societies are analysed from the point of view of Dependency Theory, particularly in relation to Henrique Cardoso's and Enzo Faletto's concept of dependent development. This concept allows a further differentiation internal to Latin American societies and problematises the common assumption that structural heterogeneity is a key concept for understanding these societies. Consequently, the thesis focuses its analysis on the socio-economic and political situation of the societies in the Southern Cone of South America, particularly Argentina, given their relative social homogenisation during the 1960s. The thesis claims that contrary to Adorno's assumption that capitalist social development destroys collective subjectivities while producing homogenisation, the Southern Cone societies show that development and relative social homogenisation in contexts of dependency do not necessarily produce political neutralisation but rather its opposite.

The problematisation of Adorno's social theory is further complicated by the historical development of capitalism during neoliberalism. The decoupling of the spatial grounding of the relation between capital and labour constituted during monopoly capitalism is presented from the point of view of the radical transformation of Argentine society from the mid-1970s onwards. The thesis introduces the concept of the 'destruction of the social' in reference to the central role that the process of accumulation by dispossession, as theorised by David Harvey, has for the transformation of Argentina.

Given this expanded global context, the thesis then discusses the effects that the transformation of the relation between capital and labour has for the conditions of production of artistic labour during neoliberalism. In particular, it claims that the 'developmentalist' dynamic that aligns technological development, industrialisation and artistic material in Adorno's concept of the new, has been problematised by the primacy of financial valorisation as a form of accumulation, and the dynamic role that accumulation by dispossession has in it. The emergence of a globally expanded labour theory of culture is analysed in relation to the contemporary art produced in Argentina between the late 1960s and the 2000s. The relation between the socially regressive tendencies developed during this period and artistic technique is analysed through the introduction of the notion of the 'return to craft.'

ILLUSTRATIONS

Image 1 – Costa, Eduardo, Escari, Raúl and Jacoby, Roberto. <i>Happening of total participation or Happening for a Dead Boar, El Mundo</i> , August 21, 1966. Newspaper coverage of the alleged <i>Happening of Total Participation (1966)</i>	136
Image 2 – Masotta, Oscar. <i>The Ghost Message (1967)</i> . Poster of the work placed at the intersection of Córdoba and Maipú streets in Buenos Aires. Photography: Suarez, Pablo. Archive of Herrera, Maria José	141
Image 3 Masotta, Oscar. <i>The Ghost Message (1967)</i> . Image of the poster broadcasted by Chanel 11. Photography: Suarez, Pablo. Archive of Herrera, Maria José	142
Image 4 <i>Tucumán Arde (1968)</i> . Sticker designed by Renzi, Juan Pablo	143
Image 5 & Image 6: Covers of <i>Sobre</i> , Nr 1 & 2, May and July 1969. Designed by Smoje, Oscar. Archive of Jacoby, Roberto	148
Image 7: Jacoby, Roberto, <i>A Guerrilla Fighter Does Not Die To Be Hang On A Wall (1969)</i> . Silkscreen 22 x 32 cm. Archive of Jacoby, Roberto	149
Image 8: <i>El Siluetazo (1983)</i> . Participants at the march use their bodies to draw the silhouettes. Photography: Kexel, Guillermo	153
Image 9: <i>El Siluetazo (1983)</i> . Archive of Longoni, Ana	154
Image 10: <i>El Siluetazo (1983)</i> . Photography: Gil, Eduardo, <i>Siluetas y Canas</i> . Museo del Barrio New York	156
Image 11: Young, La Monte. <i>The Tortoise, His Dreams and Journeys, “7”</i> , February 6, 1966. Performance at Larry Poon’s studio of the Theater of Eternal Music. Copyright Zazeela, Marian.	161
Image 12: Masotta, Oscar. <i>To Induce the Spirit of the Image (1966)</i> . Copyright Lijtmaer, Susana.....	163
Image 13: Masotta, Oscar. <i>To Induce the Spirit of the Image (1966)</i> . Copyright Lijtmaer, Susana.....	164
Image 14: Bony, Oscar. <i>The Working Family (1968)</i> Installation. Di Tella Institute, Buenos Aires. Oscar Bony Archive	166
Images 15-17: Maresca Liliana. <i>Recolecta (1990)</i> . Installation at the Centro Cultural Recoleta , Buenos Aires. Top left, clockwise: Images 14, 16 &17, Photography of Adriana Miranda; Image 18: <i>Carrito Dorado</i> , Photography Enrique Llambías, property of Fabián Lebenglik.....	174

Image 19: Siquier, Pablo. <i>9202 (1992)</i> . Acrylic on canvas, 140 x 200cm. Private collection.....	185
Image 20: Siquier, Pablo. <i>8904 (1989)</i> . Acrylic on canvas, 150 x 150 cm. Private collection.	186
Image 21: Siquier, Pablo. <i>0618 (2006)</i> . Acrylic on canvas, 200 x 300 cm. David Gorodisch collection....	189
Images 22 & 23: Siquier, Pablo. <i>0502 (2005)</i> . Vinyl on Wall, 5 x 54m. Installation at Palacio Velazquez, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid. (Two views).	190
Image 24: Siquier, Pablo. <i>0504 (2005)</i> . Charcoal on Wall, 450 x 800 cm. Installation at Palacio Velazquez, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid.	191
Image 25: Siquier, Pablo. <i>9813 (1998)</i> . Acrylic on Canvas, 160 x 230 cm. Collection of the Museo de Arte Moderno, Buenos Aires.....	197
Image 26. Siquier Pablo. <i>0810. (2009)</i> Los Molinos, Faena Group, Buenos Aires	210
Image 27. Siquier Pablo. <i>0824. (2009)</i> Los Molinos, Faena Group, Buenos Aires	211
Image 28 Ai Weiwei. <i>Sunflower Seeds (2010)</i> . Installation. Turbine Hall. Tate Modern, London. Photography: Tate. Ai Weiwei's copyright.	218

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is constructed around two main questions. The first inquires about the relevance of Theodor Adorno's aesthetic theory for the understanding of contemporary art. To put it succinctly, what are the problems that a global capitalist modernity poses for Adorno's theory of art? The second question arises out of the effort to understand the significance of an overtly aestheticised body of art works that appeared from the 1990s onwards in Argentina, a country with an important tradition of conceptual art practices. What are the concepts appropriate to the understanding of these works in their postconceptual condition?

The peripheral position of Argentina in relation to the world capitalist system is the context in relation to which these questions are posed. The persistence of the country's dependent socio-political and economic status is the key to the elaboration of these questions in relation to Adorno's theorisation of the dialectic of cultural modernity in a wider and more complex geopolitical context.

Adorno, Social Theory, Monopoly Capitalism

In Adorno's work the relation between politics and art is complex and problematic, not least because in his theorisation the growing social relevance of the latter parallels the waning power of the former. Dialectically conceived, the political signification of art appears mediated: within autonomous art, politics finds its expression in form.

"If in art formal characteristics are not facilely interpretable in political terms, everything formal in art nevertheless has substantive implications and they extend into politics"¹

The more totalised the totalising movement of capitalism appears, the more significant but powerless art becomes in political terms. This is, however, a problem not directly attributable to art but to the society in which it develops. The monopolistic character of capitalism's self-expanding development and the geopolitics of the Cold War are the two main features of the historical context within which Adorno develops

1. Adorno, Theodor W. *Aesthetic Theory* (1970). Trans. Hullot-Kentor, Robert, ed. Adorno, Gretel and Tiedemann, Rolf. London: Continuum, 1997, p.255

his art theory. In his view, the homogenisation of social relations that corresponds to monopoly capitalism has as its consequence the neutralisation of political subjectivities given the reification of experience: the constant production and reproduction of the existing becoming its ideological legitimation.

The intensification and expansion of capitalist relations since the 1960s, a process that has subsumed the entire world within its sphere of influence appears, at first sight, to have extended Adorno's sociological presupposition to the entire world. "In this decade which has just ended but it still ours," Fredric Jameson writes at the end of the 1980s, "Adorno's prophecies of the 'total system' finally came true, in wholly unexpected forms."² The transformation of capitalism and the reconfiguration of its social relations at a global level during the neoliberal period, particularly after the dissolution of the former eastern bloc, have been the context for a renewed interest in Adorno's work. The re-evaluation of the centrality of art's autonomy as a critical category to understanding the relevance of art has been one of the key points around which this interest has unravelled.³ Within this context the relevance of Adorno's social theory for his theory of art has been contested but the theory itself has not been problematised.

Under the social conditions of late capitalism, capital and labour have a specific and delimited relation: production, distribution and consumption are organised and administered jointly. The integral character of capitalist social development in this period creates a tendency towards the dissolution of political subjectivities. Crudely

2. Jameson, Fredric. *Late Marxism: Adorno or the persistence of the Dialectic* (1990). London: Verso, 2007, p.5

3. John Roberts summarised and categorised the different trends of reception of Adorno's work that emerged in the 1990s in his "After Adorno: Art, Autonomy, and Critique," *Historical Materialism*, Vol.7, Number 1, 2000, pp.221-239. The debate regarding the relevance of Adorno's social theory for his theory of art took place on the pages of the *New Left Review* and has been compiled with additional contributions in Beach, Dave and Roberts, John ed., *The Philistine Controversy*. London: Verso, 2002. Beach and Roberts criticise Jay Bernstein and Andrew Bowie for disregarding the importance of Adorno's social theory for his theory of art, trying to dialectically recuperate the figure of the philistine from what they perceived as an undialectical, one sided theorisation of the cultural field by Adorno. However, as much as they highlight the relevance of the social in Adorno's art theory their criticism does not properly problematise the historical dimension of the social they intend to rescue, analysing it in the more abstract terms they distil from Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*. A more productive approach in this respect is Peter Osborne's criticism of the "unilinearity of Adorno's orientation to history" which opens up Adorno's analysis of the dialectic of modernism to the uneven process of historical developments. See Osborne, Peter, "Adorno and the Metaphysics of Modernism: the Problem of a 'Postmodern' Art," in Benjamin Andrew, ed. *The Problems of Modernity. Adorno and Benjamin*. London: Routledge, 1989, pp. 23-48

put, capitalism maintains the rational 'irrationality' of its exchange principle by paying consciousness in exchange for conformity.⁴

Problematic as they maybe, Adorno's sociological presuppositions are however historically grounded. It is the transformation of social relations in late capitalism that constitutes the specificity of art's relation to the social in his *Aesthetic Theory* – "Modern works in this sense must show themselves to be equal to high industrialism, not simply make it a topic"⁵ – and hence provides the context for a specific constitution of its autonomy. Implicit in this argument is the condition that if society changes – capitalism becoming something other than 'late capitalism' – the way in which the work of art constitutes its autonomy in relation to the social will somehow be expressed in the work. This links the law of movement of modern art's development to the transformation of the historical form of capitalism. In other words, the logic of negation constitutive of art's modernism, its critical affirmation of the new, is related to the logic of expanded reproduction of capitalism as a system; the form in which this logic is expressed, however, is historical.⁶ Industrialisation is the historical logic of expanded reproduction implicit in Adorno's theorisation. "Late capitalism or industrial society?" is the false dichotomy that he contests by arguing that relations of production are capitalistic but the model of society is that of industrial labour, a model that has become a totality "because methods modelled on those of industry are necessarily extended by the law of economics to other realms of material production."⁷ In his sociological work Adorno is, nonetheless, ambivalent regarding the political nature of the society he analyses, acknowledging or disavowing its political construction. This ambivalence is also noticeable in his characterisation of the developmentalist character of monopoly capitalism: on the one hand, the system has learnt how to displace the crisis of accumulation so as to maintain an internal social

4. "The power of the culture industry's ideology is such that conformity has replaced consciousness." Adorno, Theodor W. "Culture Industry Reconsidered", *The Culture Industry: Selected essays on mass culture* (1991). Ed. Bernstein, J.M. London: Routledge, 2004, p.104

5. Adorno. *Aesthetic Theory*, p.33

6. "The new is the seal of expanded reproduction, with its promise of undiminished plenitude," Adorno. *Ibid.*, p. 21

7. Adorno, Theodor W. "Late capitalism or Industrial Society: The fundamental question of the present structure of society", *Can One Live after Auschwitz? A Philosophical Reader*. Trans. by Livingstone, Rodney and others, ed. Tiedemann, Rolf. California: Stanford University Press, 2003, p.117

peace; on the other hand this situation is “only temporarily in equilibrium.”⁸ This relates, on the one hand, to the place that politics has internal to the space of his analysis in which the current state of politics has been naturalised by an economy that maintains individuals more or less free of material needs; and on the other, to the displacement of politics to the geopolitics of the Cold War.

There is however a tendency in Adorno’s theorisation of modern art to take as unified (even if only as a rhetorical devise) what is a unifying tendency of capitalism; a tendency to totalise a totalising movement. Hence the differentiation that is still present in his social theory – the acknowledgement of the spatial scope of his theorisation as delimited by the industrially advanced societies – tends to appear in his art theory only internal to this limited space.⁹ This situation creates a structural tension in his theory of art which has not been sufficiently explored in recent debates. If it is true that the intensification of capitalist social relations and their expansion across the world have made the commodity form the most prevalent form of social relation, it is however a mistake to take this intensification as an intensification of the sociological presuppositions accepted by Adorno, which is what most commentators seem to accept, or at least to disregard.

In this respect one of the main objectives of this thesis is to inquire about the limits of Adorno’s sociological presuppositions and the consequence these limits have for his theory of art under the conditions of a global capitalist modernity. In particular, how this situation affects the artistic categories useful for the understanding of works produced in a different social context from the one presupposed by Adorno. This creates the need for a critical examination of Adorno’s social theory given the relevance that certain sociological presuppositions have for his understanding of society in general and the production of cultural forms in particular. There is a double

8. *Ibid.*, p.119

9. I am aware that Adorno claims that the possibility of the emergence of the aesthetically new is only possible in those spaces of society not fully colonised by administration. As he puts it: “Only where the development towards the administrated world and social modernity had not yet been asserted itself so successfully – in France and Austria, for example – did the aesthetically modern, the avant-garde, thrive.” Adorno. “Culture and Administration”, *The Culture Industry*, p.121. But this possibility is constituted internally to the capitalist spaces he analyses, and does not acknowledge the possibility of the emergence of modern art in a non fully industrialised context, the way that his sociology still recognises, although negatively, places in which the full forces of industrialisation hasn’t been achieved but with a functional relation to the industrialised nations, hence as being part of the same economic system.

problematisation of his social theory at work in this thesis. The first focuses on the spatial delimitation of Adorno's social theory and attempts to provide an expanded account of the social to include spaces outside the developed societies discussed in his work; particularly given that Adorno understands society in functional terms. Functional interconnectedness is his key to understanding the social structure. The interconnectedness of capitalism as a system is however problematically acknowledged (world system) and disavowed (isolated analysis of developed societies) in his work. The second problematisation is historical but takes into account the expanded social space acknowledged by the first problematisation. In this respect, an understanding of the dialectical relation between the concepts of expanded reproduction and accumulation by dispossession becomes relevant. The main issue here involves the historical transformation of the relation between labour and capital which has not only spatially separated production and consumption across the globe, but has also created the conditions for the selective expropriations theorised by David Harvey as accumulation by dispossession. It is the change in the dominant form of accumulation of capitalism as a global economic system that has created this situation. The financialisation of the world economy has opened the door for a free flow of capital across the world that has become increasingly speculative. As Harvey states:

"The umbilical cord that ties together accumulation by dispossession and expanded reproduction is that given by financial institutions of credit, backed, as ever, by state powers."¹⁰

The Argentina of the 1960s to the present provides a relevant case for analysis as it originally presents certain similarities with the social, political and economic spaces analysed by Adorno which are relevant to understanding the emergence and specificity of the conceptual art practices in the country during the 1960s. While at the same time, Argentina's historical development shows a transformation of its social structure which is antagonistic in relation to the transformation of the developed nations, and which requires new concepts to understand both the social transformation and the more recent artistic productions. In this way, this thesis develops by particularising the social conditions Adorno universalises in his theory.

10. Harvey, David. *The New Imperialism*. Oxford University Press, Oxford: 2005, p.152

And it proceeds, in the same way, by particularising the different social spaces it further analyses – Latin America, the Southern Cone region – to single out the space of the state as central to the understanding of the historical and political nature of the different internationally dominant forms of accumulation (monopoly capitalism – financial valorisation) and its dynamic expression in the political subjectivities of Argentina. It is in order to understand this transformation that the thesis introduces the concept of the ‘destruction of the social’ highlighting the impact in Argentina of the global dislocation between labour and capital within the context of the highly contested political sphere of the country.

Art and Geopolitics

The transformation of the relation between capital and labour during the neoliberal period cannot but affect the conditions of production within which artistic labour takes place. The concept of the dematerialisation of art that appeared in the 1960s was an expression of the transformation of this relation given the impact of technological development, particularly reflecting on the emergence of television as mass media and the growing relevance of computer technologies. Within the coordinates of monopoly capitalism the integrative character of the relation between labour and capital creates a path of development that incorporates technologies by making previous forms of production in general, and manual production in particular, obsolete. With the emergence of neoliberalism there is a spatial separation between the spheres of production and consumption in the context of an increasingly transnationalised economic system. This situation, added to the primacy of financial over productive valorisation creates a dynamic in which the convergence between technological and economic rationalities becomes problematic. First, because given the primacy of financial valorisation, processes of selective industrialisation and deindustrialisation take place simultaneously. And even within deindustrialising contexts they can be driven by totally different dynamics. In the Argentine context, deindustrialisation mixed internal politics, in the form of the disarticulation of the working class, with a disregard for its effects on consumption. Financial valorisation in this context is primarily focused on accumulation by dispossession, a dynamic that was mainly

implemented given the weight of the external debt in relation to the unproductive character of the Argentine economy. The second reason technological rationality may differ from economic rationality is derived from the first. Industrialisation during neoliberalism tends to reflect comparative advantages. Hence, profit becomes the key term “for which productivity and technology may be important means, but certainly not the only one.”¹¹

This situation complicates the “developmentalist” dynamic that the concept of the new has in Adorno’s theorisation. The new as “seal of expanded reproduction” somehow aligned artistic material, technological development and industrialisation. Under the new conditions created by financial valorisation, and the consequent emergence of accumulation by dispossession, this path has been problematised. It is within the complex relation between the transnational and local contexts that artistic materials – “everything formal in art”- gain their geopolitical significance under current conditions. The uneven process of global and transnational capitalist development requires that the relation between art and politics is understood in geopolitical terms. In this respect the intention of this thesis is not so much a departure from Adorno’s position but an immanent criticism of his theorisation, in order to provide a conceptual framework for the understanding of art works produced outside the space (the industrialised nations of monopoly capitalism) and time (the four decades span of neoliberalism) delimited by his theory.

Chapter Structure

The thesis is structured in two main parts, each composed of two chapters, linked by chapter 3 as a transitional part. The first section, chapters 1 and 2, develops a criticism of Adorno’s social theory by expanding its sociological presuppositions to the Latin American context; particularly in relation to the socio-political and economic situation of Argentina in its transition to the neoliberal period. Chapter 3 links the outcomes of the first section to a globally expanded labour theory of culture. It is a transition to the critical analysis, in chapters 4, of the emergence of conceptual art practices in Argentina during the 1960s and the traditions they inaugurate. Chapter 5 presents the

11. Castells, Manuel. *The Rise of the Network Society, Vol.1*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, p.94

work of artist Pablo Siquier in relation to those artistic traditions but within the context of a globally expanded capitalist development.

The first chapter is divided into two sections focusing on the concepts of society and the state, respectively. The first section deals accordingly with the sociological presuppositions that Adorno takes as central in the consolidation of capitalism as a world system; particularly during its monopolistic form in which the state appears as the key actor participating in the administration and planning of society. This thesis delimits Adorno's conception of social homogenisation by bringing the implicit and contradictory levels of spatialisation contained in his social theory to the fore. Adorno believes that the qualitative change created by monopoly capitalism is a product of the expansion of the industrial model beyond the productive sphere and unto society at large. Hence what at first sight appears as a political decision in relation to the construction of the social – the emergence of the welfare state and its integrative tendencies – is transformed via its naturalisation in the ever expanding rule of the principle of exchange effacing the possibility of change; a de-politicisation of the social. This thesis argues that Adorno's theorisation of the 'functionalisation' of capitalist society and the thesis of social homogenisation are made compatible in Adorno via the repression of the geopolitical scope of social theory.

Starting from Adorno's conceptualisation of society the chapter unravels the implicit contradiction between an all-encompassing concept of society understood in functionalist terms – its functional interconnection given capitalist development – and society understood in a more narrow sense as delimiting the space of industrialised societies during the 1960s – a dominant but nonetheless not exclusive instantiation of a historically specific state form. This contradiction between the space of the system and the space of a particular instantiation of state form highlights the undeveloped problem of the state as form in Adorno's theorisation. The reading presented in this thesis takes this conflation of politics and economics as the historical limit of Adorno's theorisation given that his collapse of the political and economic spheres in the form of the state poses the question of the internationalisation of capital transcending this space. This is the source of a certain one-directional sense of development in both his social and aesthetic theories that seems unacknowledged in recent debates.

In the second chapter, the problem of the tendential homogenisation of the social, understood at the most abstract level of functional interconnection, appears more clearly demarcated by transferring the object of analysis to those social formations excluded from Adorno's analysis: social heterogeneity is normally presented as one of the key features of the Latin American condition. The concept of the state appears in these societies at the forefront of the analysis as the unity between the political and the economic presupposed by the theory of monopoly capitalism appears problematised given their dependent condition. Henrique Cardoso's and Enzo Faletto's concept of dependent development becomes relevant in the context of this thesis as it allows a differentiation, internal to the Latin American context, that explains the specificity of the Southern Cone's states.¹² The common assumption that the reason for Latin American political instability is the consequence of its structural heterogeneity is refuted by the underlying reason for the emergence of bureaucratic dictatorships in the Southern Cone of South America. It is precisely the relative homogenisation of these societies, given their level of industrialisation, that creates the social tension that triggers the dictatorial process, and in this sense it expresses the class tension underlying competing political projects. Contrary to Adorno's assumption that social development destroys collective subjectivities while producing homogenisation, this thesis claims that the examples of the Southern Cone societies show that the development of relative social homogenisation in contexts of dependency (as both social and systemic integration) does not necessarily produce political neutralisation, but rather the opposite.

The case of Argentina is paradigmatic in this respect given the level of industrialisation, urbanisation and unionisation the country had achieved by the 1960s. If the adopted form of development characterised as import substitution industrialisation is the geopolitical equivalent to the monopolistic capitalism described by Adorno, the synchronicity between economics, politics and culture that the later assumes was broken down in Argentina with the political proscription of Peronism. The 1960s become unstable in Argentina because of the competing politico-ideological projects that dispute the model of development. It is this political instability that on

12. Cardoso, Henrique and Faletto, Enzo. *Dependency and Development in Latin America*. Trans. by Mattingly Urquidí, Marjory. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979

the one hand, sharpens the recurring economic crisis in the country, while on the other, radicalises the cultural sphere given the contested social space. The different social context that the 1960s in Argentina represents in relation to Adorno's presupposition is further complicated by the historical development of capitalism from the mid-1970s onwards. The intensification of capitalist development that Adorno presupposes takes place in the context of the total transformation of the spatial delimitation of the relation between capital and labour implicit in his theorisation. This situation is presented in this thesis from the Argentine perspective with recourse to David Harvey's notion of accumulation by dispossession; a process by which capitalism cannibalistically creates its other in order to enable further accumulation. It is the establishment of accumulation by dispossession as the dynamic moment within the process of capitalist development which problematises Adorno's understanding of this development in terms of expanded reproduction. The concept of the destruction of the social presented in this thesis reflects the fracture of the process of socialisation within the Argentine context.

The recuperation of the concept of the state as a critical category for the understanding of the constitution of contemporary societies, and the development of the concept of the destruction of the social as central for understanding the transformation of the Argentine society in its neoliberal period, are relevant to the introduction, in chapter 3, of a criticism of the labour theory of culture developed by John Roberts in relation to Adorno's work. The centrality of the analysis of the historical condition of labour in general in relation to artistic labour in particular is located in art's capacity to criticise the state of society given that its production does not follow the rules of production for exchange. The chapter starts by summarising the historical condition of Adorno sociological presuppositions, while complementing them with Harry Braverman's theorisation of the process of deskilling in monopoly capitalism and Robert Castel's notion of the salaried society, in order to criticise Roberts' developmentalist account of the process of deskilling.

This thesis claims that the transition from liberal to monopoly forms of capitalism and their supersession by a form related to the network society is uncritically developed by Roberts in relation to the transformation of artistic forms: the ready-made figures here as an all-encompassing structure mediating the transition to

industrialisation and informatisation at the same time. The criticism of Roberts' updated concept of craft developed through an analysis of the distinction between the concepts of technique and craft in Adorno, is the basis for the introduction of the concept of the 'return to craft'. A critical concept that problematises both the acritical link that Roberts introduces between general social technique and artistic technique, and Adorno's use of the concept of the most advanced artistic material. The concept of the return to craft emphasises the non-linear transference of the technological development implemented at the level of the forces of production to the artistic forms given the uneven social process. Furthermore it reflects the geopolitical transformation of society since the 1960s, in which a decoupling of the spatial grounding in the relation between capital and labour has distributed production and consumption unevenly across the globe, whilst at the same time creating a growing level of precarisation and marginalisation. It is the non-necessary relation between technological and economic rationality, within a context in which financial valorisation is the dominant form of accumulation, that is emphasised by the allegorical return to manual production addressed through the concept of the return to craft. The concept of convergence as the technical link between general social technique and artistic forms of productions detached from the developmentalist framework used by Roberts is important for the understanding of the development of the fourth and fifth chapters.

Chapter 4 returns the focus of the thesis to the Argentine context to analyse the emergence of conceptual art practices as a consequence of the complex geopolitical situation traversed by the country during the 1960s: the developmentalist transformation of the productive structure and the consequent verticalisation of the social strata given the internationalisation of the economy; the political antagonism created by alternative and exclusive political projects; and the productive dynamic between artistic production and the critical appropriation of foreign discourses on art. Starting from the critical works of Oscar Masotta the chapter provides a narrative of the development of two artistic genealogies that, the thesis argues, are central to the understanding of the more recent productions of the 1990s in Argentina. The first genealogy focuses on the emergence of the media art as a reflection on the ideological role played by the mass media in legitimising the developmentalist discourse; a

discourse that also helped legitimate the media art as a genre of contemporary art. The second genealogy provides an account of the relationship between artistic productions and the disarticulation of political subjectivities in Argentina between the 1960s and the 1990s, emphasising the importance of the historical and geopolitical dimensions through which artistic forms gain social meaning.

The complementary character of these two genealogies approaches the complex social situation of Argentina between the 1960s and the 1990s from different angles and times, providing a more comprehensive background for the analysis of the works of art of the 1990s presented in chapter 5. The analysis of Pablo Siquier's work in chapter 5 is contextualised in relation to the post-dictatorial period and the consolidation of the new socio-economic structure established by the dictatorship. This thesis claims that Siquier's works encapsulate the specific form of social experience I have described as the destruction of the social; in the sense that it relates to the disappearance of the mediation that the political form of the former national-popular state represented in relation to the international capitalist system. The analysis of Siquier's work is structured around its post-conceptual condition – its relation to the two genealogies developed in the previous chapter and the use of painting as an anti-art material – in the context of the subordinate incorporation of Buenos Aires a part of the networks of global cities.

CHAPTER 1

SOCIETY AND STATE: THE PROBLEM OF SPATIALISATION IN ADORNO'S SOCIAL THEORY

"Bluster about concepts such as "imperialism" or "monopoly," regardless of their scope and of the realities corresponding to these words, is false and irrational."¹

Part 1: Society

Adorno defines society as a functional and dynamic concept, as a category of mediation expressing a relationship between people. In its present socialised form, in its functional interconnectedness, society is determined by the exchange process. In capitalist societies – “which as a stage or form of dominance is prototypical of society throughout the world”² – this functional process is further determined by the principles of accumulation and expansion. This means that in order to be able to reproduce itself and its members, a society needs to tendentially incorporate new spaces under the logic of the value form. This, in a very condensed form, is the dynamic core around which Adorno develops his social theory.

The laws of movement of capitalist societies that Adorno defines as accumulation and expansion have their correlation at the sociological level in the categories of integration and differentiation. In its original conception Herbert Spencer uses these categories to describe the process through which more and more sectors of society are integrated and interrelated. At the same time, and through the division of labour pushed by such integration, a corresponding process of specialisation and differentiation takes place. Spencer understands the higher level of social complexity produced by differentiation as a qualitative transformation producing more social heterogeneity; although, as society's members are interdependent, such

1. Adorno. "Late Capitalism or Industrial Society?", p.113

2. Adorno, Theodor W. *Introduction to Sociology* (1993). trans. Edmund Jephcott. Oxford: Polity, 2000, p.39

heterogeneity is defined as conditioned.³ Adorno understands this dynamic as representing a specific historical moment in capitalist development; the one determined by free market capitalism. Under these historical conditions class consciousness is taken as the expression of the conflict that emerged between the bourgeoisie and the working class as a consequence of the contradictory character of their social relations. Adorno narrowly defines the level of integration of liberal capitalism as one that only creates a functional integration; the proletariat performs social labour but stands “in a partly external relationship to society.”⁴ It is important not to overlook the spatial dimension implied in this basic analysis of society. As defined by Adorno, society is circumscribed by the confrontation between classes; this confrontation can only be universalised once its particularity has also been acknowledged. This is, as ‘a stage or form of dominance’ capitalism has been universalised, but its appearance is expressed by the particularity of many social formations. However the relation between integration and differentiation in relation to the dialectic between totality – world economic system – and particularity – social formation – does not appear clearly developed in Adorno’s account. I will attempt a preliminary delimitation of this problematic in this first section.

Socio-historical Development

The turn of the 20th century witnessed a qualitative transformation of the dynamic relation between integration and differentiation due to the historical development of capitalist societies; particularly in the world’s industrially advanced social formations. The move towards economic concentration and business rationalisation that emerged at the time increasingly extended beyond the merely economic. Adorno understands the rationalisation brought about by the expansion of the industrial model to other social spheres – legal, political, educational, cultural – as modifying the social dynamic in such a way that to a continuous process of integration there corresponds a process of de-differentiation. As a consequence of this, a growing homogenisation of society took place, tendentially transforming all social relations according to the model

3. Spencer, Herbert. *The Principles of Sociology*, Vol. II. (1899). New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2002, p.288

4. Adorno. *Introduction to Sociology*, p.41

imposed by the primacy of exchange. Historically, this transformation expresses the process of capitalist development from a free market to a monopolist stage. The value form, even while already structuring liberal capitalist societies, increasingly became the basic form of social mediation. This expansion not only transformed the objective social conditions but also modified the subjective experience of the social. On the one hand, and as a positive result, industrial and technological developments brought with them – in the long run and mainly in the space delimited by industrialised social formations – the disappearance of worker's pauperism, rising living standards, and an increasing access to a wider number of commodities and services; all of this in the context of an internationally expanding capitalist development. On the other hand, the rationality under which all these changes were implemented increasingly became naturalised. If during free market capitalism social struggle was the expression of the contradictory character of social relations – giving way to conflicting ideologies – the new stage, by incorporating the working class – not only economically but also politically and even more importantly culturally – neutralised social tensions; becoming ideological in itself. The pressure of the system on every aspect of the social – its specific form of rationalisation and the constant incorporation of new spaces – penetrated deeply into the social body, taking possession even of culture and consciousness through their industrialisation. The dynamic aspect that the dialectic of forces and relations of production had during free market capitalism approached a standstill. While the forces of production have been increasingly transformed by technological development, Adorno understands that they have done so through the narrow path opened by the reified relations of production, no longer circumscribed to those of property, but also including those of administration and the 'state as total capitalist.' Both forces and relations of productions are treated as objects plausible of being calculated and administered. Hence Adorno states:

"The idea that the forces and relations of production are one and the same today, and that the notion of society can be easily constructed solely by reference to the forces of production, is the current shape of socially necessary illusion." ⁵

5. Adorno. "Late Capitalism or Industrial Society?", p.124

This 'socially necessary illusion' represents the historical transformation of the concept of ideology from *justification* – the expression of the contradictory character of society in ideas which are the product of a consciousness produced by such society, but which retains a moment of autonomy in relation to it⁶ – to the mere repetition of the existing. As Simon Jarvis puts it:

"Social appearance, the second nature of petrified social relations, is taken for the essence of society, for all there is or can ever be."⁷

In Adorno's views the transformation of society not only reshapes the working class, the emergence of big corporations and the increasing rationalisation of working processes make the professionalisation and specialisation of every strata of society also necessary. At a managerial level, it generates the emergence of technocratic roles that displace the owners out of their traditional position. Ownership and administration are separated by the intensification of the division of labour pushed forward by capitalist development. The mass replaces the people, but everybody becomes part of the mass. It is the system that appears to have become independent from the individuals.

Levels of Integration

The growing independence of society in relation to the individuals that constitute it produces important modifications in the conceptualisation of both individual and society. Adorno explains these transformations by way of postulating two qualitatively different modes of integration that correspond to the two stages of capitalist development he singles out; the free market of the second half of the 19th century and the state monopoly capitalism that develops from early to mid 20th century. In the first stage, the working class is only functionally part of society, given that politically and culturally workers are excluded from society, while economically they are only marginally included as producers and in a hardly relevant position as consumers.

6. See Adorno Theodor W. "Contribución a la doctrina de las ideologías", *Escritos Sociológicos I*, Vol. 8. (1972) Ed. Tiedermann, Rolf. Trans. González Ruiz, Agustín. Madrid: Akal, 2004, pp. 433-436. My translation. No English version of this text was found. Unless otherwise indicated all translations from Spanish in this thesis are my own.

7. Jarvis, Simon. *Adorno, a Critical Introduction*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998, p.67

During the second stage, the higher degree of social integration that takes place through the expansion of the industrial model affects the whole of society by objectively transforming the conditions of socialisation. It is not only that the working class has been now fully integrated but that a qualitative transformation of the process of integration itself takes place, affecting the entire society. Integration encompasses all social classes and positions them behind the veil of a new 'socially necessarily appearance.'

This situation provokes a transformation of individual consciousness. Consciousness is produced objectively by society but its expression is always subjective; it is expressed in the individual's capacity to distance itself from the society to which it belongs to and to reflect on it. Existing social conditions are the condition of possibility for specifically historical forms of consciousness. Adorno believes that during free market capitalism the conditions for socialisation which influenced the formation of an individual conscience were strong enough to produce two main social types:

"As the free market economy displaces the feudal system and demands entrepreneurs as well as free wage labourers, it forms these types anthropologically as well as professionally. Concepts such as self-responsibility, precaution, self-satisfying individuality, fulfilment of duty, but also stark force of conscience and internalised obligation to authority, emerge."⁸

It is difficult to accept, or at least it appears as strongly ideological that a social type, the *free wage labourer*, could somehow identify with the concepts mentioned above while at the same time remain, as Adorno claims, 'outside' society. If society is functionally defined, but at the same time is culturally exclusive, the anthropological types cannot correspond with each other. Adorno's idea of a self-conscious individual constituted through the objective social conditions, and embodying the above mentioned characteristics coincides with the bourgeois type of individual. Furthermore the strong ego to which Adorno usually refers to when describing individuals under free market conditions, seems to correspond with this individual, a bourgeois individual mis-constructing itself as autonomous by disavowing both the alienation that free wage labourers have to endure for this autonomy to emerge, and its own

8. Adorno, as quoted by Honneth, Axel. *The Critique of Power, Reflective Stages in a Critical Social Theory*. Trans. by Baynes, Kenneth. London: MIT Press, 1997, p.83

alienation through commodification. Adorno seems to project into the working class, bourgeois values that could only emerge once specific objective conditions emerged. Problematically, Adorno maintains this dualistic anthropological construction of subjectivities derived from the material conditions of labour during the liberal phase of capitalism; while at the same time, he presents the disappearance of class consciousness in monopoly capitalism as deriving almost exclusively from the material conditions of the working class⁹. It is the latter's integration into society – a second degree integration beyond a functional role – that is taken mainly as modifying consciousness. In Adorno's account, the fact that the value form continues to expand across different levels of society endangers precisely the individual's capacity for critical reflection. Hence, commenting on the existing possibilities for class consciousness, he states:

“It is quite possible that subjective class consciousness has weakened in the advanced countries. (...) And as society increasingly *integrates the very forms of consciousness* itself this is more and more the case.” (JR)¹⁰

The integration of forms of consciousness is the qualitative transformation that the second degree integration entails. As mentioned before, this does not affect only the working class but the entire society. Hence it is not only the working class integration, but the integration of all classes and social groups that produces this social transformation. Changes in the structural composition of society – the fusion of big business and the corresponding accumulation of capital and power in a small number of roles during monopoly capitalism – affect the concept of the individual which is itself a historical product. This is the origin of Adorno's dictum that its concept has reached its historical frontier. In other words, the bourgeois individual, an only partial representative of the society of its time, has reached its historical limit. The individual

9. This creates a contradictory problem in Adorno's theorisation of the changes affecting the constitution of subjectivity as autonomy is mostly discussed through bourgeois subjectivity, while dependency (the subjectivity pre-formed by industrial societies) is mostly explained through working class subjectivity.

10. Adorno, “Society” in *The Legacy of the German Refugee Intellectuals*. Trans. Fredric Jameson, ed. Boyers, Robert. New York: Schocken Books, 1972, p.150. I have slightly modified Jameson's translation, replacing his rendering of the german word ‘integriert’ as ‘control’ by the word ‘integrate’ as it renders more accurately Adorno's text, and it is more consistent with the argument so far developed in this thesis. The german version states “Formen des Bewußtseins integriert” See Theodor W. Adorno. *Gesammelte Schriften. Band 8: Soziologische Schriften I: Gesellschaft (I)*. Digitale Bibliothek Band 97:, p. 4755 (cf. GS 8, P. 15)

emerging out of the new phase of capitalist development needs to be re-conceptualised. It may have lost some of the characteristics Adorno ascribed to the bourgeois individual but, at the same time, and as with the value form, it has a more universal character as individual.

Integration and Differentiation: A Reified Dialectic?

The drive to maximise profit and to reduce costs imposed as a necessity by the system as whole, pushes forward new technological developments and their implementation through a continuous rationalisation of labour processes (themselves a technological development). Industrial rationality appears as the most suitable way of achieving this task. The intensification of the division of labour entailed by technological development implies a process of deskilling that, if radicalised, would transform the worker into a mere appendix to machines. Hence Adorno concludes that,

“as a result of the ever-advancing division of labour, work processes become more and more alike, to the point that the supposedly qualitative differentiation through the division of labour is finally abolished – again a dialectical motif – as a logical consequence of this very division of labour, so that, in the end, anyone can do anything.” ¹¹

According to Adorno, the process by which social homogenisation is attained leaves little space for individuals to realise that the subject of such a transformation has ceased to be the human subject. What Adorno calls ‘socially necessary semblance’ means that the system has become independent from the individuals that constitute it. This is made explicit in his essay “Individual and Organisation”¹² where Adorno further develops the consequences that the expansion of an industrial rationality has for the constitution of the individual. There he states that the individual’s

“technical abilities, and more than this, what can be called an anthropological affinity to technique, have been increased unexpectedly (...) Contemporaries are

11. Adorno. *Introduction to Sociology*, p.42

12. Adorno. “Individuo y Organización”, *Escritos Sociológicos 1*, pp.412-426. No English translation was found for this text.

so equipped to operate whichever machine that it appears as plausible the substitution of one for another.”¹³

For Adorno this implies that it becomes unsustainable to justify any hierarchical relation on the basis of neither the natural constitution of individuals nor their difference in education. The utopian possibility that this situation could represent, is however prevented by the existing character of social relations. Historically, specialisation goes hand in hand with the atomisation of practices; hence the more a field is developed the more it increasingly becomes the target of an instrumental rationality more interested in maximizing results than in the object of such rationalisation. Adorno’s thesis here is that the tendency to the atomisation of labour processes is reaching the point at which it will collapse the differences between them. Hence he insists that it is already possible to “think without any effort the specialist of one sector as specialist of another.”¹⁴ Adorno’s point goes beyond the apparent loss of relevance between classes, it also points towards a limit in which the difference between intellectual and manual labour has also been dissolved in the emerging social structure. However, it is interesting to note a subtle differentiation that Adorno inadvertently re-introduces in his presentation. On one side, he stresses that there is a growing capacity on the side of the individuals to *operate* any machine; capacity that denotes more manual than intellectual labouring – once you know how to operate you just simply repeat the operation. On the other side, Adorno dismisses the difference between *specialists*; a role that by definition implies a level of knowledge beyond mere operation. That everyone can *use* everything denotes more the growing deskilling that is produced at the lowest level of labour processes, the decreasing knowledge that is required for most line production jobs. This is obviously a result of a concrete social process that pushes uniformity at the operative level. Workers are not only deprived of the means of production but also of the means of possession, and hence, of any knowledge associated with the specific task they fulfil.

At the same time, research and implementation of technological development, planification of production or business administration are not tasks that everyone can undertake. This points to the other side of Adorno’s exposition, the difference

13. *Ibid.*, p.422

14. *Ibid.*

between specialists cannot be dissolved as easy as the abstract, but nonetheless increasingly concrete, equation of labour processes. This difference is still relevant and not only implies the different education necessary for each specific field but also, and more importantly, it marks the difference between specialist and non-specialist. Writing about the same sociological transformation produced at the level of the specialisation of the social sciences, Paul Baran and Paul Sweezy comment:

“This environment is above all one of increasing complexity calling for more and more specialisation of every kind and at every level. Following this road, social science has become more and more compartmentalised, with its practitioners turning ever more narrower specialists – superbly trained experts in their own ‘fields’ but knowing, and indeed able to understand, less and less about the specialities of others.”¹⁵

Hence specialisation concentrates knowledge in such reduced fields as to become innocuous to the nature of the whole. The same dynamic that neutralises workers, neutralises specialists. If on the one hand, there is a continuously breaking up of production processes, with the consequent de-skilling and a tendency to separate workers from the means of production and possession; on the other hand, there is a tendency towards an infinitesimal division of specialised expertise – a condition of ‘over-skilling’ – also removing specialists from the means of possession of the productive process as a whole. Given that the society Adorno analyses is defined as monopolistic with a strong state interventionist character, the directionality of the division of labour has to be oriented not only to the efficient incorporation of technology in order to create profit, but also in the direction of creating new employment in order to absorb a growing population. This becomes evident by the need to introduce a particular differentiation in the division of labour among specialists; the emergence of the administrator as a type of specialist subsuming all other forms of specialisation under its own field of knowledge. Adorno however equates specialist with administrator; the specialist in his account, is not the expert on any specific field but the expert in administration. Hence his remark that specialists of different fields are interchangeable; which actually reads more like administrators are

15. Baran, Paul A. and Sweezy, Paul M. *Monopoly Capitalism: and essay on the American Economic and Social Order*. Middlesex: Pelikan, 1975, p16

specialists in administration regardless of what the object they administer is. In a way it implies a new technocratic rule of society where those experts who bear the most power are those more suitable for maximising and intensifying the logic of the system. Hence he states,

“Specialists must exercise authority in fields in which they cannot be professionally qualified, while their particular aptitude in abstractly technical matters of administration is needed in order that the organisation continues to function.”¹⁶

At this point a further clarification of the qualitative transformation of the concept of differentiation is needed. If the social dynamic is still driven by capitalism then, in one way or another, the process of differentiation presupposed by Spencer has to be taking place; one should not forget that society's heterogeneity was conceived as heterogeneously conditioned, already a dialectical moment. It seems that Adorno has collapsed the two terms that he still wants to maintain differentiated: that society is capitalistic in its relations of production but industrial in its forces of production. As he argues, the reified side of the dialectic are still the relations of production, but if capitalism is still the driving force differentiation has to be central to it. A problem arising from this is what sort of differentiation, if the above analysis is right, is still in place? Or better what is the space of the constitution of such a differentiation? What is the spatial limit of the society implied in Adorno's thesis? Maybe a productive answer would need to take into consideration the two spaces presupposed by these problems. Hence, are we talking about the same spatial dimension when confronting the process of differentiation of the capitalist social dynamic presupposed by Adorno, an apparently universal motive, and the apparent homogenisation provoked by state monopoly capitalism in industrialised societies?

Consciousness, Organisation and State

Adorno believes that under the historical condition of monopoly capitalism the possibility for the emergence of an individual consciousness is continuously narrowing. If the social is becoming increasingly homogenised through the expansion of the

16. Adorno. *The Culture Industry*, p. 112

industrial model, and if it constantly re-constitutes itself through its inherent ideological character and the effects of the culture and consciousness industries – ‘socially necessary appearance’ –, how could it be possible to develop a critical stand point towards it? For Adorno it is only in those places which have not yet been fully transformed by administration, where the possibility of understanding the negativity of the world still exists.¹⁷ These are not defined as places outside society but places in society that have become forgotten or marginalised in relation to the logic of the whole. In other words, these places are not spatially separated from society but coexist within it under a different temporal logic. As the movement towards capitalist totalisation takes place these spaces tend to disappear. The consequence of the increasing rationalisation of the whole is that the individual becomes more and more reduced to a specific function; it becomes a tool, a means for the whole and not an end in itself. This transformation is described by Adorno as the process of autonomisation of organisations. Following Max Weber, Adorno understands the inherent tendency of the organisation for expansion as a process by which its original end – the reason why any organisation first emerges – fades away and its place is taken by the need for expansion and concentration of power. The autonomisation of the organisation implies that its end has been transformed into ‘survival by expansion’ regardless of the interests of the individuals that constitute it. Because this is a historical process, Adorno rejects any uncritical protest against the logic of organisation. It is not the latter that is threatening the individual; to present it in this way would be to pose an a-historical individual removed from its social environment. Individual and organisation are part of the same historical process. As he puts it,

“It cannot be stated that the organisation represents a threat to the human being because the objective process and the subjects of it are not merely confronted to each other, but are one and the same thing.”¹⁸

Adorno then projects this movement of totalisation onto the state as a total capitalist. A universal actualised in the particularity of each individual nation state. Adorno’s tendency to regard, or equate, the state to a business collapses the division between politics and economics established by capitalism as a mode of production.

17. Adorno. “Individuo y Organización”, p.426

18. *Ibid.*, p.421

The sudden collapse of the political and economic spheres makes the historical problematic of Adorno's analysis evident. By concentrating the subjectivity of the historical process in one unified subject – capital and the state becoming one – he simultaneously creates a further spatial problem: in so far as capitalism was increasingly becoming international through the transnationalisation of capital, the space of the political organisation of the state was continuously transcended by capital. But Adorno provides no analysis of the state as constitutional to the development of capitalist social relations; this is why the state has to be dismissed as only functional to capitalism in his analysis.¹⁹ This is linked to Adorno's understanding of state intervention as immanent to the system. State monopoly capitalism is structured around state interventions not only in the organisation of the sphere of production but also in those of circulation and consumption. The state is understood not only as providing a legal, political and ideological framework for free market development but its "political and ideological functions have themselves gained direct economic significance for the reproduction of the relations of production."²⁰ The main political significance of state interventionism is the amelioration of the irrational cycles of capitalism that end in a crisis. Adorno notwithstanding reads this as a self-defence reaction of the system. Thus he states,

"What is alien to the system stands revealed as one of its constituents and is to be found at the very heart of its politics. With the trend towards intervention, the system's resilience has been confirmed, but so, indirectly, has the theory of its collapse. The transition to a form of domination independent of the mechanisms of the market is the system's goal."²¹

However, Adorno's recognition of the appearance of an 'alien' moment to the system implies a qualitatively distinct action in its closed totality. State intervention however could only be taken as a reaction immanent to the system in so far as the space of the intervention is taken as circumscribing the totality of the system: state and capital being the unified subject of it. Adorno claims that if there is any hope in the

19. I will develop the concept of the state in the following section where I analyse the state as a real abstraction, and its structural materiality.

20. Jessop, Bob. "Globalisation and the National State," in *Paradigm Lost: State theory Reconsidered*, Aronowitz, Stanley and Bratsis, Peter, ed. London: University of Minnesota Press, 2002, p.195

21. Adorno. "Late Capitalism or Industrial Society?," p.123

administered world it is not to be found in its mediation 'but on the extremes.'²² He states that,

"Where the organisation would be necessary, in the configuration of the material conditions of life and the social relations based on them, there is too little of it, and too much in the private sphere where consciousness is formed."²³

The analysis spins around the dissolution of free market capitalism, but it spins many capitalist contradictions with it. State intervention affects both public and private spheres as it administers not only production (particularly large scale production – i.e. public services, infrastructure, health care – as it is transformed into a welfare state) but also distribution and consumption. This is done under the spell of a capitalist logic, but if the state is the total capitalist, the distinction between private and public disappears as they get unified in a new configuration. However Adorno disavows the state, it is capital itself what he embraces. Hence he states,

"The totality of the processes of mediation, which amounts in reality to the principle of exchange, has produced a second, deceptive immediacy. This enables people to ignore the evidence of their own eyes and forget difference and conflict or repress it from consciousness."²⁴

Two interlinked problems emerge at this point. The first is that the state's direct intervention in the market already implies an immersion into the organisation and configuration of the material conditions of life; even though of a capitalistic nature. This implication already points to the need for a deeper understanding of the state as a form of social relation. And second, this same movement also implies that the totality of the process of mediation cannot be reduced to the exchange principle in so far as the state as social relation is also a universal mediation. There is a double mediation that demarcates capitalism as a mode of production and at the same time, as a form of socio-political organisation.

22. Adorno. "Individuo y Organización", p.426

23. *Ibid.*

24. Adorno. "Late Capitalism or Industrial Society?," p.124

Industrial Society? The Spatial Problem of International Capitalist Relations

One of the main problems that emerges from Adorno's analysis of the transformation of the social in late capitalist societies is precisely the lack of clarity in the spatial definition of 'society' itself. Adorno uses the term society to refer to three different spatialisations of the functional relationship he finds constitutive of society as a concept. The first spatialisation corresponds to the space encompassed by what he defines as the law of movement of capitalist society. In other words, society is defined by its functional interrelatedness. Hence in his essay "Society" Adorno states that:

"The older theory of imperialism already pointed out the functional relationship between the economies of the advanced capitalistic countries and those of the non-capitalistic areas, as they were then called. The two were not merely juxtaposed, each maintained the other in existence (...) Within the exchange society, the pre-capitalist remnants and enclaves are by no means something alien, mere relics of the past: they are vital necessities for the market system"²⁵

This definition will obviously problematise his more descriptive analysis of society as industrial society, in so far as, if there is a functional relation, any intention of conceptualizing the whole leaving any of its functional components out would be partial. In its move towards totalisation, capitalism cannot be circumscribed to industrialised societies. And even then, even internal to the industrialised societies, the universality of capitalist relations of production as expressed by the particularity of states as capitalist monopolies is obviously contradictory. The analysis of society cannot be reduced to industrialised societies but has to include everything that makes it possible. Hence there is a need to think of society differently and to understand its social, political and economic contradictions at a global level.

The second spatialisation corresponds more directly to Adorno's sociological analysis of society as a concept; i.e., to the western industrialised capitalist societies of the aftermath of the Second World War. A form of society(ies)²⁶ that, paraphrasing

25. Adorno, "Society", p.149

26. The definition of industrialised societies according to the model of the state monopoly capitalism makes the universality (at least internal to the industrialised part of the world) of this form of society dependent on its many instantiations in different sovereign states. I will comment on this below as the third form of social spatialisation implicit Adorno's theorisation.

Adorno, is both capitalist in its relations of production and industrial in its forces of production. The social transformation that was described above, with the transformation of the dialectical relation between integration and differentiation, the blurring of the possibility of class consciousness, and the permeation of the industrial model onto every social sphere is problematised by Adorno's definition of functional interconnectedness as essential to the understanding of society. Adorno is partially aware of this contradiction. For example, he speculates

"Whether and to what extent class relations were displaced onto the relations between the leading industrial states, on the one hand, and the vigorously courted underdeveloped nations, on the other, is not a question I can go in here."²⁷

The relation between classes in capitalist societies (the paradigmatic Marxist definition of social relations) is central to Adorno's definition of society. If the displacement of these relations onto the world as whole is acknowledged, no adequate definition of society can be possibly offered by reducing it to industrialised societies. One could ask to this presupposition: what are the consequences of talking about industrialised western societies if these societies are capitalist in a global sense? What is the consequence of talking about a reductive totality? What about the different qualitative moments of capitalism as it determines centres and peripheries? The third spatialisation seems to be, at first sight, not so relevant for Adorno's analysis. It may appear as if the space of the nation state does not have any other signification than being merely a descriptive aid. However, in so far as Adorno takes monopoly *state* capitalism as representative of the historical development of capitalism, this spatialisation becomes problematic. The state becomes the 'total' capitalist, something more like a 'business' than a social relation politically determined. The demarcation of the space of the nation state renders its absorption into Adorno's theorisation more convincing at the expenses of its objectivity. This situation points once more to the contradictory overlapping of the political and the economical in Adorno's theorisation of society. The universality of the state as a social, economical and political unity within the system conflicts with the particularity of industrialised societies. In

27. Adorno, "Late Capitalism or Industrial Society?," p.117

industrialised societies the expression of a repressed consciousness is, as presented by Adorno, a non-antagonistic internalisation of the rationality of capitalist development in its monopolistic form. Social homogeneity can only be sustained as long as 'socially necessary semblance' does not conflict with this rationality; this is, while the common social praxis can manage to avoid or repress social conflicts and, at the same time, it continues its immanent movement. This coexistence of an objective social condition apparently increasing its autonomisation from the individuals that compose it, and of a common subjective form of consciousness unable to become aware of the contradictory character of the former, while nonetheless raising living standards, seems to be Adorno's reading of the *telos* of state monopoly capitalism. The particularity of the political situation of industrialised societies during this period is both reified and universalised in Adorno's reading. Reified, because it takes the public sphere as reduced to the social *mis*-recognition in the market, without recourse to other contradictory forms of *mis*-recognition, i.e., the state, nor to these forms' constitutional role in relation to the social form. Adorno takes the division of public and private as the expression of a dialectic, however it is only the private sphere that is then dialectically perceived: what is private is already formed by the organisation of the social. The public sphere however appears as reified; because the state and the market have been identified by Adorno, the logic of the former is reduced to the logic of the latter and hence cannot appear as a limit to the market, or vice versa.²⁸ On the other hand, Adorno universalises the particularity of industrial societies because he takes their specific form of social organisation as expression of the totality of social organisation.²⁹ As I argued above, this assumption reduces the universality of capitalism to the particularity of industrial societies, while at the same time it provides a partial *mis*-reading of the totality of the process of mediation. By reducing the state form to a by-product of the mode of production he reduces all forms of social relations

28. Nikos Poulantzas more dialectically embedded reading of the state will be the point of departure for my criticism of Adorno's more economicist reading of the social. My reading however cannot be read in the lines of second and third generation of the Frankfurt School (Habermas or Honneths) as it is an immanent criticism of Adorno's position and not a departure from the logic his argument.

29. My point here is not simply to contrast different modes of production as coexistent in the world economy. My interest is focused on the different forms of expression of capitalism as mode of production, and the relation between these expressions in the world economy. This is, I am not intending to compare capitalism and something else, but to create a differentiation internal to capitalism as it expands contradictorily around the world.

in it to industrial ones; something that giving the growing immiseration of the majority of the world's population is not only unsustainable but also dangerously reductive and ideological.

Part 2: The State

Nation, State and its Apparatuses

The question of the state is only marginally discussed by Adorno in his work. His main engagement with its problematic is via the analysis of the nation in his criticism of Hegel's notion of national spirit. It is first developed as part of a series of lectures on *History and Freedom*³⁰ and later on in *Negative Dialectics* in the section on "The Role of the Popular Spirit".³¹ In a lecture entitled "The Principle of Nationality" Adorno defines the nation as a

"specifically bourgeois form of social organisation; it is a form of organisation because it has emerged historically in certain definite units, whether geographical or linguistic in nature, or whether otherwise defined"

The emergence of the nation is presented as a historical product, the rational character of which derives from its appropriateness to the bourgeois form of organisation constituted as an economic system. Adorno sees this characteristic of bourgeois society, its rational form, as what separates it from previous forms of social organisation. In its historical dynamic the rational constitution of the nation is however misrepresented as natural; hence Adorno's criticism of the uncritical notion of the national spirit developed by Hegel. He criticises this naturalisation as follows:

"The delusion that a form of association that is essentially dynamic, economic and historical misunderstands itself as a natural formation, or misconstrues itself ideologically as natural."³²

30. Adorno, Theodor W. "The Principle of Nationality", *History and Freedom* (2001). Trans. by Rodney Livingstone. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006, pp.105-114

31. Adorno, Theodor W. *Negative Dialectics* (1966). Trans. Ashton, E. B. London: Continuum, 2005, pp.338-340

32. Adorno. *History and Freedom*, p.106

In the concept of the nation we encounter a dialectical movement between nature and rationality. Adorno is however ambiguous in this point, what in the above definition appears as the contradictory character of the nation, the fact that it is both rational and irrational, is then reified as simply irrational to counter oppose Hegel's affirmation of the national spirit. Adorno states

"In comparison with the construction of a radically organized society based on exchange, the nation and the nation spirit are anachronisms."³³

The problem seems to be one of definition and periodisation. For Adorno the concept of the nation emerges historically at the turn of the 18th century, hence it is taken as a historical product developed as an "attempt to create a bourgeois form of organisation."³⁴ His criticism of Hegel is directed towards the latter's affirmation of the spirit of the nation [Volksgeist] by way of naturalising this concept. The problem is that Hegel makes a distinction between nation and state, or the absorption of the former into the latter that Adorno does not reflect on. Adorno uncritically develops a historically functional character for the nation in the constitution of bourgeois society that is more to do with Hegel's concept of the state than with his concept of the nation. If we look back from the previous section Adorno's definition of society, "society as functional interconnectedness", we can start to understand the functionality that a 'functional' concept like the nation has for his thinking of society. Thus Adorno states,

"There have been periods when the nation had a highly progressive function (...)
I need only remind you how much the development of communication, and hence of the forces of production in general, was advanced by the collapse of the barriers erected by small feudal monarchies, the states generally referred to under absolutism as principalities. I need only remind you that it was only with the creation of modern *nation-states* that something like a universal legal system was established – for example that of safe conduct and the like; and, above all, that it was only by bringing large territories together and combining them into a

33. *Ibid.*, p.104

34. *Ibid.* p.104

single political unit that it became possible to organise large bodies of people in a rational manner and in harmony with the principle of exchange.”³⁵(JR)

Society as a functional interconnection merges here with the materiality of a specific form of organisation. As discussed in the previous section, it is precisely this materialisation that Adorno takes as universal; the emergence everywhere of social formations constituted by the same logic. In the unfolding of the above phrase the concept of the nation is implicitly defined with a sort of externality to the object described: society.³⁶ The functionality of the nation – “repressed nature (...) mobilized in the interest of progressive domination of nature, progressive rationality”³⁷ – is objectively represented by a new materiality – communication, delimited territory, political unit, universal legal system -*organised* in a *rational manner*. In this historical transition however the nation is subtly dressed up as *nation state* and presented as a condition for the universalisation of the value form, its harmonious relation with the *principle of exchange*. It is only *when* the nation state emerges that it becomes *possible* to universalise the value form as a principle of organisation. Hence the nation is implicitly something else than functional, it is a condition of possibility of the bourgeois form of organisation. Adorno’s treatment of the concept of the nation overlaps here with the emergence of the nation state. His analysis implicitly addresses the state, a modern concept linked to the principle of *progressive rationalisation*, more than the nation as such, a concept that in Hegel has more of a *communitarian* connotation.³⁸ The nation state as a concept condensates a qualitative leap from community to society that Adorno accepts when analysing society per se, but disregards when talking about the nation state. The emphasis has to be put here on the *qualitative* character of the transformation, as the problem is one of consciousness in its historical transformation; in Hegelian terms it is about different forms of spirit. This is made evident by a difference that emerges from the previous quote. Adorno understands

35. *Ibid*, p.107

36. It is important to remember the spatial tension internal to the concept of society that was mentioned in the previous section. Integration and differentiation as sociological categories are, according to Adorno, implicitly determined by the space of the state, regardless of the universality he attributes to the same space.

37. Adorno. *History and Freedom*, p.107

38. Hegel’s text usually refers to the spirit of the people (Volksgeist) which is translated as national spirit. Adorno himself acknowledges this, in his notes for lecture 11 on *History and Freedom* where he writes, “It is above all the folkways, *mores*, that are what is substantial in Hegel’s views.” p.100

the feudal barriers to the expansion of commerce as a *physical* obstruction. As Nicos Poulantzas has shown in his analysis of the materiality of state, the dissolution of the feudal territoriality does not open into the capitalist space but it is transformed into it; hence this qualitative distinction has to be made evident. As Poulantzas states,

“It is not the shifting of frontiers that is important, but the appearance of *frontiers in the modern sense of the term*: that is to say, limits capable of being shifted along a serial and discontinuous loom which everywhere fixes *insides* and *outsides*.”³⁹(italics in original)

This point seems crucial, as for Adorno the nation is more functional than constitutional. He does not offer a clear distinction between the nation as a historically dynamic concept, represented by the unfolding of the contradictorily transformation of community into society, and the nation state as a concrete and functional instrument for capitalist development. In other words, Adorno does not make a distinction between the nation state as form of “synthesis (Zusammenfassung) of civil society,” and the nation state as represented by its different apparatuses.⁴⁰

State as Form

The distinction between the state as a concept and the state as represented through its different apparatuses implies the question of the nature of the state and its relation to capitalist forms of organisation. Even though Adorno’s adoption of the theory of state monopoly capitalism is not uncritical, the functional character to which he reduces the nation state simply transforms the latter into an instrumental tool. The three criticisms Ernesto Laclau has made of theories falling into this problematic, instrumentalist theories, are relevant here.⁴¹ The first is that the analysis of the state becomes basically descriptive, hence Adorno’s reduction of states to “businesses” and his plain application of this assumption across the world. The second is that being instrumental they prevent any determination of the relation between the state as

39. Poulantzas, Nikos. *State, Power, Socialism* (1978). Trans. Camiller, Patrick. London: Verso, 2000, p. 104

40. Marx, Karl. *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy* (1939). Trans. Martin, Nicolaus. Middlesex: Penguin, 1973, p.108

41. Laclau, Ernesto. “Teorías Marxistas del Estado: Debates y Perspectivas”, in *Estado y Política en América Latina*. Ed. Lechner, Norbert. Mexico: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1981, pp. 25-59

form and the capitalist mode of production, in so far as they assume a sort of externality in this relation and hence they cannot understand the state as a *moment of the social totality*.⁴² The third is that lacking an analysis of the state as a moment of the social totality, it becomes impossible to establish the mutual limitations these moments produce on each other.⁴³ Hence, the two central questions that emerge from this analysis are how to determine the state as form and how to relate it to the social totality. I follow Norbert Lechner's analysis of the state form as a starting point. Lechner states that,

"The state seems to be the **form of generality** assumed by social relations atomised in the process of production. This is recognised in the notion of the state as administrator of the general interest."⁴⁴ (bold in original)

In fulfilling its role as administrator, the state appears as having a contradictory character in its relation to society. At first sight "the form of generality has a real base in the sphere of circulation in which capitalist and worker engage in a relation of exchange."⁴⁵ Hence, in so far as both enter into a contractual relation as free and independent individuals they both *mis*-recognise each other as private proprietors. There is a mutual limitation of the private and public spheres contained within this presentation: on the one hand, the state is the warrantor of what appears as the general interest, private property, while, on the other hand, it is the existence of a social formation constituted by private proprietors what is the "condition of possibility of the state," as capitalist state.⁴⁶ At a deeper level of analysis this 'socially necessary appearance' reveals the real social relations at its base; this is, that the generality that the state expresses in the sphere of circulation "hides an antagonism in the sphere of production." Hence, the state is *possible* because it expresses a form of generality, while it is *necessary* (for capitalism) in so far as it "organises and warranties these relations of domination and

42. This second criticism is only partially based on Laclau's analysis as he, influenced by Althusser, adopts a structuralist position. Even though I ascribe to his intention to find a place for the state at the level of the totality, I don't share this *structuralist* understanding of the social totality. In this point I follow Lechner's more Hegelian interpretation of the state *as a moment of the social totality*. See Lechner, Norbert. *La Crisis del Estado en América Latina*, Buenos Aires: El Cid Editor, 1977, p.13.

43. Here again, Laclau's analysis is defined in structuralist terms and not as a dialectical moment.

44. Lechner, *La Crisis del Estado en América Latina*, p.13

45. *Ibid.*, p.14

46. *Ibid.*

inequality.”⁴⁷ This autonomisation of both the economic and political spheres into civil society and state has two main effects according to Lechner,

“on one hand, the objectivation of coercive power in a special and specialised apparatus creates the appearance of capitalist relations of productions as a natural process, disguising its class domination character. On the other hand, the disappearance of extra economic coercion from the productive process provides political institutions with an appearance of neutral fairness beyond social antagonism. In other words, the de-politicisation of the economic sphere allows the ‘de-capitalisation’ of the political sphere. Inversely, the form of generality of the state consolidates the class structure of civil society. In this way, the inequality of the relation between concrete subjects (producers) is ‘recuperated’ in the equality of the relation between abstracts subjects (citizens).”⁴⁸

The revelation of this form of generality as a form of domination introduces a political aspect to the analysis. This political aspect however is usually presented in a problematic way, as it seems to present the state as external in relation to the civil society; hence, precisely reproducing the model above criticised in relation to Adorno’s work. In other words, to understand the state as external to the relations of production and circulation is to fail to recognise the social process as a totality. As Nicos Poulantzas puts it,

“The separation is nothing other than the capitalist form of presence of the political in the constitution and reproduction of the relations of production.”⁴⁹

It is precisely by way of defining it as external that the state is confused with its apparatuses. Lechner’s aim is to present the state as “a co-constitutive moment of the capitalist relations of production” and not as “a posteriori and dependent category.”⁵⁰ Thus he states,

“By forgetting that the material conditions of production are at the same time social conditions of life, capitalism (and socialism) is restricted to the economic sphere.”⁵¹

47. *Ibid.*

48. *Ibid.*

49. Poulantzas. *Op.cit.*, pp.18-19

50. Lechner, *La Crisis del Estado en América Latina*, p.15

51. *Ibid.*

As a logical conclusion to his analysis Lechner makes his theorisation of the state as form more explicit. The contradictory character of this form reflects the contradictory character of capitalist relations of production in the political sphere. Lechner presents the state as a real abstraction, as something that can be perceived as “*metaphysically physical*.”⁵² By separating itself from the social praxis which constitutes it, the state appears as a having its own life; it becomes a fetish. This social praxis however has to be seen as already constituted by the separation of the economic from the political sphere. In other words, what Lechner here refers to as *social praxis* needs to include both, economic and political praxis. Thus, he states,

“In the absence of direct relations between individuals, the state is the **sphere of mediation** between individual practices. In the capitalist mode of production, exchange (the market) does not allow the recognition of labour’s social character. The social dimension of the praxis is recuperated – in an inverted manner – in the state; it is as state that an intersubjective recognition between the atomised subjects is re-established.”⁵³ (bold in original).

However the state is also a sphere of *mis*-recognition. What Lechner calls *intersubjective recognition*, is a partial recognition of individuals as citizens, also an abstraction. What lies behind the fetish character of the state – an abstraction that Lechner equates with money – is the reduction of individuals to their citizenship status. As Poulantzas puts it, these are “juridical-political persons who are the subjects of certain freedoms.”⁵⁴ Hence the state is the “form constituted by the mediations of the social praxis.”⁵⁵

Individuation and the Nation State

The sphere of circulation, separated from the sphere of production, is for Adorno the sphere of *mis*-recognition between individuals. Furthermore, it is this relation of *mis*-recognition to other individuals mediated by the market what constitutes individuals as subjects. As Adorno puts it,

52. *Ibid.*, p.17

53. *Ibid.*

54. Poulantzas. *Op.cit.*, p.63

55. Lechner, *La Crisis del Estado en América Latina*, p18

"Individuation is an intermediate state between the archaic and the abstraction that arises from the process of exchange that subjugates the individual."⁵⁶

This is the reason why for Adorno the state intervention as a sort of administrator in the sphere of circulation modifies the subject's constitution; Adorno's is a subject constituted only economically. If, however, we accept the relevance of the state as a form mediating the social totality, then its sphere, the political, has to be analysed as constitutive of both the social and the individual. Both moments of the critique of political economy have to be maintained, the material production and the social organisation as the social division of labour partakes in the separation of the market and the state.⁵⁷

Poulantzas analysis of the process of individualisation seems relevant here.⁵⁸ Even though his analysis of the qualitative break that the capitalist state represents in relation to pre-capitalist forms of organisation rejects the centrality of commodity relations in its constitution, his definition of individualisation as a process that converges the materiality of the state, social division of labour and the relations of production is illuminating, and helps to distinguish problems in Adorno's conception as well as the limits of his own political approach.⁵⁹ In other words, my interest in Poulantzas is as a political

56. Adorno. *History and Freedom*, p.103

57. See Lechner. *La Crisis del Estado en América Latina*, p.18, note 7

58. Even though Poulantzas' analysis comes out of an *Althousarian matrix*, as Laclau defines it, the unfolding of his argument is not incompatible with the analysis I am carrying out here. It is true that the structuralist matrix will present some complications, but only if one allows it to become reified and a-historical. Laclau's main criticism of Poulantzas is referred to the contradiction between structures and practices in his work. This emerges because Poulantzas does not define practices as an effect of the structures and hence as one more "structural moment." (See Laclau. "Teorías Marxistas del Estado: Debates y Perspectivas", p.49). The autonomy that Poulantzas grants to practices, particularly to class struggle, is read by Laclau as a weakness of his theory as it seems to introduce a duality in his presentation of the social structure, and hence it would seem to refer this unity to a "transcendental subject." If, however, one mobilises Poulantzas' presentation under the *Hegelian matrix* that following Adorno has been assumed in this paper so far, then it is not entirely wrong to refer the unity of the social formation to a transcendental subject, in so far as this subject is capital, and not to any particular individual.

59. "Once it is understood that the specifically capitalist division of labour represents, through all its forms, the precondition of the modern state, then the latter appears in all its historical originality as an effective break with pre-capitalist types of states (Asiatic, slave and feudal). This point cannot be fully grasped by conceptions which ground the modern state on commodity relations since these have always existed." Poulantzas, *Op.cit.*, p.54. Even if it is true that commodity relations have always existed, it is the universalisation of production for exchange what grounds the 'specifically capitalist division of labour,' and makes capitalism a qualitatively distinct form of organisation. Poulantzas' definition also problematises the qualitative character of the state, as it presupposed that capitalist division of labour is the 'pre-condition' of the modern state, hence re-introducing a mode of externality to the state in relation to capitalist relation which I dispute in my analysis.

counterbalance to Adorno's economism; and it relies on what I perceive as a mutual and productive limitation between his theory and Adorno's.

Poulantzas starting point is the fractured and divided social body; "one which is homogeneous in its division, uniform in the isolation of its elements, and continuous in its atomisation."⁶⁰ The material conditions of labour create what Poulantzas calls *spatial and temporal matrices* derived from the *presuppositions* of the social division of labour.⁶¹ In the process of individualisation, the particularity of this space-time matrix – continuous, homogeneous, repetitive, fragmented, serial, cumulative – meets the corporality of the human body. As he states,

"The individual, who is much more than a product of the juridical-political ideology engendered by commodity relations, appears here as the focal point, identical with the human body itself, at which a number of practices within the social division of labour are materially crystallised."⁶²

According to Poulantzas, the materiality of the capitalist state acts on this process of individualisation by bringing together the atomised political body through its centralised, bureaucratic institutions. This is done in two ways, first by organising and regulating the reproduction of the fractured social body; this is, by assuming what Lechner's calls a *form of generality*. And second through an ideological process that constitutes "socio-economic monads as juridical and political individuals-persons-subjects."⁶³ Poulantzas appropriates Michael Foucault's concept of normalisation back into his Marxist analysis by considering it as part of the ideological transformation; this is, by considering ideology as not merely grounded in ideas but also in institutions and practices. The ideological process of normalisation has similarities with Adorno's analysis of the ideological character of industrialised capitalist societies. Where Foucault states "in a certain sense, the power of normalisation imposes homogenisation," Adorno presents the process of normalisation as the penetration of the industrial model into a growing number of spheres producing social homogeneity through the process of de-differentiation.⁶⁴ Furthermore, because for Adorno the transformation taking place in monopoly capitalism jeopardises the possibility

60. Poulantzas. *Op.cit.*, p.63

61. *Ibid.*, p.64

62. *Ibid.*, p.65

63. *Ibid.*, pp.65-66

64. Foucault, Michael. *Surveiller et punir*, as quoted by Poulantzas, *Op.cit.*, p.65

of self-consciousness, the constitution of individuals seems to have similar results than for a structuralist position.⁶⁵ In other words, the subject is constituted almost exclusively in an external fashion, like in a process of interpellation.⁶⁶ Poulantzas' definition of individualisation captures the fracture of the social into a political and economic sphere but maintaining them separate without a mediating point. He states,

"Individualisation rather constitutes the material expression in capitalist bodies of the existing relations of production and social division of labour; and it is equally the material effect of state practices and techniques forging and subordinating this (political) body⁶⁷"

It can be argued that what Adorno disavows in the political, the fact that society is split but constituted by both an economic and political sphere, both determined by the sphere of production, and including cultural productions, Poulantzas disavows in the economic, the fact that capitalist societies have, as a necessary condition of possibility, the universalisation of the value form as an expression of the relations of production. This is reflected in Adorno's understanding of civil society as a private sphere produced in its separation from the state, and also in Poulantzas understanding of it as constituted ideologically. These different conceptualisations of civil society arise from different appropriation of Marx's texts. Geoffrey Hunt has summarised this problem as follows,

"civil society has a dual character, for in its *phenomenal content* it is the totality of the relations of commodity exchange and circulation in the capitalist social formation, and in its *ideological form* it is the conception of society as an aggregate of free, equal, self-interested, property-owning individuals bearing rights. Civil society is both base and superstructure, but it is only one dimension

65. The key difference being that Adorno sees this social structure as historical and hence modifiable no matter how difficult this appears to be; while for Poulantzas the tension between structure and history marks the limits of his structuralist position without going beyond it. The theorisation of modern power as micropower in Foucault, as emanating from all types of social relations, is not necessarily incompatible with the position presented in this analysis. The criticism voiced by Stuart Hall in the introduction to Poulantzas' book on power is misleading in this sense (see Stuart Hall, "Introduction", in Poulantzas, *Op.cit.* p. xiv). Poulantzas is not presenting power as emanating from a centralised state structure, on the contrary, the state is "a *site* and a *centre* of the exercise of power, but it possesses no power of its own." *Ibid.*, p.148 The state does not concentrate all sites of power, it is a form of generality mediating social relations in a capitalist society. As more and more social relations tendentially are permeated by the exchange form, these other sites, no matter how heterogeneous initially they have been in relation to the exchange relations, also tendentially get transformed by this form.

66. Louis Althusser, as quoted by Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*, p.160-162

67. *Ibid.*, p.67

of the base, the superficially experienced dimension. The phenomenal *content* of 'civil society' is at the same time the phenomenal *form* of the essential relations of capitalist production in which surplus-value is appropriated."⁶⁸

This definition falls short of considering the complexity of the state in its relation to civil society. The problem seems to be an insufficient explanation of the ideological form, as the *aggregate of free equal, self-interest, property-owning individuals bearing of right* is also the *phenomenal form* of the political sphere of the 'civil society'. In other words, these are abstract not concrete subjects constituted through the citizen form. The phenomenal content and the ideological form are both part of the essential relations of capitalist production.

States as Monads: Homogeneity, Heterogeneity and the Global Horizon

The problem of the spatialisation of relations of production and its relation to state forms is further complicated by Adorno's assumption that the nation state, as the expression of the bourgeois form of organisation, has been expanded homogeneously across the world. He states:

"The nation has now been reduced to a mere façade by the uniformity of the organisation of life on an international plane"⁶⁹

These two assertions – that the concept of the nation has become historically reified and that there is uniformity in the organisation of life at an international plane – are premised on Adorno's projection of a unidirectional development onto the international sphere. His example is more than eloquent: the resemblance of airports across the world.

"The phenomena I am highlighting here as illustrating a historical insight simply points to the fact that the modes of production, namely the *primacy of industry*, have come to prevail throughout the world and that wherever this principle

68. Hunt, Geoffrey. "The Development of the Concept of Civil Society in Marx," in Jessop, Bob with Malcolm-Brown, Charlie ed., *Karl Marx's Social and Political Thought*, Routledge, London, 1990, p. 31

69. Adorno. *History and Freedom*, p.109

obtains, both in practical terms and as far as its marketing value is concerned, these uniformities will emerge.”⁷⁰(JR)

The uniformity that Adorno projects onto the world, is based on his claim regarding the primacy of industry; the problem appears at the level of the concrete articulation of this primacy around the world. Adorno seems to condensate a crossroad of problems in these assertions: mode of production and world economic system; industrialised and non-industrialised societies; social homogenisation and its impacts across the world. Because the primacy of industry is analysed only in relation to a superficial and random level of the everyday life, Adorno’s generalisations are open to strong backfires. Commenting on the uniformity that the primacy of industry produces across the world, Adorno states:

“This convergence points to the convergence of the fundamental processes of life, in other words, the dominance of industrial production. Compared with this, the differences between nations are merely rudimentary vestiges”⁷¹

This is why Adorno believes that given the dominance of reified consciousness across societies the differences between classes are also merely rudimentary vestiges, only to then suggest that the differences between classes may have been extrapolated to those between industrialised and non-industrialised countries.⁷² The problem is here that Adorno is seeing the difference between nation states mainly through the prism of an ideological principle of nationality: his understanding of the emergence of the nation as a historical form of organisation in “definite units, whether geographical or linguistic in nature, or whether otherwise defined,” in which the term ‘geographical’ points to a very narrow spatial dimension. These are capitalist nation states as they appear on a map, without any capitalistic relation between them. The point at which one starts to think about the concepts of nation and industry in the context of a world capitalist system, the “rudimentary vestiges” come to the fore, not simply as cultural difference – that also have to be taken into consideration regardless of Adorno’s simplistic expansion of the culture industry everywhere – but as the consequence of different levels of exploitation and marginalisation given different levels of

70. *Ibid.*, p.110

71. *Ibid.*

72. Adorno, “Society”, p.150

development. The functional relation between nation states cannot be sidelined. That Adorno's reading moves from acknowledging to disavowing this situation is evident from the quotes below. He states:

"We can now see a convergence in countless spheres of life and forms of production, right down to clothing and all sorts of other things that are all based on [US]American models."⁷³ [JR]

"Given the current state of technical development, the fact that there are still countless millions who suffer hunger and want must be attributed to the forms of social production, the *relations of production*, not to the intrinsic difficulty of meeting people's material needs."⁷⁴ (italics in original)

The distance from "clothing and all sorts of things" to "hunger and want" is the disavowed one, but it is not a distance that can be simply criticised from the standpoint of the form of social relations as expressed by Adorno. Social relations and forces of production do not express themselves in the same way across the world. There is a lack of mediation in the spatialisation proposed by Adorno. His reflection goes too quickly from a specific particularity – the USA in his example – to the entire world. If it is not true that homogenisation is making everyone look the same, then it is relevant to point towards what looks different, not simply as an aberration but as constitutive of the whole. This is why the analysis of the historical development of the state form is so relevant for the understanding of the historical development of capitalism. Adorno's analysis is submerged in the specific historical condition marked by what was called the Fordist and Welfare state societies of the aftermath of the Second World War. This historically specific state form was structured around state interventions not only in the organisation of the sphere of production but also in those of circulation and consumption. If in the previous stage of competitive capitalism the separation between state and economy had circumscribed the function of the state to that of providing a legal, political and ideological framework for the free development of a market economy, in monopoly capitalism "the state's political and ideological functions have themselves gained direct economic significance for the reproduction of

73. Adorno, *History and Freedom*, p.110

74. *Ibid.*, p.144

the relations of production.”⁷⁵ For Adorno this seemingly politicisation of the economy has as its corollary the entwining of the state and the dominant capitalist class. As he claims:

“Nations, or many nations, are transforming themselves – or have done so at particular stages of history – into something like huge companies, vast economic entities, and remain like that even if free-trade tendencies may temporarily mitigate their strict organisation, outwardly at least.”⁷⁶

Adorno saw this movement towards further centralisation from the point of view of economically developed societies, and at the point at which the world appeared divided by two main blocks that were becoming increasingly antagonised: Western developed societies against the Eastern communist block; hence his anxiety with the possibility of a final antagonism. It is for this reason that he expresses that

“the historical form of progressive rationalisation has ceased to be the most rational way of doing things and it survives only in the interests of the existing relations of production.”⁷⁷

It is in this context that he suggests the idea of decentralisation, of the possibility of organising “societies far more rationally in much smaller units that could collaborate peaceably with one another and from which all those aggressive and destructive tendencies would have banished.”⁷⁸ Leaving aside the strong utopian side of his remarks, Adorno does not really explain how this would be compatible with the sites of valorisation and reproduction of capital. His comments appear as a sudden idealistic and positive moment very unusual in his writings. As he states:

“What I have in mind is something that would change the form of society itself and put an end to the abstract organisation that acts so repressively towards its members.”⁷⁹

75. Jessop, “Globalisation and the National State,” in Aronowitz, Stanley and Bratsis, Peter ed. *Paradigm Lost: State theory Reconsidered*. London: University of Minnesota Press, 2002, p.195

76. Adorno. *History and Freedom*, p.105

77. *Ibid.*, p.111

78. *Ibid.*

79. *Ibid.*

The monolithic account Adorno produces derives from his reading of capitalist development as totally subsumed under what appeared as the increasing influence of monopoly capitalism. As I have suggested before, this reading is limited by the conflicting spatialisations implicit in Adorno's theorisation. As a consequence of this his analysis is only developed in relation to developed societies, and only universalised by its extrapolation onto the entire world. Poulantzas criticism of the ideology of globalisation is relevant here. Globalisation – as already implicit in Adorno's thinking: "the differences between nations are merely rudimentary vestiges" – treats a world economic system as a single mode of production. As Poulantzas remarks:

"This in turn prompts treatment of social formations as mere spatial concretisations of the 'world capitalist mode of production' with difference among them being regarded as insignificant or reducible to temporary uneven development."⁸⁰

The problem, as Poulantzas points out, is that "uneven development (...) is the constitutive form of the reproduction of the CMP [capitalist mode of production]."⁸¹ My point however is not to equate nations with classes as Adorno seems to suggest; nor to focus on the possibility of the coexistence of different forms of production. My point is against Adorno's narrow approach to the concept of the nation state, as if the structuring around the world of class societies ruled primarily by the principle of exchange, does not need a mediation that rules their inter-relations. As a consequence of this, the same form of organisation, capitalism, that at a national level naturalises the exploitation between classes, finds its more complicated expression in the relation of exploitation between nation states and between classes across states; this is, not a reproduction of class relations at the level of the nations, but a further complex situation in which class societies enter into relation with each other. The next chapter will analyse this situation in relation to the Latin American context, specifically in relation to the Southern Cone Societies and Argentina in particular in the context of the changes to the capitalist system since the 1960s.

80. Jessop, *Op.cit.*, p.196

81. Poulantzas as quoted by Jessop, *Ibid.*, p.196

CHAPTER 2

BUREAUCRATIC AUTHORITARIANISM AND THE DESTRUCTION OF THE SOCIAL

"The only part of the so-called national wealth that actually enters into the collective possessions of a modern nation – is the national debt."¹

Norbert Lechner's analysis of Latin American societies is historically circumscribed to the emergence of a new form of regional authoritarian regime, the Bureaucratic Authoritarianism (BA) of the 1960s and 1970s, within the context of a growing internationalisation of capital. I take it as a starting point for this chapter for two reasons: first, as a way of narrowing the focus of my analysis towards my field of interest, the peripheral scenario of Latin American societies – particularly the Argentine society –; and second, because historically it parallels the emergence of a new dominant form of capitalist accumulation, hence acting as a point of departure from Adorno's social and historical presuppositions towards neoliberalism as the dominant ideological form of the 1990s related to the dominant role of financial over industrial valorisation.

The problematisation of Adorno's concept of society from the point of view of its spatial limitations, as developed in the previous chapter, implies that the analysis of concrete social circumstances needs to keep the reference to the totality of the world geopolitical conditions to avoid partial reifications. This is particularly important when analysing concepts like imperialism and dependency, and their respective connotations of expansion and resistance. It is usually the case that imperialism is explained from the point of view of specific capitalist states – hence *expansionism* becomes subjectivised – and not of specific forms of capitalist accumulation as encompassing the whole capitalist system. The counterpart of imperialism is thus presented from the point of view of dependency, in which resistance obscures its own constitutive dominations. Nationalisms do not act in a void; they reflect local forms of capitalist accumulation in their articulation with world political and economical processes.

1. Marx, Karl. *Capital, A Critique of Political Economy, Vol.1* (1867). Trans. by Fowkes, Ben. London: Penguin, 1990, p. 919

One of the dangers in the analysis of geopolitical development is the non-differentiation between theoretical and historically concrete levels of analysis. In this sense, it is important to stress that Marx's preliminary definition of the form of state as 'synthesis of bourgeois society' understood as a moment of the social totality remains at an abstract level of presentation. It neither implies the existence of a theory of the state, nor a 'normal' circumstance from which 'deviant cases' may be analysed.² Centre and periphery, imperialism and dependency, development and underdevelopment have to be explained in reference to the totality of bourgeois society historically mediated by its constitutive structures: the state form, levels of socio-economic development, political regimes and citizenship. In this respect Lechner's inquiry into the form of the world's political organisation remains relevant:

"what remains to be explained is the particular political organisation of the world market in many national states; this is, to conceptualise the political space of economic structures."³

The understanding of this organisational form – the political aspects of a world organisation dominated by the monopolistic form – is indispensable in order to understand the *new* form implied in the neoliberal turn. My analysis has remained so far within the historical framework derived from Adorno's writing. The space of social formations constituted by monopoly capitalism confusedly corresponds with the abstract space presupposed by the analysis of capital in its general form as developed by Marx in *Capital*.⁴ The ideality of Marx's conditions of exposition seems to correspond to the space of particular states unconnected to the world economy. Similarly, the conceptualisation of monopoly capitalism is premised on the state intervention in the expanded reproduction of the national economy in the context of an integrated and pacified social structure.⁵ While the correspondence of the political

2. Lechner, Norbert. *La Crisis del Estado en América Latina*, p.18

3. *Ibid.* p.113

4. "In order to examine the object of our investigation in its integrity, free from all disturbing subsidiary circumstances, we must treat the whole world of trade as one nation, and assume that capitalist production is established everywhere and has taken possession of every branch of industry." Marx. *Capital*, Vol.1, p.727 Note that Marx is mainly analysing a socio-economic aspect of capitalism as mode of production by treating the "whole world of trade as one nation", hence leaving aside the constitution of individuals in other spheres of the social; i.e. political and cultural spheres.

5. For a theorisation of monopoly capitalism as a stage of capitalist development see Baran, Paul A. and Sweezy, Paul M. *Op.cit.* The authors reject the concept State Monopoly Capitalism for considering that

and the economic spaces is a theoretical simplification in Marx's analysis, in Adorno it is accepted as a given. Why and how those spaces correspond to each other – this is, what is the historical specificity of such a correspondence – is not the object of his analysis. Adorno criticises the contradictory character of this stage of capitalist development in terms of its irrationality, but not of its economic contradictions. In Adorno's reading the apparent stable condition of post Second World War developed societies has problematised Marx's value theory given that late capitalist societies have not solved the social contradictions inherent to their relations of production but appear to have solved the problem of the pacification of the social space.⁶ Nation states have transformed themselves to become the expression of the internalisation of a primary contradiction: capitalist units in their relations of production and industrial units in their forces of production. Even though Adorno presents this social reification as mainly a geopolitical reification – the absorption of a substantial part of the social product through the production of means of destruction – he fails to acknowledge the mediations between the states as concrete units and the international context. In other words, he fails to see the process of uneven development as central to the stage of capitalist development: society as functional interconnection is only presented at the level of the nation state.

Adorno's understanding of the reification of culture as a consequence of the reification of social conditions appears to be premised on the economic fallacy of the sustainability of the model. Historically, the contradictory character of monopoly capitalism reached its limits by the early 1970s. At which point, its crisis gave way to

the function of the state, even if expanded, did not provoke any qualitative change in the development of capitalism, see p.75. Their analysis is focused on the development of monopoly capitalism in the EEUU up to the mid 1960s, but it implicitly accepts a form of partial stagism in its predictions: "only a few countries (...) can conceivably follow the footsteps of the United States. In the rest of the capitalist world scores of colonies, neo-colonies, and semi-colonies are doomed to remain in their degraded condition of under-development and misery" p.25

6. "if, thanks to technological progress and industrialisation, the share of living labor from which alone surplus value is supposed to arise shrinks and even becomes marginal, at least in tendency, this cannot but affect the core doctrine, the theory of surplus value." See Adorno, "Late Capitalism or Industrial Society?", *Op.cit.* p.115. The only displacement of the economic contradiction that Adorno presents is the frozen international political arena. The exponential growth of the armaments race appears to be in his view what delays the collapse of the social. "The threat of one catastrophe is deferred by the catastrophe of the other. The relations of production would find it hard to maintain their position so persistently without the apocalyptic cataclysms of renewed economic crises. For in this way a disproportionate amount of the social product, which otherwise would be unable to find a market, is diverted for the production of weapons of destruction." *Ibid.*, p.121

the gradual emergence of neoliberalism as the dominant ideology advocating a 'free' market economy. The waning of monopoly capitalism as the dominant form of accumulation by necessity transformed all its structures of mediation, affecting all the links on the international chain. The consequences that this transformation had for the existing forms of socialisation in Latin American societies, particularly in the Southern Cone, are the object of analysis of the present chapter. The last sections will present the specificity of the Argentine transformation.

Dependency Theory and the Historical Specificity of Monopoly Capitalism

The decreasing relevance of theories of dependency in the Latin American context from the mid-1970s onwards is symptomatic of the impact that the transformation of the dominant form of accumulation had for the analysis of social formations in the region. The analysis of situations of dependency concentrates primarily on the contradiction between the political autonomy of Latin American nation states and their economic dependency on the world capitalist centres. The criticism of the disjunction between politics and economics mediated through the state form is one of the salient aspects of these theories. This criticism is their response to monopoly capitalism as the dominant form of accumulation of the time with its presupposition of the spatial correspondence of the political and economical spheres, and its disavowal of capitalism as a world system producing unequal forms of development. Dependency Theory's original approach to the spatialisation of structures of dependency problematises not only the understanding of Latin American societies but has far reaching consequences for the analysis of centre economies. The seminal work of Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto, *Dependency and Development in Latin America*, continues to be the main source of reference to the time⁷. According to these authors,

7. The emergence of neoliberalism is contemporaneous with the diminishing influence of Dependency Theory. This is probably related to the fact that as neoliberal policies became more central to the transformation of the international map, the nation state became less visible as a mediating actor between social groups.

“Dependence should no longer be considered an ‘external variable’; its analysis should be based on the relations between the different social classes within the dependent nations themselves.”⁸

Lechner, following this approach, emphasises the relevance of class relations for the understanding of the constitutive features of Latin American societies. As he states,

“Dependency is not a relation between countries, even though it is conditioned by the international division of labour between them. The peripheral insertion in the international market is based on class structure and hence, in the relations of domination established in the dependent nation.”⁹

Hence the analysis of a situation of dependency is established as an intention to “determine the articulation between economy and politics mediated by the articulation between the global and the national sphere.”¹⁰ Lechner criticises this position via the problematisation of two main aspects: its relation to a ‘theory’ of imperialism as its frame of reference, and its overdetermination by both a process of national liberation (autonomy – dependency) and a process of social emancipation (class conflict). Both problems remain anchored in the contradictory character of the state form as a social relation synthesising bourgeois society. According to Lechner, the main objection to accepting the theory of imperialism as the conceptual framework for the historical and structural analysis of situations of dependency is its assumption of the existence of both a national capital and a national state as a condition for the imperialist expansion. Imperialism takes the parcellation of the world in states as an empirically given situation without explaining the existence of the ‘state’ as a moment of capitalist development. In other words, there is no conceptualisation of the spatial dimension of the state – a political dimension of capital – but only an empirical affirmation of its existence.

Marx’s development of the concept of capital ‘in general’ unfolds in an abstract space resembling the structure of a given country taken in isolation from external influences. Marx justifies the limited spatial structure of his analysis by referring to the necessity of maintaining the ‘integrity’ of the conceptual object. As a consequence of

8. Cardoso and Faletto. *Op.cit.*, p.22

9. Lechner, *La Crisis del estado en América Latina*, p.90

10. *Ibid*, p.92

this, his presentation of the constitution of the social relations of production – increasing social homogenisation mediated by the value form – is not explained in any of its external determinations – its autonomous or heteronomous differentiation as a unity; neither in some of its internal ones – the conceptual analysis of the state form was left for future books never completed. Two presuppositions are at play in Marx's analysis: on the one hand, there is a spatial correlation of civil society and national space; on the other, capitalist relations of production have become universalised. These presuppositions, however, need to be taken as idealised abstractions not as empirical facts. Taken as facts these presuppositions only help to construct a limited access to the concrete as not all its determinations would be explained. Marx left the analysis of the relation between states for planned books on “The international relation of production” and “The world market and crises.”¹¹ Consequently, Lechner takes Marx's presentation of civil society in *The German Ideology* as indicative of this not developed problematic. There, Marx states,

“Civil society embraces the whole material intercourse of individuals within a definite stage of the development of productive forces. It embraces the whole commercial and industrial life of a given stage and, insofar, transcends the State and the nation, though, on the other hand again, it must assert itself in its foreign relations as nationality, and inwardly must organise itself as State.”¹²

Bourgeois society is explained as constituted by its material conditions of life; it has however a Janus face: its internal organisation appears under the form of state, a capitalist state, while externally it recognises itself through its differentiation from other nations, *mis*-recognising itself as a self-determined political unity while disavowing its external determinations. There is a centre around which exchange flourishes and around which it constitutes its own developing parameters. In other words, a market – a social, political and economic structure – develops. Social relations are produced by the delimitation of a capitalist space, and at the same time they are producers of this space. Capital's inherent need for movement depends on the constitution of some spatial delimitation; in other words, capitalist development *needs*

11. See Marx, *Grundrisse*, p.108

12. Marx, Karl and Engels, Friedrich. *The German Ideology* (1932). New York: International Publishers, 2004, p.57

the emergence of 'frontiers in the modern sense'.¹³ Analysing this dialectic between movement and fixity inherent to the capitalist dynamic, David Harvey states,

"Fluid movement *over* space can be achieved only by fixing certain physical infrastructure *in* space (...) The effect is for fixed capital embedded in land to act as a significant drag upon geographical transformations and the relocation of capitalistic activity."¹⁴

The fixing of capital in space – the infrastructure needed for capitalism as a *form of organisation* to emerge – brings to the fore a different, more complex political problematic. The molecular processes of endless capital accumulation produces a very specific space, a capitalistic space in which the "exclusions that derive from uniqueness of location"¹⁵ clashes with the dynamic drive of capitalist development to overcome any slowdown in the movement of capital flows. It can be added that this tension occurs in the context of a socially expanding process of integration; Marx's abstract understanding of the inherent movement of capitalism towards a unified global market. As Harvey puts it

"The formation of physical and social infrastructure both to support economic activity but also to secure and promulgate cultural and educational values and many other aspects of civic life typically reinforces the coherence of what begins to emerge as a regional entity within the global economy."¹⁶

The outcome of this process is, according to Harvey, that the "molecular processes converge (...) on the production of regionality." What regionality means in this context is basically the process by which cycles of capital accumulation interlink with each other at very diverse historical circumstances, so that at a certain point the intermingling between economical, political, and cultural conditions crystallise into a social formation. Once capitalism – as both a mode of production and a form of social organisation – establishes itself as the dominant social form of socialisation a process of autonomisation of its constitutive spheres develops. The contradiction between the needs of capital, as represented by private interests, and the needs of the state, as

13. Refers to Poulantzas' theorisation of the state analysed in the previous chapter. See above p.33

14. Harvey, David. *The New Imperialism*, pp. 99-100

15. *Ibid.*, p.96

16. *Ibid.*, p.103

represented by its tendency to reproduce its constitutive social relations, emerges. The 'capitalist state' is not a 'state of the capitalists', its rationality is one of 'self-preservation' and reproduction according to the capitalistic logic. Lechner's analysis puts emphasis on Marx's lack of conceptualisation of this spatial problematic in *Capital*. Lechner stresses that "the logical construction points to the universalistic tendency with which Marx characterised civil society as opposed to the particularistic form of the state."¹⁷ This opposition between civil society and state is made explicit by Marx in his "Criticism of the Gotha Programme." There he states:

"'Present-day society' is capitalist society, which exists in all civilised countries, more or less free from medieval admixture, more or less modified by the particular historical development of each country, more or less developed. On the other hand, the 'present-day state' changes with a country's frontier (...) 'The present-day state' is, therefore, a fiction. Nevertheless, the different states of the different civilised countries, in spite of their motley diversity of form, all have this in common, that they are based on modern bourgeois society, only one more or less capitalistically developed. They have therefore, also certain essential characteristics in common. In this sense it is possible to speak of 'present-day states,' in contrast with the future, in which its present root, bourgeois society, will have died off."¹⁸

The universalistic character of civil society is mediated by the form of state, but here too the state is presupposed. The spatial aspect of capital – its form of organisation – is suggested by the existence of different concretisations of the state (*the present-day state changes with a country's frontier*) as a consequence of levels of development (*more or less free from medieval admixture*) reached by historically concrete civil societies. There is, however, a detail in Marx's outline of Book Five that Lechner leaves untouched. Marx's complete schematisation is as follows:

17. Lechner, *La Crisis del estado en América Latina*, p.110. This is similar to Adorno's understanding of the universalisation of the value form and his particularistic analysis of monopoly state capitalism. In other words, the universalisation of the value form does not equally imply the reproduction of a specific economic, political and cultural form, just the existence of a capitalistic logic of development.

18. Marx, Karl and Engels, Friedrich. *Selected Works in One Volume* (1968) London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1980, p.327

“Synthesis of bourgeois society under the form of state. View in relation to itself. The ‘unproductive’ classes. Taxes. State debt. Public credit. The population. *The colonies*. Emigration.”¹⁹ (JR)

Civil society is here synthesised at a totally different level than the one presented in *The German Ideology*. If state and nation referred to internal (homogeneous or heterogeneous) and external (relational: autonomous/heteronomous) forms of constitution respectively; the intended book on the state suggests a political break up of this unity. The state here overflows the nation, it appears as a ‘colonial’ state, and civil society overflows both. This is important because it makes the historical character of development and the need for a continual reconstruction of theoretical presuppositions explicit in order to understand different historical situations. Marx’s analysis of the state form implicitly accepts a historical condition in which exchange relations are not fully universal, or they are dominant only in a formal sense. In other words, Marx projects an analysis of the form of state inclusive of both capitalistic and colonial social relations. In Lechner’s analysis however, the theorisation of the space of capital remains at an abstract level. He presents two main aspects as characteristic of Latin American societies:

“On the one hand, the social conflict, having a general content, develops under a national form. On the other hand, the class structure, delimited by the national frame of a state, is determined by capital’s process at a world level”²⁰

Lechner points out that Marx “could speak of the ‘synthesis of bourgeois society under the form of state,” because during the time of ‘liberal, free market’ form of capitalism “the state synthesises the class structure.” As I pointed out above, Marx’s definition of the state form went beyond the spatial congruence of the political and the economical, to include the colonies. In this sense, the implicit form of the state that emerges from the theoretical analysis in *Capital*, is only an aid to explain the political economy of capitalism and should not be confused with the determination of a historically concrete state. If one takes the United Kingdom of the 19th Century, the example that Marx’s takes for most of his analysis of capital, one can see that it was

19. Marx, *Grundrisse*, p.108

20. Lechner, *La Crisis del estado en América Latina*, p.94

never the case that the national space defined the space of capital accumulation. The economic dynamic of the United Kingdom was defined not only internally but by many of its different relations to its outside: colonies and other states. It is only with the incorporation of the working class and the emergence of a monopolistic form of capitalism under a different form of state – a state focused on its reproduction by regulating and interlinking mass production and mass consumption under an administrative rationality – that a more concrete correspondence between the economic and the political can be assumed. The historical investigation is not to be confused with the theoretical abstraction. The correspondence of the political and economical spheres is assumed at the abstract level of the logical construction, but it cannot be directly imposed at the level of the historical analysis. Lechner, as Adorno, accepts Marx's presupposition of this spatial correspondence as really existing, or as generally existing in the main economies of the world capitalist system, while in reality they are only *socially necessary* under a specific form of accumulation, the monopoly capitalism of post 1945. The reason for this historical transformation is well described by Harvey as an intention to displace in space and time the social tension that arise from overaccumulation. As he states:

"The period from 1945 to 1970 was, then, the second stage in the political rule of the bourgeoisie operating under global US dominance and hegemony (...) A tacit global compact was established among all the major capitalist powers, with the US in a clear leadership role, to avoid the internecine wars and to share in the benefits of an intensification of an integrated capitalism in the core regions. The geographical expansion of capital accumulation was assured through decolonisation and 'developmentalism' as a generalized goal for the rest of the world."²¹

The particularity of the capitalist form of development after the Second World War was the consequence of the political agreement mentioned by Harvey. The integration of the core economies was the consequence of the implementation of a strong policy of state intervention in the economy with a view to the creation and maintenance of social welfare in the 'core' regions. The dominant form of accumulation continued to

21. Harvey, *The New Imperialism*, pp.57-58

be monopolistic, but given state intervention, its area of influence was primarily focused on the expansion of the internal market in a context of social welfare. The form of socialisation was hence primarily defined at a national level. While this situation was mainly premised on the internal dynamic of highly developed societies, its political and economic consequences had worldwide effect through the imperialist chain. Hence, the relative overlap of the economic and political spaces within a national territory is mainly the consequence of a historically specific conjuncture that crystallises in a specific form of social organisation. During the monopolistic period, the private organisation of the productive structure, together with the political intervention of the state in planning and administration, produced this unified national space. The 'socially necessary' character of such a form of accumulation is however historically delimited. Under capitalist conditions, the capitalist logic must be objectively established but accumulation can take place in a variety of forms; which one is implemented at a specific historical time depends on social, economical and political situations. Thus Harvey states,

"The restructuring of state forms and of international relations after the Second World War was *designed* to prevent a return to the catastrophic conditions that had so threatened the capitalist order in the great slump of the 1930s. It was also *supposed* to prevent the emergence of inter-state geopolitical rivalries that had led to the war. To *ensure* domestic peace and tranquillity, some sort of class compromise between capital and labour had to be *constructed*."²² (JR)

The internal construction thus delimited for developed economies had as its correlation an international structure designed to maintain and expands its domination under the guidance of the USA. As Harvey continues:

"Internationally, a new world order was constructed through the Bretton Woods agreements, and various institutions, such as the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the Bank of International Settlements in Basel, were *set up* to help stabilise international relations."²³ (JR)

22. Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p.10

23. *Ibid*.

The emphasis on 'design', 'suppose', 'ensure', 'construct', and 'set up' brings up a specific political dimension to the process of transformation that is not present if the space of the political and the economical are presupposed to be one and the same. The 'restructuring' of the state forms is what creates at the level of the concrete what had been up to then a theoretical presupposition in Marx's analysis. And even then the relative autonomisation of social formations, and the expansion of domestic markets in confluence with the development of a strong welfare state, is done under the hegemonic role of US monopolistic capital. The growing integration of the core economies that absorbed the majority of the foreign direct investment provokes, at the same time, "new cleavages of dependence" between them, exposing, at the same time, the imperialist chain linking the world capitalist system.²⁴ Latin American societies were not exempted from these developments, import substitution industrialisation became the dominant form of accumulation transforming the productive processes and expanding internal markets.²⁵ The different waves of import substitution industrialisation in the region responded to different moments in the internationalisation of social relations. The crisis of the states of the Southern Cone of Latin America that provoked the emergence of Bureaucratic Authoritarian governments relates to the political contradictions created by the economic expansion of these societies in the context of the internationalisation of capital.²⁶

Bureaucratic Authoritarianism and the Specificity of Latin American Social Formations

In his analysis of the crisis of Latin American states, Lechner presents two main characteristics defining the contradictory character of these societies. On the one hand, they present what he describes as a "subordination of the process of capital accumulation to the movements of the world market;" this is, a dependency of the

24. See Poulantzas, Nicos. "The Internationalisation of the Capitalist Relations and the Nation State", in his *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism* (1974). London: Verso, 1978, p.84

25. "The 'import substitution' period or cycle is the designation of policies that encourage the local production of industrial goods that were formerly imported from abroad." Cardoso and Falleto. *Op.cit.*, p.2

26. The Southern Cone is technically constituted by Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, however some authors like Guillermo O'Donnell take the Sao Paulo region in Brazil as part of the region as due to its similar socio economical conditions. See O'Donnell, Guillermo, *Modernisation and Bureaucratic Authoritarianism* (1973), Berkeley: University of California, 1979

social dynamic on external factors given that the most advanced forms of capital accumulation are constituted outside the sphere of influence of these societies.²⁷ On the other hand, Lechner finds a "juxtaposition of different relations of production," what he defines as a constitutive, structural heterogeneity.²⁸ If the state, as social relation, represents a form of generality mediating the particular interests of its citizens, Latin American social formations are characterised by the state's incapacity to give a sense (meaning) to the common social praxis, understood not only as an economic phenomenon but also as a political and cultural one. There is a disjunction of the moments of domination (capitalist relations of production) and hegemony (ideology) that prevents the state from expressing a coherent social rationality. Lechner points out that, "the state is not able to express the historical reason of a particular society because the different practices have failed to constitute a common sense."²⁹ In other words, the form of generality embodied in private property cannot subsume the different spheres reproducing the capitalist relations of production, under a common logic. The form of the state however is historically specific; it is not enough to define it simply as a capitalist state given that the articulation and organisation of social actors necessarily has as its consequence different synthesis of the social under the form of the state.³⁰ In Latin America, within a capitalist system, it is possible to single out many variants of state forms: oligarchic, national popular, developmentalist, Bureaucratic Authoritarian, to name but a few.³¹ According to

27. Lechner, *La Crisis del Estado en América Latina*, p.39

28. *Ibid.*

29. *Ibid.*, p.37

30. "Type of regime and type of state usually correspond closely but not exactly. A regime that is democratic or competitive, or, in the terminology of Robert Dahl, "polyarchic" (cf. esp. *Modern Political Analysis* [New York: Prentice-Hall, 1966]), implies universalistic criteria of representation (citizenship) and of patterns of social representation (...) Such a regime is incompatible, for example, with a bureaucratic-authoritarian state (...). On the other hand, an authoritarian state can coexist with a regime made up of a single party, a dominant party (Mexico), two formally authorized parties (Brazil prior to 1979), or no party at all (Chile), and can impose more or less rigid constraints on corporative representation, with differing biases with respect to the various social classes." O'Donnell, Guillermo. *Bureaucratic Authoritarianism: Argentina, 1966-1973, in Comparative perspective*. trans. McGuire, James in collaboration with Flory, Rae. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988, p.6, footnote.

31. The distinction here is not related to the democratic or not democratic character of these forms of state. Authoritarianism may well be present, and indeed was present in Latin America in all these variants. The key aspect here is in the way that the synthesis that these forms presuppose incorporate or exclude sectors of the population.

Lechner, the lack of a unified collective identity³² and the fragmentary character of the social praxis in Latin American societies, make forms of domination more visible in so far as physical coercion has to replace an 'order of consensus.'³³ However, even if all Latin American states can be considered as peripherally subordinated to the central economies, their own dynamics are subjected to different processes of uneven development. Being productively unrelated to each other, lacking any substantial form of economic regional integration, their historical developments did not necessarily follow the same path.

After the second wave of import substitution industrialisation and the failure of developmentalist projects, a distinctive form of authoritarian and bureaucratic state spread in the Southern Cone region of Latin America. Even when it is possible to single out previous authoritarian stages in the history of these societies, the specificity of this state form and its political intention of re-defining the social structure, inaugurated a new political regime in the region. The term Bureaucratic Authoritarianism was coined by the political scientist Guillermo O'Donnell to define this type of capitalist state that spread in the region from the mid-1960s onwards. These states were the result of the economic and political crises that sparked in the region as a consequence of the social tensions created by a growing transnationalisation of the productive structure. One of the main characteristics O'Donnell highlights for these states is the reduced social base they depend on; mainly the upper fraction of the bourgeoisie and the military hierarchy. The verticalisation of the structure of political and economic power responds to two main objectives. On the one hand, the Bureaucratic Authoritarian government focuses on the restoration of 'order' by excluding the popular sectors from the political life. This political deactivation of the popular classes implies a prohibition of any "appeal to the population as *pueblo*"; hence demarcating its difference from any previous popular (Chile and Uruguay) or populist (Argentina and

32. Laclau's model of populist discourse interpellating a political subject can be mobilised through the unstable scenario described by Lechner. In so far as the disjunction between domination and ideology opens up the door for alternative political projects that constitute themselves on specifically concrete situations. In other words, the interpellation of a Peronist (populist) individual cannot be separated from the material conditions in which it emerges. The ideological construction finds its ground in the construction of new forms of domination (a nationally constituted industrial society focusing on the domestic market) more favourable to the emergence of this subjectivity.

33. Lechner, *La Crisis del Estado en América Latina*, p.20. This becomes more clear in comparison with Adorno's idea of the monopoly capitalism constituted around a specific domestic market, in which the integration and domestication of individuals takes place according to the logic of the system.

Brazil) form of state.³⁴ On the other hand, the Bureaucratic Authoritarian government intends a 'normalisation' of the economy, through its vertical subordination to the movements of transnational capital. The de-politicisation of the society reinforces the technocratic aspect of the state in its appeal to order – which also, and fundamentally, included militarisation – and its intention to normalise the economy – through the isolation of the economy as an autonomous area managed by experts; technocrats.³⁵ As O'Donnell points out "B[ureaucratic] A[uthoritarianism] is thus based on the suppression of two fundamental mediations between state and society: citizenship and *pueblo*."³⁶ (italics in original)

The historical emergence of Bureaucratic Authoritarian governments took place in the context of an already expanded social integration produced by the process of import substitution industrialisation. The transnationalisation of relations of production that began after the end of the Second World War increasingly pressed for a verticalisation of socio-economic structures and a higher concentration of capital accumulation. From a Southern Cone perspective this implied the growing influence of transnational corporations that penetrated the domestic markets of these societies, producing mainly *in* and *for* these markets, displacing existing national firms as the dynamic motor of capital accumulation, and provoking the emergence of strong and concentrated national economic groups. The expansion and supremacy of transnational corporations acted as a catalyst for the further transnationalisation of these economies. As O'Donnell points out:

"Not only the activities of the T(rans)N(ational)C(orporation)s themselves but also the changes their activities stimulated in the world financial and commercial systems promoted this transnationalisation. Especially in the countries with the largest domestic markets, TNC subsidiaries, together with some state institutions, predominated in the economic sectors (primarily industry and non-traditional services) that became the new dynamic axis of economic growth."³⁷

34. O'Donnell, *Op.cit.*, pp.31-33

35. This aspect also insinuates a cultural penetration of these societies. It has been historically the case that the majority of the economic teams that implemented neoliberal reforms during the different BAs in Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay has been trained at US Universities; a situation that was repeated during the neoliberal democratic period.

36. O'Donnell, *Op.cit.*, p.32

37. *Ibid.*, p.11

The rationalisation of the economy that these changes implied, speeded up the elimination of non-competitive players from the internal markets; while at the same time it enforced the disciplining of the popular sector given the *necessary* – in economic terms – rolling back of the distributive policies that were generally applied during the 1940s and 1950s. Hence, what at first sight appears as rational from an economic point of view becomes irrational from a social point of view; consequently provoking an internal tension. The emergence of Bureaucratic Authoritarian regimes in the Southern Cone societies was, at the economic level, the necessary consequence of the transnationalisation of the economy affecting the position of the popular classes, and at the political level, the expression of the imposition of a political project promoted by those sectors of society that constitute its social base, the upper bourgeoisie. The fact that the re-structuring of these societies is done in line with a tendency imposed by the world economic centres further determinates the instrumentation of the dependent, but qualitatively different, character of the transformation.

The substantial modification of the social structure that the transnationalisation of the economy produced has been described by Anibal Pinto and Jan Křnakal as a combination of *relative marginalisation* and *subordinated insertion*.³⁸ The first concept points to the marginal position of these economies in relation to the global system; the second describes the intention of the centres from preventing the emergence of alternative, competing models, and hence fomenting a dependency in relation to foreign capital, technology and management. In the same line, Lechner points to a process of tele-directed industrialisation that cannot be reduced to a mere technical issue, but that refers to the implementation of, and subordination to, forms of rationality that come with it.³⁹ This situation points to the influence that the organisational form of transnational corporations has on the different economic actors of these societies. In other words, the economic weight that transnational corporations have in the economy implies that their corporate culture and their level of competitiveness become necessary standards to emulate. The process of industrialisation induced by foreign direct investment is mainly focused on those

38. Pinto and Křnakal, "El sistema centro-periferia, veinte años después," quoted in Lechner, *La Crisis del Estado en América Latina*, p.46

39. *Ibid.*, p. 48

branches of the economy in which “the process of socialisation of labour and the international concentration of capital are most advanced.”⁴⁰ These concentrated sectors of the economy established patterns for capitalist development not circumscribed to their own production but, as stated above, cascaded down into other sectors. As the most advanced sectors of the economy own not only the means of production but also of possession – the direction and control of the labour process – they also indirectly transfer their standardisation of the process of production to potential competitors, contractors, suppliers who in turn reproduce and expand this logic. The more concentrated a sector is, the more monopolistic its power, the more it will be able to influence this standardisation. While the leading sectors may depend on other sectors for the supply of their own consumables, it is the power of their demand what produces the adaptation of these sectors. Altogether the process of transnationalisation forces a realignment of the existing social structure. As O'Donnell emphasises

“what occurred was less the capture of an already existing productive structure (although this too resulted from the most parasitical forms of transnational expansion) than the creation of new industrial, commercial and service sectors and activities.”⁴¹

The less concentrated parts of the industrial sector underwent a further differentiation that can be understood in relation to this transnationalisation of the economy. On the one hand, the emergence of new sectors associated to transnational corporations, either as providers or clients can only be considered “national in a formal sense,” as they are not “in the hands of an independent bourgeoisie in control of its

40. Even though Poulantzas describes this process in relation to the transformation suffered by European business due to US capital expansion on those markets, the model can obviously be applied to transnational corporations expansion throughout Latin America. Poulantzas describes two main features of the internationalisation of capital at this stage as “a) The development of bases of exploitation for a particular capital, (...) in other words the extension of the site on which this capital establishes itself as a social relation.” and b) “The pronounced tendency towards the combination, in the form of a single ownership, of capital coming from several different countries,” while adding that “this internationalisation is brought under the decisive domination of capital originating from one single country.” For Poulantzas in so far as capital is a social relation the origin of a capital is not ‘national’ but it refers to the political space where those social relations produced capital. See Poulantzas, “The Internationalisation of the Capitalist Relations and the Nation State”, p. 60

41. O'Donnell, *Op.cit.*, p.12

own accumulation, the technology it utilises, and the social relations it begets.”⁴² On the other hand, as O’Donnell explains, those previously existing sectors of urban bourgeoisie, “national in terms of the location of its decision-making centres and the origins of its capital, found [themselves] relegated to the traditional, slowest-growing, least technology- and capital-intensive, and most competitive sectors of the economy.”⁴³ This situation already conditioned their loyalties and interests to the development and reproduction of those sectors of the economy linked to the conditions of their own existence. Even though the transformation of the form of accumulation had global consequences and its epicentre was the re-organisation of structures of domination within the world developed capitalist societies, its social consequences were more crudely felt in the intermediate and lower knots of the world economy.⁴⁴ Together with the new technologies helping to implement this transformation, a process of technocratisation of these societies also took place. The ‘normalisation’ of the economy through the parameters described above implies by necessity its autonomisation, its separation from the rest of the social spheres. As Lechner stresses, “the ‘universality’ of technology corresponds to the ‘universality’ of the relations of production.”⁴⁵ The implementation of this tele-directed process of industrialisation, itself a political and ideological process, represented a ‘symbolic violence’ instrumented through the transference of ‘know-how’ and the dependence it created in the productive structure (capital, technology and management). As Lechner points out, industrialisation

“is a ‘counter-insurgency’ strategy that intends to eliminate alternatives of social progress and to liquidate any possibility of autonomous development. In this sense, the importation of technology plays a subtle psycho-social mechanism of internalisation of bourgeois values.”⁴⁶

42. *Ibid.*, p.13

43. *Ibid.*

44. See Poulantzas, “The Internationalisation of the Capitalist Relations and the Nation State”, p.47: “Relations between the imperialist metropolises themselves are now also being organised in terms of a structure of domination and dependence within the imperialist chain.”

45. Lechner. *La Crisis del Estado en América Latina*, p.48

46. Lechner. *La Crisis del Estado en América Latina*, p. 49. As we will see, this development is not purely defined in ‘external’ fashion but it is mainly provoked by the re-accommodation of relations of production to more ‘traditional,’ oligarchic structures. In Argentina, this transformation, epitomised by

The understanding of the economy as a sphere with its own rules dominated by the figure of the technocrat, invested with the impartial character acquired through scientific and technical neutrality, locks the path of development to a prescribed and predefined rationality. It is in this respect, that the imperialist chain is felt in its intermediate knots. The unidirectional path of technologic development was imposed through economic power and authoritarian rule; its unmediated character though, made its concrete implementation politically volatile as the affected sectors were reluctant to accept its direct consequences.

Political Aspects of the Southern Cone Industrialisation

What appears mainly as an economic transformation has, however, deep social and political consequences for the historical structure of domination. With the incorporation of new sectors of the population into the social life during the firsts years of the import substitution industrialisation, existing forms of representation went into crisis. With the expansion of industrial development a gap started to open between the corporatist interest of the bourgeoisie represented by the oligarchic state and the requirements of the system. The political function of the state started to incorporate more institutionalised forms of participation representing a more general interest. The growing social tension and the contradictory character of the political institutionalisation were further complicated by the emergence of authoritarian states. According to O'Donnell, the generalised distrust of democracy and citizenship are the consequence of "the absence of fully and extensively capitalist societies that foster, and are nurtured by, other levels of abstract equality." As he states:

"Most populations in Latin America forged their national identities much more as a *pueblo* than as a citizenry (...) [I]n such countries the abstract ideas of equality upon which citizenship is based were not well developed, basically owing to the incomplete diffusion of capitalist relations at the time when the national-popular identities began to crystallise. Even in relatively homogeneous countries like Argentina and Uruguay, the previously excluded became members-of-the-nation

the 1976-1983 dictatorship, is usually referred to as 'the class revenge.' Implying the reconstitution of social relations to pre-Peronist conditions.

at the same time as a great wave of urbanisation and industrialisation was taking place (...) [I]n many cases these identities were formed at the same time as the urban economy was undergoing rapid expansion. This economic growth furnished resources that enabled governments to project an image of concern for, and to some extent to promote, the interests of the popular sectors.”⁴⁷

As mentioned above, this situation was characteristic of those states that were constituted primarily as capitalistic, oligarchic states with an export oriented base. The incorporation of sectors of the population into the economic structure of these societies had as a limit, the capacity for absorbing an expanding labour force into their own productive structure. Historically the economic success of this structure was also the reason for the emergence of social antagonism, as every expansion of the domestic market brought with it a threat to its stability. The incorporation of previously marginalised people that takes place during the implementation of import substitution industrialisation coincides with the emergence of alternative political and economic projects under a national-popular form. The political alliance thus established between the newly incorporated *pueblo* and an emerging national bourgeoisie fomented the emergence of this alternative political project. This is important, as the activation of the popular sectors is not so much influenced by class antagonism but by a newly formed class alliance displacing the oligarchic structure. The re-composition of the urban social map implies the re-definition of the popular sector; as O'Donnell states,

“The emergence of the *pueblo* involved the expansion of an urban-based popular sector, one component of which was a working class that had grown rapidly and had become geographically concentrated as a result of the rate and type of industrialisation taking place at the time. This urban popular sector intervened, with a growing voice and weight of its own, in a political arena in which conflicts over the allocation of resources had become increasingly acute.”⁴⁸ (italics in original)

47. O'Donnell, *Op.cit.*, p.8

48. *Ibid.*, p.23

O'Donnell defines the popular sector as “the ensemble formed by the working class and the unionised segments of the middle sectors,” hence as already integrated and subsumed under the emerging social structure. If what constituted the ‘people’ in his original definition was their *demand for substantive justice*, an active constitution; its incorporation into the social through the expansion of the industrial base already defines its political alliances and its institutionalisation. The emergence of the ‘people’ is channelled through the institutional structure devised by the new dominant sectors.⁴⁹ In the Argentine context, the emergence of the ‘people’ (pueblo) as part of a national popular coalition and the penetration of transnational corporations in the domestic economy was non-synchronic. The former took place from the election of General Juan D. Perón to the presidency in 1945, to the military coup that deposed him in 1955. During those years the creation and expansion of a domestic market nurtured by protectionist policies under import substitution industrialisation, triggered a process of industrialisation and urbanisation that incorporated previously marginalised sectors of the population. The penetration of the domestic market by transnational corporations, on the other hand, took place mainly throughout the 1960s; first during the developmentalist years and later intensified during General Juan C. Onganía’s dictatorship between 1964 and 1967. The temporal lag between these two moments is the main factor in the growing social tension that took place with the verticalisation of the productive structure due to transnational penetration. The complexity of this conjunction included a politically activated and unionised popular sector, the proscription of Peronism from the electoral process and the existence of a displaced oligarchy with still a strong political and economic power. To this, it is necessary to add that the capitalist system in Argentina – as in all the states of the region – never reached a ‘normal’ functioning character. Its main characteristics have always been its instability, its unfair redistribution of wealth (ameliorated during the Peronist years), high levels of inflation, fiscal and trade deficits, and the lack of substantial capital

49. In the Argentine case, the emergence of the people as part of the Peronist structure implied the equation between Peronism and the national popular movement. By exclusion, whichever sector was defined as anti-Peronist fell outside the national sphere. This was indeed one of the more powerful rhetorical devices used by Perón in his discourses. For a detailed analysis on this topic see Sigal, Silvia and Verón, Eliseo. *Perón o muerte, los fundamentos discursivos del fenómeno peronista*, Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 2003.

investment.⁵⁰ The social tension is thus magnified by the conjunction of a political and economic crisis. O'Donnell uses the term 'mass praetorianism' to describe this situation in which

"a growing number of political actors are embroiled in conflicts barely, and decreasingly, regulated by institutional and normative controls. This situation tends to correspond on the one hand to an increasing randomisation of social relations and, on the other, to a worsening of the economic crisis."⁵¹

In this light, the new Bureaucratic Authoritarian regime tried to address a 'spatial' contradiction – the *internal expansion* of the domestic market produced by the incorporation of *foreign investment* – through two main strategies. Internally, the intensification of class struggle has as its consequence a doctrine of national security in order to pacify and 'restore' order in society. After a first moment in which the national popular alliance transcended the class contradiction in order to transform the system of domination, the incorporation of transnational corporations and its verticalisation of the structure of production led to the emergence of a more identifiable class struggle. The multiplication of demands and the ephemeral character of political alliances presented a context of growing randomisation of social relations and the predominance of very short term strategies. The context of a politically activated popular sector and the impossibility of a 'normal' institutionalisation of their demands provoked a growing instability in the political system. The anxiety among the dominant sectors translated into their claims for the necessity of a 'de-politicisation' of the social structure. The Bureaucratic Authoritarian governments introduced a technocratic and de-politicising approach to both order (militarisation of the social) and the normalisation of the economy. The technocratisation of the economic sphere and its alignment with the world economic order projected a unidirectional path for the rest of the social spheres.

50. O'Donnell, *Op.cit.*, pp.22-23

51. *Ibid*, p.23

Social Heterogeneity?

The condition of structural heterogeneity is usually presented as one of the constitutive characteristics of Latin American capitalist societies.⁵² It generally refers to conditions of underdevelopment in which the 'normal' functioning of capitalist relations are absent. Cardoso and Faletto have defined the notion of underdevelopment as

"a type of economic system with a predominant primary sector, a high concentration of income, little diversification in its production system, and above all, an external market far outweighing the internal."⁵³

Lechner, on his part, understands the notion of structural heterogeneity as the "juxtaposition and overlay of different relations of production"⁵⁴, an idea not derived from Cardoso and Faletto's analysis, more concerned with processes of development on dependent situations. Lechner's theorisation is relevant but historically fixed in the logic of previous analysis of Latin America's social constitution; my intention in what follows is to mobilise this common notion of structural heterogeneity through Cardoso and Faletto's studies on development, as well as O'Donnell theorisation of Bureaucratic Authoritarian governments, in order to provide a historically updated version of this condition.

According to Lechner "heterogeneity, defined as the absence of a common social praxis, refers as much to the economic structure as it does to the social, political, and cultural organisation."⁵⁵ The split of the social topography that derives from his understanding of structural heterogeneity cannot be generalised for the whole of Latin America during the period here analysed. Just as much as the notion of underdevelopment cannot suffice to understand the social structure of a society, the notion of structural heterogeneity needs to be updated in relation to the historical

52. For a relevant critical reading of some of the debates on the social composition of Latin American societies and the political-economical problematic attached to them see, Laclau, Ernesto. "Feudalism and Capitalism in Latin America" in his *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism – Fascism – Populism*. London: New Left Books, 1977, pp.15-50

53. Cardoso and Faletto. *Op.cit.*, p.17

54. "Up until today, the majority of the societies of the region are characterised by a structural heterogeneity: ethnics differences, a split between city and countryside, between coastal and mountain zones, distance between the export economy and economy of subsistence, separation between the financial circuit and the process of production." Lechner. *La Crisis del Estado en América Latina*, p.60

55. *Ibid.*, p.20

context.⁵⁶ Cardoso and Faletto refer to three pivotal concepts as relevant for the analysis of both structural and historical situations in Latin America: dependence, underdevelopment and periphery. As they state:

“The idea of dependence refers to the conditions under which alone the economic and political system can exist and function in its connection with the world productive structure. The idea of underdevelopment refers to the degree of diversification of the productive system without emphasizing the patterns of control of decisions on production and consumption (...) The ideas of ‘centre’ and ‘periphery’ stress the function that underdeveloped economies perform in the world market.”⁵⁷

From the above definition it is clear that a society can attain levels of development without acquiring the control of their productive structure, thereby becoming subordinated to central economic structures while experiencing growing levels of social homogenisation. This is mostly the case of the Southern Cone of Latin America’s societies. The historical emergence of Bureaucratic Authoritarian regimes in this region between the mid-1960s and mid-1970s – Brazil (1964-1985), Argentina (1964-1972 & 1976-1983), Chile (1973-1990) and Uruguay (1973-85)⁵⁸ – takes place in the context of substantial levels of industrialisation and generalised capitalist relations of production⁵⁹. As Lechner points out, “the new authoritarianism surges on countries

56. Cardoso and Faletto. *Op.cit.*, p.17

57. *Ibid.*, p.18

58. For Latin American standards the last three states have a high degree of social homogeneity, in the sense that the majority of social relations are constituted by a capitalist mode of production. I am not arguing that the capitalistic constitution of these social relations reflect the same level of penetration of every social sphere that social relations in hegemonic centres reflect. The inclusion of Brazil, as stated in note 26 above, relates to the relevance that the Sao Paulo industry has for the dynamic development of its economic structure. This structure that, as O’Donnell suggests, was already relevant in the 1960s, is even more relevant now a days when Sao Paulo has become the regional hub for the Mercosur. See O’Donnell, Guillermo. *Modernization and Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism: Studies in South American Politics*. Berkeley: University of California, 1979; also, Ramos Schiffer, Sueli. “Sao Paulo: Articulating a Cross-Border Region.” in Sassen, Saskia. Ed. *Global Networks. Linked Cities*. London: Routledge, 2002, pp.209-236

59. The case of Brazil marks the limit of this situation. Because of its low level of homogenisation the Brazilian BA was the least repressive of these cases, while at the same time it was the most successful in maintaining its industrialisation process. Precisely because of historically high levels of marginalisation in Brazilian society the transformation (bureaucratisation) of the society was possible without a significant popular revolt. For a comparative analysis of the social signification of violence in Argentina and Brazil see Guillermo O’Donnell, “And why should I give a shit? Notes on sociability and politics in Argentine and Brazil” in his *Counterpoints: Selected Essays on Authoritarianism and Democratization*. Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999. pp. 81-105

with high levels of economic development (like Argentina and Brazil) and with long democratic tradition (Chile)."⁶⁰ In this light, the problem of heterogeneity needs to be re-addressed by the emergence of a different type of tension; one that encompasses on the one hand, the process of homogenisation that inevitably derives from urbanisation, industrialisation and the expansion of capitalist social relations, and on the other, the impossibility of a common social praxis as a political problem, which determines the economic structure. In other words, the growing level of economic homogenisation is contemporaneous to other levels of abstract homogenisation: cultural and political processes of integration and identification that produce, even if in embryonic form, the possibility for alternative projects of development. Lechner correctly emphasises the fragmentation of civil society as a determination of the political fragmentation of Latin American societies. He states that "the disintegration of the social forces is at the root of the dispersion of the political organisations, even of the state."⁶¹ However, there is no explanation of the character of this disintegration, nor of *what* is being disintegrated.⁶² The presupposition of his analysis is that the hegemonic crisis at the basis of Latin American societies is defined by the non-correlation between the social space and the space of the state, as the economic cycle overflows the limit of the latter. But here lies the historical limit of his presupposition; structural heterogeneity cannot in the case of Bureaucratic Authoritarian regimes imply a "juxtaposition and overlay of different relations of production"; in these circumstances heterogeneity acquires a political character. The disintegration of the social forces Lechner refers to is more of the order of a re-definition of the social base of the structure of domination.

Lechner enquires "how is it possible to constitute a class interest in a situation of structural heterogeneity?"⁶³ In order to explain this problematic he points out that, "Latin American societies are characterised by the fragmentation of the social

60. Lechner. *La Crisis del Estado en América Latina*, p.32

61. *Ibid.*, p.59

62. Lechner seems to be presupposing the pre-existence of some form of state; the disintegration of its parts assumed to be the necessary condition for the crisis of the state. His assumption is that "social space and the space of the state don't coincide", *Ibid.*, but he does not reflect on how much the social space constitutes and delimits the form of state and vice versa; 'synthesis' implies full determination of the moments constituting the state, not its social pacification, *Ibid.*, p.59

63. *Ibid.*, p.6

structure; the different social groups do not reciprocally determine each other.”⁶⁴ We saw in the previous section that O’Donnell starts his analysis of Latin American societies from the same premise. This is, the emergence of Latin American national popular states does not politically confront the working class and the bourgeoisie, but on the contrary it unites them in the same political project of a national form of capitalism. The import substitution policies not only helped to develop a national industry, but by integrating new social groups also helped to demarcated a new internal unit; a national popular state unifying the majority of the population. This situation provoked substantial levels of homogenisation of the social structure given its integrative character. In the Argentine case, for example, the moment of consolidation of the national popular state, with its urbanisation and industrialisation processes, took place before the penetration of transnational corporations into the economy. In fact, it seems that it was precisely the introduction of transnational corporations into the local economy what started to fragment the relative social homogeneity. This situation, however, has a limit. As O’Donnell points out,

“The advance of all these processes was, however, subject to a key limitation. The democratic (in Chile and Uruguay) or populist (Brazil and Argentina) ‘state of compromise’ remained viable only as long as the pueblo’s demands for substantive justice did not collide with the constraints imposed by the way in which the economy was expanding and becoming extensively transnationalised.”⁶⁵

In this context, the non-reciprocal determination of the social groups that Lechner argues for is not the product of an objective analysis, but of a political and ideological one. The national popular states emerged under the banner of a nationalistic identity, and the majority of its members embraced the dominant project providing a

64. I am leaving aside the problematic understanding of a capitalist development in which social groups don’t determine each other; which is also inherent to Laclau’s analysis of populism. It sounds particularly problematic that Lechner mentions the non-correlation between the social space and the space of the state, but then finds a problem in the fragmentary character of Latin American societies because they don’t determine reciprocally the social groups. Social groups determine each other in the sphere of production, whichever its demarcation, the form that political alliances take is not dependent on how the social groups determine each other. In the US and Europe there were pacts for social pacification after the Second World War (reformism), this did not imply the non determination of social groups, but the hegemonic position of a political view. The main problem seems to be the confusion between class belonging (objective) and class consciousness (subjective). Lechner, *Ibid.*, p.66

65. Guillermo O’Donnell, *Bureaucratic Authoritarianism*. p.11

hegemonic character to that discourse, but this does not modify the objective laws determining its functioning. The subsequent transnationalisation of the *developmentalist* years implied a growing verticalisation of the economy. This verticalisation not only rationalised the structure of production by eliminating marginal players, but also re-defined the social structure by delimiting the new dominant groups to those participating in the most dynamic and capital-concentrated sectors of the economy. While the economy was able to grow and develop enough to satisfy the different social demands, the social pact remained viable regardless of the struggles between the different sectors. In the Argentine case, the verticalisation of the economy promoted through the banner of a modernisation project gave way to growing social tension and, hence, made the structure of domination more visible. Rising levels of productivity, the elimination of non-competitive actors, the implementation of tighter fiscal rules; all these factors made the lower classes conscious of their changing position in the productive structure. In the political sphere, the proscription of *Peronism* from the electoral system and the political ambivalence that strongly organised unions developed out of this situation, gave the unions an autonomy they did not experience during the *Peronist* years.

The question of how the situation empowered groups to ally with each other does not have a straightforward answer. The threat to the system – real or perceived – presented by an activated popular sector is taken by Lechner as the root for the Bureaucratic Authoritarian emergence. He condensates this problematic in two main explanations:

“Internally, the sharpening of the class struggle destabilise the structure of domination, without being able to create a new order. Externally, the internationalisation of capital transforms the process of accumulation and pushes for the realignment of the local economies.”⁶⁶

In this way, the class opposition that Lechner does not recognise in his conceptual development of the Latin American problem of structural heterogeneity permeates his historical analysis of concrete situations. Lechner acknowledges this in a note to his explanation on structural heterogeneity, where he states:

66. Lechner. *La Crisis del Estado en América Latina*, p.33

“Argentina, Chile and Uruguay have a high degree of social homogeneity. This does not invalidate the notion of Latin America (...) because these societies also found themselves under an external hegemony. Given their lower structural heterogeneity, they may in turn have found it easier to construct an internal hegemony; such a possibility – rightly or wrongly insinuated by popular movements – seems to be an important factor in the emergence of the authoritarian state.”⁶⁷

According to this definition, lower structural heterogeneity implies greater possibility of internal hegemony. The tension seems to be focused on this internal – external balance so common to Dependency Theory: external hegemony as the correlation to internal heterogeneity implies a politically heteronymous society. With the acknowledging of the growing homogeneity of these societies Lechner thesis collapses. External hegemony and internal homogenisation – expansion of capitalist relations of production – created a political crisis due to the multiplicity of demands and the emergence of competing political projects. The crisis of these Latin American states is historically specific; it does not derive from a structural heterogeneity understood as the existence of more than one mode of production, but from contradictions internal to the capitalist development. As an example, it is possible to single out a level of capitalist structural heterogeneity in the Argentina of the 1960s that emerges from the different types of industrialisation derived from the first (horizontal) and second (vertical) wave of import substitution industrialisation reflected in the rates of product growth, productivity of labour and wages.⁶⁸ This is the way in which Cardoso and Falleto have understood the characterisation of structural heterogeneity. As they state:

“Industrialisation in dependent economies enhances income concentration as it increases sharp differences in productivity without generalising this trend to the whole of the economy.”⁶⁹

67. Lechner, *Ibid.*, note to p.59

68. See Azpiazu, Daniel, Basualdo, Eduardo and Khavisse, Miguel. *El Nuevo Poder Económico en la Argentina de los Años 80*. Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 2004, p.56

69. Cardoso and Falleto. *Op.cit.*, p.xxii. Note also that this definition problematises the notion of Latin America as presented by Lechner: neither the dependent character of a social formation nor its

It is important to be cautious when interpreting this transitional face to a Bureaucratic Authoritarian regime so that the external character that the word 'transnationalisation' brings to the analysis does not appear as a simple one way movement of external influence. The transnationalisation of these societies was also encouraged internally by domestic groups eager to re-establish a class power that seemed to have changed hands, or at least to have tipped the social balance to a fairer equilibrium. As explained in the previous section, once the transnationalised sectors of the economy became the most dynamic players, an extensive effect on the rest of the sectors took place. The emergence of new actors – transnational corporations and local economic groups⁷⁰ – and the redefinition of the social place of others – a new national bourgeoisie directly linked to transnational corporations, a bourgeoisie identified with the national popular movement, as well as the proletarian sectors linked to both – made the character of the demands of these sectors a lot more complex and not always logical from other sectors' point of view. As the economic situation deteriorated the political crisis intensified and, given their autonomy and capacity for mobilisation, the popular sectors appeared as powerful contestants when claiming for their demands.

It is precisely because of the activation of many and multiple social actors and their non-compatible demands that the existing system overflowed, and the fear of a new social order radicalised political positions. The random character of social behaviours and the impossibility of an institutional option for the resolution of conflicts pointed to a situation of 'mass pretorianism,' in which the state became less and less able to mediate the social process. As O'Donnell, points out,

"The state apparatus, for its part, displaying an extremely low level of autonomy with respect to all sectors and classes, had become a battleground for social forces whose micro-rationalities it could not reconcile with the normal functioning of the economy. Moreover, with its enormous deficits and seldom-implemented policies, the state apparatus made its own contribution to the

'structural heterogeneity' suffice to constitute the notion of Latin America as they are not exclusive conditions. The notion of Latin America is cultural not developmental.

70. See Basualdo, Eduardo. *Estudios de Historia Económica Argentina: desde mediados del siglo XX a la actualidad*. Buenos Aires Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 2010. Particularly Chapter 2, Section 2.2.2 "Trayectoria de las distintas fracciones industriales durante la segunda etapa de sustitución de importaciones," pp.74-90

uncertainties, fluctuations, and conflicts of the time. Democratic or not, the praetorian state was representative—too representative—of classes, sectors, and groups that viewed its resources and institutions as part of the booty in each round of plunder and conflict.”⁷¹

The emergence of Bureaucratic Authoritarian regimes took place where capitalist relations developed enough to problematise the structure of domination through a growing popular demand. The Bureaucratic Authoritarian government’s intentions were focused on the restoration of the social order and the further transnationalisation of the economy, in line with the new structure of domination. What took place coercively was impossible under any democratic means, the restoration of class power through a deep and permanent social transformation.

The Limits of Monopoly Capitalism: Overaccumulation, National Debt and the Financialisation of the World Capitalist System

During the Fordist period crises of overaccumulation were avoided by enclosing capitalist development in a “web of social and political constraints and a regulatory environment that sometimes restrained but, in other instances led the way in economic and industrial strategy.”⁷² This form of accumulation based on the primacy of productive capital depends on the close intermingling between production and consumption. The sociological category of integration, as theorised by Adorno, depends on the balance thus created, in so far as social peace is premised on the access to the satisfaction of demands of different social classes. While it was possible to recycle accumulated capital through the internal market or through foreign direct investment, this form of accumulation was successful. The system not only managed to pacify and increasingly integrate central economies, but it also helped to maintain the US hegemony at economic, political, and cultural level – i.e., by the transference of technological know-how, or the ideological penetration of the different culture industries’. At the same time, and through the penetration of foreign direct investment, the expansion and development of some peripheral societies constituted

71. O’Donnell, *Bureaucratic Authoritarianism*, p.24

72. *Ibid*, p.11

domestic markets dependently linked to the developed world, providing transnational corporations with new spaces for expanding their influential position. The development of new, and increasingly influential, poles of production – Europe and Japan for highly concentrated sectors, South East Asia for labour intensive ones – could not but put competitive pressure on the productive sectors of the US. Gradually the disappearance of profitable outlets for productive reinvestment derived in the shift of capital from trade and production to financial investment and valorisation.⁷³ If during the post Second World War period the imperative of social peace and a fairer redistribution of income became the dominant political view over any ‘liberal’ idea of capitalist development, this, as Bob Jessop points out,

“enable[d] the territorial logic of power to constrain the tendencial ecological dominance of the logic of capital by restricting the scope of its operation within definite boundaries and so limiting the full realisation of the capitalist world market.”⁷⁴

This situation lasted until the early 1970s when the combination of a crisis of overaccumulation, a growing external competition for its industrial base, and the growing deficits it incurred, put pressure on the US administration to transform its distributionist policies. It was also further intensified by the growing concentration of the US dollar in external markets that threatened the US capacity to control its own currency. The contradiction between the political and economic logics of capitalist development reaches a crisis point when, due to their tendencial autonomisation, one of the logics forces the balance of the dialectic on its side. As Jessop argues “if the territorial logic blocks the logic of capital, there is a risk of economic crisis; if capitalistic logic undermines the territorial logic, there is a risk of political crisis.”⁷⁵ Leaving the problematic distinction between territorial and capitalistic logics untouched, what

73. Arrighi, Giovanni. *The Long Twentieth Century* (1994). London: Verso, 1999, pp.298-99

74. Jessop, Bob. “Spatial Fixes, Temporal Fixes, Spatio-Temporal Fixes”, in Castree, Noel and Gregory, Derek. *David Harvey: A Critical Reader*, Blackwell, London, 2006, p. 160

75. *Ibid.* p.157. I take the distinction between a capitalistic and a territorial logic as misleading. Given that, if a capitalist state is constituted, the different spheres determining social relations will tend to become autonomous by the logic of the division of labour. This division is produced by the instantiation of capitalism as a mode of production. Hence, the concepts of the territorial and the capitalistic determine each other; whichever synthesis they attain in the constitution of the state, it will be a political and economic synthesis containing a territorial demarcation under a capitalistic form. What is at issue then is the limit of that synthesis, and its historical transformation.

emerges from these remarks is the structural limit to the dominant form of accumulation. In any capitalist society, the political becomes the arena for the struggle between different and competing ideas regarding the form that the social organisation should take, based on the possibility of development of its capitalist structure. The inner dynamic of the US Fordist era demanded that any overaccumulation was either re-directed into the system by, as Harvey states, a “temporal displacement through investment in long-term capital projects or social expenditures (...) that defer the re-entry of capital values into circulation into the future;” or diverted as foreign direct investment provoking a “spatial displacement through the opening of new markets, new production capacities, and new resource, social, and labour possibilities elsewhere.”⁷⁶ The process of internal expansion, even when running on deficit, produces a process of social integration as it draws more people into the system; if accompanied with a distributionist policy, it also produces social homogenisation. The contradictory character of this development is that investment diverted abroad helps to develop other competing productive structures. Harvey condensates the radical transformation of the US economy of the time as follows,

“Threatened in the realm of production, the US has countered by asserting its hegemony through finance. But for this system to work effectively, markets in general and capital markets in particular had to be forced open to international trade (...) It also entailed shifting the balance of power and interests within the bourgeoisie from production activities to institutions of finance capital. Financial power could be used to discipline working-class movements. The opportunity arose to launch a frontal assault on the power of labour and to diminish the role of its institutions in the political process (...) The debt overhang of the state opened up all manner of opportunities for speculative activity that, in turn, made state powers more vulnerable to financial influences (...) This whole shift would not have had the effect it did had it not been for a battery of technological and organisational shifts that allowed manufacturing to become much more footloose and flexible.”⁷⁷

76. Harvey, *The New Imperialism*. p.109

77. *Ibid*, pp.63-64

As the world's hegemonic power, the shift of the US economy influenced the realignment of the world economic system under a new form of accumulation in which financialisation took the central place. The abandonment of the system of fixed currency exchange rates, and the gold-dollar parity, instituted a floating system of exchange rates favouring the free flow of capital.⁷⁸ At the same time, new technological developments allowed for production to be displaced almost everywhere so that transnational capital could disaggregate and disperse production "to take advantage of global differentials in labour regimes, labour processes, and industrial organisations, and to maximise its international profitability."⁷⁹ But for financial capital to operate efficiently at a world level, the international scene needed to be radically transformed. A generalised process of deregulation, the aperture of markets to financial flows, and the disciplining of debtors states took place under the growing influence of the ideology of neoliberalism. As Behzad Yaghmaian puts it,

"Global (de)regulation (neoliberalism) is, in fact, a form of regulation that facilitates the accumulation of the most internationalised capitals. This form of regulation necessitates the creation of new institutions and the enactment of new (international) laws. The new laws are enacted and enforced by the WTO and the World Bank/IMF through international trade and investment agreements and the Structural Adjustment Policy."⁸⁰

There is also another important issue relevant for the understanding of the transformation of the world economy. The overaccumulation of capital after the Second World War had provided financial institution with an important amount of reserves that were used to provide peripheral economies with credits for their recurrent economic crisis given their structural economic problems. While the IMF was originally set up to provide short term aid to countries facing balance of payment problems in order to avoid devaluation, its presupposition was the 'normal' functioning of economies and their cycles. As this is unlikely in peripheral economies

78. "Gold was abandoned as the material basis of money values and thereafter the world had to live with a dematerialised monetary system. Flows of money capital, already moving freely around the world via the eurodollar market (...) were to be totally liberated from state control." *Ibid.*, p.62

79. Yaghmaian, Behzad. "Globalisation and the State: The Political Economy of Global Accumulation and Its Emerging Mode of Regulation", *Science and Society*, Volume 62:2, p.249

80. *Ibid.*, p.257

the initial set up was modified to incorporate this new problematic. From the 1950s onwards the IMF started to implement what became known as 'standby agreements' which conditioned its help to debtor countries to the adoption of certain recommended policies.⁸¹ These agreements, while relevant in general for the approval of financial aid, did not become critical until the early 1970s. By then the peripheral countries' debt levels had become substantial enough to require a more drastic intervention⁸². As Frenkel and O'Donnell point out:

"the balance of payments problems of some peripheral countries are so severe that not only the position of their creditors but also the stability of the international financial system as a whole may be endangered. Under these conditions, international creditors are bound to promote strongly the type of economic policies that, by improving the balance of payments position of these countries, allow them to pay their debts."⁸³

This explains the transformation of the IMF into the privileged interlocutor of the most concentrated sectors of the international financial system. The political role that the IMF and other multilateral organisations were conceived to fulfil – to stabilise the world economy and create the conditions for non-antagonistic growth – was transformed into a tool for the manipulation and transformation of the political economy of peripheral countries. The IMF became the unavoidable and biased mediator between banks and financial institutions on the one hand, and financially troubled states on the other. As Frenkel and O'Donnell state

"The unwritten rules of international finance have led both private and public financiers to wait for a decision of the IMF regarding a standby credit before negotiating their own agreements, which often involve access to considerably higher amounts of hard currency than those provided by the standby credit itself. In relation to the country in need of external funds, transnational finance

81. On the transformation of the IMF criteria for providing financial help to peripheral economies see Frenkel, Roberto and O'Donnell, Guillermo. "The 'Stabilization Programs' of the International Monetary Fund and Their Internal Impacts," in Fagen, R. Richard, ed. *Capitalism and the State in U.S.- Latin American Relations*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979, pp.171-180

82. "Foreign debt of peripheral economies" has risen from 36 billion dollars in 1967 to approximately 200 billion by the end of 1976", *Ibid.* p.179

83. *Ibid.*

capital thus acts as a giant monopolist, imposing conditions that are made explicit by the IMF.”⁸⁴

This analysis points to the mutual coexistence between on the one hand, a crisis of overaccumulation and the disappearance of profitable outlets for investment in the centre economy that triggered the shift to financial capital; and on the other, the need for direct action on peripheral economies to make this transformation viable at the international level. The way in which the new and more flexible form of accumulation that began to emerge at this point affected different social formations, depended on the form in which their internal structures have been developed in relation to the world economic system until then.

Argentina's Dependent Development

I will refer here to the specificity of the Argentine case as the particularity of its socio-economic dynamic was at the root of the recurrent political crises of the import substitution industrialisation model, and ultimately of its termination as instrumented by the 1976 Bureaucratic Authoritarian government and its social base. The main distinctive feature of the Argentine economy that structured the political struggles during the years of import substitution industrialisation was that its main export commodities – beef and agricultural products – were at the same time the popular classes' most consumed commodities. As the price of these commodities is determined internationally they have an important impact in the domestic economy; primarily by affecting levels of industrial activity and employment. The mediation of the state in limiting any abrupt fluctuation in prices greatly defines the social policy in place. This is done generally by controlling the exchange rate or through the use of fiscal policy limiting the effects of the fluctuation of prices. With the expansion of the domestic market during the import substitution industrialisation period these prices became a central part of the political economy, and triggered a set of alliances between different sectors according to their internal or external economic interest. O'Donnell distinguishes four main political consequences arising from this situation. First, it offered “an objective basis (...) for the repeated alliance between a sizable part

84. Frenkel and O'Donnell, *Op.cit.*, p.175

of the weaker fractions of the urban bourgeoisie and the popular sector.”⁸⁵ Second, the continuous mobilisation of the popular sector in defence of its consumption levels made it conscious of its organisational and political capacity. Third, this alliance fractures the unity of the urban bourgeoisie – oligopolistic versus non-concentrated sectors. And fourth, the situation created a further internal fracture of the bourgeoisie; one dividing its urban and agrarian sectors.⁸⁶ This situation implied that the economic interests of the export oriented sectors were constantly clashing with the demands of those sectors focused on the development of the internal market; particularly those directed to wage earners’ demands. The key aspect of this situation was that any expansion of the internal market tendentially provoked a negative balance of payment. This was so, because given the dependent developmental character of the Argentine economy any expansion of the internal market required industrial imports that had to be sustained with either external financing or foreign direct investment. Hence the volume of imports required by, primarily but not exclusively, transnationalised sectors of the bourgeoisie for their expansion surpassed the exports of the agrarian bourgeoisie. The solution to this situation could only be generated by raising the productivity of the agrarian sector – difficult under unstable political and economic conditions, given that it requires important investment – or a programme of stabilisation of the economy. This last one normally forced a devaluation of the national currency in order to stabilise the situation. The devaluation gave a competitive advantage to the agrarian exporting sector, and increased the balance of payment surplus. At the same time, it triggered a strong internal recession by transferring a mass of resources to the agrarian sectors at the expenses of the urban sectors. As the prices of the basic commodities consumed by the popular classes increased, their purchasing power deteriorated, having a recessive effect on the urban economy. This, in turn, activated the alliance between the working classes and the urban bourgeoisie in their demands for a change of policy given the deteriorating situation. As the balance of payments eased, the conditions for a re-activation of the economy emerged. The subsequent increase in salaries and the rise of consumption levels, led to an expansion of the domestic economy until a new balance of payments

85. O’Donnell, *Counterpoints*, p.11

86. *Ibid.*

crisis emerged.⁸⁷ These cycles of expansion and contraction of the domestic market demonstrated the ability of each sector to negotiate in its own favour. And, as Basualdo demonstrates, it managed to expand the economy up until the mid-1970s through the dynamism of its industrial base.⁸⁸ At the same time, it created strong antagonisms between the internally oriented block – the popular sectors and a national bourgeoisie related to the state as the dynamic motor of the economy – and an externally oriented sector and the transnationalised bourgeoisie that, at least until the 1976, did not manage to consolidate a power block. The alliance of the working class with the local bourgeoisie constituted a defensive reaction to the advances of the oligopolistic and transnationalised bourgeoisie. However, the alliance's successive victories were, at the same time, demarcating their own limitations, as O'Donnell points out:

“Their banner has been the defence of the internal market, in the sense, both of raising the level of its activity and of limiting the expansion of international capital in it (...) Its ideology of 'nationalist' and 'socially just' development overlooked what it was unable to problematise: the deeply oligopolistic and internationalised structure of the capitalism of which its members were the weakest components.”⁸⁹

Caught between the cycles of expansion and contraction of the economy and the political antagonisms thus created, this 'defensive alliance' was not able to offer a transformative alternative. A working class organisation deeply immersed in the ideological coordinates of Peronism was unable to present an alternative political project beyond their own punctual economic demands: an 'impressive popular activation' reduced to a form of 'militant economism'.⁹⁰ The weakness of a state unable to synthesise in a stable and continuous form its constitutive social relations, added to the ineffectiveness of its apparatuses to channel institutionally the demands of the different social groups, transformed it into the prey of every power struggle. The succession of power block coalitions incapable of stabilising the internal social,

87. *Ibid.*, p.13

88. Basualdo Eduardo, *Estudios de Historia Económica Argentina: desde mediados del siglo XX a la actualidad*. Buenos Aires, Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 2010, pp.91-107

89. O'Donnell *Counterpoints*, pp.18-19

90. *Ibid.* p.22

economic and political structure and the randomisation of demands, led to a continuous crisis of mass praetorianism. A condition intensified given the ambivalent ideological character of Peronism. Given the short term scope of successive economic policies that the state implemented in order to attend to the multiplying demands and the unstable political conditions, its situation “was recurrently razed to the ground by civil society's changing coalitions (...) The result was a state apparatus extensively colonised by civil society.”⁹¹

The social power and contradiction inherent in the defensive alliance had it momentum with the return of Perón from exile and his election for a third term in 1973, which put the national popular movement in charge of the institutional system of the state, marginalising the transnationalised bourgeoisie from the power block. Given the structural constitution of the Argentine capitalist system, and its dependence on the dynamic of both the transnationalised and agrarian bourgeoisie, the economic cycle referred to above resurged after Perón's death, intensified by the now highly politicised social context. The social situation deteriorated and opened the door to a new military intervention. O'Donnell emphasises the self-defeating circle of development:

“The appropriation of the public sphere by unmediated conflicts (or, rather, by conflicts mediated only by increasing violence) by actors ever more private and particularised, and, behind this, the destruction of civilised coexistence.”⁹²

The understanding of this particular dynamic of the Argentine political and economic situation, and of the effects that the transnationalisation of the economy had for its social bases, is relevant for the understanding of the effects that the Bureaucratic Authoritarian government that took power in 1976 had on the country. The transformation of the society that this last dictatorship produced had long lasting effects on the social structure, some of which can still be perceived today. The unprecedented levels of violence that the military government unleashed on the population together with the deep transformation of the productive structure radically modified the constitution of Argentine society. The following section is an attempt to

91. *Ibid.* p.23

92. *Ibid.*, p.96

understand this transformation within the conceptual framework of the destruction of the social.

The Destruction of the Social

While the developmentalist discourses had their momentum during the late 1950s and early 1960s, the time lapse of Bureaucratic Authoritarianism extended through the 1970s and well into the 1980s. The discourse of re-alignment with the world economy did not maintain its industrialist character in Argentina, and instead turned towards neoliberal reforms involving the opening of the economy to the international markets and the transformation of its financial regulation to allow the free flow of capital. The policies implemented by the Bureaucratic Authoritarian government aimed at different fronts and had apparently autonomous targets: economically, the 'normalisation' of an economy that had become highly speculative and randomised, trapped as it was in the cycles of expansion and recession, was to be separated from any political influence, while left to the hands of expert technocrats whose scientific knowledge was presented as neutral. Politically, the deactivation of a popular sector that was perceived as dangerously mobilised and highly politicised 'demanded' strong measures to avoid further disruptions to the social order. And finally, at the social level, there was a need for 'disciplining' a society that had nurtured and incited 'subversiveness' at every micro level challenging its hierarchical structure. At all three levels, the armed forces had the role of repressing any resistance to the transformation. The last objective, however, demanded a more direct intervention: the restoration of the hierarchical functioning of the social body based on values and traditions epitomised by those of a 'Western' and 'Christian' society. The anatomic metaphor worked in a twofold direction: on the one hand, legitimising the hierarchical and theological vision of society that the military government, together with the economic elites, wanted to restore, and on the other hand, as a rhetorical figure for the description of the social body as an 'infected' body in need of urgent and drastic intervention. As O'Donnell points out:

"In Argentina, society was perceived to be the problem. It was there that, according to the perpetrators and supporters of the 1976 coup, everything was

out of place. Nothing important could be achieved, nor would the cruel victories of the perpetrators be worth anything, if the *destruction of the basis of such 'disorder'* was not accomplished. The country's evil elements had to be eliminated; i.e., the political identities of the popular sector, its unions, and (...) their insolence in daily dealings with 'superiors.'"⁹³ (JR)

The challenge to any sort of confrontational or critical behaviour at every micro level of society – from the education, to the work spaces of the office and the factory, and the private space of the family – provoked an increasing fracture of the social fabric. The atomisation of subjectivities inherent in the process of individualisation at the economic (commodification) or political (citizenship) levels is here produced by a criminal repression propagating a multiplicity of micro-despotisms. One of the fundamental consequences of this, is the fracture of not only a vertical collective voice, the one flowing from society to the representative levels, but also of an horizontal voice, a voice produced at the level of equals. This, as O'Donnell points out

“results not only in the suppression of the specifically public dimension of the subjects, but also in severe loss of their sociability (...) the atomised life they are forced to live, the extreme privatisation of their concerns, and the caution and mistrust with which the few remaining occasions of sociability must be approached (...) Short of the psychological disintegration of the individual (...) the resulting tendency converges with the purposes of the BA: to take refuge in an extremely privatised life, ‘forgetting’ the dangerous and cognitively uncertain ‘outside world.’”⁹⁴

A different type of heterogenisation takes place: a compartmentalised division of the social in which everyone has their precise place. As the market and the political process failed to homogenise society, state terrorism became the unmediated medium of unification of the social. As Lechner states:

“The authoritarian strategy can efficiently rely on the conformism induced by the disciplinary mechanisms, but it cannot eliminate politics understood as an inter-subjective production of a ‘sense of order;’ with the caveat that politics cannot

93. *Ibid*, p.98

94. *Ibid.*, p.72

find any mediating structures. The different social groups can not anymore recognise themselves in a common reference. Hence, it becomes necessary to determinate and articulate the meaning of each individual practice. Everything becomes political, but without the public sphere where to construct a collective representation.”⁹⁵

Occupied in the compulsory search of every ‘subversive cell’ the military government left the task of normalising the economy in the hands of a team of neoliberal technocrats. The centrality that the economic intervention had for the reconstitution of the productive structure marks its clear political objective: the destruction of the material basis sustaining the national popular state; an objective that seamlessly matched the authoritarian construction of order. Hidden behind the anti-subversive ideology of the military government and its terrorist machine, this economic team articulated the crafty dismantling of the productive structure that had organised the country’s social relations for the past four decades. As O’Donnell states:

“The anti-subversive paranoia petrifies society. In this way the political conditions are created for the chirurgical intervention of the economic ‘técnicos’; in this way, the anti-subversive passion offers its aseptic self-image to the technocrat.”⁹⁶

At this point in the analysis, the objectives of the national economic elites overlap with those of the international trend towards the transformation of the dominant form of accumulation. The balance of payments crisis and the high inflationary situation conditioned any help from the international markets to the implementation of a ‘stand-by’ programme of adjustment elaborated by the IMF. This programme was based on the monetarist idea that the price system has a point of equilibrium under free market conditions; hence the need for opening up the national economy to the international markets in order to find it. In this way the existing conditions of the Argentine economy at the time of the military coup were used as the basis for the implementation of a restriction on money supply, a tight fiscal policy and the devaluation of the national currency, presenting them as necessary for an economic

95. Lechner, “Epílogo”, *Estado y Política en América Latina*, p.318

96. O’Donnell, “Las Fuerzas Armadas y Estado Autoritario”, *Estado y Política en América Latina*. p.213

recovery. The ideological link between the Argentine technocrats designing the economic plan and the IMF approach is exposed in the latter's remarkably contradictorily approach to commodity and labour markets. As O'Donnell and Frenkel emphasise:

"Whenever price controls and regulations are in force, the program tends to demand their elimination; conversely, when the IMF considers that the government has sufficient power to establish ceilings on salary increases, they are imposed by the program. This incongruence goes considerably beyond the criteria based on theoretical outlook and implies a socially biased pragmatism whose political significance is demonstrated most clearly under authoritarian regimes."⁹⁷

De-regulation of commodity markets so that they can freely flow and tight regulation of the internal labour market to maximise exploitation. Consequently, the economic policy of the 1976-1983 dictatorship implemented a strong devaluation of the national currency that brought about an increase in agricultural prices and a lowering of real wages, that – following the dynamic explained in the previous section – triggered a recession of the domestic market.⁹⁸ Under the existing repressive conditions the popular classes' capacity for opposing these measures disappeared.⁹⁹ The distribution of income regressively moved from wage earners to agrarian bourgeoisie and the export sector. Even when the whole industrial sector was affected, the burden of the transformation was shouldered by those industries producing for the internal market.¹⁰⁰ At the same time the opening of the domestic market to international imports had a drastic consequence for an important part of the social fabric. At the industrial level, the removal of important protectionist barriers literally meant a hard-boiled economic rationalisation of the internal market, displacing a big sector of the national industry. This situation, one of the key economic measures, provoked a two way transformation. On the one hand, there was a process

97. Frenkel and O'Donnell, *Op.cit.* p.177

98. *Ibid.* p.182

99. This situation forms part of the disciplining of the popular classes implemented by the dictatorship: "the dissolution of the CGT (Workers General Congress), the suppression of union activities and the right to strike, etc." Azpiazu, Basualdo and Khavisse, *Op.cit.* p.75

100. Frenkel and O'Donnell, *Op.cit.* p.188

of des-industrialisation that reduced the total industrial capacity and the employment linked to it.¹⁰¹ On the other hand, the restructuring of the productive system provoked a high degree of concentration of the economy and favoured all those industrial sectors focused mainly on international markets or products of primary necessity.¹⁰² According to Basualdo, Azpiazu and Khavisse the transformation of the society imposed by the Bureaucratic Authoritarian government acted across three fundamental lines, “the reconstitution of the conditions of social domination, the re-definition of the role of the state, and the transformation of social and productive structure.”¹⁰³ In this respect, the reason for the economic transformation has to be seen in line with the political and ideological objectives behind the transformation. As the authors state,

“The military process aimed at reverting the dynamic and the productive conditions that the industrial substitution had implemented due to its 'apparent' inefficiencies in relation to the international market, the discrimination that it represented for the agrarian production, and particularly, because of the *social conditions* and the type of *political alliances* it favoured, which constituted the basis of the recurrent popular projects.” (JR)¹⁰⁴

It is far from an exaggeration to assert that the structural transformation described above is better understood as a process of des-integration hidden behind the doctrine

101. This is shown more explicitly by comparing the figures of industrial Gross Domestic Product (GDP) before and after the dictatorship. See Azpiazu, Basualdo and Khavisse, *Op.cit.*, p. 90 “That the industrial GDP of 1983 is equivalent to 90% of the one generated the previous decade (1973) or 85%, if compared to the one of 1974, does not constitute a usual phenomenon in the history of societies. Relatively similar examples could only be found in cases of physical destruction of the means of production (like the consequences of war conflicts or big natural catastrophes) or the monetarists economic programmes implemented also in other countries of the Southern Cone of Latin America (Chile, Uruguay).”

102. *Ibid.*, p. 198

103. *Ibid.*, p.176

104. Azpiazu, Basualdo and Khavisse, *Op.cit.* p.211 O'Donnell's description of the narrow social base supporting Bureaucratic Authoritarian regimes follows similar lines to these authors: “The ‘artificial’ economy, the mobilisation of the masses and the subversion appear thus integrated as the common target technocrats and the military should aim to” O'Donnell, *Counterpoints*, p.52. It is because of the constant failure of the economic cycles described in the previous section, and the political crisis derived from them, that the only sector that appeared as ‘uncontaminated’ from that past can form part of the regime's social base: a right wing oligarchic sector marginalised as a political minority since the 1930, even though still strongly influential, and a right wing technocratic group representative of an ‘economic liberalism’ legitimised by its links to the international establishment. In O'Donnell's words: “What is that this civilians had to offer to the military government? Under the façade of an economic policy, nothing else than a political ideology, an organisational matrix through which to perceive the reality and the projects of that government.” O'Donnell, “Fuerzas Armadas y Estado Autoritario”, p.207

of national security. The transformation of the social structure; the marginalisation of the popular classes and the shocking diminishing of its participation in the social income imposed under a highly repressive regime¹⁰⁵; the destruction of capital produced by the bankruptcies and closing down of businesses; the concentration of capital in the oligopolistic hands of the transnationalised sector and the diversified oligarchy of local economic groups; the fundamental transformation of the financial system providing the means for an influx of speculative capital, the drainage of internal surpluses towards the international financial centres, and creating the conditions for the radical development of speculative gambling: all these situations re-defined the criteria for capital investment towards a very narrow industrial base mainly focused on producing for the international market or re-directed to the financial sector for openly speculative investment.¹⁰⁶ At the same time the exponential increase of the external debt became the seal to this transformation as it cemented the new social structure. Eduardo Basualdo synthesises the transformation as follows:

“the external debt not only put a limit to economic growth, it also defines, in great measure, the pattern of accumulation and hence, the type of crisis or of growth that a peripheral country like Argentina adopts (...) Since the Financial Reform,¹⁰⁷ and the opening of the commodity and capital markets, onwards, the external debt replaces foreign direct investment as the strategic variable, not only because of its magnitude and the outflow of capitals it provokes, but most importantly because it defines the new characteristics that the economic process adopts.”¹⁰⁸

As pointed out in this section the main target of the 1976-1983 dictatorship was the dismantling of the material conditions that sustained the popular sectors' capacity to

105. “Given the differential behaviour between labour’s productivity (it grew 37.6% between 1974-1983) and the wage cost of labour (it decreased 18.6%), the magnitude of the surplus absorbed by the industrial sector as a whole, grew 69% in that decade.” Azpiazu, Basualdo and Khavisse, *Op.cit.*, p. 109.

106. As Azpiazu, Basualdo and Khavisse state: “The internationalisation of the financial system brakes the previous pattern of accumulation not only because the free movement of capitals implies that considerations of the rate of external productive profit stops being a privilege of TNC, but most fundamentally because from that moment onwards the level of the internal rate of profit confront itself with the rate of financial profit in the international market, in a period in which the financial valorisation of capital has become dominant.” *Ibid.*, pp. 216-217

107. Basualdo refers to the Law 21.526 (14/02/1977) of Financial Reform established by the military government that deregulated the Argentine financial sector.

108. Eduardo Basualdo. *Deuda Externa y Poder Economico en la Argentina*. Buenos Aires: Nueva America, 1987, pp.126-127

constitute an alternative political project. The dissolution of the internal market, the suspension of political participation or any appeal to the people, the censorship exerted on cultural life, and the long lasting fracture of all dimensions of the public sphere enacted through state terrorism, helped to destroy, or at least to severely restrict, the existing conditions of sociability and solidarity.

The concept of the destruction of the social introduced in this last section refers to the specific character of the transformation effected in the Argentine society in its transition to, and during, the neoliberal period. It is anchored in the turning point that the dictatorship is in this respect; its historically specific mediation between the political and ideological struggles internal to the country – the need of the elites to reassert their economic power politically – and the transformation of the world's capitalist system towards financial valorisation as a dominant form of accumulation within a neoliberal ideological framework – but has its continuation and legitimating moment during the 1990s when, after the processes of hyper inflation of the late 1980s, all resistance to the total transformation of the national popular state disappeared. The reduction and retreat of the state during the 1990s allowed a process of privatisation that furthered the disintegration and fragmentation of the existing social structure. This transformation is the expression in the Argentine context of what Harvey has denominated “accumulation by dispossession”; a process through which capitalism cannibalistically “manufactures” and ‘outside’ and colonises it through “predatory and fraudulent practices.”¹⁰⁹ As Basualdo points out, it is the dominant form of accumulation based on financial valorisation that defines the “type of crisis or growth” that the Argentine society suffered during the neoliberal period. The substantial transformation of the relation between labour and capital fractures the type of developmental logic implied by the model of import substitution industrialisation. Given these conditions, the conceptualisation of the logic of expanded reproduction – so central to Adorno's sociological understanding of the process of integration and key for the construction of the categories of the new and the most advanced artistic material in his theory of art – needs to be dialectically elaborated in relation to the concept of ‘accumulation by dispossession’ to understand the dynamic of the historical process taking place in Argentina.

109. Harvey. *The New Imperialism*, pp.141-148

The dictatorship of 1976-1983 established this turning point by articulating the dissolution of any political subjectivity constituted around popular demands with the imposition of both direct violence and direct intervention in the material conditions of its existence; both having long lasting effects. The destruction of the social capital accumulated in more than three decades of import substitution industrialisation was part of the mechanisms for the dissolution of the dominant political subjectivity of that period, as well as the source of accumulation and concentration of capital in favour of an elite that became politically determinant by virtue of the economic power it held, and directing the “type of crisis or growth” according to their own interest.

CHAPTER 3

THE POLITICAL MEDIATION OF ART AS COMMODITY FORM: SKILLING, DESKILLING AND PRECARISATION

The critique of the spatial dimension of Adorno's social theory offered in Chapter 1 focuses on the existence of different and overlapping conceptualisations of space at work in his reflections. On the one hand, there is the space of the conceptualisation of society at the level of its form of organisation (production) and reproduction; what Adorno describes as its dynamic principle, its functional interconnection. On the other hand, there is the space in which Adorno's sociological presuppositions take place; the space of the industrialised societies. The logic of the first space conflicts with the logic of the second in such a way that to follow rigorously the principle of the functional interconnection puts his thesis of the homogenisation of social relations into crisis. The situation is further complicated by the historical transformation of the global structure of capitalism from the 1970s onwards, when the key ideas sustaining the Fordist type of mass production and the Welfare State form of social organisation of developed societies of the 1950s and 1960s were replaced by a more flexible, demand oriented organisation of production, in combination with a retreat of the state from its interventions in the economy and the gradual deregulation of the financial sector, with the consequent 'free' movement of capital throughout the globe.¹

The vast literature dedicated to Adorno since the 1990s highlights the actuality of his theory on the basis that the expansion and increasing integration of capitalist relations across the entire globe has made the conditions described in his social theory a reality, generally disregarding the structural transformation suffered by the different social formations since Adorno's time. Concepts like 'commodification' require to be interpreted in a historical perspective as their actualisation will have a very different impact according to the prevailing political and economic structures, and hence will affect subjects differently. Adorno links the rationalisation of administration not only to the tendency of every institution to expansion and autonomisation, but primarily to the expansion of "the conditions of exchange throughout the entirety of life in the face

1. This is however a dialectical moment, in so far as the retreat of the state implies a state active *de*-intervention (in terms of de-regulation, fiscal policy, etc) in the economy.

of *increasing monopolisation*.”²(JR). This expansion shapes and is shaped by the political form of organisation and the prevailing economic form of accumulation, and defines the scope of the social: how subjects live in this society. In Adorno’s theorisation the term ‘monopoly’ is understood not only in relation to the productive sector but also to the political structure of the developed nation states. It refers to the transition from a liberal form of capitalism to what in the Frankfurt School context was encapsulated by the debate around State Capitalism (Fredrich Pollock) or Monopolistic Economy (Franz Neumman).³ In other words, the society that Adorno defines as constituting ‘late capitalism’ can be summarised by what Fredric Jameson distinguishes as its two essential features: “(1) A tendential web of bureaucratic control (...), and (2) the interpenetration of government and big business.”⁴ The implication of this theorisation at the sociological level is that the integration of previously excluded parts of the population – primarily but not exclusively the proletariat – is done at the expense of not only their subjectivity but of all social subjectivities, in what Adorno describes as a process of homogenisation; integration and de-differentiation. This integration implies a specific modality of relation between the universe of labour and the rest of the social. The moment of the ‘total’ integration of the excluded is also the moment of the qualitative transformation of the social as a whole. The homogenisation of labour processes that Adorno described at the productive level – his thesis of the interchangeability of individuals throughout the productive system given that the intensification of the division of labour has in turn deepened the process of deskilling, and hence no relevance is attached to any specific form of labour⁵ – is articulated with the characterisation of a ‘totally integrated’ society, one that provides a social network covering all its members through the mediation of the Welfare State.

With the characterisation of society as industrial, Adorno’s description of the homogenisation of knowledge and skills through the intensification of labour processes accepts the transformation of all labour into productive labour on the basis

2. Adorno, “Culture and Administration”, p.110

3. See, Pollock, Friedrich. “State Capitalism: Its Possibilities and Limitations”, in Arato, Andrew and Gebhardt, Eike, ed. *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*. London: Continuum, , 2005, pp.71-97 and Neuman, Franz. *Behemoth. The Structure and Practice of National Socialism 1933-1944*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1944.

4. Jameson, Fredric *Postmodernism or the cultural logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1991, p. XVIII

5. See Chapter 1 above, p.26

of the primacy of industrial labour. Because society is allegorically understood as a 'kind of factory' the term 'industrial society' fits well with Adorno's argument of the 'industrialisation' of society at every level⁶. As he states

"Industrial labour has everywhere become the model of society as such, regardless of the frontiers separating differing political systems. It has developed into a totality because methods modelled on those of industry are necessarily extended by the laws of economics to other realms of material production, administration, the sphere of distribution, and those that call themselves culture."⁷

As 'industrial (productive) labour' is taken as the model, all other types of labour are assimilated to productive labour, and hence the real subsumption of labour under capital tends towards a specific type of totalisation. This is the key element for understanding the role of the historically specific form of commodification at work in Adorno's theorisation. At the same time, and influenced by Weber's analysis of bureaucracies,⁸ Adorno finds the limit to the tendency towards the monopolisation of the economy in a logic that is external to the principle of exchange: the logic of total administration. Planning at an economically large scale becomes necessary in order to avoid collapsing the social body that has been constructed around the industrial expansion. This is the moment of self adaptation of the system; its mechanism of survival. Industrialisation, as the basis of further economic expansion, and bureaucratisation, as the mark of an expanded and expanding form of organisation and administration, are the two logics at play in this society. As these two logics reinforce each other, what appears as a politically constructed society – the Welfare State of post Second World War in developed societies – becomes at the same time de-politicised. As much as Adorno acknowledges the political dimension in the manipulation of the economic process, he also condemns the objective irrationality of a politics constrained by a capitalistic and monopolistic logic.⁹ As conformity replaces

6. "Those (the relations of production) have ceased to be just property relations; they now also include relations ranging from those of administration on up to those of the state, which functions now as an all-inclusive capitalist organisation," Adorno. "Late Capitalism or Industrial Society", p.119

7. *Ibid.*, p.118

8. In "Culture and Administration", Adorno quotes from Weber, Max. *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, Tübingen, 1922, pp. 109-112

9. Adorno, "Late Capitalism or Industrial Society?," p116

consciousness and the culture industry ideologically cements the path towards further social expansion and totalisation, relations of production “become more flexible” and hence the overthrow of capitalist relations does not appear as a goal anymore;¹⁰ this is the moment in which the politically constructed society dissolves politics. As Adorno states

“This creates the impression that the universal interest is to preserve the status quo and the only ideal is full employment, not liberation from heteronomous labour.”¹¹

The ‘ideal of full employment’ was a centrepiece of the different Welfare States of the industrially developed societies of the 1960s, and constituted what Robert Castel denominates a ‘salaried society’.¹² Castel’s analysis of these societies is in many respects similar to Adorno’s, though it offers a stronger emphasis on the social achievements accomplished by the ‘salarisation’ of society in its extension of rights and social benefits. At a macroeconomic level, full employment becomes one of the key state policies as consumption is what maintains the economic process; while at the microeconomic level, these societies develop a social pact to deal with wage and productivity; what Adorno defines as the fusion of state and market under the seal of administration. These societies also define the spatial demarcation of the social pact at the level of the nation state in which this pact unfolds, hence delimiting its political reach.

Monopoly Capitalism and Commodification

Given that the expansion of the principle of exchange is conditioned internally by an administrative logic focused on social inclusion, and externally by the international scenario of the Cold War, the process of commodification cannot but be mediated by

10. *Ibid.* p118, “In the advanced industrial societies, as long as no natural economic catastrophes occur in defiance of Keynes, people have learned to prevent an all-too-visible poverty.”

11. *Ibid.*

12. Castel, Robert. *From Manual Workers To Wage Laborers: The Transformation of the Social Question*, translated and edited by Richard Boyd, Transaction Publishers, London, 2003. Castel analyses the sociological implications of the concept of salaried society as defined by Aglietta, Michel and Bender, Anton. *Les Métamorphoses de la Société Salariale*. Paris: Calmann-Lévey, 1984.

the existing forms of socio-political organisation. As Castel remarks, the society of the Welfare State is

“a system of political management, which linked together private property and social property, economic development and the acquisition of social rights, the market and the State.”¹³

One in which

“wage ceases any longer to be a punctual remuneration for a task. Now it guarantees rights, gives access to benefits outside of work (sickness, accidents, retirement) and allows a wider participation in social life: through consumption, housing, education, and even, beginning in 1936, leisure.”¹⁴

In a similar fashion Adorno's analysis of the culture industry rests upon the integration of the different spheres of the social into a totality that secures its existence and perpetuation. Adorno criticises the type of developmentalism that has become the engine of society, but his social theory seems to incorporate such developmentalism into its own logic. A society thus structured creates specific conditions for the appropriation of new technological developments in line with Harry Braverman's description in his *Labour and Monopoly Capital*.¹⁵ Braverman's book, like Adorno's reflection on the sociology of industrialised developed societies, was produced before the beginning of the structural transformation of capitalism in the early to mid-1970s and as such reflects the characteristics of the US American society of the time. As Paul M. Sweezy states, Braverman's book can be understood as

"an attempt to inquire systematically into the consequences which the particular kinds of technological change characteristic of the *monopoly capitalist period* have had for the nature of work [and] the composition (and differentiation) of the working class."¹⁶ (JR)

Braverman develops his thesis of the degradation of work on the basis of an expanding economy in which state intervention helped to absorb the growing surplus

13. Castel, Robert. *Op.cit.*, p.343

14. *Ibid*, pp. 303-4

15. Braverman, Harry. *Labour and Monopoly Capital, The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1998.

16. Sweezy, Paul M. "Foreword to the Original Edition" in Braverman, *Op.cit.*, p. XXIV

created by the monopolistic business structure. Similar to Adorno, Braverman describes the tendency of the transformation of labour processes towards meaningless repetitive tasks in which the required levels of instruction and learning have been reduced significantly. Hence, the transformation of production processes and of the labour attached to them provokes a qualitative transformation of the concept of skill from its previous definition as craft mastery to its new meaning as a form of 'specific dexterity,' detached from scientific knowledge and decision-making strategies.¹⁷ As in Adorno's reflections, Braverman extends his conclusions regarding productive labour to the sphere of unproductive labour claiming that the technicality of their distinction has become historically irrelevant.¹⁸

The politics of autonomy in Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory* is demarcated by this social form subjacent to a historically specific process of commodification. Concepts like 'late capitalism', 'monopoly', and 'industrial society', are important reminders of the historical specificity of Adorno's theorisation. The analysis of monopoly capitalism cannot be detached, at the sociological level, from the dynamic of state interventionism in this society; otherwise the analysis becomes a form of sociological developmentalism. What is a relatively concrete analysis of the specific dynamic of the conditions of production, organisation and consumption in monopolistic economies under this particular form of state, becomes deterministic if applied without recourse to the context in which it is immersed. The condition of universality of the autonomous work of art in Adorno's theory finds its limit in the particularity of the social conditions under which it is constituted. This limit is not only manifested in relation to the more complex geopolitical context of the 1960s – which I address in chapter 4 – but also in the dissolution of those social conditions from the early 1970s onwards. This last point, in its specific Argentine context, is the topic of chapter 5.

17. See Braverman, "A Final Note on Skill", *Op.cit.*, particularly pages 443-4 and the quote from the unpublished Ph.D. by M.C. Kennedy. Braverman, while not influenced by Poulantzas, defines deskilling along the same lines in which the latter defines the workers' position in relation to the means of possession. See chapter 1.

18. Braverman, *Op.cit.*, pp.420-423

Deskilling – Reskilling in Art

The transformation of labour processes, together with the structural transformation of society described in the first two sections of this chapter, cannot but affect the productions of works of arts. With the tendency towards the commodification of all spheres of the social under capitalist monopolistic conditions, moments of freedom from this logic become critical reminders of the unfreedom of the system. The work of art is affected by industrialisation given that as a social product it also suffers the consequences of the transformation of the productive processes. Materials and procedures lose their social meaning as they are replaced by others, in line with the development and industrial implementation of new technologies. In so far as labour – both productive and unproductive – is transformed and revolutionised by technological changes, artistic labour, as a particular type of social labour, is also transformed.

The notion of craft, as a constitutive element of the work of art, has been problematised at different levels since the emergence of the ready-made in the early 20th Century. In *The Intangibilities of Form* John Roberts approaches the notion of craft in art from the stand point of the dialectic of skilling and deskilling and its relation to the broader social context.¹⁹ Roberts' analysis of the process of deskilling under capitalist development is based on the intensification of Marx's account of the transformation of the division of labour, through the monopolisation of industrial manufacture presented by Braverman in his *Labor and Monopoly Capital*. Its significance however derives from the extrapolation of the dialectic of skilling and deskilling onto the new emergent context dominated by the growing immateriality of labour and the rise of the 'network society'. Roberts provides a historical reading of the qualitative difference between artistic labour and alienated labour, using as its pivotal moment the canonical production of the ready-made by Duchamp. As he states,

19. Roberts, John. *The Intangibilities of Form: Skill and Deskilling in Art After the Readymade*. London: Verso, 2007.

“The readymade’s expansion of the materials of art is not just a formal extension of the artist’s repertoire, but a point of reflection on art’s place within the division of labour.”²⁰

This point of reflection is, at the same time, Roberts’ point of departure for explaining the differential character in the historical development of productive labour and artistic labour.²¹ First, he emphasises the historical development of the dialectic of skilling and deskilling for productive labour in general, given the ‘necessarily’ constant technological development under capitalist conditions; repeating Marx’s argument and re-emphasizing it through Braverman’s account of labour under monopoly capitalism. This is problematic in relation to the historical horizon in which Roberts unfolds his argument – that of the network society²² – as Braverman’s argument is constituted by the specificity of the monopolistic economic structures pre-1970s, and hence it does not reflect the uneven expression of technological development in its impact on the global heterogeneous social conditions developed since then. Second, he presents art as a unique sphere of production in which artistic labour, as a form of labour not formally subsumed under capital, is able to bypass the dialectic of skilling and deskilling by qualitatively transforming the nature of its own development. In other words, artistic labour is able to align itself to general social technique and absorb technological developments in a non-alienating form so as to remain autonomous. As Roberts puts it:

“Reskilling is emergent from deskilling precisely because as non-heteronomous labour the deskilling of art is open to autonomous forms of transformation, and

20. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p.52

21. Roberts’ analysis of the different types of labour in contemporary society, and of artistic labour in particular, is far from satisfactory. The distinction he makes, following Marx, between productive and unproductive labour leaves Negri’s criticism of that distinction in *Marx Beyond Marx* untouched, and hence does not really make a differentiation internal to unproductive labour where artistic production is located. See, Negri, Antonio, Fleming, Jim, and Cleaver, Harry. *Marx Beyond Marx: Lessons on the Grundrisse*. Trans. by Fleming, Jim. London: Pluto Press, 1992. Without such a differentiation, artistic practice is one more of the formally subsumed types of labour under capitalism; which in fact, according to Adorno’s position, it also is. Roberts intends to affirm artistic labour by appropriating Adorno’s analysis of the autonomy of the work of art and expanding it to artistic labour. Adorno’s analysis however is not applicable to the autonomy of artistic labour but only to the work of art.

22. This is an argument open to debate as it is not clear that this dialectic affects in equal form the manufacture and service industries. See Castells. *Op.cit.*, see particularly Chapter 4, pp.216-354

these forms of transformation will of necessity find their expression in other skills than craft-based skills: namely, immaterial skills.”²³

It is not the notion of craft per se that Roberts wants to detach from artistic labour, but a notion of craft as ‘handicraft.’ It is the process of demanualisation of labour in general, as part of the development of general social technique which makes manual production obsolete due to the emergence of different processes of industrialisation. Craft re-defines itself historically in Roberts’ account,

“the ‘demanualisation’ of art links dexterity and facility to conceptual acuity as an expression of craft. Skill reemerges as the craft of reproducibility and the craft of copying without copying, realigning the emergent totipotentiality of the hand to mechanic and digital forms of general social technique.”²⁴

Roberts’ concern with the technological transformation of labour processes in both art and productive labour is influenced by Walter Benjamin’s essay “The work of art in the age of its mechanical reproduction”.²⁵ According to Benjamin, technological reproducibility, by destroying the aura of the work of art, has made the possibility of autonomy in art obsolete. The fundamental transformation that the emergence of technological reproducibility has for art is effected at the level of production. Making a distinction between the production of a painting and the production of a film, Benjamin states:

“The painter’s image is a total image, whereas that of the cinematographer is piecemeal, its manifold parts being assembled according to a new law.”²⁶

Benjamin makes a distinction between first technology – “mastery over nature” – and second technology – defined by the “interplay between nature and humanity”²⁷ – that is reproduced dialectically in art, even though it is second technology that appears as the dominant moment. Benjamin functionalises the role of art in a pedagogic

23. Roberts, *op. cit.*, pp. 87-88

24. *Ibid.*, p.98

25. Benjamin, Walter. “The work of art in the age of its mechanical reproduction”, *Selected Writings*, Vol 3, Ed. by Jennings, Michael W., the Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, London, 2002, pp.101-133., I take this version of Benjamin essay, the second version unpublished during Benjamin’s life, as it is the one Roberts discusses in his analysis.

26. *Ibid.*, p116

27. *Ibid.*, p107

fashion: "the primary social function of art today is to rehearse that interplay". Film as the paradigmatic art form in Benjamin's account has the double function of making humans compatible with the high levels of technologisation, but more importantly of creating a level of consciousness of the potentiality of a free technology. As he states:

"This second technology is a system in which the mastering of elementary social forces is a precondition for playing with natural forces (...) For the more the collective makes the second technology its own, the more keenly individuals belonging to the collective feel how little they have received of what was due to them under the dominion of the first technology."²⁸

Adorno shares Benjamin's understanding of the problem of art's liquidation under the primacy of technological development, but he rejects both Benjamin's equation between the autonomous work of art and myth as condensed in the concept of aura, and the positive and liberating power that Benjamin confers to cinema as a technological medium.²⁹ As he writes in a letter to Benjamin,

"The reification of a great work of art is not simply a matter of loss, any more than the reification of the cinema is all loss (...) You underestimate the technical character of autonomous art and overestimate that of dependent art."³⁰

This qualitative distinction internal to the sphere of art is the basis for Adorno's famous remark about the "torn halves of an integral freedom, to which, however, they do not add up"³¹. In the constitution of the work of art this dialectic of autonomy and dependency is what establishes the work's position in one of the halves according to what moment of the dialectic predominates in them.³² This is why Adorno encourages Benjamin to be more dialectic in his analysis of the artwork essay, asking for "an even stronger attempt to interpret the negativity of utilitarian art dialectically."³³ However Adorno retains in his reflections something of the distinction Benjamin makes between

28. *Ibid.*

29. Lonitz, Henri, ed. *Theodor W. Adorno and Walter Benjamin: The Complete Correspondence 1928-1940*. Trans. By Walker, Nicholas. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003 p.128

30. Adorno and Benjamin, *op.cit.*, p. 131

31. *Ibid.*, p.130

32. For a detailed account of this dialectic in Adorno's theory of art see Osborne, Peter. "Torn halves and the Great Divides: The Dialectics of a Cultural Dichotomy", *News from Nowhere*, Nr7, Winter 1989, pp.49-63

33. Adorno and Benjamin, *Op.cit.*, p.131

first and second technology, and the relevance that the latter has for autonomous forms of art. As he states

“Technological progress in art is motivated not least by the dialectic of technique repairing the damages wrought by technology.”³⁴

Roberts however takes Adorno’s and Benjamin’s disagreement as based on the question of reproducibility.

Reproducibility – Un-reproducibility

It is the dialectic between, what Adorno calls low and high spheres of art what Roberts does not seem to differentiate enough. Thus he centres the Adorno – Benjamin dispute around the axis of reproducibility – un-reproducibility as external to the dialectic of technique and technology. Roberts argues that the concept of un-reproducibility is central to Adorno’s conception of the autonomous work of art, and as a consequence of this he argues against the “supra-fetishistic notion of the unreproducible modernist artwork as the site of non-dominative labour”³⁵ Thus he states:

“Un-reproducibility and reproducibility, then, may not be absolutised in Adorno’s writing, but the distinctive challenge of un-reproducibility is certainly opposed to reproducibility, on the basis that the systematic pursuit of the latter could only destroy the expressive artefactuality of the un-reproducible artwork.”³⁶

Adorno, on the contrary is quite emphatic about the dialectical relation between the two concepts:

“The simple antithesis between the auratic [un-reproducible, JR] and the mass-reproduced work [reproducible, JR], which for the sake of simplicity neglected the dialectic of the two types, became the booty of a view of art that takes

34. Adorno, “Der getreue Korrepetitor”, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol.15, p.371, as quoted by Hansen, Miriam Bratu. *Cinema and Experience: Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor W. Adorno*. London: University of California Press, 2012, p.214

35. Roberts. *Op.cit.*, pp.31-32

36. *Ibid.*, p.31

photography as its model and is no less barbaric than the view of the artist as creator.”³⁷

The problem with Roberts’ claim is created by his presentation of Adorno’s, more than certain, challenge to the ‘systematic pursuit of reproducibility’ – a stance that per se presupposes a functionalisation of reproducibility as something that has to be systematically pursued – as proof of Adorno’s undialectical embrace of the un-reproducible artwork. In fact, the undialectical stance here is derived from the insistence on the ‘necessity’ that technologisation, in this case represented as reproducibility, has a direct impact on art production reflected through the labour of the artist. For Adorno reproducibility, as Roberts points out, is not an absolute; if as a consequence of its historical development, the materials and the artistic techniques become immaterial or linked to technologies of reproducibility, there is nothing in his theory that would prevent the use of technologically reproducible material as an element of autonomous art. In fact, commenting on the effects of reproducibility, Adorno states

“There is in principle no way out of the mechanical reproduction and that any progressive tendencies can only be realised by going right through it.”³⁸

The problem relates less to the relation between reproducibility and un-reproducibility than to the qualitative transformation that technological development provokes in the constitution of the work at the level of its production. This is the difference Benjamin emphasises between the production of a painting and the production of a film. Adorno sees this transformation as affecting the nature of both the artist’s labour and the work of art. This is reflected in Adorno’s distinction between the, otherwise synonymous concepts of craft and technique. The emergence of technique in art is related to, on the one hand, the incorporation of technological developments that have originated in society but are detached of their instrumental character; and on the other hand, to the level of differentiated consciousness that this society has developed. Adorno takes consciousness as part of the forces of production. In the context of modern art, craft marks, according to Adorno, the lack of conscious

37. Adorno. *Aesthetic Theory*, p.56

38. Adorno. “Musik im Rundfunk”, *Frankfurter Adorno Blätter* 7, München, 2001, p.107 as quoted and translated by Bratu Hansen, *Op.cit.*, p.216

free control over the aesthetic means that is characteristic of technique, “the aesthetic name for mastery over the material.”³⁹ The concept of skill as used by Roberts probably corresponds more with the concept of *métier* in Adorno, than to the concept of technique. *Métier* defines “expertise in both matters of handicraft and of technique”.⁴⁰ But where Roberts has a tendency to give the moment of subjectivity in the work a dominant character, Adorno re-immerses subjectivity back onto the socially dominant objective conditions.⁴¹ The subjective moment for Adorno disappears in the objectification of the work of art.⁴² This reflects the historical condition of society under capitalism and hence the need for critical interpretation in order to ‘produce’ the signification of the work; a level of ‘non alienated’ labour Roberts never acknowledges in his text. The dialectical relation between technological development and alienation makes the unmediated expression of free subjectivity impossible, and hence problematises Roberts' affirmation of the work of art as the site of “subjectivity *all the way down*”⁴³. This is why Roberts can continue to talk about the transformation of craft instead of its supersession by technique. For Adorno, on the other hand, even when technique reflects a qualitative leap in relation to the traditional methods of craftsmanship due to the “predominance of conscious free control over the aesthetic material;”⁴⁴ the constitution of the work of art is still subjected to the dialectic of mimesis and rationality through the concept of construction. There is in this argument an acknowledgment of the historical transformation of the work of art from an organic to an inorganic unit reflecting on the conception of its realisation.

Adorno derives the principle of construction from Benjamin's discussion of the technique of montage in film. According to Adorno, this technique only works external to the objects that it receives ready-made from reality, construction on the other side

39. Adorno. *Aesthetic Theory*, pp.212-213

40. Adorno. “Functionalism Today”, in Leach, Neil. *Rethinking Architecture: a reader in cultural theory*. Trans by Newman, Jane and Smith, John. London: Routledge, 1997 p.6. In note 6 the translators state that, “The word *Handwerk* in German means both ‘handwork’ and ‘craftsmanship’ or ‘skill’. Because Adorno later emphasizes the ‘hand’ aspect, we have decided on ‘handcraft.’”

41. Roberts uses the undefined concept of “subjectivity *all the way down*” to express a moment of non alienated production as contained in what he claims is the autonomous labour of the artist.

42. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.283

43. Roberts, *Op.cit.*, pp.32, 87 & 206

44. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, pp.212-213

works on the multiplicity of elements – materials and techniques available to the artist – by transforming them into a contradictory unit.⁴⁵ As Adorno puts it,

“Construction is the synthesis of the diverse at the expense of the qualitative elements that it masters, and at the expense of the subject, which intends to extinguish itself as it carries out this synthesis.”⁴⁶

Construction has a contradictory relation to empirical reality. According to Adorno, construction is the moment of rationality in the work which relates to the development of the forces of production accomplished by society.⁴⁷ The relevance of technology for art has to do with the rational organisation of the work. Given that materials and traditional procedures do not hold anymore the authority that tradition granted them, technology becomes the necessary means of organizing the work. As technology is the product of a contradictory society it also contains a moment of irrationality. Construction then is both a reaction against all previous traditional procedures that organised the work of art according to rules external to art, and at the same time, it is a moment of mimesis of that irrational society that dominated by a heteronomous rule, the primacy of exchange, is not able to differentiate itself. As Adorno puts it:

“The survival of mimesis, the nonconceptual affinity of the subjectively produced with its unposited other, defines art as a form of knowledge and to that extent as ‘rational’.”⁴⁸

Mimesis appears in the work of art as a way to transcend the reduction of rationality to a mere instrumental logic. On the one hand, it posits its affinity with the existing state of affairs through a seemingly undifferentiated drive to self-subsistence; and on the other hand, it critically transcends it by breaking the capitalist logic prevailing in the social; this is, by having no function, no use that can be subsumed by the principle of exchange. The transformation of this dialectic given the historical character of both rationality and mimesis affects the definition of the concept of construction. Roberts’ reduction of Adorno’s and Benjamin’s exchange to the problem

45. *Ibid.*, pp.56-57

46. *Ibid.*, p.57

47. *Ibid.*

48. *Ibid.*, p.54

of reproducibility expresses the unidirectional character of his reflection on the impact of technologisation in art. In this way, Roberts seems to uncritically continue Adorno's reduced approach to the historical conditions of capitalist development. But while for Adorno, the reification is produced by the presuppositions of his social theory, in Roberts the reification is a product of the a-historical development of the relation between art and technology in his labour theory of culture. This is particularly problematic given that the emergence of so called immaterial labour relates not only to the emergence of the informational economy but to a process of deindustrialisation of the developed world. Thus the underlying economicist approach to development and the technical consequences that technologisation has for the labour directly affected by it, foreclose any possibility of dealing with the geopolitical transformation of the world economic system and the segmented way in which it affects labour markets. Roberts is still endeavoured to demonstrate that autonomous labour in art is "*emergent from the post-artisanal conditions of deskilling*" as if industrialisation and deindustrialisation macroeconomic policies have no implication for the consequences of skilling and deskilling.⁴⁹

Immateriality, Dematerialisation, Re-Materialisation

The intangibility of forms, their immateriality, has been a conscious element of art (as visual art) since conceptual art. The concept of 'immateriality' was coined with the intention of reflecting the changing conditions of labour under advanced technological development. Roberts, however, confuses the emergence of the ready-made with the emergence of immateriality. The emergence of the ready-made, for all the conceptuality of its claim, refers at the technological level, mainly to the impact of industrialisation on the traditional crafts. The emergence of immateriality, on the other hand, is historically linked to the expansion of mass communication introduced by TV and the expansion of the services and financial industries due to the growing influence of computer development. It is not necessary to accept Antonio Negri's and Michael Hardt's notion of immateriality and its implications, to accept that substantial amounts of labour since the 1960s have produced objects whose materiality can be

49. Roberts, *Op.cit.*, p.87

defined as 'immaterial' or 'invisible'.⁵⁰ In the art context, for example, the concept that emerged in the 1960s which corresponds to Roberts' notion of immaterial skills was dematerialisation. This transformation of the 'material' character of the work of art was expressed early on after the emergence of conceptual art in both centre and peripheral contexts.⁵¹ In the Argentine context, this issue was introduced in Oscar Masotta's text "After Pop we dematerialised".⁵² A reflection on the changed materiality of the work of art due to the growing impact of the new mediums of mass communication, which was expressed by the then recently emerged media art. As Masotta states

"The 'material' ('immaterial', 'invisible') with which informational works of this type are made is no other than the processes, the results, the facts, and/or the phenomena of information set off by the mass information media."⁵³

But the development of new technologies and their mediated influence in art through the development of techniques is not a linear process towards progress. It depends on the historical dynamic of the expansion of capitalism in its global tendency. Roberts calls the influence of technology in art convergence:

"Convergence is what happens, then, when general social technique is diffused throughout the system, establishing a technical link between determinate (instrumental) labour and non-determinate (creative) labour."⁵⁴

This has an affinity with Adorno's understanding of convergence as

50. Hardt, Michael and Negri, Antonio. *Empire* (2000). London: Harvard University Press, 2001

51. Lippard, Lucy. *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972*. California: University of California Press, 1997; and Masotta, Oscar "Después del pop: nosotros desmaterializamos" in his, *Conciencia Y Estructura*. Buenos Aires: Corregidor, 1990, pp.235-263

52. Masotta states that he took the notion of 'dematerialisation' from El Lissitzky's essay, "The Future of the Book" which was originally written in 1927 and republished in *The New Left Review*, Vol. 41, January February 1967, pp.39-44 from where Masotta took the following quote: "The idea moving the masses today is called materialism, but dematerialization is the characteristic of the epoch. For example, correspondence grows, so the number of letters, the quantity of writing paper, the mass of material consumed expand, until relieved by the telephone. Again, the network and material supply grow until they are relieved by the radio. Matter diminishes, we dematerialize, sluggish masses of matter are replaced by liberated energy. This is the mark of our epoch."

53. Masotta, Oscar. "After Pop, We dematerialized," (Excerpts) in Katzenstein, Inés ed., *Listen Here Now!: Argentine Art of the 1960s: Writings of the Avant-Garde*. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2004, p.214

54. Roberts, *Op.cit.* pp.213-214

“the fundamental process of life, in other words, the dominance of industrial production.”⁵⁵

This is the reason why for Adorno “modern works (...) must show themselves to be the equal of high industrialism, not simply make it a topic”⁵⁶ With the caveat that moments of relevant technological transformation can correspond to different forms of appropriation of this technology via the mediation of technique, and this does not necessarily show the convergence between artistic technique and the technological moment, but may even negate it. Or to put it in the more Marxist terms that Roberts uses, “general social technique” means that one has to take into account the different levels of irrationality embedded in the application and the uses that technological development provides within the context of the dialectic between expanded reproduction and accumulation by dispossession as discussed in chapter 2. As an example of a problematic I will discuss in more detail in chapter 5, the geographical comparative advantages that globalisation has created are not related to the best application of technological resources in the production of goods or services, but in the more economically rational way to maximise the accumulation of capital. As Castells puts it:

*“firms will be motivated not by productivity, but by profitability, and growth of value of their stocks. For which productivity and technology may be important means, but certainly not the only ones.”*⁵⁷(italic in original)

The Return to Craft

According to Adorno, the autonomy of the work of art is constituted through its contradictory relationship to society: the work of art is both autonomous and social fact. Its separation from the social (its autonomy) carries however a social meaning mediated by form: “form is the seal of social labour, fundamentally different from the empirical process of making.”⁵⁸ The universalisation of exchange relationships generates a growing abstraction in the nature of the relations constituting the social,

55. Adorno. *History and Freedom*, p.110

56. Adorno. *Aesthetic Theory*, p.33

57. Castells. *Op.cit.* p.94

58. Adorno. *Aesthetic Theory*, p.189

which combined with the intensification of the division of labour creates differentiated spheres with growing levels of autonomisation. Thus, the resulting modern artistic sphere liberates itself from its ties to religious or political forms of patronage while being subsumed by the social relations emergent from the dominantly capitalistic society of the 20th century. It is the protest against the current conditions of existence that creates the dynamic of production of modern works of art; a process of negation that starts by critically dismantling all uncritically inherited artistic conventions and ends up by negating its own condition of possibility as the condition of its existence. Thus its separation from the social is premised on the basis of its constitution on the social process itself. This separation depends for modern art on its incorporation of an element of the social that negates its own existence as art; an anti-art moment⁵⁹. As historically constructed, this autonomy is exposed to being neutralised and absorbed back into the heteronymous realm. Autonomy as a category of modern art, is inserted in the historical movement of the modern; it is consequently tied to the aesthetically new as a way of counteracting the 'new as the ever the same' as contained in the process of capitalist expansion and reproduction. This is why the new is for Adorno a 'seal of expanded reproduction.'⁶⁰ The development of capitalism entails, as Roberts claims, that its expansion involves a technologisation of the forces of production and a consequent transformation of labour processes. However, as argued earlier, this also depends on the relations of production and their position relative to the globalised market. In other words, the impact of technological development that the introduction of machinery, computers, automation of working processes through robotics, etc, provokes does not follow the straight line of development that Roberts abstractly presents. It only represents a tendency, and within the current tendency to global integration of capitalism, it strongly depends on the comparative difference that each region can offer to the global economy;⁶¹ for if there is a global economy, it is not the case that there corresponds a unified global labour market.⁶² The relation of labour to

59. *Ibid.*, p.29

60. *Ibid.*, p.21

61. The difference between system integration and social integration is an important one. Embedded in Adorno's argument is that social integration has become the basis of system integration. However different relations between these two forms are a possible option in the organisational structure of both the state and the global scenario. A discussion of an alternative situation is developed in the last part of this chapter.

62. Castells, *Op.cit.*, p.251

capital mediated by productivity as a measure of technological development has to be explained in a more complex way than a relation of deskilling and a further equalisation of labour the more these technologies develop. The capitalist strategy is not simply economic but, as I argued earlier, has a strong political component mediated, amongst other factors, by the state form, and this has become particularly unstable under neoliberalism. Thus, Castells states

“there is indeed global interdependence of the labour force in the informational economy. Such interdependence is characterised by the hierarchical segmentation of labour not between countries but across borders (...) The new model of global production and management is tantamount to the simultaneous integration of work processes and the disintegration of the workforce.”⁶³

The spatial logic of this integration of work processes and disintegration of workforce cuts across states and becomes transnational. With the loss of prominence of the national space as delimiting the relation between capital and labour presupposed by monopoly capitalism, economic expansion not necessarily depends on increased productivity, particularly under the conditions of financial valorisation in which the world economy is embedded. Employment however remains a national problem and the transformation of the meaning and scope of full employment redefines the social contract. Castells provides a compelling account of the emergence of the network society from different points of view: the technological revolution; the transformation of the economy and the primacy of the financial sector; the emergence of flexible and precarious forms of labour transforming the structure of employment; and the appearance of the internet constellation as a horizon for the unfolding of what he calls a ‘culture of real virtuality.’⁶⁴ The emergence of a global economy, primarily conditioned by the expansion and de-regulation of financial markets across the world, has produced very heterogeneous results in its impact on national spaces transforming social structures. As this situation develops, and the precarisation and flexibilisation of labour expands, it creates the space for the re-emergence of sustained marginalisation. Under these conditions the reified process of integration described by Adorno loses its socio-historical meaning and gives way to a retrograde process of

63. *Ibid*, p.255

64. *Ibid*, p.403

differentiation. The intensification of the process of global integration – a systemic integration – produces different types of social integration or disintegration, and hence augments the potential for social instability.⁶⁵ In the Argentine context, the drastic destruction of the social structure developed around import substitution industrialisation, gradually imposed the conditions for the country's integration into the global economy. As Jose Nun states in relation to Latin America as a whole:

“the severe crisis of the external debt, and the mounting pressure of the big transnational interests that were articulated around the Washington Consensus led almost everywhere to drastic changes in the prevailing social regimes of accumulation.⁶⁶ The new watchwords were the reduction of the state (with the privatisation of state enterprises and the decrease in public expenditures at the forefront), the achievement of macroeconomic stability through greater fiscal discipline and an all-out fight against inflation, the deregulation of the markets, giving absolute priority to private investment, and an opening of the economies to international trade and finance that was nowhere in the world so abrupt and so intense.”⁶⁷

The decline of labour conditions presented by Castells in relation to developed societies (unemployment in Europe, instability in the US, underemployment in Japan) as a “result of the current restructuring of capital-labour relations” speaks, as Nun states, “less of exclusion in the strict sense than of the segmentation of labour markets and the rise of new forms of retention and exploitation of the labour force.”⁶⁸ In the Argentine context however, the transformation of the economy in its integration to the global economy intensifies the problem of precarisation of labour and the emergence a growing marginalised mass.

65. Nun, José. “The End of Work and the ‘Marginal Mass’ Thesis,” *Latin American Perspectives*, Issue 110. Vol. 27 Nr.1, January 2000, p.20

66. The Washington Consensus delineated “the lowest common denominator of policy advice being address by the Washington-based institutions to Latin America.” John Williamson, Ed. “What Washington Means by Policy Reform,” in *Latin American Adjustment: how much has happened?* Washington: Institute for International Economics, 1990, pp7-20 These included: fiscal discipline, tax reform, liberalization of inflows of foreign direct investment, privatization, deregulation and the security of property rights.

67. *Ibid.*, p.21

68. *Ibid.*, p.19

The notion of the 'return to craft' – as a mark of both precarisation of labour conditions and the marginalisation of a growing number of the population – dialectically reflects this situation in two different ways. On the one hand, 'craft' emerges as a relevant form linked to the 'social necessity' of re-functionalizing work processes that had been made technologically obsolete but now appear as economically rational, as for example the return to manual forms of production.⁶⁹ On the other hand, labour precarisation appears as the marker of a new geopolitical organisation reconfiguring the divide between centre and periphery according to a different dominant form of accumulation of capital; reconfiguring the conditions of marginalisation and dependency by way of a reconfiguration of the relation between labour and capital. For example, labour flexibilisation, one of the forms under which labour precarisation takes place, has a totally different impact according to the specific location a particular type of work has in the process of production and its geopolitical location.⁷⁰

The return to craft implies that mastery over the materials has been somehow compromised. A specific claim of this thesis is that the return to the use of working procedures that have been historically superseded by industrial development, paradigmatically the demanualisation of production, allegorically reflects the transformation of the relation between labour and capital within the geopolitical context of a globally expanded capitalism. In this way, the return to craft points to the emergence of precarious forms of production more related to the concept of craft than to technique because the necessity of the use of certain materials is imposed externally by the social process; one that does not express the uncritical recourse to traditional methods but the imposition of exploitation and marginalisation as a social necessity by the system. However given the logic of historical development of the concept of art, this notion needs to be taken dialectically as one element in the construction of the work of art. The necessity of going back to the use of certain

69. The re-manualisation of certain labour activities does not respond to the logic of convergence that both Roberts and Adorno develop. It corresponds to the decoupling of economic rationality from technologic rationality, and it responds more closely to the logic of profitability than to productivity.

70. Other forms of precarisation are, for example, informalisation, sub-employment, super-exploitation. These forms of precarisation tend to be geopolitically located in the so-called emerging societies where added to the poor levels of social security, open and structural poverty, and inequality, are likely to produce conditions of marginalisation.

materials and techniques – though not necessarily taken as artistic materials or techniques any more but as their opposite; e.i. as anti-art – is permeated by a social necessity imposed by the previously discussed notion of comparative advantage. At the same time, and because the historical situation of art is determined by its post-conceptual condition, conceptuality is part of the work and the return to craft is encapsulated in both, a rational construction of the work incorporating the contradiction between technology and manual labour as a contradiction between capital and labour, and a mimetic comportment taking elements of the social reality as expression of individual suffering. It makes explicit, not only the irrationality of the social, but its inscription on bodies; the return to manual production is not a romantic return to craftsmanship but a mark of super-exploitation and marginalisation. If Adorno was able to say that complacency has replaced consciousness, the changed material conditions of workers through labour flexibilisation and marginalisation, implies that pauperisation has once again become part of the social reality.

The dynamic of the historical transformation of capitalism as a global system implies moments of synchronisation and disruptions between the logics of expansion of centre and periphery. This situation further complicates Roberts' concept of convergence given that the technical link that the diffusion of general social technique creates between instrumental labour and, what Roberts calls, creative labour is permeated by a logic not fully determined by technologisation. Thus when Adorno demands that artworks be equal to high industrialism, this last notion points to a very specific form of social organisation: the industrial societies of late capitalism in which social inclusion is guaranteed by a 'welfare-state', represented and reinforced by an expanding 'culture industry'.⁷¹ The criticism of Adorno's social theory developed in chapter 1 disclosed a form of 'developmentalism' at play in his analysis which thus seems to re-appear underlying his theory of art: high industrialism, being socially and spatially delimited to developed societies, problematises modern art development

71. As Adorno puts it: "For all its protestations to the contrary, for all its dynamism and its growth in production, contemporary society displays certain static tendencies. These belong to the relations of production. Those have ceased to be just property relation; they now include relations ranging from those of the administration on up to those of the state, which functions now as an all-inclusive capitalist organisation. In that their rationalization resembles technical rationality, the rationality of the forces of production, they have undoubtedly become more flexible." Theodor Adorno, "Late Capitalism or Industrial Society", pp.118-119

given that the universality of its claims finds its limit on an heterogeneous global condition. This situation becomes more problematic in Roberts' analysis as he not only reinforces this trend with his un-dialectical insistence on the 'necessity' that technologisation has a direct impact on art productions, but he does so in a completely different historical circumstance in which the relation of technology to the accumulation of capital and the transformation of labour conditions is permeated by a neoliberal ideology which has been systematically destroying many of the social features Adorno took for granted: full employment, welfare state, social homogenisation, fairer distribution of wealth. Given the more spatially complicated context to which my criticism of Adorno and Robert points, the development of my argument in the next two chapters in relation to Argentine art production, will focus on the analysis of the changing relation between labour and capital which not only reflects its dynamic in relation to a temporal matrix, but also pays attention to the geopolitical context; a spatial dimension that both Adorno and Roberts only partially reflect on.

CHAPTER 4

POST-CONCEPTUAL ART AND ITS GEOPOLITICAL DIFFERENTIATION

Argentina 1960s – 1970s

The 1960s in Argentina provide a complex example of convergence between technological development and artistic practice – complex because permeated by both an internal dialectic of social homogeneity and heterogeneity, and an external dialectic of political autonomy and dependency¹ – in which the concept of technique appears central to the understanding of the new body of artistic production; particularly, but not exclusively, those artistic practices more closely related to the media art. Oscar Masotta was the main theorist of these practices given his sensibility to the changing conditions of the time and his capacity to ground his reflections historically, producing levels of signification for the art works and stimulating new productions.

Technique as ‘conscious free control over the aesthetic means’ or ‘mastery over the materials,’ as Adorno puts it, is not a concept clearly defined by Masotta but it can be inferred from the more concrete and spatially located historical analysis that he offers.

Masotta states that:

“In a moment like the one we are living through, when the artwork is defined primarily with respect to the artist’s consciousness of art history, the maturity of a national movement, or of a country’s art, is defined by the degree of this consciousness.”²

The artist’s consciousness of the art history that Masotta refers to represents a radical break with the conditions of production of previous art forms. It is a negation dictated by “an internal necessity” – “a logical consequence” of a latent limit in the negated art form – that opens up the possibility for the new.³ Thus Masotta’s reading of the genealogy of the Argentine works of the 1960s produces a narrative of the development of art history that explains and creates the ground for a more conscious form of artistic experimentation and the techniques related to it. His remarks

1. See Chapter 2

2. Masotta, Oscar. *Listen Here Now!: Argentine Art of the 1960s: Writings of the Avant-Garde*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2004, p.185

3. Masotta, Oscar. “Después del pop: nosotros desmaterializamos,” p.242

regarding the maturity of a national movement would however prove more complicated than he appeared to believe given that art, by the nature of its own constitution, has a claim to universality that a national space can only but mediate, and which is complicated by political, economic and social issues defining that space. His reflections include what he describes as historical correlations between types of knowledge and artistic productions: surrealism and psychoanalysis in the early 20th century, and the new artistic practices of the 1960s (pop art, happenings, media art) and semantics.⁴ A correlation that he further links to a historical moment “in which a certain ideology (this is, a certain interpretation of the social and historical process in its entirety) begins to lose its validity to be replaced by another one;”⁵ from industrialisation to mass information media. The kernel of Masotta’s reflections develops around this last correlation linking the new artistic productions to semantics. In Masotta’s words, “to the study of the facts of signification or of behaviours when they are not originated in the consciousness of the person acting, but arise, very structured, from the system or the group of systems of valorisation and interpretation produced by the social group,” in the context of the expansion of the mass information media.⁶ Hence if the defining feature of the 1960s works is the level of correlation between the artists’ consciousness of the historical place of the current artistic productions within an art historical context, this consciousness seems also permeated by the structure provided by the correlations of artistic practices and knowledge. This, however, appears to assume a certain type of knowledge and a certain type of production as the most advanced or relevant, and seems compatible with Adorno’s ‘developmentalist’ conception of artistic material. The historical conditions of emergence of the practices that Masotta engages with are spatially located; both pop art and happenings are art forms that appeared at the centre of industrialised societies.⁷ Masotta, however, failed to explain why the media art appeared in Argentina given that the mass media were also, and primarily, the products of the hegemonic centres. This situation not only points to a problematisation of the modernist logic of artistic development given the potential plurality of artistic forms in

4. Masotta, Oscar, ed., *Happenings*, Buenos Aires: Jorge Alvarez, 1967, p.56

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Ibid.*

7. See for example Masotta’s interpretation of the emergence of pop art in the EEUU in his *Pop Art*, p.110

any historically specific situation; but it also introduces the problem of the geopolitical specificity for the social relevance of art productions. This chapter unravels this problematic through an analysis of Masotta's theoretical reading of the significance of pop art and happenings for the emergence of the media art, and provides an account of the two genealogies I believe are relevant for the understanding of the more recent productions of the 1990s in Argentina. The dynamic of my presentation is based on the unstable institutional framework of the Argentine society of the 1960s and 1970s that is the basis for the constant emergence of a political dimension at the level of the artistic form; a dimension that tendentially fades away the more the neoliberal ideology of the 1990s legitimises the structural transformation of society effected by the 1976-1983 dictatorship.

Discontinuity

Two main concepts can be singled out in Masotta's theorisation of the new tendencies of the 1960s. The first one is the concept of discontinuity that he takes from Roland Barthes; particularly, from Barthes analysis of Michael Butor's book *Mobile* in his essay "Literature and Discontinuity."⁸ In this essay Barthes defines discontinuity as a new artistic strategy that highlights those uncritical assumptions in traditional forms of criticism that take the relation between an artistic form or media and its traditional materials as essential. The naturalisation of this relation is what creates, according to Barthes, the confusion between, for example, the 'book as object' and the 'book as idea', in such a way that "to attack the material regularity of the work is to attack the very idea of literature."⁹ As Barthes points out, the technique of discontinuity targets the idea of literature reduced to a literary discourse of traditional forms of criticism. Barthes' analysis is, however, dialectical – discontinuity is a form of continuity – and he proposes a further differentiation between a continuity that produces reified forms – "rhetorical continuity develops, amplifies; it will agree to repeat only if it can transform", – and critical ones – "*Mobile's* continuity returns, recurs, recalls: the new is ceaselessly accompanied by the old: it is, one might say, a fugal continuity, in the

8. Roland Barthes, "Literature y Discontinuity" in *Critical Essays*. Trans. Howard, Richard. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972 (Barcelona, Editorial Seix Barral, 1977), pp.171-183

9. *Ibid.*, p.173

course of which identifiable fragments ceaselessly reappear.”¹⁰ The principle of ‘discontinuous continuity’ that Barthes distils from Butor’s book resembles constructivist strategies. For example, he states:

“it is by *trying* fragments of events together that meaning is generated, it is by tirelessly transforming these events into functions that the structure is erected: the writer (poet, novelist or chronicler) *sees* the meaning of the inert units in front of him only by *relating* them (...) it is a masterly puzzle, the puzzle of the best possibility.”¹¹

Masotta links this idea of discontinuity to several of the visual artists’ strategies of the 1960s. Starting with his analysis of pop art Masotta develops his thesis of the relation between the new works and semantics. Pop art is focused on those cultural products that are predominant in a society and help to shape it. For Masotta, pop art is a “radical critique of an aesthetic culture (...) that understands subjectivity or the ‘I’ as the centre of the world’s significations.”¹² As pop works are images that reproduce images that are already part of the everyday life, the status of the work is transformed from *image* to *semiotic* sign:

“Pop art is not a realism of objects, nor a realism of contents. The only ‘reality’ here are the languages, that is: those products of social action, those semantic circuits, those rules of restrictions and prohibitions that beat at the heart of social life, that are called codes and that rule and determine individual life.”¹³

In Masotta’s reading, Roy Leichtenstein comic strips images do not refer to a real object – a fragment of a specific cartoon – but to the conventionality of stereotypes and myth reproduced in that media; behind the images there is not an object but a code. A similar reading can be done of Andy Warhol’s *Campbell’s Soup Cans* (1962), where the play between identity and multiplicity becomes a play between sense and no-sense, that induces the viewer to *apperceive* the code, and hence to perceive the conditions under which meaning is conveyed¹⁴. Masotta recognises a similar strategy

10. *Ibid*, p.181

11. *Ibid*, p.183

12. Masotta, Oscar. *El Pop*, (Buenos Aires, Columba, 1967), p.19

13. *Ibid*, p.66

14. Masotta. *El Pop*, pp.71-74

present in Warhol's work in terms of the fragmentation of the subjective aesthetic experience – and hence of the impossibility of a purely imaginative act – that induces an intellectual consciousness in relation to the work. Contrary to what happens in Arman's works in which repetition is presented as a unit and hence can be grasped as a unity – as in for example *1 Kg of smoke* (1962) in which cigarettes boxes are accumulated inside a big glass box – Warhol's *Campbell's Soup Cans* have to be perceived by displacing oneself through the gallery, and consequently perception is diminished in favour of an intellectual grasping of the work. Masotta refers to this strategy as the 'technique of redundancy', given that the emphasis of the works on readymade images produced by the culture industry, provokes a reflection on the structure of the social system in which these images appear and, as a consequence of this, it highlights those conventions of signification under which meaning is produced; stereotypes in Leichtenstein and multiplication of advertising images in Warhol fulfil this function. Unlike the use of metaphors in surrealism, the technique of redundancy does not produce new meanings but points to the structure that creates the possibility of communication. It is, maybe, in relation to the work of Jim Dine however that the technique of redundancy becomes more obvious, and its indebtedness to Dada more clear for Masotta's intention. To illustrate the technique Masotta compares it to the behaviour of those aphasic patients described by Kurt Goldstein that have lost the capacity to name an object in two different ways. If an object is pointed out to them, they cannot name it with words as the act of pointing fulfils the need for communication; they have lost the ability to produce metaphors.¹⁵ The technique of redundancy used by pop artists reverses this behaviour by acting as a kind of tautological compulsion. As Masotta states

"They refuse to create metaphors, but they would not hesitate to bring a real microphone to the canvas, write the word microphone next to the object and entitle the work 'Microphone'."¹⁶

This explanation is an almost exact description of the technique used by Jim Dine in which he would embed an object on a canvas, cover it with paint, then repeatedly

15. Masotta makes reference to examples discussed by Roman Jakobson in his essay "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances", in his *El Pop Art*, p. 80

16. *Ibid* p.80

paint the object's shape on the canvas in different positions, while at the same time writing the object's word somewhere on the canvas.¹⁷ According to Masotta, this immersion of the object on the canvas is an allegorical immersion of the object in a set of languages: the language of painting, the written language, the 'social' language emerging from its use. The object thus presented cannot but act as an analogy of itself. "There is in Dine," Masotta states, "the consciousness that the concrete being of the object, its factual individuality (...) depends on the *context of its use*."¹⁸

There is something similar going on in Robert Rauschenberg's works, except that instead of encouraging a discontinued reading, as in Warhol, Dine or the other pop artists, they propose discontinuity as evidence.¹⁹ Rauschenberg's creations are about discontinuity in the sense that his works are more combinations than compositions, but combinations of elements that does not make sense to read together. They are not open to synthetic reading, or to a continuous imaginary experience, and hence they point back to the objects themselves. For Masotta, Rauschenberg's *combines* are relevant because structurally they are closer to happenings. The *combines* are still supported by a traditional structure, the canvas, but the objects in them cannot be grasped as a totality; they do not fit in. They are separated compartments combined in the same space without any straight-forward meaning. As Masotta states:

"In so far as they negate the synthetic character of the image and the continuity that all reading on the imaginary presupposes; they make evident what, at the same time, grounds and comes before any act of imagination: the inherency of the substance of the image to the real context."²⁰

Masotta links Rauschenberg's *combines* to happenings and John Cage's works through Michael Kirby's notions of "compartmented structure" and "nonmatrixed performance."²¹ Kirby uses the first notion to designate that characteristic of happenings in which different actions take place in the same space, and sometimes in different spaces, but with no real relation between them. The second notion

17. *Ibid.*, p.99

18. Masotta. *Pop Art*, p.100

19. Masotta. "Los medios de información de masas y la categoría de 'discontinuo' en la estética contemporánea," *Happenings*, p.60

20. *Ibid*, p.60

21. See Kirby, Michael. "Introduction," *Happenings*. London: Sidwick and Jackson, 1965

emphasises the destruction of the matrixes of time, place, and character. This combination destroys any narrative process, and structures the work through different independent actions. The 'passage to discontinuity,' as Masotta calls it, separates all those autonomous parameters that in traditional works of art are stuck together through conventions. Discontinuity then becomes a key aspect of the experimental art of the 1960s. In happenings the altered *parameter* is mainly the context; the limits of the work are then expanded to include the audience and the environment. Unlike traditional theatre where a set of conventions – a narrative communicated through different levels of signification: linguistic, paralinguistic, gestural, and contextual – create the necessary conditions for a continuous reading – that is, the distance between imaginary and real context – in happenings the referential parameters are lost. The link between the verbal and visual language is forcefully separated; the continuum that normally exists between the text of a play and the scenography breaks up and the words and objects do not relate to one another anymore. The real and imaginary contexts break up, and this suspension of the "suspension of disbelief" implies that in happenings objects appear side by side as floating verbal comments without an anchor. With no possibility of imaginary engagement, lacking any kind of convention that could help to make sense of what is going on, the spectator cannot but turn to those objects that have suddenly lost signification whilst, at the same time, uncannily gained material intensification. As in Dada's type of performance object and word are separated, but at the same time words reveal their nature, their adherence to objects and events, disclosing that 'hybridisation of components' on which any type of experience is mounted on.²² According to Masotta, redundancy and discontinuity underlie the strategies of both pop art and happenings, and are important in so far as they allow a critical reflection on society's structure of meaning production at the point at which it is being historically transformed. As he states

"The same tactic is then encountered: a passage to the parameters; analysis of the 'material' components of the unities of sense, and of sense as 'continuum'; and also, or most fundamentally, a fascination with the first results of the

22. Masotta, *Happenings*, p.63

analysis, upon the material facticity of the sensible reality that is brought to light.”²³

Environment

Environment is the second concept that Masotta takes as central to the understanding of the new artistic productions. The concept is taken from Marshall McLuhan’s book *Understanding Media: The Extension of Man*. It appears in the context of his famous remark “the medium is the message.” Even though McLuhan uses a loose concept of medium as technology, Masotta only makes use of the concept in so far as it refers to the information media. Hence while McLuhan states, “the ‘message’ of any medium or technology is the change of scale or pace or pattern that it introduces into human affairs,” for Masotta its relevance is found in the expansion of mass media.²⁴ As he states:

“This means that the individual of each culture is determined, in each historical moment, by an unconscious atmosphere, by an environment produced by the characteristics of the information media.”²⁵

And while for McLuhan “*the medium is the message*” means that, in the terms of the electronic age, a new global environment has been created. The ‘content’ of this new environment is the environment of the old mechanised world of the industrial age.”²⁶ For Masotta the relevant point is the relation of containment (environment) by which a new media contains an old one. In this line he singles out two aspects of McLuhan work that he links to his previous analysis. First, he states that

“the apprehension of any message is differential in respect to the quantitative characteristic of each channel, and that the emergence of a new media will carry a change in the degree of discrimination of that difference.”²⁷

When compared to, for example, pop works produced at the time, characterised by Masotta as constituted by the technique of redundancy – as for example Dine’s, Kirby’s

23. *Ibid*, p.64

24. Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, p.8

25. Marshall McLuhan as quoted by Oscar Masotta, *Happenings*, p.66

26. *Ibid*, p.66

27. *Ibid*, p.67

or Whitman's works in the USA, but also Minujin's and Raúl Escari's in Buenos Aires – he concludes that

“the social field from which the subject receives information from the mass media is defined less by the multiplicity of the messages than by the channelling of usually similar contents through different media.”²⁸

The subjective capacity for apprehending a *quantitative differential* character to each media already implies a certain grasping of the media as materially constituted and delimited, and where perception can be reoriented. Hence it is not only contents that are being transmitted but also the underlying structure of transmission. As Masotta puts it

“a sign is something more, and something else, than an abstract concept, (...) it is not possible to imagine a sign without any specific material substrate, given that this substrate acts back on the concept itself and outside it, and it is for this reason effective in regards to its reception.”²⁹

This connects to the second point, the “indication that each media contains other media.”³⁰ So television contains cinema, which in itself contains literature. This implies that different media induce meaning in different ways. According to Masotta it is the entire media environment that is working as a signifying structure. Hence each media signifies through its material characteristics, but also through what differentiates it from other media. As language in itself which is omnipresent but, at the same time, almost naturalised, the entire media environment is understood as a given. The technique of discontinuity in new art practices operates at this level by separating one media from the others, form from content, signified from signifier. It is in this combination of discontinuity and environment, or in the possibility that a consciously constructed environment could provide the basis for a “fugal continuity,” that Masotta sees both the strategy and the potentialities of the new forms. As he states,

“an analytical passage to the parameters, and a call of attention, a fascinated call, over its materials characteristics; the thematisation of the media as media.

28. *Ibid*, p.67

29. *Ibid*, p.65

30. *Ibid*, p.68

And simultaneously, the use of, or the intent of using, this materiality in relation to the spectator's behaviour. In sum: discontinuity and environment."³¹

The link between information media, technological development and opaque (unconscious) social relations is at the basis of Masotta's enthusiasm for the new productions, for their capacity or potential to break through the social veil by means of creating historical consciousness. Masotta's intention is to functionalise the new artistic techniques in an attempt to use them to modify behaviours. The intention is, in his words, to create forms capable of "receiving political content, (...) from the Left, truly convulsive, capable of really merging a "revolutionary praxis" with an "aesthetic praxis."³² Two interconnected issues emerge at this moment problematising Masotta's understanding of the historical development of artistic forms. The first one relates to the supersession of happenings, as an avant-garde art form, by the media art. In this respect the immanent criticism of happenings, the way in which they disavow their affinity with mass media aesthetics by fetishistically embracing a rhetoric of freedom and liberation, critically establishes the media art form as the most advanced art form. As a consequence of this, Masotta claims, that the media art becomes "the most embracing, the most *totalising*, the only (art form) capable of taking what the past has to teach in order to produce really new objects."³³ However, even when Masotta claims that the artist's consciousness of art history is what defines the maturity of the country's art, the supersession of happenings by the media art in terms of the logical development of artistic forms leaves the critical question of why this type of art form – the media art – developed in Argentina untouched. To make the claim, as it is normally the case, that the media art discloses the mass media as ideologically mediating consciousness appears insufficient. The second question relates to the first in so far as it focuses on the formal incorporation of certain political subjectivities as content of the work of art. This integration of the political as part of the work can be taken as the incorporation of an anti-art element into the dialectic of autonomy and dependency internal to the work. However, it also problematises the assumption that the way in which form carries social meaning is merely a by-product of commodification. As has

31. *Ibid*, pp.68-69

32. Masotta, *Listen, Here, Now*, p.208

33. Masotta, "Advertencia", *Conciencia Y Estructura*. Buenos Aires: Corregidor, 1990, p.14.

been argued throughout this thesis, commodification does not precede the social organisation that is its condition of possibility. In other words, it is capitalist development that institutes the commodity form as the most universally prevalent form of social relation, but the existence of capitalism does not necessarily say anything about its political form of organisation. Thus, 'high industrialism' as defined by Adorno, is not only historically specific, it is also geographically bound. If conformity has replaced consciousness in Adorno's depiction of politically passive subjectivities across the industrial societies of 'late capitalism;' the political subjectivities of the 1960s in Argentina were partial, fragmented and unstable. Commodification, the undoubted capitalistic nature of social relations, appears, in this context, permeated by the political subjectivities disputing the form of the social organisation. What for Jeff Wall becomes a definite breach of "the authority of the old idea of national styles in art,"³⁴ is in reality the increased universalisation of US American particularism. In societies dominated by the culture industry, such a domination is expressed through a kind of renewed numbness and acceptance of an instrumental 'common sense;' hence the cultural quasi-affirmation of both pop and minimalism – but also of conceptual practices, once the aesthetic of administration became incorporated by the art institutions. In order to survive art has to continuously intensify its modernism to remain critical. The need for an authoritarian rule in order to effect structural social transformations makes domination explicit through direct political exclusion and violence. Under these conditions art does not turn to politics but politics subsumes every social activity. How can art signify through the compulsion to renew its autonomy in societies where political subjectivities are bluntly negated? The following sections will address these two problems by way of constructing a narrative of what this thesis claims are the two key genealogies of contemporary art practices in Argentina during its transition to the neoliberal period.

34. Jeff Wall, *Op.cit.*, p.513

Two Political Genealogies of Contemporary Argentine Art

Genealogy I:

The Helicopter (1967)

In his essay "After pop we dematerialised," Masotta defines an avant-garde work as fulfilling four necessary conditions. First, it must be possible "to recognise in it a determinate susceptibility and complete information about what is going on at the level of the history of art."³⁵ That is, the work has to be self-aware of its position in a specific point in history. Second, it has to open new aesthetic possibilities, but simultaneously, "and in a radical way, it has to negate something." Third, the negation must be shown as contained in what is being negated. The negation must be a logical consequence, something *latent* in the previous works. And fourth, "That the work, through its radical, constitutive negativity, puts the limits of traditional artistic genres into doubt."³⁶ Masotta considers that happenings fulfil these conditions, but only to the point that they allowed him to present the media art as what stands after them. As a way of explaining his position, Masotta organised a number of events at the Di Tella Institute in 1967. They consisted of one happening, *The Helicopter* (1967), one anti-happening or communication work, *The Ghost Message*, (1967), and a lecture, *We Dematerialised* (1967). Masotta compares his happening, which already contains a communicational proposition, to Jacques Lebel's happenings in order to clarify the difference between them, and in that way, to demonstrate the transition from happenings to communicational works. It is relevant to note that while Masotta has an obviously ideological reading of happenings, his reading is opposed to that of Lebel's, which was definitely political. That is, for Lebel "art has to deepen the crisis as a possibility of putting an end to the 'society of exploitation, to its slavish mentality and its irremediable culture."³⁷ The way of doing this was to provoke situations in which subjectivity could become alive again; in other words, by liberating the subject of all its

35. Masotta, *Conciencia y estructura*, (Buenos Aires, Corregidor, 1990), p.242

36. *Ibid.*

37. Jean Jacques Lebel as quoted by Alicia Paez, "El Concepto de Happening y las Teorías," in Masotta y otros, *Happenings*, p.35

cultural ties. Masotta takes Lebel's ideology as based on a few myths: of life, spontaneity, participation and the liberation of the unconscious. According to Masotta Lebel believes

"that the contemporary subject fears, more than anything, the nude expression of its instincts. (...) On the contrary, I believe, that what the subject of contemporary societies fears and tends to hide is not the irrationality of the instinct, but the rationality of the structure."³⁸

Masotta describes the happening presented by Lebel at the Di Tella Institute's auditorium in 1966, as a "neo-naturalist-expressionist collage," in which the author shows a simultaneous, disordered group of messages (slides, films, performers, and his own conference), but still shows them in a conventional way – the cube of the traditional theatrical space – and hence makes its structural contradiction evident. As Masotta states, "It would be enough to move the audience outside the Institute to already change the aesthetic."³⁹ The counterpoint to Lebel's happening is Masotta's *The Helicopter*. For this happening Masotta divided the audience into two groups. One of them was sent to a theatre in the city centre, where the group witnessed something very similar to Lebel's happening. After this the group was taken by bus to meet the second group at a location outside the city. At the same time the second group was sent to an old train station next to the de la Plata River, where they had to wait for the arrival of a helicopter supposedly carrying a famous actress. The helicopter arrived at the specified time carrying the actress, turned around in circles for a couple of minutes, and then left right before the first group arrived at the scene. The happening was considered completed when the members of each group told the members of the other group what they couldn't witness. Masotta states that, "what was shared about this experience was only verbal. The final situation of verbal communication was then the function of two different 'real' experiences."⁴⁰ Even though the two events do not signify anything per se, through their contraposition different levels of signification arise: a place in the commercial city centre, with no defined social status, in contraposition to a place next to the river, in one of the richest areas of the city; a

38. Masotta, *Conciencia y estructura*, p.246

39. *Ibid.*, p.246

40. *Ibid.*, p.255

situation in which the public is totally submerged in the chaotic juxtaposition of stimulatory experiences – like the normal everyday experience of the city – and another in which the public remains at a contemplative and untroubled distance from the object; the helicopter as an autogiro aircraft able to land in both places, and as such symbolically neutralising their socio-economic distance; and finally both groups being reunited at the end of the happening and recuperating their unity as a group through a communicational act. It is not important here to go into the details of Masotta's analysis but to single out his intention to emphasise that objects, situations, and places are immersed in a net of social symbolisms that cannot but signify, and hence any reading of the work must include an ideological level of interpretation. Objects in a social context gain meaning from that context: "on the one hand they denote their utility, on the other hand, they *connote* their status."⁴¹ This is the reason why Masotta considers that happenings are relevant aesthetic objects, given that they represent the alienation of the subject in its social environment; an alienation expressed by the "rupture between culture and economy that defines contemporary societies."⁴² Masotta's main point about happenings in general, is that the way in which they expose parameters of signification gives us access to comprehend different aspects of social life. As he states,

"Happenings are one more testimony that if the social universe is intelligible (that is, something more and other than a tumult without sense), it is because 'things' and subjects form a close net of relations in that universe."⁴³

However, at the same moment that they show their utility, happenings already expose their limits. On the one hand, by collapsing different acts in the same space happenings create chaos only to the point of disavowing the same conditions in everyday life; in other words, happenings disavow the collapsing of different times and spaces through the space of the media. On the other hand, the circumscription of the work to the limited space of the performance restricts the access to its experience contradicting the quotidian encounter with the mass media. In other words, happenings use the aesthetics of the mass media (mediated experience) to produce

41. *Ibid*, p.257

42. *Ibid*.

43. *Ibid*.

works that can only be experience in person (immediate experience). *The Helicopter* was intended as a way of making the disavowed *communicational vocation* of happenings explicit. But if there was communication in the work, it was, as Masotta puts it, “oral and not massive.”⁴⁴ To create objects capable of re-signifying the social space of mass communication was the function of a different kind of art form.

The hybrid type of artwork that *The Helicopter* is, cannot be considered without a reference to happenings and pop as art forms. However, the organisation of the work and its intended purpose functionalise its reception in a particular direction. A pedagogical intension permeates most of Masotta’s productions, pre-digesting their reception by the viewer. In so far as this work helps to legitimise, both formally and theoretically the media art, it will also help to import this ‘positive’ (functionalist) aspect to the subsequent works. The moment of rationalisation tends to obscure the relevance of the moment of mimesis. Masotta became aware of the risks involved in such a pedagogical and, therefore, institutionalised way of presenting avant-garde works. Thus he states,

“I start to believe the opposite regarding those pedagogical ends, about the idea of introducing the dissolvent and negative aspect of a new aesthetic genre through the positive image of the official institutions.”⁴⁵

The Happening of Total Participation (1966)

The emergence of the media art as an art form took place in July, 1966, when Eduardo Costa, Raúl Escari and Roberto Jacoby published the manifesto *Un arte de los medios de comunicación* (*An art of the communication media*, 1966). The manifesto contained a brief explanation about the role of the mass media in the cultural field, and a proposal for the first mass media work to be produced shortly afterwards. In relation to the first point they argue that in a mass civilisation no immediacy but mediation exists between public and cultural events. Given such a situation, “real artistic events stop having relevance in terms of their diffusion, as they only reach a reduced

44. *Ibid*, p.258

45. Oscar Masotta, *Happenings*, p.170

audience.”⁴⁶ The need for mass-mediatic diffusion in order to reach a wider audience brings, what the authors call, the *de-realisation* of the work and its reconstitution as information. For this reason, the authors propose a work constituted inside the structure of the mass media and entirely produced out of information. Their intention is to provide the mass media with information about a happening that never took place. Playing with the eagerness of the mass media to publish or broadcast information regarding the new art forms, and happenings in particular, they intend to create ‘news’ out of the mass media’s own informational structure. The fake happening was known as *Happening of total participation* or *Happening for a Dead Boar* (Image 1), and was considered “a pretext to start up the communication media:” *a thematisation of the medias as medias*.⁴⁷ The work can be taken as another example of that fascination with the parameters Masotta referred to when describing the techniques of redundancy and discontinuity. It is also a reflection on the transformation that the specific characteristics of happenings suffered in the process of being mediated by the mass media. As Jacoby puts it

“What was communicated was the paradox between the characteristics of the happening (lack of mediation, direct communication with objects and people, short distance between spectator and spectacle) and those big mediations in respect to objects and events, the non-real participation of the receptor; in short, those characteristics imposed by the mass press as a means of communication. The message was then constituted at two levels, one aesthetic, the other massive, and hence there was a certain interpretation of one by the other. The ‘aesthetic level’ was mediatised by the mass level, which was the one that reached the receptors. In this way, what at first sight could look like a happening was transformed into a true anti-happening given the relations it created among the objects.”⁴⁸

46. Costa, Eduardo, Jacoby, Roberto and Escari, Raúl “Un arte de los medios de comunicación: manifiesto,” in Masotta, *Happenings*, p.121

47. *Ibid.*, p.122

48. Jacoby, “Contra el happening,” in Masotta, *Happenings*, p.127

The structure of the *Happening of Total Participation* is analogous to that of happenings in general in that, by modifying the usual encounter between the spectator and the public, it exposes the structure through which the mass media signifies. The receiver relies on the information he/she is consuming just because the information is being produced by the mass media. It is precisely the uncritical reliability on the status of the mass media as conveyor of truth that is modified in the work. But at the same time, it is a call of attention to the inevitability of such a condition under the current social structure of distribution of information. Given the mass media's omnipresence in everyday life, the *Happening of Total Participation* proposes an investigation into the specificity of information as constituted through the mass media.

The *Happening of Total Participation* is structurally interesting in many respects. It can be argued that following happenings the work has been expanded into a process, the characteristic of which is to include the everyday relation between the public and the mass media. Hence the work becomes an expanded ready-made including the mechanisms of mass communication. The materiality of the work is determined, as Masotta claims, "by the processes, the results, the events and the phenomena of information set in motion by the mass media."⁴⁹ The structural characteristics of the happenings: "separate compartments," "discontinuous time," "involvement of the audience;" are reformulated by the media art by putting them into the perspective of normal everyday life as specifically reproduced by the mass media. Masotta believes that a happening is the collapse of different spaces and times into a common space, where unintelligibility is maintained as long as the collapse is maintained. Once the separation has been effected communication is needed in order to connect events taking place at different locations; that was the idea behind his happening *The Helicopter*: "to constitute the history of the group through the reciprocity of each account, that is, its single memory; and through it, to constitute the group as a social unity."⁵⁰ But while that work demonstrated a latent communicational aspect already present in the apparent incomprehensibility of happenings, its communicational structure was nonetheless reduced. In other words, it reached a very limited audience. The aspect disavowed by happenings was its inherent aestheticisation of the structural aspects of mass communication. That is, that the collapsing of simultaneous situations in the same space was replicating the historical conditions of the mass media; particularly of television, which as the latest technological development in mass communication, creates an 'environment' containing all previous forms, while at the same time acting as the medium for the re-definition of all other mass medias. However, as mass communication always brings with it an interpretation of events, a narrative, such a collapse tends to favour one narrative over others

There is an interesting correlation between Dan Graham's works on the mass media and *Happening of Total Participation*. In terms of its specificity it is possible to ascribe what Benjamin Buchloh states about Graham's work to the *Happening of Total*

49. Masotta, *Conciencia y Estructura*, p.244

50. *Ibid.*, p.255

Participation; this is that they are specific in a threefold manner. First, Buchloh argues, “in regard to their proper epistemological and historical context (i.e., the visual art) as they dialectically reflect and transcend the given conditions of minimal aesthetics” –in Graham’s works – and happenings aesthetics –in the case of the media art. This specificity, though, still falls under the more general logic of modernism. Second, “in their relation to objective methodology which consciously and clearly inserts them into the context of more general principles of meaning production.” For the media art those more general principles refer particularly to the conditions of the mass media as active propagator of the Argentine modernisation project’s ideology. In Graham’s works this insertion is what constitutes the works’ autonomy given their capacity to be simultaneously both, works of art and something else: e.i. a journalistic piece. As we will see in a moment, the ontological duality of Graham works is somehow negated by the *Happening of Total Participation* given the non-synchronicity of this duality in the perception of the work; the work is initially taken for a journalistic piece, but it is subsequently disclosed as a work of art. And third, “because of their very concrete reference to a particular segment of reality.”⁵¹ In this case, the *Happening of Total Participation* not only includes the mass media’s misrepresentation of reality, but a self-reflection on the conditions for the existence of the avant-garde as its product. There is a fourth correlation not stated by Buchloh. In this case it is possible to ascribe what Masotta states about the media art to Graham’s works; this is, that they have broken with the naturalised relation that traditionally should exist between “the idea of the ‘work’ and the predetermined number of their possible material vehicles.” The radicality of this specificity derives, Masotta states, from the difference between perturbing the internal levels of a work “and postulating the possibility of the work at the level of other material substrates.” As Masotta asks “Where is the ‘matter’ of the false report Jacoby and Costa gave to the press?”⁵²

There is, however, a relevant difference between these works, while for example Graham’s *Homes for America* specifically points towards its double conditions as both a piece of photojournalism and at the same time a work of art – and hence opening

51. Buchloh, Benjamin H. D. “Moments of History in the Works of Dan Graham,” *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000, p.191

52. Masotta, *Happenings*, p.72

the door for a weak *post*-autonomous work of art – the work of Jacoby, Escari and Costa, only fulfils its role as a journalistic piece through the mediation of the media, and only to make the second part of the work evident; the fact that the piece does not reflect any real object, and that its structure must be understood as a process in which the structure of the media is exposed. Also while the materiality of Graham's work is defined by the artist's production of a journalistic piece – it was Graham who wrote the piece, took the images and designed the layout⁵³ – the media art is not defined, or limited by any of its material instances – the work includes the different journalistic pieces that were published, but the artists did not have any influence in their instantiation; they only defined their structure as a process. That was Masotta's claim in relation to dematerialisation, the characterisation of the work in relation to its "anti-optic, anti-visual" aesthetics; "the idea of constituting 'objects' with the intention of talking not to the eyes, but to the understanding."⁵⁴ However, the functionality of *Happening of Total Participation* as critique of both happenings and the function and structure of the mass media, cannot be equated with the functionality of Graham's *Home for America*, which is defined by its critique of both the art form and the mass media structure, by fulfilling the necessary conditions for being both a work of art and a journalistic piece. The *Happening of total participation* fulfils the conditions of being a work of art by the definition of its own specificity, and includes the mass media as an important space for the validation of works of art, but it is not a real journalistic piece. The incorporation of different reviews and articles into the structure of the work re-signifies the whole process of production of information in a very different way than the everyday instrumental use of it by the mass media. In that respect its functionalism is more akin to the structure of Institutional Critique as theorised by Buchloh: its three stages of functionalism, dis-functionalism and re-functionalism.⁵⁵ With the exception that the space of recognition of the work as art is neither placed within the traditional art institutions nor the mass media, but it is recognised through the transformation of

53. It is irrelevant to my argument here if the published work finally included photographs by other photographers, or if its original layout was changed in subsequent publications of the work.

54. Masotta, *Conciencia y Estructura*, p245. Masotta is influenced by the writings of El Lissitzky, *The Future of book*, quoted in Masotta's work, "Briefly: matter diminishes; the process of dematerialization increases more and more. Slow masses of matter are replaced by liberated energy."

55. See Buchloh, *Op.cit.*, particularly his analysis of the works of Michael Asher, pp.1-39, and Daniel Buren, pp.119-139

“structures of communication,” between both spheres.⁵⁶ The first stage of functionalisation consists of the press release sent to the different media. A second stage, or disfunctionalist moment, in which the media, and through it the public in general is informed of the false character of the published news. And the last moment, in which through the re-functionalisation of the work its ideological character is made evident. The media is hence exposed as part of those “institutions, which determine the conditions of cultural consumption,” validating experimental art as long as it belongs to the new artistic circuit, and fomenting its consumption not qua works of art but qua commodified information.⁵⁷ At the same time, happenings are exposed by their disavowal of the aesthetics of the mass media as reproduced in their own structure, and hence as a positive reception of such a condition.

The Ghost Message (1967) – Tucumán Arde (1968)

Even though the media art was not limited to *Happening of Total Participation*; it did not develop into an extensive and consistent body of production. Reduced mainly to the re-signification of small communicational circuits and some experimentation with fashion magazines by Costa, the work that appears as the most significant for both its mass communicational reach and its self-reflective character is Masotta's *The Ghost Message* (Images 2 & 3). For two days – the 16th and 17th of July of 1967- he displayed, in Buenos Aires' city centre, posters that read “This poster will be broadcast on television by Channel 11 on the 20th of July”. On that day, two advertising spots were broadcast for ten seconds on Channel 11 reading, “This media announces the appearance of a poster the text of which we now broadcast.” The transmission then showed an exact reproduction of the poster.⁵⁸ Masotta highlighted four points in relation to the work: the use of advertising as a medium, the transformation of the audience into a mass audience, its “purposiveness without a purpose,” and its inversion of the everyday relation “between communication media and the

56. Verón, “Comunicación de masas,” *El Mundo*, (Sunday 30th of October, 1966), as reproduced in Masotta, *Happenings*, p.138

57. Buchloh, Benjamin. “Conceptual Art: 1962-1969: from the aesthetic of administration to the critique of institutions,” in Alberro, Alexander and Stimson, Blake *Conceptual Art: A critical Anthology*. London: MIT, 1999,” p.533

58. Oscar Masotta, *Conciencia y Estructura*, p.259

communicated contents.”⁵⁹ One of the aspects that Masotta pointed to was the differential engagement with the audience between happenings and media art. While in happenings there is a need for a concrete audience, a public, in the case of *The Ghost Message* the work could start without it, because the audience as mass audience was undetermined.

In 1967 *The Ghost Message* was only one of the various examples of artistic experimentation, and it probably helped with reflections on how to be effective, in revolutionary terms, in the use or appropriation of the mass media for social change. This was highlighted by the well-known experience of *Tucumán Arde* (1968) which confronted the artists with the limits of their own practices. The work brought together a group of artists from Buenos Aires, Rosario and Santa Fe. Parallel to this collaboration, different developments during 1968 created a link between the avant-garde artists and one of the newly formed workers Union, CGTA (Argentine General Worker's Confederation), and this link would provide the topic for *Tucumán Arde*: the deteriorating situation of the sugar mill workers' living standards due to the intensification of the 'modernising' trend implanted by the 1964 dictatorship. The artists generated a circuit of false information regarding the project so that their real intentions would pass unnoticed. A press conference was called by some of the artists to publicise an avant-garde event at the Museum of Fine Art in Tucumán, while

another group was compiling information about the workers' situation, interviewing union leaders, and recording images of the critical living conditions of the sugar mill workers. An advertising campaign in Buenos Aires and Rosario built up the expectation, first in relation to the word 'Tucumán' and then to 'Tucumán Arde' by handing out flyers at different events, painting graffiti, and posting stickers throughout both cities.⁶⁰ (Image 4)

After the artists finished collecting information, a second press conference was called to announce the real reason behind their presence in Tucumán. Two exhibitions were later presented at the CGTA buildings in Rosario and Buenos Aires, in which the everyday coverage of the mass media was exposed as manipulating the information, and hence as an apparatus of the military state and private corporations. *Tucumán*

60. According Longoni and Mestman, the artists' chose the title for its similarities with the title of a new released film, *Paris brul-t-il?* (1965) by Rene Clement.

Arde was defined as a counter-informational event intending to unmask the dictatorship's advertising campaign which was trying to hide the social state of the province. It was hence indebted to the media art in so far as it intended to expose the mass media as functional to the dictatorship. However instead of using a supposedly irrelevant and artistic content like happenings, as the *Happening of Total Participation* did, the artists of *Tucumán Arde* intended their work to carry political content. The intention was not to functionalise the mass media in such a way as to disclose its mechanism but merely to use it as a way for the propagation of a message related to reality that the artists intentionally filtered through. Contradictorily the counter-informational event depended on the 'official' informational mass media for its mass diffusion. The instrumentalisation of the technique implicit in Masotta's pedagogical re-appropriation of happenings and pop art – his idea of 'loading' the work of art with the politically revolutionary content – is first attempted in *Tucumán Arde*. The cancellation of the exhibition in Buenos Aires ironically confronted the artist with a complex reality. Being used to be absorbed and neutralised by the art institution the artists were suddenly being censored by the same organisation they intended to support. The cancellation was a political decision of the CGTA in response to the military government pressure.

With *Happening of total participation* the limits of the art institution expanded outside the limits of the gallery and the museum, and demonstrated the dependence of new art productions on the new structures of the mass media and the new art institutions; both heavily linked to the modernisation project and its verticalisation and internationalisation of the economy. This implied that while the process of legitimisation for new productions have managed to bypass the traditional structure of art institutions in Argentina, it ended up depending for its legitimisation on funding, prizes and exhibitions promoted by the new institutional circuit. Once this point was reached, the production of further works was definitely problematised, given that it was not possible to produce works that did not take into account such unstable ontology of the work of art. In other words, if the work was to play in between art and life, that play should now include the work's self-awareness of its own condition of possibility, which in this case was also constitutive of its own condition as peripheral and institutionalised art; even though now as part of the new institutional circuits. The

reshaping of the limits of the art institution was played against the context of the tensions provoked by a modernisation project intending to modify Argentina's productive structure. If at the politico-economic level this tension was expressed by the clashes between two antagonistic politico-economical projects, at the artistic level the shift of power in favour of the new institutions was problematised by the reluctance of the artists to participate in those spaces once the art sphere became politicised. An uncritical, mass mediated reading of the superficial similarities between already established trends in international art (pop, minimalism, happenings) and the new artistic productions in Buenos Aires and Rosario cities, led to a short-circuit of legitimisation between the new art circuit and the modernisation project, which legitimised art productions on the basis of their affinity with centre-based productions and neutralised them through their institutionalisation and their mass media consumption. The growing opposition to the modernisation project given its incapacity to incorporate a politically marginalised working class paralleled the growing disillusion of the avant-garde with the constant re-appropriation and neutralisation of their work by the new institutional circuit. The political tension at the level of the social seems to have provided a new orientation to the increasing radicalisation of that avant-garde. Their anti-institutional drive shifted from attacking the position of power of art institutions in relation to the work of art, to attacking those institutions that held power in society.

It is a common feature of the literature to present *Tucumán Arde* as the breaking point after which the avant-garde artists stopped producing works. However, it is the definition of the work of art that became unstable under these conditions. Art as a special type of commodity has a critical place in society in so far as its absolutisation as a commodity entails its paradoxical transformation into an 'anti-commodity.' The liminal character of this definition, the fact that a work of art, as illusion, never becomes an absolute, implies that it is always absorbed back into the art institution; hence the limit of art –at least of modern art – is not only the limit of its recognitions as art, but also its existence within a society structured around a capitalist system; capitalism is historically modern art's condition of possibility. But if the horizon appears as one in which the commodity relations could be superseded then the questions of what art is and how to define it become more problematic. How to define

the activities of the Argentine avant-garde during the late 1960s and 1970s depends very much on a retrospective reading, but in that reading a future horizon of change has been historically dissolved.⁶¹ It is because of its exposure as one of the vehicles for the ideological legitimization of the modernisation project that the mass media became one of the privileged targets of the avant-garde of the 1960s. A narrative can thus be constructed that goes from the production of the media art works as a reflective critique of happenings; continues with the politicisation of the avant-garde and the criticism of the new art institutions and the mass media; and ends with the radicalisation of the avant-garde, its break with the art institutions and its intent to find alternative channels for production that involve counter-hegemonic, communicational means. In this reading the anti-institutional tendency of the avant-garde cannot be separated from the growing anti-institutionalism emerging from parts of society. *Tucumán Arde* was part of those anti-institutional tendencies and the limits it created for the production of avant-garde art works not only refer to the autonomous sphere of art but to the consequences of its politisation. Thus in *Tucumán Arde*'s declaration the artists postulated a new type of work in which "aesthetic creation as a collective and violent act" would destroy "the bourgeois myth of the *new forms of art*."⁶² It was the failure of creating "a positively social art", an art of social transformation, what confronted the artists not only with the limits of art, but with the limits of the existing forms of social institutionalisation: their break with the art institution, their confrontation with the censorship implanted by the military government, and the disillusionment with the political positions of the Unions which they had embraced for the production of *Tucumán Arde*.⁶³ As the clandestine Comité Coordinador de la Imaginación Revolucionaria states

"During 1968 and as a consequence of the direct experience of its own production – the avant-garde artwork – an important group of avant-garde

61. In fact this is what has taken place during the last 15 years in relation to the Argentine art of the 1960s and 1970s. The institutionalisation of *Tucumán Arde*, *Sobre, El Siluetazo* and others are part of this retrospective reading.

62. Gramuglio, María Teresa and Rosa, Nicolás. "Tucumán Burns", in Alexander Alberro & Blake Stimson *Conceptual Art: A critical Anthology*, (London: MIT, 1999), p.76

63. The scope of this work does not allow me to go into a detailed description and analysis of *Tucumán Arde*. The literature regarding the work is extensive. The most comprehensive study of the genealogy and critical analysis of this work is, the previously cited Ana Longoni and Mariano Mestman *Del Di Tella a Tucumán Arde*.

artists (linked to what was called the Di Tella group) became conscious of the caducity and futility of the propositions of the existing culture, including their own claims, until then apparently repulsive and dissolvent.”⁶⁴

The continuation of art and politics by other means created an almost impossible line of progression for the media art, given that its constitutive dependence on the mass media as material and the public sphere as the space of its legitimation clashed with its political radicalisation and its intention to develop a parallel and, given the circumstances, clandestine sphere. The modernisation project that provided the media art with the social content for its works was part of a contested but nonetheless visible political space. The construction of the public sphere in its relation to the mass media was, however, tied up to the latter’s contradictory role as a corporation and as a medium for information dependent on the existing social conditions. The options for the artists became both politics and the construction of a paradoxical clandestine public sphere. As Jacoby states

“The closure (of *Tucumán Arde*) has made us conscious that it is not possible to work semi-legally in Argentina. A sufficiently aggressive cultural action, capable of spreading itself and oriented towards those that can make best use of it, falls instantly under the strike of repression (...) This is why the new cultural forms we elaborate shall be clandestine.”⁶⁵

Sobre (1969)

During 1969, a group of artists, film makers, and social scientists ‘published’ two issues of the ‘anti-magazine’ *Sobre (Envelope)* (Images 5 and 6). *Sobre*, was literally an envelope containing a heterogeneous collection of materials: manifestos, declarations, flyers, documents, cartoons, facsimiles. Jacoby defines it as “also a media art idea;” though in this case not a mass media work but a limited edition of ten thousand copies

64. Comité Coordinador de la Imaginación Revolucionaria, “La Nueva Vanguardia Cultural Argentina”, *Sobre*, Nr 1, Buenos Aires, Mayo 1969, reprinted in Ana Longoni, *Roberto Jacoby, El deseo nace del derrumbe: acciones conceptos, escritos*, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Barcelona, 2011, p. 125

65. Roberto Jacoby, letter to Jean Clay published in *Rhobo*, nr. 5/6 as part of the dossier “Les Fils de Marx et Mondrian” reproduced in Longoni and Mestman, *Op.cit.*, p.228. The shift that goes from the term “artwork” in the previous quote, to the use of the terms “cultural actions” and “cultural forms” marks the emergence of the horizon of social transformation to which I referred above.

distributed through a network of friends.⁶⁶ Precarious in its production, the magazine involved printing all the information in mimeograph, folding them into envelopes and distribute them in a clandestine way. The original intention was that the readers could use and re-appropriate the information as they wanted; subtracting or adding material before passing the magazine on. In this way, an initial impulse from a group of people would be redefined and expanded in a more socially participative way.

The shift from attacking the art institution to the attack on the institutions of social power took the modernism of the Argentine avant-garde of the 1960s towards the political radicalisation of their practice in the form of propaganda. Inside the first issue of *Sobre* there was a poster by Roberto Jacoby with the inscription “Un guerrillero no muere para que lo cuelguen en la pared” (“A guerrilla fighter does not die to be hung on a wall.”) (Image 7) The simplicity of the contradiction presented in Jacoby’s work highlights the difficulty of producing a work of art that could fulfil its condition as avant-garde work under these social conditions. The function of the work as an anti-

66. Roberto Jacoby interviewed by Ana Longoni and Mariano Mestman, *Op.cit.*, p.286-300

poster derives from the contradiction between form and content. The poster as mass media form is subordinated to the dynamics of the culture industry. Apart from fulfilling its function in relation to the product advertised, a poster ideologically helps to reinforce the logic of the totality by reproducing it; the thesis of the 'medium is the message' disregards any particular content as universal. In Jacoby's work, it is the content of the poster that calls the attention to the parameters Masotta described in relation to happenings. It is the impossibility of following the directive of the content in relation to the nature of the object – its form as a poster – what points to the appropriation and reification of the figure of the guerrilla fighter performed by its mass media reproduction.

A ready-made reversal: *El Siluetazo* (1983) and the mark of precarisation

If there is a work of art that fulfils the conditions Masotta expected of a truly revolutionary art, one fusing 'revolutionary praxis' and 'aesthetic praxis' it ironically emerged in the least utopian time of the entire Argentina history. On the 21st of September 1983, three months before the end of the military dictatorship, the Madres de Plaza de Mayo organised the third "Marcha de la Resistencia"-to oppose the military Junta's attempt to establish an Amnesty Law to avoid any retrospective judgment of their actions during the period 1976-1983.⁶⁷ The march was the occasion for a significant politico-representational event thereafter known as *El Siluetazo*. Three visual artists from Buenos Aires – Rodolfo Aguerreberry, Julio Flores and Guillermo Kexel – presented their proposal to the Madres de Plaza de Mayo five days before the demonstration. The idea, triggered by an invitation to participate in the 'Objects and Experience Salon' the ESSO Foundation intended to organise previous to the Malvinas (Falklands) War, was to give visual expression to the physical space that the 30,000 human bodies would occupy; an allegorical 'presentation' of the 30,000 people 'disappeared' during the dictatorship.⁶⁸

The artists were influenced by the work of the Polish artist Jerzy Skapski that appeared in the *UNESCO Courier* in October 1978.⁶⁹ Skapski designed a poster in which 2,370 human figures were represented; the average number of people killed daily at Auschwitz during Second World War. The number of posters printed was 1.688, exactly the number of days the camp was opened. In this way, the representation of more than four million figures resonates between the incommensurability of its perception (between the visual 'too many' and the number), and the implications of the atrocity of the act, the genocide of four million people. Aguerreberry, Flores and

67. "The Marches of Resistance, which have been taking place annually since 1981, are occupations of the Mayo Square for 24 hours, with a closing march heading towards the Congress Square," Ana Longoni and Gustavo Bruzzone, *El Siluetazo*, Introduction, Adriana Hidalgo editora, Buenos Aires, 2008. p.44 The May Square, around which are built the presidential building (Casa Rosada), the Economy Ministry, the old Cabildo (The colonial house of government) and the Catholic Cathedral, is the symbol of the political manifestations of the people. As Longoni and Bruzzone state it is "without doubts the most highly charged and conflictive space of memory in Argentine history." *Ibid*. The "Ley de Autoamnistía" nro. 22.924, was approved by the Military Junta on the 23rd of September 1983.

68. 30.000 is, according to human rights groups, the estimated number of people disappeared during the dictatorship 1976-1983. Even though the number has become the site of continuous debate, it has also become a paradigmatic number to refer to the disappeared.

69. The poster by Skapski was reproduced in *The Unesco Courier*, 31st Year, October 1978, p.22. This was a special issue on teaching human rights.

Kexel took the idea of the *spatial dimensionality* of a socially charged quantity and applied it to the situation of state terrorism in Argentina. The quantification of the 'disappeared' and its spatial representation thus became the central idea to be developed through the work. As they state,

"If an adult person covers an average surface of 1.75 x 0.60 metres, what surface is covered by 30.000 people? If they are placed side by side they would cover around 18 km (...) and if you lay them down in the floor in a line, they would cover 52.2 km (...) The idea then began to formalise: we would depict all the disappeared. Conceptually, it would be a *spatial dimensionalisation* that would help to understand the magnitude of the event."⁷⁰

The dimensions, costs and time that the production of such a work would entail were obstacles that limited the possibilities of its realisation. It was clear that it would be impossible to present it in any art institution, and given the socio-political situation it was very unlikely that any institution would accept the proposal. When the artists became aware of the preparations for the third "Marcha de la Resistencia" they re-worked their initial idea to surpass its limitations: instead of the artists producing the work, they would use the space of the demonstration to incentivise a collective production. At the same time, to avoid the risk of censorship, the work would take the form of a political demonstration dissolving its authorship amongst the participants.⁷¹ The 'Marcha' was the perfect context for the work, and by incorporating the demonstrators into the process of production it would be possible to create a substantial number of silhouettes in a short period of time. In this way, the production of the work would be socialised, preserving the artists' anonymity and hence avoiding any personal punishment or censorship by the government.⁷² Their idea was to produce real-size silhouettes of human bodies, hand painted on paper, and subsequently pasted onto walls, trees, everywhere possible on the Mayo Square and its surrounding areas to accompany the demonstration and one day 'occupation' of the square. According to the artists the project had four aims:

70. Julio Flores, "Siluetas" in Ana Longoni and Gustavo Bruzzone, "Las Siluetas," *Op.cit.*, p.92

71. Ana Longoni and Gustavo Bruzzone, "Las Siluetas," *Op.cit.*, pp.73-74, "If each silhouette was of the shape of a person, how to produce 30.000 of them? In 1982, who could convoke that many participants in an artistic and political activity? Who, how many would dare to participate in such an event?"

72. Julio Flores, "Siluetas" in Ana Longoni and Gustavo Bruzzone, "Las Siluetas," *Op.cit.*, p.92

- In line with the Madres' long standing claims, "to demand the apparition with life of all those detained for political causes and all other exigencies that were made at the time of the march against the 'military dossier'."⁷³
- *"To give a different possibility of expression and temporal durability to the demonstration."* (JR)
- *"To create a graphic event that hurts the government through its physical magnitude and formal development, and, given its unusual character, renew the attention of the media."* (JR)
- "To provoke a binding activity, one that mobilises the people even a few days before they get out on the street"⁷⁴

With the intention of arriving at the Mayo Square with enough production to initially cover a substantial amount of walls and buildings, nearly 1500 silhouettes were produced on the days leading to the demonstration at different art student unions and political party centres. On the day of the demonstration, a street workshop for the production of silhouettes was set up in the Mayo Square providing a continuous output to expand the area of symbolic appropriation of the demonstration. Given the necessity of active participation from the public in the production of as many silhouettes as possible, and also keeping in mind the limited resources available, the techniques proposed were as simple as possible. Two alternatives were presented:

- either to lay successive people on a piece of paper and draw their silhouettes with a pen (a sort of mass production using bodies as both raw material and labour in the production line); (Image 8 and 9)
- Or to cut the first silhouette out and use it as a stencil for further productions.

In the end, both techniques were implemented, together with a number of variants introduced by the participants themselves. As Aguerreberry points out:

73. The term 'apparition with life' is translated literally from the Spanish 'aparición con vida'; it has been one of the mottos of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo demanding that their 'disappeared' relatives 'appear' alive. For lack of any better alternative I am keeping "apparition with life" which has been the translation commonly used in the literature or its translation. See for example, Ana Longoni, "El Siluetazo: On the border between Art and Politics," in *Sarai Reader 07: Frontiers*, pp176-86 (http://www.sarai.net/publications/readers/07-frontiers/176-186_longoni.pdf), last accessed on the January 27th, 2013. "The silhouettes are usually understood as a visual rendering of the slogan 'Apparition with Life', adopted by the Mothers since 1980; a slogan often repeated in the demonstrations would be, 'Alive they were taken, alive we want them'." p.181

74. Aguerreberry, Flores, Kexel, "Propuesta Presentada a las Madres de Plaza de Mayo en Septiembre de 1983" reproduced in in Longoni and Bruzzone, *Op.cit.*, p.63

“The poverty of available materials was total: we arrived to the square with four brushes, six paper reels, two big tins of paint and I do not know what else. (...) A dynamic started to grow in which the people would see what was going on and went back home to pick up a brush, or someone would donate money to buy materials. (...) It was a kind of *factory-workshop*, not an artistic workshop. It was a *mechanical* work: some cut paper from the reel, others laid down to get their silhouette taken, like a *capitalist* line production system.” ⁷⁵ (JR)

75. Aguerreberry, quoted in Ameijeiras, Hernán, “Este Año se cumple una década de 'El Siluetazo'”, en Longoni, Ana and Bruzzone, Gustavo, *El Siluetazo*, p.192

Because of the obviously political content of the work, the apparent blurring of the limits between the work and its immediate social space was taken to be a paradigmatic development of the fusing of art and life. Even when the event had a strong political repercussion and its methodology has since become a strategic model to create a lasting visual impact in political manifestations, its quality as a work of art has not been totally reflected upon.⁷⁶ Some aspects, commonly emphasised as *new* in *El Siluetazo*, are the collective socialisation of the artistic means of production and circulation, as in the essay by Roberto Amigo, or its recuperation of an *auratic* charge or ritual dimension lost in modernist works of art, as in the text by Daniel Buntix.⁷⁷ The genealogy that is claimed for the work is generally accepted as in line with “counter-hegemonic artistic practices that question the lack of social function of modern art.”⁷⁸ Longoni and Bruzzone, for example, link *El Siluetazo* with what Alberto Greco⁷⁹ called ‘incorporations of characters into the canvas’ in which a silhouette of a person was drawn by the artist on a canvas, and also with one of Luis Pazos’s works of the early 1970s in which, again, a body was used to produce a dripping red painted silhouette denouncing the Trelew Masacre of 1972.⁸⁰ Despite the formal analogies and political resonance with *El Siluetazo*, these works are separated from the later in their overall

76. The silhouettes have become the ‘mark’ of the human right movements, appearing in demonstrations organized by the *Madres*, *Abuelas* and *Hijos* of the disappeared.

77. Roberto Amigo, “Aparición con vida: las siluetas de los detenidos-desaparecidos”; and Gustavo Buntix, “Desapariciones forzadas/ resurrecciones místicas”, both in Longoni and Bruzzone, *Op.cit.* pp.203-252 and 253-284 respectively.

78. *Ibid.*, p.41

79. *Ibid.*

80. *Ibid.*, pp.41-42

formal construction. *El Siluetazo* cannot be reduced exclusively to the production of a silhouette using a human body as a model, even though this is obviously central to its constitution. The structure of the work is centred on the silhouettes but exceeds them in that it incorporates its own strategies for both, the *production* (a precarious line assembly) and the *reading* of the productions (appropriation of the mass media channels of distribution). In many ways *El Siluetazo* has the structure of a 'marketing' strategy designed to appropriate the public space (Image 10), an appropriation including the channels for its absorption and dissemination by the mass media: as banners and posters covering walls on the public space, and as mediated news recycled through different mass media forms: newspapers, magazines, television, radio. This was indicated by the second and third aims detailed by the artists: its durability and its insertion in the mass media. These characteristics make its affinity to media art works produced during the 1960s evident, and particularly to the form of the *Ghost Message* designed by Oscar Masotta.⁸¹ One of Masotta's aims in this work was to invert the everyday relations between communication media and the communicated contents,⁸² and hence to point to the reification of communication in its reduction to information by the omnipresent and repetitious character of the mass media in everyday life, "defined less by the multiplicity of the messages than by the channeling of usually similar contents through different media."⁸³ *El Siluetazo* takes the precise structure of the *Ghost Message* but modifies the elaboration of its content.

81. In this sense, I believe the genealogy of this work is linked to some aspects of the *Happening of total Participation* and *Tucumán Arde*. Most precisely to the recuperation of the failure of the latter mediated through the formal aspects of Masotta's *Ghost Message*.

82. *Ibid.*, p.259

83. *Ibid.*, p.67

What defines *El Siluetazo* as a work of art – and this is my claim – is its relation to previous artworks like the *Ghost Message*, *The Happening of total participation* and *Tucumán Arde*, and its capacity to transcend them in its more seamless merging of the aesthetic and the political. Two differentiated anti-art moments can be singled out in the work. First, the incorporation of the mass media apparatus and the political mobilisation as part of the work; something *Tucumán Arde* could not properly achieve. And second, and more relevant for my account, the incorporation of a type of manual production expressing the mechanism of social destruction implemented through the dictatorship's political economy. I am using the concept of a 'mechanism of social destruction' to refer to both the mechanism of destruction of capital discussed in the second chapter (accumulation by dispossession) and the apparatus of state terrorism. It is precisely in the powerful combination of the 'poverty' and 'exploitative' character of the production, on the one hand, and in its appropriation of the public sphere in both its immediate (the Mayo Square with all its symbolic charge) and its mediated (its infiltration on the mass media and its permanence on the city centre's walls) character, that *El Siluetazo's* denunciation of the consequences of state terrorism acquires its critical dimension and artistic expression.

I see four differentiated levels of criticism: At the level of the social, the recuperation of the image of the 'disappeared' as a denunciation of the atrocities of state terrorism, but also as a criticism directed to the civil society in its responsibility, complicity and, sometimes, indifference to the model implemented by military government; at the political level, by its recuperation of participation and solidarity as key elements of civil society; at the economic level, by mimicking the pauperisation and reorganisation of the productive structure as represented by the mechanical and precarious forms of production of the work; and finally at the artistic level, by transcending the limitations of *Tucumán Arde* and *The Ghost Message* by its effective appropriation of the mass media and its insertion in a political event, but without losing its own autonomous character as a work of art. What is relevant here is the point of indifference between both the political and the artistic.

El Siluetazo encapsulates a turning point in Argentine history, one that retrospectively can only speak of the defeat of a political project, in so far as the promises contained in the work were not socially fulfilled in the post-dictatorial period. *El Siluetazo* is also exemplary in that it transcends its particularity by its relation to a wider international moment of transformation and consolidation of neoliberalism as the dominant ideology. The impact of transnational financial capital in its penetration of a relatively small domestic market and the transformation of the state form that mediates such an impact gave the 'disciplining of the working class' in Argentina its 'international' character.⁸⁴ The radical transformation of the economy and the social deterioration that followed created the conditions for a speculative and rampant individualism, as defence mechanism, defining the Argentine specificity in the global transformation. The destruction of capital, as accumulated in the socially produced infrastructure of the Argentine industry, cracked through the social tissue, and exposed it to the reality of a higher order, the international system of capital accumulation. David Harvey has stated that:

84. See Chapter 2, particularly the section on the Argentine economical and political specificity, and the last section on the destruction of the social.

“As capitalism exhausts the possibilities for primitive accumulation (...) so it has to look elsewhere for fresh sources of labour power. In the end it has only one place to go. It has to cannibalise itself.”⁸⁵

The notions of ‘cannibalisation’, ‘the disciplining of the proletarian,’ the metaphor of the self-mutilating ‘infected social body’ discussed in the previous character, individualism and speculative behaviour: all resonate strongly in the aftermath of the dictatorship.⁸⁶ Having stumbled across throughout the 1980s entangled on the remnants of a previously structured nationalistic class struggle for and against the implementation of neoliberal reforms, the Argentine society saw the 1989’s crisis of hyperinflation as the point of no return, opening the door for a deep process of privatisation, restructuring of the state and further de-regulation of the economy. The social consequences of the neoliberal hegemonic transformation are succinctly summarised by Santiago García Navarro:

“Transnationalisation, deindustrialisation, indebtedness, concentration of wealth, unemployment, these are realities that begin, on the larger scale, to consolidate their power of organisation on Argentine everyday life. On this plane of microphysical relations, the condition of permanent contingency established by financial operations in the context of a market with waning industry established speculation as the norm for survival and as the crucial factor in the recognition or disavowal of the other. Each individual had to do a continuous monitoring of the economic world to be able to calculate the precise moment in which to take the biggest advantage of the bizarre relation between the different financial variables which had a daily impact on consumption. (...) Its continuity in the present time is less explicit but it is maybe more effective, precisely because its functions in a more stable market – and hence it is more acceptable –, but also because, on the face of a crisis, it has the potential legitimization of the collective memory.”⁸⁷

85. David Harvey, *Op.cit.*, p.438

86. “The per capita GDP of 1982 was 15% lower than in 1975, and the industrial GDP, 25% smaller than in 1970. Salaries were 40% lower, and their share of the GDP went from 45% in 1974 to 34% in 1983. Debt represented five years of exports.” Novaro, Marcos. *Historia de la Argentina Contemporanea: de Perón a Kirchner*. Buenos Aires: Edhasa, 2006, p.151

87. García Navarro, Santiago. “El Fuego y sus Caminos” en Longoni and Bruzzone. *Op. cit.*, pp.339-340

This last point, the legitimization of extreme individualism as a newly established form of collective memory is key to the understanding of the social and artistic developments of the Argentine of the late 20th and early 21st century. Precarisation of labour and marginalisation become the key concepts through which to analyze the new production of the early 1990s.

Genealogy II:

To Induce the Spirit of the image (1966)

In early 1967 and in response to a newspaper article that criticised the intellectuals involved in the production of happenings, Masotta wrote an essay entitled “I committed a happening” in which he detailed the origin and the production of his happening *To Induce the Spirit of the Image*. The text, an explanation of the signification and relevance of happenings for the understanding of the society of the time, is divided in three sections. The first section deals with the reception of happenings in the Argentine mass media and the reactionary readings it paradoxically provokes in both the traditional left and right. The second section presents Masotta’s description and comments on two happenings he witnessed in New York in 1966. The third section narrates the development of his happening in detail. I will focus on the second and third sections as they provide the basis for the genealogy I intend to present.

The two happenings described in the second section were works by La Monte Young and Michael Kirby that Masotta witnessed in New York in early 1966. The only two formal aspects both happenings share, according to Masotta, are the physical presence of the artist, and an audience of no more than two hundred people.⁸⁸ Masotta’s interpretation of these happening is important to understand the influence that the genre had in some Argentine artists of the 1960s. The complementary character that the works take in Masotta’s reading is the basis for the development of his own happening. Masotta states that: “One could say that one was made for the

88. Masotta, *Happenings*, pp.162-163

senses, while the other was talking to the understanding.”⁸⁹ If Masotta reads Kirby’s work as ‘intelligent,’ “in Barthes’ sense of the ‘aesthetic contemplation of the intelligible,’” it is Young’s work that, by pushing the sensory aspects of the experience to a limit, gives Masotta the idea of a happening containing both aspects, or better, the ‘induction’ of the conceptual aspect through the sensory aspect.⁹⁰ Masotta does not provide a critical interpretation of Kirby’s work; his account is purely descriptive. The happening took place at St Francis College in Brooklyn on the 4th of March 1966. Very formal and self-reflective in relation to its own constitutive materials, the happening was structured in scenes demarcated by on/off switching of the room’s lights. It started by showing a film in which two people discuss the physical characteristics of the place and the necessary requirements to produce the happening that was taking place: the size of the place, the number of lights and performers, the entrance fee and the potential profits. The following scene showed a projection of a map with the location of the happening, while a superimposed pencil drew the route to the college from a nearby location on the map. The same itinerary was then shown on photographs. The next scene was live and showed the same two people that appeared on the first scene of the film; they were dressed with the same clothes and they repeated the same conversation. Kirby joined the conversation, and subsequently the same scene was repeated on the film. A close up of one of the performers speaking to the camera was followed by Kirby’s live response from his chair. Masotta’s description focuses on the growing synchronisation of the time of the narration and the time of the happening; and their subsequent desynchronisation when, as the happening concluded, the audience could see themselves on Polaroid images taken as they entered the room, and could hear a recording of their applause once the performance concluded.

The second happening was created by La Monte Young and took place at Larry Poons’ loft in early 1966. Masotta does not provide the name of the work but he probably saw a performance of “7” a part of *The tortoise, His dreams and journeys*, which technically was not a happening.⁹¹ (Image 11) The loft was located on the third

89. *Ibid*, p.163

90. *Ibid*, footnote 5

91. According to Juli Carson the work was 7, from *The Tortoise, His Dreams and Journeys*. Performed by the “Theatre of Eternal Music”. See her “Aesthetics of Repetition: A Case for Oscar Masotta”, *XTRA*,

floor of a large warehouse building. In his explanation of La Monte Young's work Masotta recalls approaching a room immersed in a very loud and continuous noise made out of electronic sounds, in a dense atmosphere intensified by the smell of incense. A pale coloured light, "turning from red, to green and violet," illuminated one of the walls against which the performance was taking place.⁹² Below the light and facing the public, five people, one woman and four men, sat in a row along the wall in a yoga position, dressed in oriental clothes and holding a microphone each. Four of them were making guttural and repetitive sounds, while the other was playing a homogeneous and continuous music with his violin. An amplified electronic sound played in loop completed the scene, which, according to Masotta, had the effect of inducing the participants into a trance type of experience intensified by the work's stipulated five- hour duration.⁹³ Masotta's description focuses on the effect that the loud and homogeneous noise was having on him:

Vol.14 Nr.3, Spring 2012. According to Young, "this was not a 'happening' but a series of music and light concert performances."

92. Masotta, *Happenings*, p.165

93. *Ibid*, 165-166. Also, reproduced in Ines Katzenstein, ed. *Listen, here, now*, New York, MOMA, 2004 p.195

“Since I had entered the room the physiological condition of my body had changed. The homogenisation of the auditory time, through the presence of this sound at such a high volume, had practically split one of my senses away from all the others. I felt isolated, like nailed to the floor, the auditory reality was now passing through the ‘inside’ of my body and not just through my ears, and it was as if I was forced to compensate the lost capacity to discriminate sounds with my eyes. They opened wider and wider. And all they found in front of them, immersed in the quietude of the bodies and the light, seated, were the five performers”⁹⁴

For Masotta, there were two important points to be made regarding Young’s work. The first relates to the intention of inducing the audience into an almost hallucinatory experience through the modification of the perceptive field that however failed to materialise; in other words, the hallucinatory situation could not go beyond the state of induction. The second point is a consequence of the first, the failure to go beyond the state of induction makes us aware of the material conditions underlying the experience. Following Barthes’ concept of discontinuity, Masotta takes the modification of one continuous – a sound played at such a high volume – as an open comment on the continuous as continuous. Hence, the intensification of the sensory experience creates in turn an awareness of the “material components of the unities of sense, and of sense as continuum” and allows us “to glimpse how far certain continuities and discontinuities are at the root of our relationship to things.”⁹⁵ These were the two points Masotta wanted to highlight in his re-working of Young’s happening that was presented with a few modifications in Buenos Aires during the same year. His version maintained Young’s main structure: the image of performers against a wall facing an audience under a continuous, very loud combination of electronic sounds, and under a focus of light. The length of the piece was reduced to one hour and the number of performers to twenty elderly people.⁹⁶ The first idea was to use marginalised people, though he finally decided upon the use of extras dressed as poor people; a detail that remained unknown to the audience. He also used an

94. *Listen, here, now*, p.195

95. Masotta, *Happenings*, pp.64 & 162

96. *Ibid.*, p.169

intense white light, and placed the performers against a white wall in order to intensify the image like character of the performance; implied at one level by the title *To Induce the Spirit of Image*. (Images 12 and 13)

On the night of the event, Masotta, his back facing the audience and sitting on a sofa chair, introduced the happening, explaining that he had paid 600 pesos to the people on stage for letting themselves be looked at for an hour by the audience; that the audience –more than 200 people – had each paid 200 pesos to see these people standing there; and that he was simply the mediator in this not unusual circuit constituted by money.⁹⁷ He then emptied a fire extinguisher in the space between the performers and the audience, turned on the sound and illuminated the extras for the hour long duration of the happening.

97. This is one of the similarities between Masotta's and Kirby's happenings, but while Kirby discussion of costs and profits in his work presents it as a commercial transaction with the audience, Masotta makes exploitation a material of his work. See Masotta, *Happenings*, pp.171-2

Some recent criticism of Masotta's work flattens the meaning of the work by taking it as an act of recognition whose significance rests in its acknowledgement of the decentred nature of our subjectivity.⁹⁸ Claire Bishop's reading of Masotta's happening highlights its phenomenological aspect, almost repeating Masotta's first reading of Young's. Her reading is, however, paradoxical because it reduces Masotta's work to a copy of Young's work, except for the fact that an economic transaction takes place between Masotta, the performers and the audience. Bishop's approach disavows this last point and its social significance; hence, her perplexity regarding the title. She states,

"It perhaps alludes to the fashionability of happenings at that time and their media reception, pointing to the swift recuperation of actuality into image. The

98. Bishop, Claire. "Live Installations and Constructed Situations: The Use of 'Real People' in Art." *Verksted*, Nr 7, 2006, pp.61-85 Bishop takes Masotta's work as the first example of the new genre she calls "the people's art", without acknowledging that Masotta's work was a direct appropriation of a happening, and as such a happening itself. Paradoxically, Masotta takes *pop art* as conveying the meaning Bishop assigns to "the people's art." As he states, "*Pop art* constitutes a radical critique of an aesthetic culture that, like ours, sees subjectivity or the I as the centre of all the world's significations." Masotta, *Pop Art*, p.19

work flattened out an event into an immobile picture through the violence of sound and light.”⁹⁹

Masotta’s ironic comment that the happening was but ‘an act of social sadism made explicit,’ points to a level of signification that emerges at the moment when the exasperation of the ‘sensory’ aspects of the work makes the need to read beyond the crude phenomenological experience explicit. Taking the loud sound as intensifying the visual experience, and using a crude white light to fix the image, the hour long vision of a group of poor, elderly people being paid to be watched, and the feeling of being the one paying for this abuse to happen, while the person profiting from the situation sat on a sofa next to the stage, could not fail to materialise in the audience. The social relation that is the point of departure of Masotta’s happening – the economic transaction at the basis of our sociability – presents the ‘continuous’ that Masotta wanted to intensify to the point of inversion – the sadistic social character of the exploitation of people by people. The explicitation of the social act of abuse contained in the transaction induced the spirit of the image, in itself based on the spirit of the existing social conditions: the artistic image mimicking the social image. Masotta’s clearly pedagogical functionalisation of happenings aimed to create the conditions for the legitimisation of the media art, of which he was one of the main theorist. Of the three happenings Masotta produced at the time, two have a clear communicational core reflecting on direct and indirect (mass) communication given the growing centrality of the mass media. *To Induce the Spirit of the Image*, on the other hand, has a clear political intention that was both performatively and didactically presented. Masotta’s politicised reading of Young’s happening is probably the consequence of his own exposure to the overly politicised environment of the Argentina of the 1960s.

This attention to the aspects of works of art that touches on concrete social relations is characteristic of Masotta’s critical production, from his literary criticism to his involvement with the avant-garde practices of the 1960. However, while he was particularly aware of the historical conditions for the reception of these artistic productions, his happening did not differentiate the geopolitical conditions of the Argentine reality of his time enough. His incorporation of a social relation as an anti-art

99. Bishop, *Op.cit.*, p.73

element on the work of art imported an aspect of abstract generality in relation to capitalist societies in general into the work. The historical specificity of this society and the unstable character of its political subjectivities are better exemplified in the work of Oscar Bony, *The Working Family*, a work for which Masotta's happening was very influential.

The Working Family (1968)

For the exhibition *Experiencias 68*, a group show organised by the Instituto Di Tella focused on new and experimental art forms, Oscar Bony presented his now "well-know" work *La Familia Obrera (The Working Family)*. (Image 14) Bony hired Luis Ricardo Rodriguez, a dye-caster, together with his wife and son, to stay within the confines of the gallery during its opening hours. For this they received double the salary Rodriguez was normally paid for his skills. The work became known through the different photographic records taken at the time, that suggest that they were sitting on a plinth; in reality the public would find them wandering around the gallery during the exhibition times, even though, the plinth was there somehow marking a referential position for the piece.

Figure 14: Oscar Bony, *La Familia Obrera* (1968). Photo: Oscar Bony.

Much has been said about Bony's work. The idea of fusion of art and life prevalent at the time and very relevant for the Argentine avant-garde is emphasised at different levels in Bony's work. First, by proposing a reversal to the normal direction of this fusion – "instead of bringing art to the masses, to take a sample of the masses and bring it to the gallery"¹⁰⁰ – Bony aligns his gesture to the tradition of the readymade. Furthermore, his gesture has similarities with Dan Graham's reflections on Dan Flavin's works in his alternative history of conceptual art: the idea of not simply taking a sample of reality and putting it inside the gallery, but that the way in which the object is inserted creates a point of indifference between the work qua art and its everyday function.¹⁰¹ *The Working Family* maintains this dual ontological status. On the one hand, it is effectively a work of art in its relation to previous art forms and works that give it its legitimate status. This is maintained in its relation to both the vernacular (Grecco, Masotta) and international artistic traditions (readymade, happenings). On the other hand, *The Working Family* is also a contractual agreement between Bony and Rodriguez, even though the latter's status has been modified as he is being paid not for his skills but for letting people look at him and his family; directing the reading to their class.¹⁰² One could claim that the worker is paid for his work though the nature of his skills has been transformed, in a resemblance of the dialectic of skilling and deskilling. Bony's gesture of naming a family as art, positions his work in the vernacular tradition, also derived from the ready-made, of the post-informalists works of Alberto Grecco.¹⁰³ For example his *Vivo-Dito (Live Finger)*, in which he encircled a person, activity or object, and named them as art objects. Grecco's reception and assimilation

100. Oscar Bony interviewed by Juana Libedisnky, "Tres décadas después, el Di Tella sigue despertando controversias," *La Nación*, 24th of May 1998.

101. Dan Graham, "My works for magazine pages: 'a history of conceptual art'", in Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson, ed. *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, MIT, London, 1999, pp 418-422 "His (Flavin's) arrangements of light fixtures in a gallery space depend for significance, contextually, upon the function of the gallery, and the socially determined architectural use of electric lighting. Use of electric light is related to a specific time in history. Flavin has observed that when the existing system of electric lighting has ceased to exist, his art would no longer function. Being a series of standardized, replaceable units, which, in Flavin's words, "can be bought in any hardware store," his arrangements of fluorescent tubes within the interior or adjacent exterior architectural frame of the gallery exhibition-space function only in situation installation and upon completion of the exhibition cease to function artistically."p.420

102. I am leaving aside a distinct and problematic aspect of the work that emerges from the fact that Bony is not only hiring the male worker but his entire family for double the salary *the male worker* is normally paid.

103. I am also leaving aside possible religious connotations in relation to the work. It could be argued that the work presented by Bony re-enacts the iconographic tradition of Western representations of the holy family re-coded in a vernacular popular (populist) iconography.

by Masotta are a direct line of influence for Bony. Masotta's insistence on the contextualisation of works of art in order to provide a meaningful criticism is reiterated in his approach to Grecco. As he states

"‘To sign people’ as Grecco said; what else could this mean but that there isn't a subject outside the context to which it belongs; and that if the context is somehow modified (isolating the individual with a circle for example) what is modified or perturbed is the idea of individuality itself."¹⁰⁴

In this sense Masotta's 'sadist act' in his above commented happening was literally playing with the boundaries of Grecco's circles, re-positioning the social relations inside and outside the gallery in order to highlight the economic 'continuous' in which the exchange was taking place. Metaphorically taken, instead of using chalk as Grecco did, Masotta used sound and light to encircle the performers. The perturbation of the idea of individuality is the consequence of exposing concrete inequalities. In Masotta's work however, these inequalities appear as almost pedagogically constructed; the transaction is real but its relation to existing social conditions exaggerated.

Masotta's work deeply influenced Bony, and while Masotta's happening appears as the inspiration behind the production of *The Working Family*, Bony's work highlights the historical and geopolitical specificity of a struggle; something that Masotta's abstract reflection did not reach. The conditions of pauperisation implied in Masotta's work, the existence of a lumpen social base, are not part of Bony's work. The working family that Bony presents is not shown as marginal but as representing a particular social class; what Bony called a "sample of the masses". An immanent criticism of the parameters and materials of the work cannot fail to realise the historical specificity of Bony's gesture as deeply rooted in those conditions. Argentina was in 1968 under the dictatorship of General Onganía. This was the third coup, in between five intermittent and pseudo-democratic periods, since the one that removed Peron from government in 1955. The autonomisation of the working class and its 'floating character' as a political actor was the consequence of the political void established by the 1955 dictatorship. The emergence of the working class as an institutionalised – because unionised – political actor with enough power and autonomy to struggle for their own

104. Masotta, *Pop Art*, p.100

interest outside the existing party politics, was the counter balance to an economic elite – a renewed oligarchy – that depended on the authoritarianism of dictatorships to assert its economic power politically. Bony's work condenses this problematisation at many levels. The working family (the real, not the work of art) represents, at one level, the paradigmatic *Peronist* signifier *per excellence*. *Peronism*, as national-popular movement, represents the integration, recognition and institutionalisation of the working class in Argentina. It also represents, at another level, the historical transformation of that signifier given Perón's exile, and the new, much disputed role the working class had during the mid to late 1960s. At the same time the verticalisation of the economy was the consequence of its growing internationalisation in which transnational corporations and local economic groups became the main dynamic actors.¹⁰⁵ This situation introduced the problem of the segmentation of the working class according to the sector of the productive structure its members were inserted in, and, hence, threaten the workers' capacity for pressure and negotiation. On a different level, and given Argentina's political crisis, a process of fragmentation of the ambivalent ideological composition of *Peronism* took place. The newly emerging left, that during those years came out of the revision of *Peronism*, took it as a social movement with the potential to produce a radical social transformation.¹⁰⁶ A potential constructed in two ways, first because given the changes *Peronism* effectively instituted, it was taken as establishing the conditions of possibility for its intensification towards a revolutionary situation, and second because its proscription and Peron's exile created the basis for its mythologisation. It is the peculiar contradiction internal to *Peronism*, a populism of ambivalent ideology, hierarchically structured under the powerful image of the leader, that gives *The Working Family* its historical significance: the still prevalent identification of 'the people' with 'the working class' and the *Peronist* movement as the horizon of historical development and change, and a moment of threat to that construction.

105. See Azpiazu, Daniel Basualdo, Eduardo and Khavisse, Miguel. *El Nuevo Poder Económico en la Argentina de los Años Ochenta*. Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 2004. Chapter 2, pp 33-51. Also Eduardo Basualdo, *Estudios de Historia Económica Argentina: desde mediados del siglo XX a la actualidad*, Siglo veintiuno editores, Buenos Aires, 2010. Chapter 2, pp.25-107

106. See Terán, Oscar. *Nuestros Años Sesenta*. Buenos Aires: Punto Sur Editores, 1991, and Sigal Silvia. *Intelectuales y poder en la década del sesenta*, Buenos Aires: Punto Sur Editores, 1991.

The class struggle was still presented on the basis of a national – international axis of confrontation paradigmatically defined by *Dependency Theory* through its revision of the *Theory of Imperialism*.¹⁰⁷ This is important as it marks the historical difference between the dictatorships of the 1960s, when a national capitalist movement like *Peronism* still defined the socio-historical horizon of development, and the 1970s, when without Perón's unifying figure the horizon of a different type of historical transformation (at least in the imagination of the parts involved), started to appear as both hope (for the armed movements) and fear (for the military power and the dominant classes). The formal aspect of the work reflects this moment of political ambivalence, the definition of which cannot be taken as a minor result. If form is what carries social meaning in the work, the incorporation of politics as form touches on aspects of social policy that structure the political form of the state in very different ways: the form of accumulation and its link to the international scene, the importance of the internal market for a policy of employment, the redistribution of wealth. In other words, the work appears politically mediated in so far as the process of commodification in which the society is immersed cannot be defined exclusively in economic terms. Retrospectively, the work also becomes relevant for its formal analogy to the conditions of precarisation established once the social structure was transformed into an open market neoliberal society in the 1990s. Bony's work is a contract for the duration of the show without any of the benefits and rights of permanent working conditions associated to the profession of industrial worker he is employing, and the type of salaried society Argentina was in the 1960s. The contract also involves the whole family, not just the male worker, further emphasising its exploitative and precarious character.

In this context, Masotta's controversial statement quoted at the beginning of this chapter gains strong signification. For if the new artistic productions show a high level of consciousness in relation to their position in the history of art, they also show a constitutive spatio-temporal gap in relation to the maturity of the 'national' movement. This is, between art and it claims to universality on the one hand, and works of art as constituted in the political and economic space of a particular nation state in its relation to international and transnational space, on the other.

107. See Chapter 2

Consciousness of the history art and consciousness of uneven development as the basis for the production of particular works are not overlapping conditions. It is precisely the overdetermination presented by the historical development of artistic forms, the geopolitical location of the state, and the internal political disputes originated in a process of modernisation that give the *The Working Family* and the media art their historical significance.

With the expansion of the limits of the work of art outside the parameters of the art institution, consciousness of the art history also overlaps with the history of all other institutions brought into the scope of art. The attention to the parameters so characteristic of the Argentine artistic productions of the 1960s therefore increasingly brought other parameters, and the structures defining those parameters, to light. If political forms are brought to account in the production of the work, consciousness of an artistic production's place in the history of art also means consciousness regarding the role played by such a production in the political arena. Art institutions do not exist in a void, they are part of wider networks structuring the social field. A third level of signification is then produced by Bony's "selection" given the art context in which it is presented. The Di Tella Institute was the space in which all new and experimental forms of art were given a space of display and legitimation. The internationalist project for the promotion of Argentine art the institute fomented, paralleled the process of modernisation that was taken place at the level of the productive structure, in which de Di Tella industries were immersed. Bony's work presented a working family at the place that synthesise the social transformation affecting the working class best. It poses the question of the working class as political subjectivity in its historical *Peronist* form at the moment in which the self-understanding of that notion by the working class was being transformed. This situation was somehow staged by the "circuit constituted by money" that Bony set up. For *Experiencias 68*, all the artists received funding from the Di Tella for the production of their works; the Di Tella in turn received part of its funding from the Rockefeller Foundation; and Bony decided to use this funding to pay the family. Bony states that he found it "interesting to use the money from one of the biggest exponents of world capitalism to present an icon of its class

enemy.”¹⁰⁸ However, the funding was also coming from the Di Tella industries, a representative of that upper bourgeoisie benefiting directly from the transformation of the productive structure. That continuum that, as Masotta states, links “‘things’ and subjects in a close net of relations” appears here embedded in a more complicated context; one that not only makes the problematic relation of different social actors and political subjectivities visible, but also highlights the cultural dependency as a condition for the emergence of the Argentine politicised avant-garde of the 1960s. In this respect, Bony’s work falls prey to the same neutralisation Masotta saw as a trap for his pedagogical intentions. It was integrated very easily into the institutional context regardless of the discomfort that it could have created for viewers on both sides of the political spectrum and the press. The growing opposition to the modernisation project, given its incapacity to incorporate a politically marginalised working class, paralleled the artists’ growing disillusion with the constant re-appropriation and neutralisation of their work by the institutional circuit. It is symptomatic of this situation that the majority of the artists regarded as part of the avant-garde broke with the art institution at around this time. As the ideological sphere became contested the production of new artworks became radicalised and the works functionalised as tools for producing social change. With the consequence that the illusion of an autonomous political subjectivity dissolved the illusion of the autonomous character of the work of art; hence after the highly politicised experience of *Tucumán Arde* art almost suddenly stopped being produced, and there was only politics.

Bony’s work particularity in the history of Argentine art, encounters a contrasting moment in a work by Liliana Maresca of the early 1990s. Maresca’s work brings *The Working Family’s* signification to the spotlight by confirming the threat implicit to the working class’ struggle pointed out by Bony’s work 25 years earlier. Bony’s relation to Maresca’s work is condensed in Maresca’s work relation to the social conditions of the 1990s, as it highlights the transition from a combative and organised working class to the emergence of an excluded and marginalised sector of the population more akin to Nun’s conception of the marginal mass.¹⁰⁹ If historical accounts change the relation of works of art to the present, it seems correct, with the hindsight of the early 21st

108. Oscar Bony, interviewed by Santiago García Navarro, “Bony, el polémico”, *La Nación-Vía Libre*, 21 de Mayo 1998

109. Nun, *Op.cit.*, pp.6-32

century, to claim that Masotta's *To Induce the Spirit of the Image* is more contemporary to the Argentine 1990s than *The Working Family*, as those marginal people displayed in Masotta's work correspond more directly with the Argentina of the post-hyperinflationary period (post-1989) and the full blown neoliberal policies associated with the Washington Consensus, than with the Argentina of the 1960s where exclusion and marginality were not as prevalent.

***Recolecta* (1990)**

Maresca's work *Recolecta* is also, as Bony's work, a gesture in line with the tradition of the readymade. In that sense, it does not transcend the genre but provides a further example of its possible re-appropriations and the dangers of its neutralisation by the art institutions. Its relevance for the genealogy traced in this thesis is centred in the way in which it allows a reading of the transformation of the political subjectivities of the 1960s, given the transformation of the social structure of production and accumulation. At the same time the level of aestheticisation of Maresca's work also reflects a tendency that became important in the Argentine art scene of the 1990s.

Recolecta was shown at the Centro Cultural Recoleta between the 27th of November and the 16th of December of 1990. Maresca presented a four-piece work around the figure of a "carro cartonero:"¹¹⁰ a cart that is normally used by poor and marginalised people to collect recyclable materials and objects dumped as waste by households in Buenos Aires. The first piece was an unmodified cart with its load as it was taken from the street. The second piece was a cart that had been fully painted in white. And the third and forth were two small bronze reproductions, one silver-plated and the other gold-plated. (Images 15-18) The work of the "cartoneros", that became visible and widely spread in Buenos Aires after the 2001 crisis, has its origin as a socially relevant practice in the crisis of hyperinflation of 1989. This type of work is normally taken as a symbol of the deterioration of living standards in the country. Maresca picked this symbolic embodiment and transplanted it into the gallery space with some modifications. For this she rented two carts with their complete load from a person

110. "Carro" means wagon in Spanish; "Cartonero" means the one that collects "carton", "Cartonero" is however a confusing way of denominating the activities of the people Maresca took as symbolic of the state of Argentina. The "cartoneros" as a social subject are the product of the 2001 crisis.

living in the Albergue Warnes, an uncompleted and emblematic Children's Hospital that was intended to be the biggest in Latin America. Its construction started in the early 1950s during Peron's presidency, and was brought to a halt by the 1955 dictatorship. The building, now demolished, was by the 1990s a shanty town in the geographical centre point of the city; its incomplete existence allegorically exemplifies the social struggle condensed in Bony's work.

Maresca saw the emergence of cartoneros as allegoric of the social changes taking place in the country and the cart carried through the streets of the city as a symbol of the exploitative character of the Argentine society of the time. As Maresca states:

"I took the 'carrito cartonero' as a national symbol. And I worked with this, even with an idealisation of this. This is why I converted them in gold, in silver, like moving to another medialisation of it, an alchemy of some sort, of producing something out of nothing and of all that human suffering that 'cartonear' for twenty pesos a day means. Like those hundred guys that would then go and sell that that was like selling their soul, their blood. Misery seemed to me a national symbol."¹¹¹

'Producing something out of nothing' and 'selling the blood' are the main, almost literal notions distilled from Maresca's explanation. In Argentine Spanish 'horse-drawn' is 'tracción a sangre' (blood-drawn); as the "carts" are pulled by people, 'selling their blood' condenses both the exploitative character of the physical work and the literal act of selling the product of the work. 'Producing something out of nothing' also condensates two dialectically related moments of the social. On the one hand, it points to the historical moment in which the previously 'nothing' of capitalism, its waste or rubbish, is thrown back into the system as raw materials; the 'cartoneros' mainly collect materials for recycling. On the other hand, this 'nothing' created by capitalism is put back into the system by the 'social nothing' also created by the system in the form of the marginal, the excluded; though somehow functionalised in a perverse productive form. The act of social sadism pointed out by Masotta at a formal abstract level, now explicitated at the social level and enacted by the entire society. These two notions are in turn condensed in the work through the symbolic presentation of the "carros" in reduced silver and gold versions. Silver and gold are also the most emblematic materials of Latin America's colonial past; hence the transformation points to a new form of "neo-colonialism."

The relevance of Maresca's work is not so much the political or social content derived from her gesture, though obviously this is important, but the way in which its affinity with Bony's work brings out a perspective of the political as form in the work of art. Bony's work presented the social base of the state in dispute over the political subjectivities that composed it. The 'working family' as embodiment of the *Peronist* political subjectivity was in dispute, both internal to the movement and external to it,

111. Maresca, Liliana interviewed by , quoted in *Liliana Maresca Documentos* Buenos Aires: Libros del Rojas, 2006, p.101

in the transformation of the productive structure that was the basis of its existence as political subject. What comes to the fore in Maresca's is the dissolution of the previously dominant political subjectivity and its replacement by a softer, malleable, defeated subjectivity. The material conditions that sustained Bony's work – the tensions triggered by a process of industrial expansion and the clash between antagonistic projects – have disappeared by the time Maresca presents hers. The 1976-1983 dictatorship and the process of hyperinflation in 1989, transformed the pattern of accumulation in such a definite way that the neoliberal path was progressively taken as necessary. The level of external indebtedness and the intensified concentration of capital in fewer actors abruptly re-shaped the political sphere, replacing the main political subjectivities of the previous model with fragmented social actors neutralised by the apparent economic nature of the political decisions. Under these conditions, the disappearance of the contested social space that was the basis for the emergence of political signification at the formal, subject matter and content levels during the 1960s and 1970s, became the reason for the evacuation of the political in new productions during the 1990s.

The physical violence and political exclusion that was necessary to modify the pattern of accumulation during the dictatorship gave way, after the successive economic crises in democratic times, to a subtle but consistent demonisation of the state as the cause of the collapse of the previous model of socialisation. At the same time, the displacement of the working class' centrality as a relevant political subject, as well as the diminishing of the middle classes, were further established by the subsequent crisis of hyperinflation of 1989, the emergence of a structural 20% of unemployment that followed the privatisation waves from 1992 onwards, the rising levels of informalisation and precarisation of working conditions, the lack of an adequate social service network, the further deindustrialisation of the productive structure given the parity of the local currency to the dollar, and the reduction of the state in wave after wave of budget adjustments dictated by the servicing of national debt.¹¹² The dissolution of politics into the space of an economy increasingly

112. To put this account in numbers, the statistics for 1974 showed a 2,8% of unemployment, 40,1% of annual inflation, 17% of informal employment, a gap of 12,3% between the richest 10% and poorest 10% of the population, and a 36,42% of unequal distribution of wealth according to the Gini coefficient. These same variables were 2,3%, 87,6%, 15,8%, 12,7% and 41,34% in 1980, and 7%, 4.923,5%, 26,7%,

dominated by a technocratic approach naturalised the existing social conditions: high levels of unemployment and employment informality, precarisation of labour conditions, super exploitation, financialisation of the economy. The omnipresence of the market and the newly created heterogenisation of the social structure have their correlation in the aestheticisation of the art sphere.

Art, Commodity Form and Political Subjectivities

The two genealogies outlined above are the basis for the critical reading of the art of the 1990s in Argentina I will present in the following chapter. The first genealogy constructs a narrative that goes from the appropriation of happenings to the media art, and reads more recent productions as part of the same development. In this way, the narrative develops inside a framework that can be classified as modernist. It is constituted through the negation of a historically specific art form that provides the dynamic for subsequent productions; each different media art production experimenting further with the limitations and historical conditions of the previous ones. The criticism of the works presented in this chapter provided a contextualisation for the emergence of the media art in Argentina as immersed in a process of modernisation that included both the mass media and avant-garde productions as active participants of its ideological legitimisation. As the ideological sphere was very much contested at the time⁴, the production of new artworks became radicalised. The focus on the contested ideological sphere somehow obscured the relation of the work as social product to the sphere of production in general. If the formal abstraction of Masotta's *Ghost Message* pointed to the reification of information through the mass media, and the political content of *Tucumán Arde* pointed to the deterioration of living conditions of the sugar mills workers hidden by the 1966 dictatorship, the relation of the form of production of the art works to the productive structure in general does not emerge from the artistic material as clearly as their relation to the mass media. Hence the analysis of the artistic materials appears more directly linked to a politico-

23.1% and 50,08% in 1989. The same values were 19%, -1,5%, 37,8%, 28,5% and 47,30% in 2001. Artemio López and Martín Romeo, *La Declinación de la Clase Media Argentina: Transformaciones en la estructura social (1974-2004)*, Libros de eQuis, Buenos Aires, 2005, pp. 43, 51, & 55. The Gini coefficient is a measurement of inequality; a measurement of 0% expresses a minimum of inequality among values, and a 100% a maximum.

ideological sphere. The analysis of *El Siluetazo*, on the other hand, allows for different levels of interpretation in relation to its content. What appears as an abstraction in Masotta's work, or as political propaganda in *Tucumán Arde*, is here concretised at the level of the materials. In other words, the 'functionalisation' of the *Ghost Message* that *El Siluetazo* effects is done through the appropriation of a popular form of political mobilisation. The figure of the 'desaparecidos' ('disappeared') as content, and the spatial dimensionality of the presentation, work against the reification of the material as information, while at the same time, the poverty of materials and the mode of production of the silhouettes create an affinity between the production of the work and the newly imposed conditions of production; what I have described as 'precarisation' and 'marginalisation'.

However, the subject matter of the work, the "desaparecidos," also works in a more subtle way at the level of the political. The social and political levels of interpretation presented in this text pointed to the recuperation of the image of the 'desaparecidos' and the recuperation of participation and solidarity as key elements of civil society respectively. It is, however, important to keep these levels apart. To take the *Siluetazo* as a political event implies the need to elaborate on the political subjectivities thus activated or alluded. But there isn't a political subjectivity per se embodied in the work; on the contrary the subjectivity expressed is social and relates to the claim to universality of discourses on human rights. Given that the subject matter of the work are the 'desaparecidos', there is no political subjectivity that can exclusively fulfil that content because all political subjectivities are also interpellated given that human rights are a universal right. This is an important point from an artistic perspective as there is a tendency to take the number of artistic practices supporting different social groups that emerged in Argentina during the 1990s, as examples of political art, while in reality their demands are primarily focused on demands for justice.¹¹³

The analysis of the first genealogy does not allow for an understanding of the transformation of political subjectivities that has taken place since the late 1960s. This transformation, that appears more clearly presented in the second genealogy, is however relevant for the understanding of the passivity of political subjectivities given

113. I am referring here to the works of GAC (Grupo de Arte Callejero) y Etcetera. These two art collectives emerged in the late 1990s and have collaborated with the Madres de Plaza de Mayo and H.I.J.O.S. (*Hijos e Hijas por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio*).

the dimension of Argentina's structural transformation. To go back once again to Adorno's dictum that 'conformity has replaced consciousness,' the passivity expressed by political subjectivities in the Argentine context cannot be reduced to 'conformity' as the deteriorating living conditions affected a substantial amount of the population permanently. At the same time, 'consciousness' has not re-emerged given the transformation of material conditions. At this point, it is necessary to bring the geopolitical dimension back into the analysis as context for these transformations. The political subjectivities of the 1960s were constructed under a 'national' paradigm that appears totally dissolved in the 1990s. It is the geopolitical transformation produced by the changes in the mode of accumulation at a global level what dissolved the political subjectivities of the 1960s, and provided the basis for the emergence of multiple social movements representing particular and disarticulated demands. The second genealogy thus appears as a complement to the first by providing a narrative of the disarticulation of political subjectivities in Argentina. The criticism of the commodification of mass communicational forms and their ideological instrumentalisation contained in the first genealogy, and the criticism of the dissolution of political subjectivities enacted by a violent and disciplinary transformation of the productive structure contained in the second genealogy, provides the context through which I will read the artistic productions of the 1990s. On the one hand, the aestheticisation of the artistic sphere is presented as the consequence of the omnipresence of the market as the sole horizon of development; one in which the political subjectivities of the past 40 years have been dissolved in the new neoliberal context. On the other hand, the contradictory character of the form of production of works of art is taken as determined by its relation to the precarisation of social relations and the growing centrality of marginality.

CHAPTER 5

THE PERSISTENCE OF A PERIPHERAL CONDITION

*"The shadow of art's autarchic radicalism is its harmlessness:
Absolute color compositions verge on wallpaper patterns."*¹

If the situation affecting the practice of art in general, in its post-conceptual condition, requires that all contemporary artistic practice registers in its production the condition of crisis as the basis of its condition as a socially meaningful practice – its modernism – it must do so however, by assimilating at the same time the difference inscribed in its particularity as a consequence of its location in the uneven geopolitical organisation of the world economic system. The particularity of its modernism is an expression of its relation to a given modernity. In other words, art as a social relation is inscribed in specific material conditions. For this reason, its post-conceptual character cannot remain blind to the transformation of the material conditions that made conceptuality historically possible in the first place, while at the same time, it needs to register in its particularity the historical and geopolitical specificity of its constitution. Following on from the previous chapter, we may enquire into the significance of post-conceptuality under the post-dictatorial conditions of a peripheral country like Argentina, in which the dictatorship of 1976-83 is understood as a turning point, displacing the model of national-industrial development that characterised Argentine state policy after the Second World War. As argued in chapter 4, the various crises of this model represent, at the cultural level, the historical condition of possibility of conceptual artistic practices in the country.

It is against the background of the cultural and social legacy of the last dictatorship, as well as the economic and political consequences of the transformation of the productive structure that Argentina experienced during the same period, that the post-conceptual artistic practices in Buenos Aires have to be read. Not as a direct consequence of the neoliberal transformation of the 1990s but as forming part of the same historical logic of the emergence of neoliberalism as the dominant world's ideology, and of flexible, transnational forms of accumulation as defining a global

1. Adorno. *Aesthetic Theory*, p.29

regime of accumulation in its local specificity. I want to argue that the specific form of social experience contained in some Argentine works of the 1990s is related to the disappearance of the mediation that the political form of the former national-popular state represented in relation to the international capitalist system. The gradual replacement of this state form by a neo-liberal, global market-oriented state form implied the dismantling of the interdependence between capital and labour that has defined the previous political organisation of the national economy. In this sense, it is in its relation to the post-conceptual that some artistic practices related to the concept of precarisation have their historical significance as a peripheral markers of a transnationalised global economy. The counter-product to the increasing administrative logic of the transnational capitalist system – which in the periphery never had the capacity for social complacency that Adorno theorised for developed societies – is the growing significance of the informal and marginal sectors.

What follows is an analysis of the development of the work of Pablo Siquier from the early 1990s onwards. I take his work as paradigmatic of a growing trend towards the aestheticisation of the work of art that characterised many art productions in Buenos Aires during the 1990s. It is a trend that incorporates both the omnipresence of the market and the dissolution of political subjectivities, in the context of state withdrawal and increasing levels of social marginalisation. Siquier's body of work can be analysed at three different levels broadly corresponding to different stages in his production. The first level is defined by the use of the medium of painting as an anti-art form; in this respects it highlights its connection to a historically specific milieu in which the loss of the social meaning of painting as an artistic medium is intertwined with the increasing social relevance of manual production as an allegory of marginalisation. This will be the topic of the following section. The second level is defined in relation to the historical transformation of the urban space of the Buenos Aires metropolis that started with the dictatorship of 1976-1982, but was legitimised and consolidated during the 1990s under the neoliberal government of Carlos Menem; ironically a representative of the Justicialista *Peronist* Party. It is mainly the heterogenisation of the social tissue – its 'Latinamericanisation'² – that is at stake in

2. The particularity of Buenos Aires in the Latin American context has been historically its level of social homogenisation. I will elaborate this point in the last two sections of this chapter.

the reading of the fragmentation of the city according to the model of what Graciela Silvestri and Adrian Gorelik termed the 'city of business.'³ The third level corresponds to the intersection between the previous two levels and the tradition initiated with media art (chapter 4) given Siquier work's expansion onto the public space. In particular, here, it is the use of the mural form in the public space that creates the works' signification.

Medium specificity, conceptuality and the peripheral condition: the work of Pablo Siquier

In the catalogue that accompanies the Argentine representation at the Sao Paulo Biennale of 2005, the artist and critic Nicolás Guagnini published a text summarising Siquier's artistic production to date. There Guagnini states that,

"The basic form in which Siquier's work has been disseminated is the pictoric. However, Siquier has worked in space since the beginning of his career. And in more than three lustrums of works he has barely and tangentially dedicated to the problems of colour. We can therefore conclude that Siquier is not a painter. If we have to frame his practice in a disciplinary episteme, he is clearly a draftsman, and as a draftsman he is better defined as a designer."⁴

The question of the relation of Siquier's work to current and previous artistic forms, and to art in general, is, as Guagnini points out, a problematic one. Formally his work could be inserted in the tradition of 'concrete art' that developed in Buenos Aires during the 1940s and 1950s.⁵ While Siquier has particularly mentioned his interest in

3. Silvestri, Graciela and Gorelik, Adrián. "Ciudad y Cultura Urbana, 1976-1999: El fin de la Expansión", in Romero, José Luis and Romero, Luis Alberto ed. *Buenos Aires: Historia de Cuatro Siglos, Volumen 2: Desde la Ciudad Burguesa (1880-1930) hasta la Ciudad de Masas (1930-2000)*. Buenos Aires: Altamira, 2000.

4. Guagnini, Nicolás. "La implacable sombra de la involución" *Ramona*, Nr. 48, March 2005, Buenos Aires, p.70

5. This has certainly been the case in some recent group exhibitions that have tried to locate, not only Siquier's production, but also some of his Argentine contemporaries', on the tradition of both Argentine Concrete Art, and more generally, on the tradition of Western abstract painting. An example of the first case is the exhibition curated by Carlos Basualdo at Apex Art during February 1996 entitled *The Rational Twist*. An example of the second case is the exhibition *Painting Zero Degree* curated also by Basualdo and Ellen Tepfer and organised and circulated by Independent Curators International (ICI) between 2000 and 2002.

the *perceptivist*⁶ works of Raúl Lozza,⁷ he has nonetheless pointed out that such interest resides more in the apparent inversion of the utopian relation to the social that can be found in these works than in their formal relations: positive and utopian in the case of Lozza and other artists associated to the Argentine concrete movements; negative and dystopian in the case of Siquier and his contemporaries. The invariant quality of Siquier's form of production, and the constantly expanding serial character and sequential naming of his works also distance his production from concrete art. Siquier's works derive a substantial part of their signification from the constant and cumulative character of his production which places the works in a closer relation to minimalist and conceptual art strategies of the 1950s and 1960s. However the formalist and industrialist character of the former and the more ascetic and discursive nature of the later are difficult to relate to the manual and overly aesthetic features of Siquier's work.

To define, as Guagnini does, Siquier as a 'designer' and as working 'in space' points to a form of construction that moves beyond its reduction to painting. In its simplest description, Siquier's work is the result of a process of transferring imaginary designs onto different surfaces using a range of different techniques. The separation of design and production, and the reduction of design to the expanded reworking and reproduction of ornamental forms, delimited by very concise rules, constitute the basis of Siquier's work, and highlights the relevance of the process of production for evaluating his work. Two main stages of development can be singled out in Siquier's trajectory corresponding mainly with the differential use of technologies of production (of the designs) and reproduction (the transference of the designs onto different surfaces), and the growing complexity of the designs. In relation to the designs in general, Guagnini enumerates two interrelated variables defining each stage; these variables are "the emblem, ornament, or sign" and "the lattice." As Guagnini points out:

6. Raúl Lozza was a member of *Arte Concreto Invención*, one of the two concrete movements that emerged in Buenos Aires during the 1940s; the other was MADI. He later founded his own movement *Perceptismo*, a variant of concrete art highlighting the quality of visual perception as constitutive of a practical relation to the expectator. His "Manifiesto Perceptista" was published in the catalogue of the first "perceptivist" exhibition in 1949. See, Lozza, Raúl. "Manifiesto Perceptista" in Cippolini, Rafael ed. *Manifiestos Argentinos: Políticas de lo Visual 1900-2000*. Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo Editora, 2003, pp.224-226

7. See, for example, Siquier, Pablo. "El Edificio Subjetivo", *Ramona*, Nr. 13, June 2001, Buenos Aires, p.22

“Different levels of interaction between lattices and emblems, the emergence of lattices through the repetition of designs, the overlay of lattices' densities, in short, the entire formalist paraphernalia that the infinite game of difference and repetition allows, were thoroughly explored according to very precise parameters that Siquier defined as rules or touchstones from the beginning of his practice.”⁸

The designs are stylistically standardised by persistently maintaining pre-established parameters, or subjective 'conventions'. These determine that each design is represented by casting the shadow of a hypothetical object produced by a hypothetical light coming from the right upper corner of the hypothetical object. These subjectively pre-given rules submit the final work to the test of its geometrical correctness. The first series was produced with the same, strict “vertical axis of symmetry”, that combined with the already described rules provided a schematic system to represent volumes: “Of volumes under the sun, as Le Corbusier would say.”⁹ As Guagnini observes, “the shadows do not have a vanishing point; this is, the code of representation is analogous to the axonometric perspective and not the renaissance one.”¹⁰ The works are in this way, designs of ornamental features that are rendered in a three dimensional way by their separation from a neutral (mainly white) background. A key feature of architectural design since modernism, the axonometric perspective appears in Siquier's work in order to render visible, in a negative form – through a shadow – the existence of an object-design that otherwise would blend with the background. This is evident in Siquier's procedure, as he first draws the design and then projects its shadow.

For the early works the basic designs were first developed on millimetric paper. The process of transferring the design to the canvas was a laborious manual process for which he used rulers and compass. A grid of 1.5 cm by 1.5 cm would be drawn on the canvas to assist positioning lines and curves. After this the shadows were geometrically projected creating a complex sketch of lines. Subsequent phases of painting over and re-drawing were undertaken until all secondary lines were removed. The remaining

8. Guagnini, *Op.cit.*, p.70

9. Siquier interviewed by Estol, Leopoldo. “Radicality, Intensity, Dissolution”, in Tabarovsky, Damián. *Siquier*. Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo Editor, 2011, p.68

10. Guagnini, *ibid.*, p.72

shadow of the design was painted black by hand using a small brush. These works were still partly designed on the canvas.¹¹ As the initial phase of the work had been produced on a horizontal position, Siquier re-assessed it after the canvas was presented vertically; any corrections or modification were done directly on the canvas; works 9202 (Image 19) and 8904 (Image 20) below are examples of this stage. In these early works the object of the design is still present in the image as it appears defined by the reflection of the light on its right side and the shadow it casts on the left hand side of the image. The architectonic style appears more clearly in these works, as the ornamental or style features are still easily recognisable. As Siquier states, "the gray serie's paintings are all constructions that were thought with an architectonic idea, with the same aesthetic idea."¹²

11. Author's interview with Pablo Siquier. Buenos Aires, May 2010.

12. Molina, Daniel. "Siquier , simple y barroco," *La Nacion*, 27th January 2012.

The same aesthetic idea is however architectonic in a very reductive way. It refers to the singling out of a stylistic or ornamental architectonic feature and reduces it to a single and symmetric emblem detached from any architectonic object. The architectonic idea does not refer to a building but singles out styles. Given the cumulative character of Siquier's series, which is further emphasised by the tittles' sequential numbering – in all titles the first two digits refer to the corresponding sequential number and the second two digits refer to the year of production – the series takes the form of a cataloguing procedure. Features of a style reduced to a design further abstracted by the projection of its shadow, and the cumulative depiction of different stylistic versions in different works. The axonometric perspective is presented and repressed at the same time; its technical possibilities, its functional character as aid to depicting all sides of an object in a non-distorted form, which was

the basis of its use in modernist architecture, reduced to the depiction of the object in two dimensions – as it is only depicted in a frontal way – and only introduced for the depiction of its shadow.

The second stage is a further elaboration of the first series in which the removal of colour from the canvas merges the light into the background dissolving any depiction of volume. The designs become increasingly more complex with the interconnection and overlap of ornamental features in a lattice type of configuration; the asymmetrically resulting composition displaces the centrality that the ornament had in the previous series onto the fragmentary character of the entire design in which different ornaments are interconnected. The works move from the singling out of a specific style to their hybridisation; a process that Siquier has referred to as “stylistic metastasis” given that it absorbs and juxtaposes ornamental features from different styles and re-defines them according to his own system of production.”¹³ It was almost a logical consequence of this development that the expansion and complexity of the designs put a limit to the possibility of both the design and its production by hand. The amount of time consumed in the production of one particular design and in its transference to the canvas, added to the limitation of forms that Siquier was able to produce with the aid of rulers and compass – particularly the limitation with the projection of curves and counter-curves; a complication that was duplicated in order to project the shadows. This dynamic created a set of problems and solution for the production of new works. On the one hand, as stated above, the growing complexity of the designs pushed Siquier to begin elaborating them using standardised design software. This situation had the contradictory consequence of simplifying the production of the design while at the same time infinitely augmenting the possibilities of expansion and complexity of the works, and hence of re-complicating the production of the design. That is, the technological shift made the design of early works simpler, but given the new and expanded possibilities the design became ever more complicated; the quantitatively increased possibilities for designing, becoming a qualitative feature of the work. On the other hand, and given the increased possibilities for designing implied by the use of a computer, the manual method

13. “Stylistic metastasis” is a term coined by Siquier to describe the hybridisation of styles inherent to his method of production. See Guagnini, *Op.cit.*, p.70

previously used to transfer the design onto the canvas became problematised. The free use of all geometrical possibilities that the use of a computer allows at the moment of designing, displaced all those problems to the moment of transference. At the same time, the use of the computer completed the separation between the process of design and that of production. As Siquier states

“With the computer, all the variables and failures were corrected on the screen. Hence at the moment of rendering the design it was only a matter of transferring it to the canvas. So it could even be done by a different person as nothing was decided at the moment of the production of the painting; the whole struggle had been solved on the screen”¹⁴

The amount of time that the rendering of the first works designed on the computer consumed, the difficulty of the process, and the number of errors and corrections that were necessary after the initial transference, pushed Siquier to review the technology of reproduction. Siquier solved these problems through a set of different techniques. The first solution was to maintain the use of the canvas but transfer the design by using a plotter to produce vinyl stencils that were then overlaid on the canvas. Instead of painting black on white as in previous works, Siquier painted the whole canvas black, overlaid the vinyl stencils, painted over in white and finally produced the design by removing the stencil. All imperfections on the canvas were then removed by hand. The systematisation of this productive process allowed Siquier to become a very prolific artist. This situation had two main consequences. On the one hand, the amount of works produced and their public exposure made Siquier's style easily recognisable. On the other hand, the easily identifiable style reduced the relevance of the single work transforming the name Siquier into a kind of brand, another of the consequences of transforming quantity into quality. (Image 21) -

14. Siquier, Pablo. “Mis influencias vinieron de la música y la danza, no vengo de la tradición pictórica”, *Ramona*, Nr.50, Buenos Aires, 2005, p.87

A logical expansion of the work was to use the transference process onto other surfaces than the canvas. Consequently a second technique was to use the vinyl stencil to produce the work directly onto the gallery walls. The technique in this case was to use the vinyl not as a stencil but as a black adhesive placed directly onto the white gallery walls, as in 0502 below. The more seamless finishing of the work combines with the transience of its existence as the work is destroyed once the exhibition is completed. (Images 22 and 23)

This new technique of transference of the design to the wall is complemented by the introduction of a different series of murals, that even when maintaining the

separation of design and rendering introduces a totally different strategy. This new series is designed on a 3D software, unlike the previous works they include a renaissance type of perspective dominated by a vanishing point, and they depict imaginary constructions: apparently non-functional constructions of tightly packed beams projected in every direction. (Image 24) Ornamental features are less apparent than in the previous designs, however they share their growing and apparently irrational complexity. The reproduction technique is reduced to manually copying the digitally produced design on charcoal as it is being projected onto the wall.

Style

The importance of an easily recognisable style in relation to Siquier's work should not be underestimated as it represents one of its defining features. It is so because the particularity of the styled produced has as its consequence the transformation of each individual work into the instantiation of a predefined convention with unlimited possibilities of elaboration but almost the same level of signification. Siquier neutralises design forms through the standardisation inherent in his methodical form

of production. The 'stylistic metastasis' thus created, presents a de-contextualisation of historical forms, the social meaning of which problematises their interpretation. Instead of the celebratory 'post-modern' re-working of styles and the celebration of marketable identitarian collectivities, the systematisation proposed by Siquier liquidates all styles and their historical and social meaning, emphasising at the same time their potential for ideological re-working. The construction of a design through the serial repetition of details, and the superposition of designs, co-exist with a tendency to self-referentiality that absorbs his own style into the re-working machine. The standardisation of a model of production creates a style out of the absorption of styles, while the fixation of certain parameters of production constructs Siquier's style as an immediately recognisable one. This point has similarities with Adorno's and Max Horkheimer's definition of the culture industry machine as a "stereotyped appropriation of everything," however Siquier's resulting style does not produce a total reification of form.¹⁵ In Adorno's and Horkheimer's account, the functionalisation of culture for the purpose of exchange produces a paradoxical short-circuit between culture and the everyday, to the point of making them almost undistinguishable. Because production and consumption are planned together according to the overall social design, "in the very process of production, images are pre-censored according to the norm of the understanding which will later govern their apprehension."¹⁶ The elimination of the distance between culture and the everyday is achieved not by realising the avant-garde ideal of total fusion of art and life, but by the total commodification of the latter. The culture industry's naturalisation of exchange relations dissolves the tension between the general and the particular by the absolutisation of its own 'barbaric' style, dissolving at the same time the tension between society and the individual, in the latter's total conformity with the social hierarchy.¹⁷ The claim that what is "expressed by the work of art is subsumed through style into the dominant form of generality (...) in the hope that it will be reconciled thus with the idea of true generality," is cancelled out by the dominant 'style' of the

15. Adorno, Theodor W. and Horkheimer, Max. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Trans. by Cumming, John. London: Verso, 1997, p.12

16. *Ibid*, p.84

17. "This is the 'nature' which, complicated by the ever-present and extravagant demands of the specific medium, constitutes the new style and is a 'system of non-culture, to which one might even concede a certain 'unity of style' if it really made any sense to speak of stylised barbaric." *Ibid*. p.128

culture industry, "which no longer has to test itself against any refractory material."¹⁸ Contrary to this absolutisation of style, Siquier's re-working of form cannot eliminate completely the social content carried by forms. Hence the sense in which his works always appear as quoting previous styles due to the familiarity of forms; the emphasis with which his works are taken as referring to Buenos Aires.¹⁹ The quoted styles do not simply go away; like an irrecoverable quotation of previous styles, there is something parasitical about this body of work. Guagnini stresses that Siquier's designs always take us to

"the brink of a calming order, to the promise of providing a meaning to the emblems, to the revelation of a system that would finally transform us in receptors and Siquier into an author, but that never gives up to such identifications."²⁰

This failure to provide meaning for the designs is not to be confused with their meaninglessness, as it is precisely the basis of an internal tension in the works. The result is of the order of a ruin, more dystopia than utopia, more destruction than a construction.

Contemporary Art and Geopolitics: The return to painting as anti-art material

In the canonical reading of painting's self-reflective development through the successive abandonment of craft conventions, its relation to the Duchampian ready-made has developed in the direction of the impossibility of painting in an era that has made its form of production and the idea of its capacity as a medium for transcendental experience obsolete. In a historical development that saw the emergence of photography as a mechanical form of image production, the industrialisation of painting's materials and the obsolescence of manual production, painting's historical aesthetic conventions were critically peeled off one by one, until reflection on the impossibility of its own condition of possibility became the possibility – as in Gerhard Richter's work – of maintaining painting somehow alive. In one way or

18. *Ibid.*, pp.129-30

19. This point is further developed in the section on Buenos Aires's global city functions. See note 25 in this chapter.

20. Guagnini. *Op.cit.*, p.72

another, the different trends of painterly production – from the development of abstract expressionism towards happening, to the tendential expansion of minimalism into the expanded field of the institutional space or its urban environment, to the more specifically painterly forms of production as in Richter and others – had to deal with the legacy of the ready-made and the limits of painterly production as an artistic practice the social meaning of which appeared to wane. As Peter Osborne has pointed out

“the ready-made may “speak of the conditions for the survival of painting in a society that renders its craft impossible” (namely, that it severs its links with the craft completely) while simultaneously registering the impossibility of any such survival.”²¹

I am interested here in the historical implications of understanding the painterly craft as ‘impossible’; a liminal reading of painting as a practice carrying an increasingly irrelevant social meaning given the social obsolescence of its form for the purpose of image production. In other words, the severance of the link between painting and its craft is the consequence of the historical development of the forces and relations of production. Under the social conditions established by industrialisation on its monopolistic stage, particularly the massification of image production for both commercial and private use, the possibility of painting’s survival appears tied to ‘registering the impossibility of its own survival.’ As the relation between technology, political economy and cultural forms is not a linear one, painting’s survival is tied to its capacity to reflect its social condition in its relation to not only other forms of image production but also to other forms of production in general.

Geopolitically the transformation and re-configuration of the meaning of society since the 1960s – notwithstanding growing levels of global integration – has developed towards a disintegration of many of the social conditions that rendered manual production obsolete against different modes of industrial production. The neoliberal phase has seen the displacement of the national paradigm of social integration around a consolidated, regulated and expanding internal market, onto an increasingly deregulated and globalised market that separates the processes of production and

21. Osborne, Peter. “Painting Negation. Gerhard Richter's Negatives”, *October*, Nr 62, Autumn 1992, pp. 102-113

consumption affecting labour rights; favouring at the same time financial forms of capital valorisation and the fragmentation of labour markets according to their location in the world economic system. Given this changing scenario, while painting as an art medium may have reached the end point of its survival as a constant reflection on its impossibility, painting as an anti-art form – as anti-conceptual or brute – may have become meaningful in its anachronism. It is hence painting, as a social practice, what contains the original contradiction of Siquier's works: a technology that has superseded painting and, nonetheless, the works' dependency on the new emergent social conditions in the return to manual production. The mimetic comportment of the work in relation to the emergence of precarisation and marginality is defined by its incorporation of a technique of reproduction detached from the existing technological development but nonetheless in accordance with the economic process. In other words, if technological development is constrained or directed by the logic of the system as a whole, its implementation is even more constrained by this logic: what is technologically and economically rational in a specific location, may still be technologically rational but not economically so in another.

The signification of the use of painting as a manual form of production in these works expresses this contradiction between the possibilities of technological development and the existing social conditions. This contradiction is not only expressed through the emergence of manual work, but also through the transformation of quantity into quality. In other words, manual work is presented here in a context in which quantification – the amount of work – becomes the marker of a qualitative change in the work. As in Daniel Buren's paintings, style is reduced to the simple repetition of fixed conventions, but unlike Buren's, Siquier's work does not relate to the tradition of painting by a process of negation. Siquier's relation to painting is based on the non (or low) artistic quality of the painted form and the amount of working time necessary to produce the work. As with the use of manual production for the rendering of a technological produced design, painting is here the mark of a precarious form of image production. This situation, implicit in the early works, develops through the different phases of Siquier's work to the point at which the separation between the production of the design and the production of the work marks their incorporation of a contradictory relation between design and rendering. The aesthetic experience

associated with the works resides partially in the fragmentary character of the production: the totality of the complexity of the design in its monumental, ascetic and distant technological base and the irrational character of its obsessive manual rendering. This situation parallels the necessary split in the apprehension of the work. Given the size of the paintings the initial reading is done at a distance from the canvas. The apparent perfection of the design as perceived from a distance is cancelled out by a close up reading of the imperfection of the rendering. What in a distanced reading appears monumental – its dimension and baroque complexity – becomes a mark of social violence in the close up. The amount of work involved in the production of the painting and the non-artistic quality of the skill acquired in reproducing the design – reduced to paint black the lines that have previously been defined on pencil on the canvas – represents a further intensification of the separation between intellectual and manual production.

The quantity and quality of the work needed to produce the transference is better exemplified by analysing the two techniques implemented by Siquier. The first one is the process of transferring the designs to the canvas comparing the early productions with the more recent, and systematised, procedures. The first work that Siquier fully designed on the computer screen was 9813. Once the size of the canvas had been decided, the design was divided and printed in as many A4 sheets of paper as it was necessary to cover it. Each part of the design was then printed on A4 paper and overlaid on the canvas. By pressing on the paper with an indelible pen at every intersection of lines, the basic structure of the design was transferred onto the canvas. After removing the A4 sheets of paper, the design was produced by laboriously reconnecting the dots imprinted in the previous stage. It took Siquier four months to complete the work.²² (Image 25)

22. Author's interview with Pablo Siquier.

The development of the transferring process towards the more mechanical forms of Siquier's recent paintings reduced the skills necessary for producing the works, while at the same time intensified the labour intensity of the work. The skills are reduced to painting over the stencils and correcting imperfections, but at the same time there is a higher output of canvas to paint. The rendering of the first work designed on the computer screen still demanded a certain level of understanding of the design and a certain level of skills for the use of drawing tools. The rendering of the latest works has totally separated production from reproduction, intensifying both the process of deskilling of labour and the amount of work.

The second technique is used for the wall drawings. The transference of the design becomes extremely simple: The design is literally projected onto the wall and is transferred manually by using charcoal to copy the design. Given the size of the drawings (up to 10 metres wide) a very slight modification of the physical conditions of the projector can provoke a misalignment between the projected image and the drawing. Hence the transference has to be done in a single session and in a relatively short period of time. The physical demand of reproducing the drawing in a short time

is intensified by constantly having to re-position the body awkwardly to avoid hiding the projection. In this sense, Siquier's paintings incorporate, at different levels, procedures and significations from the two genealogies delineated in the previous chapter. In other words Siquier appropriates something of the violence that made the methodology of unskilled manual production constitutive of the Silhouettes' significance. The inscription in bodies of such violence has obviously a different sign, now the economic violence has been legitimised politically through the inoculation of the democratic process effected by the neoliberal ideology. Paradoxically, it is the omnipresence of the market – an omnipresence theorised by Adorno in relation to the culture industry – that establishes the de-politicisation of the Argentine context given its absorption into a globalised economy. What is crucially different in relation to Adorno's theory is the level of exclusion – disintegration – that it provokes; the systemic integration (global capitalism) is combined with social disintegration (heterogenisation of the social structure). The disciplinary effects that the violence and the concentration of capital of the late 1970s, the high inflationary crises of 1989, and the high levels unemployment and labour informalisation of the economy during the 1990s managed to break down and definitely transformed the social body. These disciplinary effects are the reason for the low levels and fragmentary character of social upheaval provoked by the new form of social organisation. The atomisation, or dissolution, of strong political subjectivities explains how it was possible to socially a-functionalise the growing number of excluded people without causing the system to collapse. It also explains the almost a-historical return of aestheticism in the productions of new works of art. The context here described corresponds to the one I referred to at the end of chapter 4 when describing Maresca's work. Siquier started to produce this body of work more or less at the same time that Maresca was presenting *Recolecta*.

In Siquier's work painting does not have the legitimising function traditionally associated with its specificity as a medium. The medium here is always a mark of regression, and as such, the paintings gain their social significance. As a way of separating Siquier's practice from painting as an artistic medium it is important to re-emphasise that manual rendering is not the empty mark of repetition and reified subjectivity that prevails in some central reading. The negation of technology by the

re-emergence of manual production as a socially relevant form of labour, comments on the conditions under which this re-emergence takes place. As parasitical on the new technologies, painting becomes critical historically, as a negation (anti-art) of its own negative condition: reduced to the unskilled and idiotic transference of the work from the computer to the surface. As a superseded technology painting relates to the pauperisation Guagnini mentions in his essay, one that presents as economically sound to render something manually as long as it achieves its purpose; this is the key point that relates this work to the dynamics of geopolitical comparative advantages in times of globalisation. Siquier's work relation to the precarisation of labour has a direct relation to the growing pauperisation and marginalisation of part of the population, and their displaced conditions in the transformed Argentina of the neoliberal period. The concept of the 'return to craft' refers to this unskilled type of labour unable to master the materials involved in the process of production.

The authoritarian basis of the logic of production of these works depends on the social a-sociality that marks its geopolitical determinants. Social in its relation to the totality of the world capitalist system – the transformation of Buenos Aires into a 'city of business'²³ as part of the transnational network of accumulation – and a-social in its mimetic relation to the dissolution of the sociality that was the condition of its possibility – the waning of the historically inclusive character of the city and its growing 'Latin Americanisation'. The irrational rationality of the new form of social divide has at its end a form of organic development. A private-interest driven, unplanned city expansion – a consequence of the retreat of the state – has provoked the fracture of the urban to levels previously unimagined; not only the multiplication of suburban, fortress-style private neighbourhoods, but also the expansion of slums as part of a growing marginalisation – the flip side of the dialectical relation between art and architecture.

23. Adrian Gorelik, "La Ciudad de los Negocios," *Punto de Vista*, Nro.50, Buenos Aires, November 1994, pp.14-18

Many commentators have pointed out the indebtedness of Siquier's artworks to the catalogue of architectural styles that mark the different phases of development that the city of Buenos Aires went through in its history.²⁵ Those reading however tend to reduce the work to a metaphor of the city – almost always in a celebratory tone – and except for Guagnini's text, they disregard the process of construction of the work and the relation between the different artistic materials. Guagnini, on the other hand, tends to maintain the metaphoric reading in relation to the city separated from the analysis of the materials, which he relates to the Argentine case in general; thus the relation of the works to the transformation of the city during the neoliberal period remains hidden given that there is no mediation between the quoting of styles and the city's neoliberal debacle. This is, however, very problematic given that the reference to different architectural styles in Siquier's work does not directly relate the works to the city of Buenos Aires per se. As I will argue in the following pages the use of past styles in Siquier's work has to be read as its mimetic moment, as its appropriation of the dominant aesthetic perceived in the renovation of the urban environment through the consolidation of a new city form. More precisely, it relates to what Gorelik has defined as the transformation of Buenos Aires from its 'industrial city form' to the form of the 'city of business.'

A short diversion will be needed at this point to briefly summarised the transformation of the city during the 1990s. During the neoliberal period, the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires experienced a process of transformation of its traditionally inclusive social horizon with no precedence in its history. The process of metropolisation of Buenos Aires throughout the 20th century and up until the transitional period of the 1980s is normally described as one of territorial and demographic expansion in the context of a substantial, though uneven, social integration. The cycle of urbanisation of Buenos Aires that dominated this period, that included its geographical expansion

24. I take this subtitle from the title of the book by Welch Guerra, Max ed. *Buenos Aires a la deriva: transformaciones urbanas recientes*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Biblos, 2005.

25. See Guagnini, *ibid.* p.71. See also, Mesquita, Ivo. "Pablo Siquier: Vivir La Ciudad", and Bonet, Juan Manuel. "Fragmentos Porteños de Pablo Siquier" both in the catalogue that accompanied Siquier's exhibiton at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia in 2005. *Pablo Siquier*, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte reina Sofia, Madrid, 2005.

towards its limits and the homogenisation of its social structure, was a mixture of state intervention in infrastructural development combined with atomised and low scale private efforts, mainly delimited to the individual construction of family houses, that created a dense amalgam of neighbourhoods surpassing the city's formal limits and consolidating a continuously expanding metropolitan area. This situation was favoured by the layout of a public grid divided into homogeneously demarcated plots from very early in the city's history.²⁶ As Gorelik mentions, this layout can be considered a 'key urban bastion' in the socially homogeneous consolidation of the city structure and acted as a way of 'resisting processes of segregation' by limiting the scope of private interventions; a resistance that has been partially broken from the 1990s onwards.²⁷ The social homogenisation that took place during this early period was further incentivised by the access to cheap credit that benefited the lower classes during the Peronist years. Even with the important economic constraints the state faced in order to provide adequate public services to cope with the demands of an ever growing urban environment, the process of metropolisation of Buenos Aires was produced, in general, within the context of increased social integration and mobility. This is the basis for the particularity that has historically characterised Buenos Aires in the Latin American context: the emergence and consolidation of a widely expanding middle class that in 1974 included more than 80 percent of its population²⁸. A combination of low degree interventions, by both the state and private capitals accompanied the expansion of a housing market almost subordinated to the dynamic of small scale transactions in which as Silvestri and Gorelik point out:

26. See Gorelik, Adrian. *La Grilla y el Parque*. Buenos Aires: Espacio Publico y Cultura Urbana en Buenos Aires, 1887-1936. 1998. Buenos Aires: Universidad Nacional de Quilmes, 2010, pp.125-148

27. Gorelik. "La Ciudad de los Negocios," p.18

28. See graph A in Lopez, Artemio and Romeo, Martin, *La Declinacion de la Clase Media Argentina: Transformaciones en la estructura social (1974-2004)*. Buenos Aires: Aurelia Rivera, 2005, p. 43. Lopez and Romeo differentiate between high, full and low middle class; where a low middle class defines someone above the line of poverty but below the value that corresponds to two lines of poverty; the middle corresponds to those between 2 and 4 lines of poverty; and the high to those between 4 and 16 lines of poverty. Technically the aggregate for all three sectors represented 93 percent of the metropolitan population in 1974

“the ideal of a community of small scale owners where neighbourhoods communicated and homogenised by the public grid, became an effective door of access to an active citizenship that included civil, political and social rights.”²⁹

This dynamic of small scale transactions and small scale owners combined with the grid layout as a form of state delimitation of private intervention, and crystallised in that consolidation of the middle classes mentioned above and was expressed in that by the end of the 1970s more than 70% of the properties in the metropolitan area were inhabited by their owners.³⁰ The emphasis on the relative homogenisation of the social and urban conditions that created the particularity of Buenos Aires in the Latin American context is important in relation to the understanding of the process of transformation effected by the dictatorship of 1976-1983 and will be central to the reading of Siquier's works offered below. The transformation of the structure of accumulation during the dictatorship, the deindustrialisation process it inaugurated, and the weight of the national debt as percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) defined the crisis scenario of the 1980s. The economic and administrative crisis that the city of Buenos Aires suffered during this period was an expression of the end of its expansionary period; a crisis of the industrial city form that found its limits with the hyperinflationary process of 1989 and 1990.³¹ The transformation of the state during the 1990s represented the total acceptance of a neoliberal model: market deregulation, openness of the economy, the retreat and weakening of the state through its restructuring and the privatisation of public services; all recipes fomented by the Washington Consensus and different international organizations like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. While all these changes had an impact on the city of Buenos Aires, the privatisation of the public services represented a structural crack in its homogenising tradition, as it imposed a dynamic of selective intervention on the provision of these services according to the logic of the market, hence literally provoking its fragmentation. The retreat of the state from the

29. Silvestri and Gorelik, *Op.cit.* p.462

30. Horacio Torres, quoted in Adrian Gorelik, “Buenos Aires en la Encrucijada: modernización y política urbana” *Punto de Vista*, Nr.59, Diciembre, 1997, p.9

31. The industrial city form is characterized not so much by the presence of industries in the city space, though this may be part of the process, but by the acceptance of the city as a site capable of absorbing capital investments that have previously been destined to production. See Gorelik. “La Ciudad de los Negocios,” p.15

maintenance and provision of infrastructure further emphasised this problematic. Education, health care, public transport, all underwent a process of deterioration that led to the emergence of their private counterparts, and accentuated the fragmentation given that different levels of affluence started to demarcate the areas for further private investment.³² At the same time, with the intensification of globalisation a growing process of selective private development of the city took place which prioritised investment in infrastructure mainly focused on the financial and services industries. This process reflects the development of global city functions for Buenos Aires, though as part of a secondary level position connected to the global network. The effects highlighted by Sassia Sasken in relation to the transformation of cities like New York, London or Tokyo as global cities are, in the case of Buenos Aires, negatively intensified in a context in which the state has totally retreat from its function.³³ In other words, there is a sharper contrast between, on the one hand, the increase of the services sector and of their necessary infrastructure, the selective development of certain neighbourhoods and the growing concentration of wealth; and on the other hand, the increase in inequalities, the growing precarisation and informalisation of labour and the uneven development of the city environment.³⁴ The central feature in this process is the transformation of the social function of the state. As Silvestri and Gorelik remark

“In effect, the state has functioned as the main promoter of business without at the same time claiming something for the overall city, as it is clear from the official figures: between 1988 and 1997 public investment in infrastructure was reduced 100%, and in addition to this all the public expenditure was invested in

32. A look at the distribution of shopping centers shows they are located strategically in the areas with the higher levels of income. A third of them are located in the city of Buenos Aires where 8.5 percent of the population lives. See, Pablo Ciccolella and Iliana Mignaqui. “Buenos Aires: Sociospatial Impacts of the Development of Global City Functions” in Sassia Sassen. Ed. *Global Networks, Linked Cities*. London: Routledge, 2002, pp.318-319. It is also visible in recent statistics on birth rates that show figures for the north of the city are similar to those of the main European cities, while the figures for the southern neighborhoods are comparable to rest of Latin America. See table 3 in Direccion General de Estadisticas y Censos del Gobierno de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires. *Mortalidad Infantil 1999-2009*. May 2010, p.4, http://estatico.buenosaires.gov.ar/areas/hacienda/sis_estadistico/425_mortalidad_infantil.pdf. Last accessed on the 1st February, 2013.

33. Saskia Sassen, *The Global City* (1991). Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001.

34. See Ciccolella and Mignaqui. *Op.cit.*, pp.321-322

the most promising areas for private capitals, the coastal area from the port towards the north.”³⁵

Thus, the unrestricted demands of capital on the city environment produced a series of ‘macro-developments’ in a very localised and fragmented way, incentivising the emergence of archipelago of wealthy places amongst sites abandoned to their lack. The investment in new urban developments has been focused on three main areas: the development of office space in the city centre and the new development of Puerto Madero to satisfy the process of *localisation* of Buenos Aires in its new global function; the development of mega-centres for consumption (shopping centres or malls); and the monumental expansion of private forms of urbanisation covering a space of more than one and a half times the size of the formal limits of the city (gated communities, private neighbourhoods, and high-rise residential complexes).³⁶ In addition to this, there was the development of a system of highways that connects all newly developed areas effectively demarcating a new internal and symbolic frontier of the city. Or to be more accurate, a new frontier creating a dual city, one that has to be constantly negotiated by the middle classes in their unstable condition, but that has definitively excluded the poor and marginalised sectors. This is represented by the proliferation of slums and illegal settlements across the city and its metropolitan area. A paradigmatic case is the physical proximity of the newly renovated area of Puerto Madero – an old docklands area that had been in disuse for many decades and which now hosts luxury apartments and high-tech office infrastructure – and the Villa 31 en Retiro, a shanty town emplaced in one of the city’s most expensive and central locations that has managed to survive many removal attempts and has developed into a precarious but permanent settlement that has been recognised as a neighbourhood by the authorities. As Gorelik points out the new city form is better described as dominated by the logic of ‘the city of business;’ a city form that

“accepts the caducity of the private space as industry and the public space as both support network and as the space of the emergence of the political. And

35. Silvestri and Gorelik, *Op.cit.*, p.491

36. “In the 1990s around \$4.5 billion was invested in approximately three hundred private urbanizations with an average of 100 hectares and 5 million square meters built space. Together they cover an urbanized area of 30,000 hectares and have 300 square kilometres of constructed space (one and a half times the area occupied by the city of Buenos Aires).” Ciccolella and Iliana. *Op.cit.*, p.318

from this acceptance proposes a total inversion of the traditional equation: it converts the public space in private business and the urban society in a simple function of the competition of interest.”³⁷

It is to this new city form that the work of Siquier relates to, and the logic of transformation is contained in the materials he uses as well as in the logic of their interrelation. There are two levels of engagement of the works, two different aesthetics of the new urban object represented in his work. On the one hand, there is the relation of the black and white designs to the process of *localisation* of the city, in its fragmentary and pervasive transformation of the city landscape. On the other hand, there is the relation of the charcoal wall drawings to the proliferation of shanty towns and its aesthetics of marginalisation. In relation to the first level, the fragmentary character of these designs, their asymmetric ‘formal’ reworking of ornamentation abstracted at a second level – as abstracted from its original context and as shadow – devoid of any historical connection to the social conditions of their emergence, their incorporation of a form of production emphasising the separation of intellectual and manual labour, and the degradation of manual labour to a basic but physically demanding task reproduces an aesthetic of urban space condensed in the transformation of the city’s form. This is emphasised in the designs’ incorporation of an axonometric perspective. A perspective that incorporates the contradictory character of modernist designs in its rationalisation of space: its separation of representation from the subjective renaissance type of perspective and its unfolding into an objective, rationalistic and measurable space, though still dependant on a particular view point. This opens the doors to the possibility of abstraction and compartmentalisation of an infinite space beyond the subjective view, but in line with the needs of capitalist development; particularly as it suits the ideological basis of a neoliberal deregulatory framework. The possibility of three dimensional representation that would fulfil the axonometric perspective is implicit in the use of the computer as the design tool. This is cancelled out in both the reduction of the design to the projection of a shadow and the use of design software (Adobe Illustrator) instead of 3D software. Unlike the homogenising character of the grid that maintains

37. Gorelik. “La Ciudad de los Negocios,” p.15

the strict separation of spaces – grid that Siquier used as the basis for the early designs – the aleatory distribution of forms throughout the design constructs its rationalistic form, because geometrically correct, in an irrationalistic fashion: the randomness of the design as a unit; the white background as a tendency given the superimposition of designs that end up erasing the final design; the bidimensional layout using a tridimensional tool. In relation to the second level, the charcoal designs correspond to those urban forms that have been left out of the depiction presented in the acrylic designs. They do not contain any of the recognisable forms that are the basis of the black and white designs. The rationalistic basis of its design is reduced, like in the black and white works, to the correctness of its representation. These heavily packed designs of imaginary constructions are visualized from a subjective position, one that scrutinises but at a distance. The renaissance type of perspective use for the charcoal designs contradicts the 3D technology provided by the software, representing at a distant and in frontal fashion the object depicted, and hence denying a rationalisation of the space according to both the desires of architecture and capital. If the acrylic designs incorporate a catalogue of ornamentations that allows the recognition of styles as part of its own process of stylization, in the charcoal designs there is no explicit appropriation of any style. If the acrylic designs adopts the aesthetic of the 'city of business' and its fragmentary character, the charcoal designs have, in their presentation of these constructions as inhospitable, inhabitable and contrary to the logical expansion of the 'city of business', an aesthetic of the slum, further emphasised by the physical effort demanded for their production that corresponds more closely to the basic and ad hoc nature of a construction built to satisfied, as it is possible, some basic needs; another expression of the 'return to craft'

The Architecturalisation of Art: Marginality and the Public Space

The relation of art to architecture since conceptual art has been dominated by the mediating function of architecture in its ambivalent situation as both art and part of the social. It is this excess of architecture as art form, the fact that it cannot avoid having a social function, what distinguishes it from the autonomous development of modern art, which relates its existence as social fact to not having any social function;

its uselessness. The mediation of architecture works, via its relation to the urban environment, as a way of keeping alive the utopian character of earlier avant-garde movements of a modernism with social content.³⁸

David Cunningham has pointed out that “it is only *via* the ‘political fantasies’ of conceptualism – and thus in a simultaneously post-minimalist and post-conceptualist situation – that the full stakes of art’s seam with the architectural are directly brought into focus,”³⁹ via the reconstruction of a lineage from constructivism to minimalism. It must be added that this temporal form of ‘avant-gardist’ reading of architecture only makes sense from a geopolitically central perspective. A critical form of avant-gardism would have to relate its political-temporal form (the futurity of its claim) to the space in which such a politics is expected to take place. It is not my intention to deny the existence of artistic practices in Argentina that engaged with the problematisation of a ‘transition from pictorial space to real space’; my point is that when those practices appeared, directly influenced by foreign developments, they ended up confronting a social reality that did not allow an objective expansion in this direction. David Lamelas’ early investigations into sculpture quickly ended, absorbed by media concerns, and found their possibility for further development in world artistic centres; the primary structures that so strongly influenced the Rosario group quickly dissipated into installation formats of increasingly political content.⁴⁰ The move from a medium-specific to a post-conceptual art – a definition that in the Argentine art critical context is non-existent⁴¹ – is very much blocked by a repression of those forms of conceptual practices that could re-articulate that link (political forms), more related to the mass media as a form of urban experience, but also by the transformation of the material

38. See for example, Osborne, Peter. “Survey” in *Conceptual Art*, New York: Phaidon, 2002; Wall, Jeff. “Dan Graham’s Kammerspiel,” in Alberro, Alexander and Stimson, Blake. *Op.cit.*, pp. 504-513; and Cunningham, David, “A Seam with the Economic: Art, Architecture, Metropolis”, *Verksted*, Nr 8, 2006, pp. 131-166

39. Cunningham, *Op.cit.* p.143

40. Noemi Escandell comments in a recent interview are indicative of the objective limits the artist faced in their formal explorations: “When Romero (Brest) told me: ‘you are not going to be able to continue because this is not a society of consumption’, I did not get him. I thought: ‘If I want I go ahead with this, I do.’ No, because when I took the primary structures back to Rosario, there was no place to keep them and I had to pay for the storage. I then realised what a society of consumption was.” Interview with Noemí Escandell in Longoni, Ana and Mestman, Mariano. *Del Di Tella a “Tucumán Arde”: Vanguardia artística y vanguardia política en el ‘68 argentino*. Bueno Aires: El Cielo por Asalto, 2000, p.280

41. The only un-critical exception is Gumier Maier's aphorism, “All contemporary art would be conceptual if it were not brute.” Gumier Maier, Jorge “Avatares del Arte,” *La Hoja del Rojas*, Nro 11, June 1989, reproduced in Cippolini, *Op.cit.*, p.461

conditions of existence. In other words, 'real space' can have a very different meaning, not only historically, but also spatially at the level of the contemporary. The type of non-contemporaneity of social experience that the reading of Siquier's work presupposes reflects the dialectical fracture of the contemporaneity presupposed by a globalised form of capitalism. The emphasis on the geopolitical problem however also points to the underlying transformation of the Argentine society in the neoliberal period. Hence if Siquier's works relate to architectural designs via their geometrical projectual coherence and their technological basis, they nonetheless remain negative. The possibility of their existence is tied to the shadow of what is not in the design. As such, through their dystopian character, they criticise both the utopia still contained in the notion of constructivism and the one-dimensional criticism sustained by centre-based meditations on the relation between art and architecture. "Ironically", Cunningham states, "it is precisely the very contemporary demands of capital accumulation which, above all, drive architecture's own current 'artification.'"⁴² But this leaves architecture tied up to a particular set of construction in the totality of the urban environment, leaving out the analysis of the emergence of marginalised constructions that proliferate, particularly in the periphery. This is the disavowed side that the 'contemporary demands of capital accumulation' put on architecture. If, as Cunningham suggests "a certain dialectic of form and function is internal to the work, in *both* art and architecture, and mediates the dialectic *of* art and architecture, as well as of autonomy and heteronomy, without thereby simply identifying the two," a further mediation has to be established as mediating the two previous ones, the one mediating the historically variable, but nevertheless prevalent, dialectic between centre and periphery.⁴³

The murals that Siquier has been recently commissioned to design incorporate a new dimension to the reading of his work. Displayed in the public space, they cannot but resonate with the environment in which they are located, particularly because of their large size which makes them compete at a visual level with different forms of mass media; mainly advertising billboards and similar kind of displays. I want to focus on the two mirroring murals that Siquier designed for the *Los Molinos Building* in

42. Cunningham, *Op.cit.*, p.146

43. Cunningham, *ibid*

Puerto Madero in 2009. (Images 26 and 27) The renovation of the building, built in 1906, was part of a larger renovation project of the Puerto Madero area. The two original buildings have been united by a glass structure sitting at the top of the old constructions, also acting as a bridge between them. Siquier's murals have been designed to fit underneath the bridge, on the sides of the two buildings, facing each other. Contrary to the production techniques of the previous murals, these murals have been produced using the latest technological developments. Each mural has been produced in anodised aluminium measuring 13.5 metres by 13.5 metres, and is composed of 55 panels each. Unlike the previous murals, and given their design for the public space, these murals have been produced to resist their physical deterioration. The black and white symmetrical designs reject the fragmentary character of the acrylic works and are closer to the early works in their emblematic character. Their size and their position in relation to the street make them more likely to be perceived by people passing by, either on foot, by car or while travelling on public transport. Their existence as art is hence related to that flicker experience of the work, which in more cases than not will be perceived in a distracted way. As commented above, their size makes them compete visually either with advertising boards or business logos displayed in the public space, even though their symmetrical, abstract and neat design puts them more in relation to the latter than to the former. This is emphasised by being the building part of a more extended project for the renovation of Puerto Madero rebranded as the Faena Art District by its celebrity developer Alan Faena. The district, a section of Puerto Madero, includes The Faena Art Centre, an art exhibition space hosting national and international productions, the recently built *The Aleph*, a residential building designed by Norman Foster, a five star hotel decorated by Phillipe Starck, and a group of restored or newly constructed buildings for residential and retail use.

In this context the reading of the murals becomes very problematic as they seem to acknowledge their total and neutralised absorption into the art institution. The monumental and abstract character of the works seems to be reduced to a mere decoration of the building; a reduction of art to an aesthetic endeavour subordinated

to the demands of capital emphasising the exclusivity of the new developments in the trendiest and most dynamic area of the city. And as such legitimising the process by which Buenos Aires has become segmented in its globalising process and utilising the recognisable work and the renowned figure of Siquier as a mark of distinction. This is re-emphasised by the combination of art and technology in the work, a combination that correspond to the slogan “Art-Technology-Architecture” under which the Faena Group introduces its property development portfolio. At the same time, and given the cumulative and serial character of Siquier’s work, a marginal though still present, critical character of the work re-emerges. This reading is mounted on the process by which a work by Siquier becomes a mark of its own recognition. The “stylistic metastasis” that reduced Siquier’s work to a style appears here condensed as a form of branding; a logo that identifies the murals with the specificity of Siquier’s works in general, opening up a reading internal to the development of Siquier’s entire body of work. This reading incorporates a dialectical process between design and production of the previous works in a context in which the exclusivity of technology in the murals intensifies the experience of social inequalities. From the contradiction between technological design and manual production of the black and white early series, to its intensification in the large scale gallery murals and the incorporation of the wall drawings as their counterpart, the works of Siquier have absorbed the aesthetic of social fragmentation and marginalisation that the transformation of Buenos Aires during its neoliberal phase incurred. The fully technological rendering of the murals cannot fail to resonate with Siquier’s previous production. At the same time the proliferation of Siquier’s murals around the city and his prolific production for galleries and museums, makes the reading of this monumental but isolated pair of murals part of a fragmented experience, because through their reduction of style to the repetition of certain conventions, each work becomes a new instantiation of the style. Siquier’s feeling that he has always painted the same painting becomes a reality at this level: it puts his entire production in conversation with each other, and every new production is defined and re-defines the previous body of work. Now that Siquier’s work has appeared in the public space, its location becomes one more of the coordinates in mapping its social signification. Puerto Madero and the Faena Art District become an unavoidable key to criticise this work: the total exclusion of Siquier’s previous

productive contradictions – particularly between design and production -; its fixation of the mural in a permanent, perdurable and high-tech material; the emblem type of design of the murals highlighting their ‘branding’ quality, inserted in the middle of a district acting itself as a branding and distinctive quality of a new Buenos Aires in the global space; all these features point back to what has been repressed in these murals and cannot but highlight, by way of its sharp contrast, its relation to the rest of the city, and in particular to the mushrooming of slums surrounding this new built area of the city. The paradigmatic cases of the Villa 31 and Rodrigo Bueno, flanking Puerto Madero from the North and the South respectively, at a distance of no more than 1 kilometre each, intensifies this contrast, and exemplifies what has been called the process of Latin Americanisation of the city; its process of social fragmentation that has created a dual city.

The tension in these works is however very fragile, as fragile as the maxims express in the manifesto that Siquier signed together with Fabian Burgos, Gachi Hasper and Fabio Kasero at the turn of the century. And hence the extreme aestheticism of Siquier’s work risks falling into a meaningless decorative function; a function predefined by the unrestricted unleashing of the market and the absence of any collective political subjectivity opposing the process of social transformation. This absence probably explains the passivity and indifference towards the deterioration of the living conditions of a substantial part of the population. The explosion of this aestheticising trend at the turn of the century is part of the re-definition of the social form according to the parameters of the dominant economic form. The baroque environment creates a happening style character of a dislocated social environment in which things do not make sense anymore, or worse, where the sense is perverse, and cannot but resonate heavily with Masotta’s prescient and timely phrase, “an explicitated act of social sadism.”

CONCLUSION

Siquier's Meaninglessness

The tendency towards the disappearance of a critical relation to the social in Siquier's work is, in a way, an effect of the society in which this body of work is produced. Paradoxically, its meaningful 'meaninglessness' is constructed in relation to a society that has been radically heterogenised. The disappearance of alternative political projects to the one pressed through by the neoliberal development somehow legitimised the omnipresence of the market in the Argentina of the 1990s. The naturalisation of the economic premises underlying the structural transformation of the Argentine society during this period – mainly those imposed by the Washington Consensus – also naturalised the dynamic of social exclusion those premises caused, and had as its consequence the imposition of a process of commodification with very specific characteristics. The neoliberal approach acted by creating a necessary 'outside' space in need of colonisation out of the social capital accumulated during the years of import substitution industrialisation. This outside was then forced open to commodification under the logic of deindustrialisation and financial valorisation. The privatisation of all public services, the deregulation and aperture of the economy, the precarisation of labour, and the combination between the peso-dollar parity and the free flow of financial capital, acted as powerful igniters for the hard-boiling environment in which the structure of the previous state form melted down; producing out of this transformation a very different social body constructed under a different logic of accumulation and a different state form. This cannibalisation of the capitalist body structure of the previous form of social organisation also had external mediators. The combination between the globalisation of the world economic system in which the geopolitical dislocation of the relation between capital and labour was immersed, together with the transnationalisation of financial capital, created specific and localised impacts on the social structures of states throughout the world. This is the wider historical context that problematises many of Adorno's sociological presuppositions, and the spatial limits implicitly developed in his social theory. It is also, as was claimed in this thesis, the context of the decoupling of the dialectic of

cultural modernity from its embedding in the industrialist logic of monopoly capitalism.

The combination of a growing geopolitical concentration of productive processes according to comparative advantages, the emergence of an informational economy constituted around the world economic centres and its extension in multiple intermediate local centres, and the primacy of financial valorisation, designed a new geopolitical configuration in which the dialectic between the logic of expanded reproduction and accumulation by dispossession moved towards the latter as its dynamic moment. Inserted dialectically in the historical development of the Argentine society, the concept of the destruction of the social is transformed into a notion that reflects the constitutive features of this new society. The production and reproduction of marginality and extreme social inequalities appear as outcomes of the logic of development of the Argentine neoliberal period. Hence the naturalisation of the economic process, and the social relations that sustain it, end up depoliticizing a heterogeneous social body; explaining in this way the social passivity in which the process unfolded.

The post conceptual notion of the return to craft presented in this thesis expresses these transformed social conditions in the Argentine society by allegorically expressing the contradictory character of the relation between technology and manual production. The way in which Siquier's works gain their social significance appears ironic in relation to the genealogies of Argentine art pre-neoliberalism narrativised in this thesis. In so far as the political signification of Siquier's works is gained through their formal construction, their social mediation relates to the specificity of the Argentine process of commodification in which the political subjectivities of the past have been destroyed. Nonetheless, the autarchy of art's radicalism that, according to Adorno, ends in harmlessness, appears here in a more perverse fashion. In a society permeated by deep inequalities and marginalisation, the distance between conformity and survival expresses the distance between decoration and social sadism.¹ Siquier's murals show, on the one hand, their weakness in the decorative character of their functionalisation as architectural components, almost seamlessly integrated into the new urban landscape. On the other hand, this harmless decorative character is

1. See Adorno. *Aesthetic Theory*, p.29

mediated by the social status that decoration acquires under the exclusive social conditions of the Argentine society during neoliberalism.

A Brief Excursus: The 'Return to Craft'

For the concept of the return to craft to have both historical and critical significance its applicability has to go beyond the localised specificity of Siquier's body of work. Ai Weiwei's work, *Sunflower Seeds*, shown at the Tate Modern's turbine hall between October 2010 and May 2011, is an interesting work in this respect given that it highlights a political, technological, and economic context that differ with the one analysed in this thesis. (Image 27) *Sunflower Seeds* was commissioned by the Tate Gallery for its annual Unilever Series that is sponsored by the Anglo-Dutch multinational of the same name. For this installation the artist covered the gallery floor with 100 million sunflower seeds hand-crafted on porcelain. The seeds were produced by small-scale workshops from the Chinese city of Jingdezhen, renowned for its tradition of high quality porcelain work.² The production of the work demanded two and a half years for its completion, and employed over 1600 skilled artisans receiving a living wage salary.³ Highly symbolic and aesthetic the work provokes a certain level of uncaniness that is produced by the combination of the powerful view of millions of sunflower seeds evenly distributed across the floor and the reaction that the close up inspection of the work provokes. The quality of its manual production reverberates with the massive display of seeds, and hence the visually powerful image of the installation is inexorably permeated by the consciousness of the amount of work in front of us; work that cannot fail to appear repetitive, monotonous and endless. An unquantifiable amount of seeds and labour hours that can only be put into perspective once the information regarding the production of the work becomes available. Something that would have probably taken days if industrially produced, and which would probably have a similar aesthetic effect contemplated at a distance, is totally

2. See Ai WeiWei video accompanying the installation. The video is still available for viewing online at <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/unilever-series-ai-weiwei-sunflower-seeds> Last accessed on the 17th of February 2013

3. Higgins, Charlotte. "People power comes to the Turbine Hall: Ai Weiwei's Sunflower Seeds", *The Guardian*, October 11th 2010. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2010/oct/11/tate-modern-sunflower-seeds-turbine>. Last accessed on the 8th of February 2013

redefined by the awareness of its manual production, the time that it consumed, and the mobilisation of resources it entailed. This process by which the aesthetic experience forces the apperception of the work directly into its mode of production provokes in turn a reading of its constitutive structure beyond the space of the gallery. At one level, it is the relation between quantity (number of seeds and the amount of work) and quality (manual production of a repetitive and monotonous kind) that gives its signification to the work. The meaning is at this level produced by the contradictory industrial nature (quantity) of the project that contradicts the artisanal character (quality) of the production: one thousand six hundred skilled craftswomen and men producing one hundred millions sunflower seeds for two and a half years is a reduction to the absurd of the concept of craft while at the same time it comments on the geopolitics and geoeconomics of manual production and comparative advantages. The pharaonic dimensions of the work produce a different level of signification related to the geopolitical context in which this work is manufactured and consumed. The geographical separation between production and consumption highlights the symbolic place that the 'made in China' label has acquired in the global context. Part of the impact of the work rests on the impossibility of producing this work in the United Kingdom where the cost of labour would represent a concrete limit to its realisation. This relates geopolitically to the dominant logic of accumulation discussed throughout this thesis. The tendential industrialisation of China appears as a counterpart to the logic of deindustrialisation in many of the developed societies; particularly the United Kingdom. Its deindustrialisation, however, was accompanied by an intensification of its position as a financial power. Hence, its social transformation – which was also deep – had a very different impact on its population than the ones experienced by peripheral countries; particularly during the 1990s.

It is not my intention to provide a comprehensive analysis of the work but to offer some preliminary observations as a way to link them to the notion of the return to craft. In this sense the work condenses different levels of contradictions that can be summarised as relating the geopolitics and economics of localised processes of industrialisation and deindustrialisation, the persistence of labour intensive productive process in disregard of technological development, the a-functionalisation of labour, and the combination of highly skilled but cheap labour. This last point relates the work's procedure to the artistic technique it appropriates. In this case, the highly skilful and fixed language of porcelain production is both intensified and negated. The negation is produced by the reduction of the fixity of the language of porcelain

production to their mimicking of the logic of industrial production. This reduction of a highly skilled craft to the very simple process of producing a porcelain sunflower seed appears as an allegory of the logic of comparative advantages at place in the global economy. On the one hand, the return to craft in the Chinese context would appear more linked to an industrialisation under conditions of exploitation of labour in relation to the global economy; at least during the early stages of the country's industrialisation. On the other hand, and given the more technologically intense industries that have developed in China during the past ten years, a double kind of signification seems to appear, the one linking exploitation with the need to address the problem of a growing mass of population that needs to be kept working regardless of the work it produces, a form of afunctionalisation. It is the inner contradictions of the Chinese economy in its global geopolitical position what provides the context for Ai Weiwei's work's signification

Art and Geopolitics

The dialectic of cultural modernity theorised by Adorno in relation to the work of art's capacity to produce a moment of autonomy from the social reality, is almost exclusively dependent on the universal mediation of social relations by the commodity form. As argued throughout the thesis, it is Adorno's analysis of the historical socio-political and economic conditions of monopoly capitalism what influenced his social theory. His understanding of the 1960s society as depoliticised and economically fixed on a unidirectional path of development is the outcome of a totally administered society. Having accepted those conditions, their extrapolation into his theory of art meant that all critical constructions were related primarily to the commodity form. One of the aims of this thesis has been to open up, through its historisation, the social relations analysed by Adorno to a wider geopolitical and increasingly geoeconomic context. The intention has been to provide, through this analysis, an alternative path through which Adorno's art theory can be rethought. As the criticism has been as much spatial (geopolitical) as historical (the changing conditions of capitalist development) the conceptualisation offer throughout the thesis also finds its limits in the periodisation that it has used to provide a critical reading of contemporary

Argentine art. This is, however, a logic embedded in the logic of art's autonomisation as theorised by Adorno. As Stewart Martin points out

"New forms of commodification need to be examined as the heteronomous scene of new formations of autonomous art; new forms of art need to be examined as the contradictions of new formations of commodification."⁴

The contradictory character of global capitalist development forces the constant commodification of social relations in new and ever more complex forms that need to be re-addressed with a constant reworking of the theory. The contradictory character of art, its dialectical character as both autonomous and dependent, locates it in a privileged position to understand the 'new formations of commodification,' but these formations are as much political and ideological as they are economic, as much geopolitically construct as locally concretised. The challenge for a contemporary theory of art is to be able to provide the necessary tools to grasp out of the contradictory unity of the work of art a clue to the contradictions of contemporary society(ies).

4. Martin, Stewart. "The Absolute Artwork Meets the Absolute Commodity", *Radical Philosophy*, Nr. 146, November/December, 2007, p.24

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adamson, Glenn, ed. *The Craft Reader*. Oxford: Berg: 2010

---*Philosophy of New Music* (1949). Trans. and ed. by Hullot-Kentor, Robert. London: University of Minnesota Press, 2006

--- *Minima Moralia. Reflections on a damaged life* (1951). Trans. Jephcott, E. F. N. London: Verso, 2005

--- *Notes to Literature. Vol.1.* (1958) Ed. Tiedermann, Rolf. Trans. Weber NicholSEN, Shierry. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991

--- *Negative Dialectics* (1966). Trans. Ashton, E. B. New York: Continuum, 2005

--- *Prisms* .(1967). Trans. Weber, Samuel and Shierry. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981

--- *Critical Models. Interventions and Catchwords* (1963)(1969). Trans. by Pickford Henry W. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998

Adorno, Theodor W. *Aesthetic Theory* (1970). Ed. Adorno, Gretel and Tiedermann, Rolf. Trans. Hullot-Kentor, Robert. New York: Continuum, 1997

---*Escritos Sociológicos I. Obra Completa. Vol 8.*(1972) Ed. Tiedermann, Rolf. Trans. González Ruiz, Agustín. Madrid: Akal, 2004

--- *Disonancias. Introducción a la Sociología de la Música* (1973). *Obra Completa. Vol 14.* Ed. Tiedermann, Rolf. Trans. Menéndez Torrellas, Gabriel. Madrid: Akal, 2009

--- "Society", trans. Frederic Jameson, in Boyers, Robert ed. *The Legacy of the German Refugee Intellectuals*. New York: Schocken Books, 1972

--- *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, ed. By Bernstein, Jay M. London: Routledge, 1991

--- *Introduction to Sociology* (1993). Ed. Gödde, Christoph. Trans. Jephcott, Edmund. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002

--- *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (1995). Ed. Tiedermann, Rolf. Trans. Livingstone, Rolf. 2008. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001

--- *Problems of Moral Philosophy* (1996). Ed. Schröder, Thomas. Trans. Livingstone, Rolf. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001

--- "Functionalism Today", in Neil Leach, *Rethinking Architecture: a reader in cultural theory*. London: Routledge, 1997

--- *History and Freedom.*(2001) Ed. Tiedermann, Rolf. Trans. Livingstone, Rolf. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006

--- *Can One Live after Auschwitz? A Philosophical Reader*. Ed. Tiedemann, Rolf. Trans. Livingstone, Rodney and others. California: Stanford University Press, 2003

--- *Lectures on Negative Dialectics* (2003). Ed. Tiedermann, Rolf. Trans. Livingstone, Rolf. 2008. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010

Adorno, Theodor W. and Horkheimer, Max. *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944). Trans. by Cumming, John. London: Verso, 1997

- Affani, Flavia. Et al. *Arte y Recepción*. Buenos Aires: CAIA, 1997
- Aglietta, Michel and Bender, Anton. *Les Métamorphoses de le Société Salariale*. Paris: Calmann-Lévey, 1984
- Alberro, Alexaner. "A Media Art: Conceptualism in Latin America in the 1960s", in Newman, Michael and Bird, Jon, ed. *Re-writing conceptual art*. London: Reaktion, 1999, pp. 140-51
- Alberro, Alexander and Stimson, Blake. *Conceptual Art: a critical anthology*. London: MIT Press, 1999
- Alonso, Rodrigo, et al. *Vanguardias Argentinas, Ciclo de mesas redondas del Centro Cultural Rojas*. Buenos Aires: Libros del Rojas, 2003
- Althusser, Louis. *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (1971). Trans. by Brewster, Ben. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001
- Aronowitz, Stanley and Bratsis, Peter, ed. *Paradigm Lost: state theory reconsidered*. London: University of Minnesota Press, 2002
- Arrighi, Giovanni. *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, power, and the Origins of Times* (1994). London: Verso, 1999
- Avelar, Idelber. *The Untimely Present: Postdictatorial Latin American Fiction and the Task of Mourning*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1999
- Azpiaz, Daniel, Basualdo, Eduardo and Khavisse, Miguel. *El Nuevo Poder Económico en la Argentina de los Años 80*. Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 2004
- Baran, Paul A. and Sweezy, Paul M. *Monopoly Capitalism: and essay on the American Economic and Social Order*. Pelikan: Middlesex 1975
- Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies*. Trans. by Lavers, Annette. London: Vintage, 1993
- Critical Essays* (1964). Trans. by Howard Richard. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972
- Basualdo, Carlos. "Ejercicio de Lejanía", in *The Racional Twist*, catalogue of the exhibition. New York: Aphex Art, 1995
- Basualdo, Eduardo. *Deuda Externa y Poder Económico en la Argentina*. Buenos Aires: Nueva America, 1987
- *Estudios de Historia Económica Argentina: desde mediados del siglo XX a la actualidad*. Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 2010
- Beech, Dave and Roberts, John. Ed. *The Philistine Controversy*. London: Verso, 2002
- Benjamin, Andrew and Osborne, Peter, ed. *Destruction and Experience: Walter's Benjamin Philosophy*. Manchester: Clinamen Press, 2000
- Benjamin, Walter. *Selected Writings. Vol. 3*. Ed. Michael W. Jennings. London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002
- The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (1963). Trans. by Osborne, John. London: Verso, 2003
- The Archades Project* (1982). Trans. by Eiland, Howard and McLaughlin, Kevin. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002
- Berman, Marshall. *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity*. London: Verso, 1982

- Biardeau, Javier, Contreras, Miguel A. and Sonntag, Heinz R. "Development as Modernization and Modernity in Latin America," *Review*, Vol.24, Nr.2, 2001, pp.219-251
- Bishop, Claire. "Live Installations and Constructed Situations: The Use of 'Real People' in Art." *Verksted*, Nr 7, 2006
- Bloch, Ernst. et al. *Aesthetics and Politics*. London: Verso, 1980
- Bony, Oscar. *Oscar Bony. El Mago. Obras 1965 / 2001*. Buenos Aires: MALBA, 2007
- Borthagaray, Juan Manuel ed. *Habitar Buenos Aires, Las Manzanas, los Lotes y las Casas*. Buenos Aires: Sociedad Central de Arquitectos, 2009
- Bratu Hansen, Miriam. *Cinema and Experience: Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor W. Adorno*. London: University of California Press, 2012
- Braverman, Harry. *Labour and Monopoly Capital, The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1998
- Bruzzone, Gustavo and Longoni, Ana, ed. *El Siluetazo*. Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo Editora, 2008.
- Buch, Esteban, et al. *Arte y Poder*. Buenos Aires, CAIA, 1993
- Buchloh, Benjamin H.D.. "Conceptual Art: 1962-1969: from the aesthetic of administration to the critique of institutions," in Alberro, Alexander and Stimson, Blake *Conceptual Art: A critical Anthology*. London: MIT, 1999
- *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000
- "Detritus and Decrepitude: The Sculpture of Thomas Hirschhorn," *Oxford Art Journal*, 24:2, 2001, pp.41-56
- Buck-Morss, Susan. *The Origin of Negative Dialectics: Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and the Frankfurt Institute (1977)*. New York: The Free Press, 1979
- Bürger, Peter. *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984
- "The Decline of the Modern Age," *Telos* 62, Winter 1984-5, pp.117-130
- Burgin, Victor. *The End of Art Theory: Criticism and Postmodernity*. London: MacMillan, 1986
- Calzón Flores, Natalia, ed. *25 Anos del Rojas*. Buenos Aires: Libros del Rojas, 2009
- Camnitzer, Luis. *On Art, Artists, Latin America and other Utopias*. Ed. Rachael Weiss. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009
- *Conceptualism in Latin American Art: Didactics of Liberation*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007
- Camnitzer, Luis, Farver Jane and Weiss Rachel, ed. *Global Conceptualism. Points of Origin, 1950s-1980s (cat. exp.)*. Nueva York: Queens Museum of Art, 1999
- Cardoso, Henrique and Faletto, Enzo. *Dependency and Development in Latin America (1971)*, trans. by Marjory Mattingly Urquidí. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979
- Carnevale, Graciela, Davis, Fernando, Longoni, Ana and Wandzik, Ana. *Inventario 1965-1975 Archivo Graciela Carnevale*. Rosario: Centro Cultural Parque de España, CCPE / AECID, 2008
- Carras, Rafaela. *Pensamientos, Practicas y Acciones del GAC*. Buenos Aires: Tinta Limón, 2009
- Carson, Juli. "Aesthetics of Repetition: A Case for Oscar Masotta", *XTRA*, Vol.14 Nr.3, Spring 2012

- Castel, Robert. *From Manual Workers to Wage Laborers: the transformation of the social question*, trans. and ed. Richard Boyd. London: Transaction Publishers, 2003
- Castells, Manuel. *The Information Age: Economy, Society, and Culture. Volume 1: The Rise of the Network Society* (1196). 2nd Edition. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010
- Casullo, Nicolas. *Modernidad y Cultura Crítica*. Buenos Aires: Paidós, 1998
- Cavarozzi, Marcelo. *Autoritarismo y Democracia (1955-1983)*. Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1983
- Caviglia, Mariana. *Dictadura, vida cotidiana y clases medias: Una sociedad fracturada*. Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros, 2006
- Cippolini, Rafael. *Manifiestos Argentinos: Políticas de lo Visual 1900-2000*. Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo Editora, 2003
- Kacero. Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo Editora, 2007
- Collier, David, ed. *The New Authoritarianism in Latin America*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1979
- Costa, Eduardo, Jacoby, Roberto and Escari, Raúl "Un arte de los medios de comunicación: manifiesto," in Masotta et al. *Happenings* Buenos Aires: Jorge Alvarez, 1967
- Creischer, Alice and Siekmann, Andreas, *Ex-Argentina, Pasos para huir del trabajo al hacer*. Buenos Aires: Goethe-Institut Buenos Aires, 2004
- Cunningham, David, "A Seam with the Economic: Art, Architecture, Metropolis", *Verksted*, Nr 8, 2006, pp. 131-166
- De Caro, Marina, Fontes, Claudia and Banchemo, ed. *TRAMA 2002, Imagenes, Relatos y Utopias*. Buenos Aires: Proyecto Trama, 2002
- De Rueda, María de los Angeles, ed. *Arte y Utopia*. Buenos Aires: Asunto Impreso Ediciones, 2003
- Elliot, David. *Art From Argentina: 1920-1994*. Oxford: The Museum of Modern Art Oxford, 1994
- Falconi, Jose Luis and Rangel, Gabriela, ed. *A Principality of Its Own: 40 Years of Visual Arts at the Americas Society*. New York: Americas Society, 2006
- Fantoni, Guillermo. *Arte, Vanguardia y Política en los Años '60: Conversaciones con Juan Pablo Renzi*. Buenos Aires: El Cielo Por Asalto, 1998
- Fontes, Claudia and Banchemo, Irene, ed. *TRAMA 2003, La Red Como Lugar Comun*. Buenos Aires: Proyecto Trama, 2003
- Fontes, Claudia, Zicarelllo, Pablo and Banchemo, Irene, ed. *TRAMA 2000, Mirada y Contexto*. Buenos Aires: Proyecto Trama, 2000
- *TRAMA 2001, La Sociedad Imaginada*. Buenos Aires: Proyecto Trama, 2001
- Foster, Hal. *Design and Crime (and Other Diatribes)*. London: Verso, 2003
- Frank, Gunter Andre. *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America*. Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1971

- Frenkel, Roberto and O'Donnell, Guillermo. "The 'Stabilization Programs' of the International Monetary Fund and Their Internal Impacts," in Fagen, R. Richard, ed. *Capitalism and the State in U.S.- Latin American Relations*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979, pp.171-180
- Garcia Canclini, Nestor. *La Produccion Simbolica: Teoria y Metodo en Sociologia del Arte*. Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1979
- *Hybrid Cultures*, trans. Chiappari, Christopher I. and Lopez Silvia L. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995
- Garcia Canclini, Nestor y Carlos Moneta, coord. *Las Industrias Culturales en la Integración Latinoamericana*. Buenos Aires: EUDEBA, 1999
- Giunta, Andrea. *Vanguardia, Internacionalismo y Política: Arte Argentino en los Años Sesenta*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Paidós, 2001
- *Poscrisis, Arte Argentino después de 2001*. Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 2009
- Glusberg, Jorge. *Art in Argentina*. Milan: Giancarlo Politi Editore, 1986
- Gonzalez, Valeria. *Ballesteros*. Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo Editora, 2008
- Gorelik, Adrian "La Ciudad de los Negocios," *Punto de Vista*, Nro.50, Buenos Aires, November 1994, pp.14-18
- "Ciudad, Modernidad, Modernización", *Universitas Humanística*. No. 056, Bogotá, Junio, 2003, pp. 11-27
- "El Romance del Espacio Público", *Alteridades*, Vol.18 No.36, Mexico, Jul./Dic.2008, pp.33-45
- *La Grilla Y El Parque: Espacio público y cultura urbana en Buenos Aires, 1887-1936*. Bernal: Universidad Nacional de Quilmes, 2010
- Gorelik, Adrián and Silvestri, Graciela. "Ciudad y Cultura Urbana, 1976-1999: El fin de la expansión", in José Luis Romero y Luis Alberto Romero ed. *Buenos Aires, Historia de Cuatro Siglos. Vol. II*: .Buenos Aires: Editorial Altamira, 2000
- Dan Graham, "My works for magazine pages: 'a history of conceptual art'", in Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson, ed. *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, MIT, London, 1999, pp 418-422
- Gramuglio, María Teresa and Rosa, Nicolás. "Tucumán Burns", in Alexander Alberro & Blake Stimson *Conceptual Art: A critical Anthology*, (London: MIT, 1999), p. 76-79
- Green, Duncan. *Silent Revolution: The Rise of Market Economics in Latin America*. New York: Cassell, 1995
- Grupo de Artistas de Vanguardia de la Comisión de Acción Artística de la CGT de los Argentinos. "Límites de lo legal," 1968. Typewritten statement. Archive of Roberto Jacoby, Buenos Aires.
- Guagnini, Nicolás. "La implacable sombra de la involución" *Ramona*, Nr. 48, March 2005, Buenos Aires, pp.70-75
- Gumier Maier, Jorge and Pacheco, Marcelo E., ed. *Artistas Argentinos de los '90*. Buenos Aires: Fondo Nacional de las Artes, 1999
- Curadores . Entrevistas*. Buenos Aires, Libros del Rojas, 2005

- "Avatares del Arte", in Cippolini, Rafael. *Manifiestos Argentinos: Políticas de lo Visual 1900-2000*, Buenos Aires: Tusquets, 2003.
- "El Tao del Arte", in Cippolini, Rafael. *Manifiestos Argentinos: Políticas de lo Visual 1900-2000*, Buenos Aires: Tusquets, 2003
- Katzenstein, Ines. *Pombo*. Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo Editora, 2006
- ed. *Listen, Here, Now! Argentine Art of the 1960s: Writings of the Avant-Garde*. New York: MOMA, 2004
- Habermas, Jürgen. "Modernity: An Unfinished Project", in D'Entrèves, Maurizio Passerin and Benhabib, Seyla ed, *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996
- *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1996
- Hammer, Espen. *Adorno and the Political*. London: Routledge, 2006
- Hansen, Miriam Bratu. *Cinema and Experience: Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor W. Adorno*. London: University of California Press, 2012
- Hardt, Michael and Negri, Antonio. *Empire* (2000). London: Harvard University Press, 2001
- Harrison, Charles and Wood, Paul. *Art in Theory. 1900-1990. An Anthology of Changing Ideas*. 1992. Oxford: Blackwell, 1999
- Harvey, David. *The Limits to Capital* (1982). London: Verso, 2006
- *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005
- *The New Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005
- Hasper, Graciela. *Liliana Maresca. Documentos*. Buenos Aires, Libros del Rojas, 2006
- Haug, Wolfgang Fritz. "Commodity aesthetics revisited: Exchange relations as the source of antagonistic aesthetics", *Radical Philosophy*, Nr. 135, 2006, pp.18-24
- Herrera, Maria Jose. *Pop! La consagración de la primavera*. Buenos Aires: Fundacion OSDE, 2010
- Higgins, Charlotte. "People power comes to the Turbine Hall: Ai Weiwei's Sunflower Seeds", *The Guardian*, October 11th 2010. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2010/oct/11/tate-modern-sunflower-seeds-turbine>. Last accessed on the 8th of February 2013
- Honneth, Axel. *The Critique of Power, Reflective Stages in a Critical Social Theory*, trans. by Baynes, Kenneth. London: MIT Press, 1997
- Hopenhayn, Martín. *No Apocalypse, No Integration: Modernism and Postmodernism in Latin America*. Trans. Tompkins, Cynthia Margarita and Horan, Elizabeth Rosa. London: Duke University Press, 2001
- Huhn, Tom and Zuidervaart, Lambert, ed. *The Semblance of Subjectivity: Essays in Adorno's Aesthetic Theory*. London: MIT Press, 1997
- Hunt, Geoffrey. "The Development of the Concept of Civil Society in Marx," in Jessop, Bob with Malcolm-Brown, Charlie ed., *Karl Marx's Social and Political Thought*, Routledge, London, 1990
- Huyssen, Andreas. *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003
- Izaguirre, Marcelo, ed. *Oscar Masotta: El revés de la trama*. Buenos Aires: Atuel/Anáfora, 1999

- Jacoby, Russell. *Social Amnesia; A Critique of Contemporary Psychology from Adlerto Laing*. Boston: Bacon Press, 1975
- James, Daniel. *Resistance and Integration: Peronism and the Argentine Working Class, 1946-1976* (1988). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994
- Jameson, Fredric. *Late Marxism: Adorno or the Persistence of the Dialectic* (1990) London: Verso, 2007
- *Postmodernism or the cultural logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1991
- *The Jameson Reader*. Ed. Hardt Michael and Weeks, Kathi. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000
- Jarvis, Simon. *Adorno, a Critical Introduction*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998
- Jessop, Bob. "Globalisation and the National State," in *Paradigm Lost: State theory Reconsidered*, Aronowitz, Stanley and Bratsis, Peter, ed. London: University of Minnesota Press, 2002
- "Spatial Fixes, Temporal Fixes, Spatio-Temporal Fixes", in Castree, Noel and Gregory, Derek. *David Harvey: A Critical Reader*, Blackwell, London, 2006
- *State Power: A Strategic-Relational Approach*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008
- Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Practical Reason*. Trans. and ed. by Gregor, Mary. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010
- Kaprow, Alan. *Assemblage, Environments & Happenings*. New York: H.N.Abrams, 1966
- King, John. *El Di Tella y el desarrollo cultural argentino en la década del sesenta*. Buenos Aires: Gagliamone, 1985
- Kirby, Michael. *Happenings*. London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1965
- Kraniauskas, John. "Hybridity in a Transnational Frame: Latin-Americanist and Postcolonial Perspectives on Cultural Studies". *Nepantal: Views from South*, 1, 2000, pp. 111-137
- "Difference Against Development: Spiritual Accumulation and the Politics of Freedom," *Boundary 2*, 32:2, 2005, pp.53-80
- Laclau, Ernesto. *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*. London: New Left Books, 1977
- "Teorías Marxistas del Estado: Debates y Perspectivas", in *Estado y Política en América Latina*. Ed. Lechner, Norbert. Mexico: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1981
- *On Populist Reason*. London: Verso, 2007
- Laclau, Ernesto and Mouffe, Chantal. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (1985) Second Edition. London: Verso: 2001
- Lamelas, David. *David Lamelas. Extranjero*. Buenos Aires: MALBA, 2006
- Larrain, Jorge. *Theories of Development*. Polity Press: Cambridge, 1989
- Lechner, Norbert. *La Crisis del Estado en América Latina*. Caracas: El Cid Editor, 1977
- ed. *Estado y Política en América Latina*. México: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1981
- Lefebvre, Henri. *State, Space, World. Selected Essays*. Ed. Brenner Neil and Elden Stuart. Trans. Moore, Gerald, Brenner Neil and Elden Stuart. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009
- Lippard, Lucy. *Six Years: the dematerialization of the art object from 1962 to 1972*. California: University of California Press, 1997
- Lissitsky, El. "The Future of the Book", *New Left Review*, V41, January February 1967

- Longoni, Ana. "El Siluetazo: On the border between Art and Politics," in *Sarai Reader 07: Frontiers*, pp.176-86
- ed. *El Deseo Nace del Derrumbe*. Jacoby, Roberto: *Acciones, Conceptos, Escritos*. Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo Editora, 2011
- Longoni, Ana and Mestman, Mariano. *Del Di Tella a "Tucumán Arde": Vanguardia artística y política en el '68 Argentino*. Buenos Aires: El Cielo Por Asalto, 2000
- Lonitz, Henri ed. *Theodor W. Adorno and Walter Benjamin: The Complete Correspondence 1928-1940* (1994). Trans. by Nicholas Walker, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003
- Artemio Lopez. *El Otro Golpe. Las Transformaciones en la Estructura Social por el Terrorismo de Estado*. Buenos Aires: Consultora Equis, Newsletter, Marzo 2006
- López, Artemio and Romeo, Martín. *La Declinación de la Clase Media Argentina: Transformaciones en la estructura social (1974-2004)*. Buenos Aires: Libros de eQuis, 2005
- Lozza, Raúl. "Manifiesto Perceptista" in Cippolini, Rafael ed. *Manifiestos Argentinos: Políticas de lo Visual 1900-2000*. Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo Editora, 2003, pp.224-226
- Lukács, Georg. *History and Class Consciousness* (1968). Trans. by Livingstone, Rodney. London: merlin Press, 1990
- Macchi, Jorge and Rudnitzky, Edgardo. *La Ascension*, Bienal de Venecia, 51, Palagrazuissi. Antico Oratorio San Filippo Neri alla Fava, 12th of June to 6th of November 2005. Buenos Aires: Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Comercio Internacional y Culto, 2005
- Marchán Fiz, Simón. *Del arte objetual al arte de concepto*. Madrid: Ediciones Akal, 1989
- Maresca, Liliana. *Liliana Maresca. Transmutaciones*. Rosario: Museo Castagnino + MACRO, 2008
- . *Documentos*. Buenos Aires: Libros del Rojas, 2006
- Margulis, Mario and Urresti, Marcelo. ed. *La Cultura Argentina de fin de Siglo: Ensayos sobre la dimensión cultural*. Buenos Aires: Universidad de Buenos Aires, 1997
- Margulis, Mario and Urresti, Marcelo. et al. *La Segregación Negada: Cultura y discriminación social*. Buenos Aires: Biblos, 1999
- Martin, Stewart, "Autonomy and Anti-Art: Adorno's Concept of Avant-Garde Art," *Constellations*, Vol.7, Nr.2, 2000, pp. 197-207
- "W.G. Sebald and the modern art of memory," *Radical Philosophy* 132, July / August, 2005, pp.18-30
- "The Absolute Work of Art Meet the Absolute Commodity," *Radical Philosophy*, Nr.146, November / December, 2007
- Marcuse, Herbert. *Negations* (1968). Trans. by Shapiro, Jeremy J..Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1972
- Marx, Karl. *Capital, Vol.1* (1976). Trans. by Fowkes, Ben. London: Penguin, 1990
- *Grundrisse, Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. by Martin Nicolaus. Middlesex: Penguin, 1973
- Marx, Karl and Engels, Friedrich. *The German Ideology* (1932). New York: International Publishers, 2004
- *Selected Works in One Volume*. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1968
- Masotta, Oscar. et al. *Happenings*. Buenos Aires: Jorge Alvarez, 1967

- *El "pop-art"*. Buenos Aires: Nuevos Esquemas, 1967
- *Conciencia y Estructura* (1968). Buenos Aires: Corregidor, 1990
- McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding Media: The extensions of man*. London: Routledge, 1964, 2010
- Mesquita, Ivo and Pedrosa Adriano. *F[r]icciones*. Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 2000
- Molina, Daniel. "Siquier , simple y barroco," *La Nacion*, 27th January 2012
- Moreiras, Alberto and Richards, Nelly. ed. *Pensar en/la Postdictadura*. Santiago: Editorial Cuarto Propio, 2001
- Müller-Doohm, Stefan. *Adorno. A Biography* (2003). Trans. by Livingstone, Rodney. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005
- Negri, Antonio, Fleming, Jim, and Cleaver, Harry. *Marx Beyond Marx: Lessons on the Grundrisse*. Trans. by Fleming, Jim. London: Pluto Press, 1992
- Neuman, Franz. *Behemoth. The Structure and Parctice of National Socialism 1933-1944*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1944
- Noorthoorn, Victoria. *Hasper*. Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo Editora, 2007
- , ed. *Beginning with a Bang: From Confrontation to Intimacy. An Exhibition of Argentine Contemporary Artists, 1960 – 2007*. New York: Americas Society, 2008
- Novaro, Marcos. *Historia de la Argentina Contemporanea: de Perón a Kirchner*. Buenos Aires: Edhasa, 2006
- Nun, José. "Superoblación relativa, ejercito industrial de reserva y masa marginal", *Revista Latinoamericana de Sociología*, Vol. 5, Nr. 2, Buenos Aires, July 1969, pp. 180-225
- "The End of Work and the 'Marginal Mass' Thesis", *Latin American Perspectives*, Issue 110, Vol.27 Nr 1, January 2000, pp.6-32
- O'Donnell, Guillermo. *Bureaucratic Authoritarianism: Argentina, 1966-1973, in Comparative perspective*, trans. James McGuire in collaboration with Rae Flory. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988
- *Modernization and Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism: Studies in South American Politics*. Berkeley: University of California, 1973, 1979
- : *Selected Essays on Authoritarianism and Democratization*, University of Notre Dame Press, Indiana, 1999
- Olea, Héctor and Ramirez, Mari Carmen, ed. *Heterotopías. Medio siglo sin lugar, 1918-1968*, Madrid: MNCARS, 2000
- Osborne, Peter. "Torn halves and the Great Divides: The Dialectics of a Cultural Dichotomy", *News from Nowhere*, Nr.7, Winter 1989, pp.49-63
- "Adorno and the Metaphysics of Modernism: The Problem of a 'Postmodern' Art," in Benjamin, Andrew ed., *The Problems of Modernity: Adorno and Benjamin*. London: Routledge, 1989, pp. 23-48.
- "A Marxism for the Postmodern? Jameson's Adorno," *New German Critique*, Nr.56, Spring –Summer, 1992, pp. 171-192
- "Painting Negation. Gerhard Richter's Negatives", *October*, Nr 62, Autumn 1992, pp. 102-113

- *The Politics of Time*. London: Verso, 1996
- *Philosophy in Cultural Theory*. London: Routledge, 2000
- ed. *From an Aesthetic Point of View: Philosophy, Art and the Senses*. London: Serpent's Tail, 2000
- ed. *Conceptual Art*. (2002). London: Phaidon, 2011
- "Whoever Speaks Of Culture Speaks Of Administration As Well, disputing pragmatism in cultural studies," *Cultural Studies*, Vol. 20, Nr 1, January 2006, pp.33-47
- *El Arte Más Allá de la Estética: Ensayos Filosóficos sobre arte contemporáneo*. Trans. Hernández Velázquez, Yaiza. Murcia: CENDEAC, 2010
- Oteiza, Enrique, ed. *Cultura y Política en los Años '60*. Buenos Aires: UBA, 1997
- Pacheco, Marcelo E., ed. *Escuelismo. Arte Argentino de los 90*. Buenos Aires: MALBA, 2009
- Pensky, Max. Ed. *Globalizing Critical Theory*. Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2005
- Podalsky, Laura. *Specular City: transforming cultura, consumption, and space in Buenos Aires, 1955-1973*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004
- Pollock, Friedrich. "State Capitalism: Its Possibilities and Limitations", *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, ed. Andrew Arato & Eike Gebhardt. London: Continuum, 2005
- Poulantzas, Nikos. *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism* (1974) Trans. by Fernbach, David. London: Verso, 1975
- *State, Power, Socialism*(1978). London: Verso, 2000
- *Las Crisis de las Dictaduras: Portugal, Grecia, España*. Trans. by Mercado, Tununa. Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1976
- Quiles, Daniel. "Interview with Roberto Jacoby". *Review: Literature and Arts of the Americas*, Issue 75, Vol.40, 2007, pp.323-330
- Ramirez, Mari Carmen, ed. *Cantos Paralelos*. Austin: University of Texas, 1999
- "Tactics for Thriving on Adversity: Conceptualism in Latin America, 1960-1980, cat exp. *Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin, 1950s-1980s*. New York: The Queens Museum of Art, 1999, pp.53-71
- "blueprint circuits: conceptual art and politics in Latin America," in Alexander Alberro & Blake Stimson *Conceptual Art: A critical Anthology*. London: MIT, 1999, pp. 550-562
- Rapoport, Mario. *De Pellegrini a Martinez de Hoz: el modelo liberal*. Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1988
- Rizzo, Patricia, ed. *Instituto Di Tella Experiencias '68*. Buenos Aires: Fundacion Proa, 1998
- Roberts, John. *The Intangibilities of Form: Skill and Deskilling in Art After the Readymade*. London: Verso, 2007.
- "After Adorno: Art, Autonomy, and Critique," *Historical Materialism*, Vol.7, Number 1, 2000, pp.221-239.
- Romero, José Luis. *Situaciones e Ideologías en Latinoamérica*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1986

- Romero, José Luis and Romero, Luis Alberto ed. *Buenos Aires: Historia de Cuatro Siglos, Volumen 2: Desde la Ciudad Burguesa (1880-1930) hasta la Ciudad de Masas (1930-2000)*. Buenos Aires: Altamira, 2000
- Romero Brest, Jorge. "El Arte Argentino y el Arte Universal," *Ver y Estimar*, Vol. 1, Nr. 1, April, 1948, pp. 4-16
- *Pintura del Siglo XX (1900-1974)*. Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1952, 1978, 1992
- *Arte en la Argentina*. Buenos Aires: Paidós, 1969
- Saenz, Mario, "Philosophies of Liberation and Modernity: The Case of Latin America," *Philosophy Today*, Summer, 1994, pp. 115-131
- Sarlo, Beatriz. *La Máquina Cultural*. Buenos Aires: Ariel, 1998
- *Scenes from Postmodern Life*. Trans. Beasley-Murray, Jon. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001
- *Una modernidad periférica: Buenos Aires 1920 y 1930*. Buenos Aires: Nueva Visión, 2003
- Sassen, Saskia. *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*. 2nd Edition. Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001
- ed. *Global Networks, Linked Cities*. London: Routledge, 2002
- Sebreli, Juan José. *Buenos Aires, Vida Cotidiana y Alienci3n, seguido de Buenos Aires, Ciudad en Crisis*. Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2003
- Sigal, Silvia. *Intelectuales y poder en la decada del sesenta*. Buenos Aires: Punto Sur, 1991
- Sigal, Silvia and Eliseo Ver3n. *Per3n o muerte, los fundamentos discursivos del fen3meno peronista*. Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 2003
- Siquier, Pablo. *Siquier*. Exhibition Catalogue. Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 2005.
- "El Edificio Subjetivo", *Ramona*, Nr. 13, June 2001, Buenos Aires, p. 22
- "Mis influencias vinieron de la m3sica y la danza, no vengo de la tradici3n pict3rica", *Ramona*, Nr. 50, Buenos Aires, 2005, pp. 87
- Siquier, Pablo. "Manifiesto Frágil", in Cippolini, Rafael. *Manifiestos Argentinos: Políticas de lo Visual 1900-2000*, Buenos Aires: Tusquets, 2003
- Sohn-Rethel, Alfred. *Intellectual and Manual Labour: A Critique of Epistemology*. Trans. Sohn-Rethel, Martin. London: Macmillan, 1978
- Sonntag, Heinz R., Contreras, Miguel A. and Biardeau, Javier. "Development as Modernisation and Modernity in Latin America," *Review*, Vol. 24, Nr. 2, 2001, pp. 219-51
- Spencer, Herbert, *The Principles of Sociology, Vol. II*. New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2002
- Sueldo, Andrea, Andino, Silvia y Sacco, Graciela. *Tucumán Arde*. Rosario: mimeograph, 1987
- Tabarovski, Damian. *Siquier*. Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo Editora, 2011
- Tafuri, Manfredo. *Architecture and Utopia: Design and capitalist Development*, trans. La Penta, Barbara Luigia. London: MIT Press, 1976
- Terán, Oscar. *Nuestros Años Sesentas: la formaci3n de la nueva izquierda intelectual argentina 1956-1966*. Buenos Aires: Punto Sur, 1991

- Vezzetti, Hugo. *Pasado Y Presente: Guerra, dictadura y sociedad en la Argentina*. Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Editores Argentina, 2003
- Wall, Jeff. "Dan Graham's Kammerspiel," in Alberro, Alexander and Stimson, Blake. *Conceptual Art: A critical Anthology*. London: MIT, 1999, pp. 504-513
- *Selected Essays and Interviews*. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2007
- Wallerstein, Immanuel. *Geopolitics and Geoculture: Essays on the changing world-system*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991
- Welch Guerra, Max, ed. *Buenos Aires a la deriva: Transformaciones urbanas recientes*. Buenos Aires: Biblos, 2005
- Wiggershaus, Rolf. *The Frankfurt School: Its History, Theories and Political Significance* (1986). Trans. by Robertson, Michael. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007
- Williamson, John. Ed. "What Washington Means by Policy Reform," in *Latin American Adjustment: how much has happened?* Washington: Institute for International Economics, 1990, pp.7-20
- Yaghmaian, Behzad. "Globalisation and the State: The Political Economy of Global Accumulation and Its Emerging Mode of Regulation", *Science and Society*, Volume 62:2
- Yúdice, George. *The Expediency of Culture: Uses of Culture in the Global Era*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005