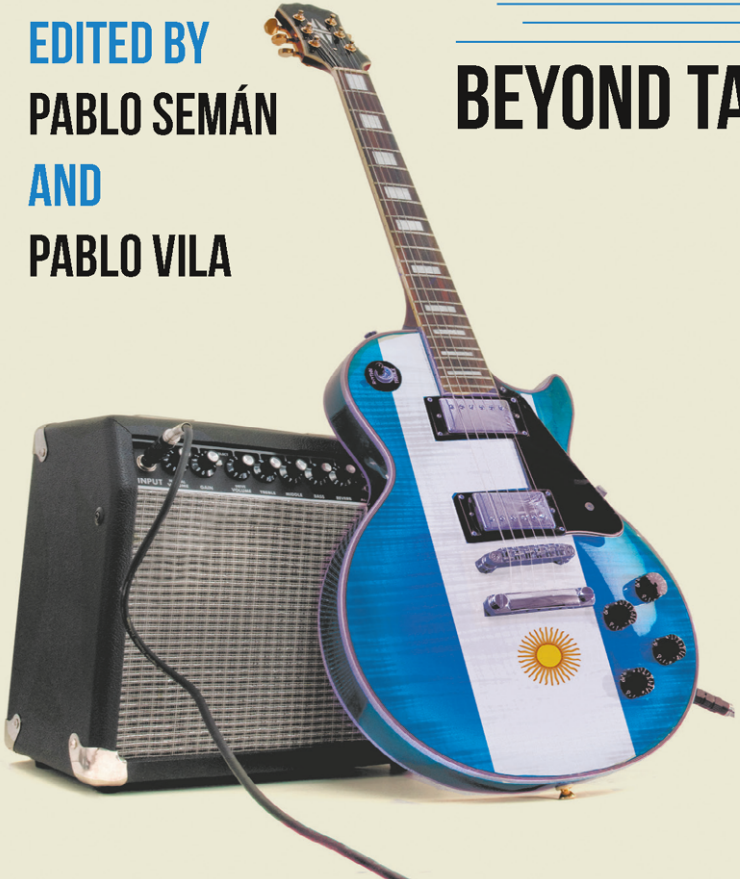
YOUTH IDENTITIES AND ARGENTINE POPULAR MUSIC

BEYOND TANGO

EDITED BY
PABLO SEMÁN
AND
PABLO VILA



Youth Identities and Argentine Popular Music

Youth Identities and Argentine Popular Music

Beyond Tango

Edited by Pablo Semán and Pablo Vila

palgrave
macmillan

YOUTH IDENTITIES AND ARGENTINE POPULAR MUSIC

Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2012 978-0-230-10463-1

First published in 2012 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN® in the United States – a division of
St. Martin's Press LLC, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

Where this book is distributed in the UK, Europe and the rest of the world, this is by Palgrave Macmillan, a division of Macmillan Publishers Limited, registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS.

Palgrave Macmillan is the global academic imprint of the above companies and has companies and representatives throughout the world.

ISBN 978-1-349-28923-3 ISBN 978-1-137-01152-7 (eBook)
DOI 10.1057/9781137011527

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Youth identities and Argentine popular music : beyond tango / edited by Pablo Semán and Pablo Vila.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references.

1. Popular music—Social aspects Argentina—Buenos Aires. I. Semán, Pablo. II. Vila, Pablo, 1952–
ML3917.A7Y68 2011
306.4'84240982—dc23 2011025506

A catalogue record of the book is available from the British Library.

Design by MPS Limited

First edition: May 2012

Contents

1

Introduction

Pablo Semán and Pablo Vila

In Argentina, until quite recently, the way in which the relationship between young people and music was conceptualized was very limited, either because that was the point of view employed by academicians or because social reality itself asked for such a framework. In a nutshell, most academic accounts of young people's music were based on lyrics and their reception that more often than not rendered an image of young people that, through the use of "culture," constructed dissidences, questionings, and rebellions that did not have other outlets. This kind of approach, almost exclusively focused on youth rebellion, was linked to a particular academic tradition (innovative in the 1970s and 1980s) that today requires a rewriting in order to take into account other musical aspects of the everyday experience of Argentine youth, and, at the same time, be able to inscribe such a practice using different registers than the ones used in the past.

Since the early 2000s we have been conducting research that has shown us the plurality of issues that are constructed around music and that, at the same time, reveals a symbolic map that is much more variegated and heterogeneous than previous studies on popular music in Argentina (ours included) had presumed. The music that young people from Metropolitan Buenos Aires (the capital and its suburbs, which constitute the bulk of Argentina's population) listen to shows that the field of "musical consumption" is a field through which categories of class, ethnicity, religion, and gender are constructed and processed. And they are constructed and processed within relationships of force and social arrangements that challenge any simplistic cultural analysis because they show that young people reconcile without major problems, sexualities, religions, egalitarian political principles, and hierarchical social classifications.

The construction/inscription of class, gender, and ethnic differences is linked to several social changes that work in tandem, such as the transformation of the social structure of the country, cultural change, and technological innovations. Those changes allow the appearance (many times quite fleeting) of new social actors, new forms of social distinction that, moreover, are not necessarily coextensive with musical genres, but transversal to them. Within the framework of important technological change, alongside the emergence of a transformed repertoire of sexual imaginaries, we have witnessed the emergence of a new way to process gender relationships. But, at the same time, it is quite noticeable that the activation of the religious sphere, expressed and/or promoted by music, accounts for a very specific (and nonlinear) path of "secularization." Additionally, what is also apparent is how class and ethnic classifications actualize themselves to recognize or inscribe in the social scenario abrupt and profound transformations of the social.

Therefore, the new way of understanding the musical phenomena that this collection of essays entails goes beyond the study of how music participates in the construction of multiple sensibilities or its capacity to articulate social transformations at the same time that helps in their institution. What the chapters also show is how these new sensibilities and capacities are entangled in relationships that organize them at a different level. Young rockers, who are simultaneously politically progressive and blatantly racist, share the scenes with young women who while advocating new ways of sexual agency, do so within androcentric frameworks. All these complex entanglements, which challenge the facile idea that emancipations advance in an evenly and unified way, are some of the ways in which the "raw" data of a long process of class inequality and pauperization are processed.

But what the articles in this collection want to advance as well is an appreciation of the way in which all those complex entanglements combine with the specific process where conflicts around sexual and religious imaginaries are elaborated. To appreciate the role of music in young people's everyday lives is to take into account all these processes to compose a richer and more encompassing picture of their complex lives in contemporary Argentina. Because all these processes are still under way, and because we cannot weigh their full impact yet, it is impossible to predict their possible outcome. However, it is still possible to point out the diversity of alignments and constitutional logic that the possible outcome has to deal with. It is also possible to understand that, in contraposition to other epochs and related to both the change in the way musical phenomena are observed and the social, cultural, and technological change currently under way, it is not possible any longer to refer to the pair "youth/music" except as an irreducible diversity that even affects the "naturalism" of age.[1]

In this volume we compile a series of chapters that reveal and analyze the reception and circulation of the musical production of bands and soloists relevant to the music scene of contemporary Argentine youth. In this introduction we want to do more than just summarize the contents of those texts to get to a sum of the parts. Along with that, we are interested in positing an outlook in which the connection between the abovementioned reception processes is made visible.

In section I below, we summarize the chapters of this book. Then, in Section II we consider both, the technical and symbolic conditions of music access and appropriation (conditions that redefine the ways in which different music genres are experienced). In this regard we will show that "music genres" exist within a context of porous frontiers, generating possibilities for reception (and sociological interpretation) that are transversal to them. Taking that specificity into account, we advance in the characterization of three key themes that appear transversally to the different music genres and scenes considered in this book. Last, in Section III, we will claim that through the relationship between different publics and musical productions it is possible to discern a field of conflicts where music activates diverse, opposing visions of sexuality, religion, class, and "race" inequalities and their combinations.

I.

In Chapter 1, Citro argues that in the Bersuit concerts, a peculiar sexed body quite similar to the way the body was deployed in the aesthetics of the popular festivals Bajtín (1987 [1930]) called "grotesque realism," became one of the prevalent means to incarnate the difference and transgressions of both the rules of bourgeois morals of the adult world and the neoliberal policies of the 1990s. Although several authors have analyzed the role of the grotesque in central countries (Kohl 1993; Halnon 2004, 2006), Citro's point here is that in the case of Bersuit and their fans, this style took distinctive elements from the local culture and used them in their confrontation with the establishment by means of a provocative language of gender and sex. Chapter 2 shows the complexity of moral classifications used by Argentine rock fans (the "rockers"), who organize their identitarian attributes in moral oppositions: on one hand they legitimize their belonging to the group through the consumption of drugs and the performance of a rebel attitude that generates and reinforces their identity within the group. Such an attitude, at the same time, draws boundaries and establishes differences in relation to other groups. They create a universe of symbols that differ from the hegemonic discourses that only portray the consumption of drugs and transgressive attitudes as negative;

this group of symbols places them, discoursively, against the injustices and the oppressions of the system. These gestures of resistance do not respond, however, to an elaborate political stance; they are formed with an unstable organizational dynamic and are sometimes complexly articulated to both hegemonic and alternative values. This is why they fall in such obvious contradictions. They think of themselves as politically correct when they point out the injustices of the system, but they are politically incorrect when they address the cumbia villera (shantytown cumbia) as a music style of the despised "negros."

In Chapter 3, Martín presents and contextualizes the new uses of a social category, that of "pibe"—a transversal category to the generational divisions between infancy, youth, and adulthood—analyzing its place in cumbia villera. The first part of the chapter presents the context within which this musical genre emerges. The second part is a comparative exercise in which Martín considers some topics that are present in the genre that contrast not only with hegemonic values but also with those other values that, while they were not hegemonic, were still oriented to the social practices of previous generations in the popular sectors in Argentina. We will see some sort of unsolved ambiguity between the rupturing of a disciplinary world and the reaction against social segregation in which the pibes do not want to be controlled, but neither to be socially excluded. Through this comparison of horizons, the specificity of the category at stake becomes clear and also the musical genre that, at the same time, reveals and helps to construct it. However, as the social context in which all this occurs is structurally ambiguous, it is possible that in both, the lyrics of the songs and the media interviews with the musicians, different interpretations are staged regarding the type of disruption with the dominant order cumbia villera is attempting to enact.

Chapter 4 addresses how music (more prominently cumbia) is a central element in the complicated process of identity construction many young Bolivians and Paraguayans undergo in Buenos Aires. A crucial aspect of such a process is the way in which these immigrants use Argentine cumbia to negotiate their status of "ethnic and national others" in the context of a city whose imaginary is mostly European and white. After positioning their research in the context of racial and ethnic studies in Argentina, without which the meaning of the term "Negro" applied to these immigrants cannot be understood, Vila and Silba examine the commonalities and differences between two very popular ethnic dance halls, a Bolivian (Kory) and a Paraguayan baile (Cachaquísimo). In those dance halls, the authors show the way in which diverse references to what is Bolivian and Paraguayan popular music are complexly intertwined with allusions to Argentine cultural markers, especially musical ones. The chapter ends

with a general discussion on the meaning of "ethnic" in a globalized world, considering how complex is the mixing of the Bolivian, Paraguayan, and Argentine (but also American, Colombian, and Mexican) musical artefacts that are combined in both bailes to position the young people that crowd Kory and Cachaquísimo every weekend as "Bolivian" and "Paraguayan" immigrants.

In Chapter 5, Semán and Vila want to display the complex relationship many young women in Argentina have with the sexist and obscene lyrics of cumbia villera that, many times, portray them as "sluts." In the process of doing so, Semán and Vila will also show how a certain "activation" of female sexuality is at play, and how such activation produces the fear that many male-centered lyrics seem to depict.

Chapter 6 analyzes the fan club of Ricardo Arjona in Buenos Aires. The fan club is presented as the center of a complex set of activities that hybridizes different knowledge backgrounds and skills acquired along the agents trajectories, such as those gained in the religious world and the educational institutions. That way, the hypothesis this work intends to prove arose in the light of the ethnographic experience. The cult status conferred to the singer is developed amid the double pathway of the deployment of Christian echoes (Catholic, to be more precise), and the assumption that there are "post-traditional" parameters in relation to sexuality.

Chapter 7 focuses on electronic music. The phenomenon we have presented here is indeed part of a complex reality that cannot be denied; the socialization of an increasing number of our youths takes place with consequences far removed from the old despotic everyday norms, in territories that involve unpredictable danger zones, where pleasure and suffering become individual experiences. The chapter shows how electronic music emerges, changing the youth's patterns of taste where a combination that associates spiritual and hedonistic values are possible.

Chapter 8 shows how, once the evangelical faith, on the one hand, and rock on the other, have been widely spread, the possibility of interpretive communities that can enjoy an evangelical rock appears for the first time. The rock band "Rescue" (Rescate) is an update of that possibility, and its impact on the evangelical and rock worlds comprises the bulk of the chapter.

II. The New Conditions of the Musical Experience Among Young Argentine (Musicians and Public)

Here we address various music experiences. On the one hand, there are those that are consolidated as "massive" because they reveal increasing levels of recognition and/or historical predominance in terms of popularity

and critique. On the other, there are those that emerge and tend to reach expectations of relevance and predominance in the music scene based on differences and ruptures, which bring new identity elements to the stage. In this introduction we aim to locate the conditions under which young people appropriate productions that can be considered a part of musical genres. It is these conditions that make it possible to read, transversally to genres, themes common to young people's production and appropriations because they allow movement between genres in a to-and-fro game generating common sensibilities beyond genres and tribes.

When considering the musical taste of youngsters in the popular and middle classes in contemporary Argentina, one must draw some comparisons that turn out to be difficult given the lack of prior detailed studies on the workings of the music scenes discussed here.

However, even if only tentatively, it is possible to analyze certain contrasts between the present and its various pasts. For the purposes of this introduction we will describe three features arising from this contrast: the pluralization of technical access to music, the singularization of the menu available to consumers, and the forms of musical socialization that entail subjects activating new, intense musical forms. To this activation process we will add the effects of what we are considering in section II of this introduction, that is, the monetization of exchanges that creates professional opportunities in the different art worlds associated with music and the cultivation of taste criteria that deconstruct genres (illuminating, parodying, and manipulating their assumptions) and mixes them to degrees unknown as of yet in Argentina.

II.1 The pluralization of access

First of all, we need to point out the pluralization of the means of access to music. We cannot delve into as much detail as this item requires, but the mere summary of what is involved in it will alert the reader to its implications. New technologies multiply and coexist in the same time and space. If people now in their fifties lived a slow, almost excluding transition from vinyl and cassette tapes to compact disks (with the exception of a growing minority that nowadays are taking up vinyl again or those who never abandoned it), young people now have CDs, iPods, cell phones, computers, and TV programming, encompassing much greater technological possibilities than ever; a number of outlets of digital media provide access to music distribution points that have not only multiplied, but also have been redefined in such a way that they allow for customized access and appropriations (aside from CD and vinyl). Thus, record companies, radio stations, and direct

supply by groups on their Web sites multiply what is on offer, but available technologies allow for the playing of specifically one song, one fragment, one phrase, one moment (where such a thing as a "concept record" is a species in extinction and it is substituted by the pleasure of partial, specific listening of a song or even a fragment of a song). We are not even considering in this portrayal that the total musical supply multiplies both through traditional media (to which we should add the increasing supply of live music, strategically developed by many record companies to fight piracy, at least partially) and the fact that the most diverse everyday spaces and objects use music to create an atmosphere (movie theaters, shopping malls, beaches, restaurants, devices, phone calls). While up to the 1980s, music supply consisted basically of live music, records and cassette tapes, radio and environmental music, these media, which have not disappeared, are now accompanied by a new legion of music distribution channels that seems to acknowledge no barriers or untouchable spaces.

Along with this there is a second trait that, like the previous one, is not exclusively local. A series of facts that must be considered as complementary to the observations of Yúdice (2007) indicate that the situations where music is present multiply beyond moments intended for dancing or listening exclusively to one song. According to the author, we live in a time of increased, diversified "aurality." The musical and sound dimension of the everyday experience is ever more present and vital. Shopping, physical activity, work, the manipulation of objects (cell phones, computers, etc.) are, as previously mentioned, accompanied by a dimension of musicality and aurality that also claims and allows for customization. For example, the fact that the sale of ringtones is a thriving business shows the degree to which the technical possibilities for customization accompany the proliferation of situations where music is put to use.

But it is not just that. A third element completes the picture: multiplied, customized uses of the musical menu are established within the framework of widely circulating social knowledge about the identitarian value of music in the social space. For example, an academician who downloads the music commonly played for the entrance of Boca Juniors's (a soccer team associated with the popular sectors of Buenos Aires) fans into a soccer stadium showcases his capacity to burst into the university environment where he works in an unorthodox manner. The young man from the Greater Buenos Aires who takes a cumbia-sounding cell phone to school does the same thing, but he knows he surprises his friends when he plays rock music on it at the street corner. Mobile phones are not the only devices customized through sounds, computers are also fed with selected sounds; the acquired singularity of sounds that identifies the presence of an object is as inevitable as its repertoire is varied. Of course we are not claiming that

all customization is ironic, since some may choose (and many people do) a musical motif that they deem represents them directly.

II.2 More musical activity, new forms of belonging

This is the context of exposure, multiplied and inviting, of an element we must stress. The relationship between young people and music is increasingly active (and takes place through different media than those used by the previous generation). It is no longer just about the traditional activity of learning piano, guitar, accordion, or any other instrument, or the daring launch of garage bands. If rock can be a scholarly subject in secondary schools, as it happens at some private schools attended by middle-class students or, more frequently, an integral part of the informal music program in middle schools, new technologies, along with new musical paradigms, call young people to be an active part of artistic endeavors that make music one of its main axes of articulation. Being a band photographer, sound engineer, driver of the van that transports the musicians, member of the gang putting up posters that announce concerts, instrument and sound equipment carrier, music director, DJ, part of the fan base, dancer, graphic artist, and even singer or musician are some of the positions with which young people may take part in an activity that multiplies the opportunity to exercise and develop different appreciation categories in several real and virtual spaces. This, along with the increasing availability of idle time and the need to generate alternatives to large, expensive, and teeming entertainment centers in urban spaces, makes participating in these projects run parallel to their minimal commercial feasibility. Absolute professionalization is only for a few. In contrast, professionalization of a low temporal intensity but long duration, combined with other sources of income, is extended and allows for the existence of multiple enduring offers and nuclei (this dynamic encompasses everything from cumbia groups in the Greater Buenos Aires to Indie bands proliferating among the middle-class, high-school educated public).

An additional feature is the degree to which the taste of the youth, but not only their taste, is affected by a pronounced and widespread "alterophilia" that conditions the analytical work based on genre, and the consequent alteration on the meaning of an adherence to a genre. Let's see what happens first and then we will discuss the consequences.

Liking a musical "genre" sometimes presumes certain rules of exclusion that many individuals do not obey (or are not even aware of and/or actively relativize), by mixing elements that the orthodoxy allegedly proscribes (even if sometimes when listening to music, those same agents identify themselves with the tenets of the all-powerful orthodoxy).

It may happen that at a rock concert, cumbia is harshly criticized by the musicians and the public accepts those expressions. But this does not mean that the same person who embraces them does not enjoy cumbia at another moment in a different context—with a group of friends from their neighborhood, with their family, at a party, etc.

This phenomenon was even more so when ideologies about musical taste professed by leading musicians, who undoubtedly influence our respondents, emphasized the competencies or the prestige associated with listening to different genres as an attribute of good listeners. Here is an example of this ideology: Leon Gieco, one of the most popular and well-recognized musicians in *rock nacional* (Argentine rock in Spanish) music history, has recorded and performed with *cuarteto* (a form of regional music from the province of Cordoba that mixes Spanish and Italian music with Caribbean rhythms) and cumbia villera musicians, two categories that apparently are or were an anathema to rock.

One could say that Argentine rock had opened up to other music genres in the past, and that at least some of its variants tried fusion since the inception of the movement, especially with elements taken from tango and folklore (cf. Vila 1987, 1989, and 1995). What has changed, however, is what is mixed with rock. For the traditional rocker ideology of "not compromising" with commercial music, recording with singers from folklore or tango avant-garde movements, which are deeply rooted among the middle classes, is not the same as recording with members of the "commercial" currents of any music genre. One thing is that, as happened toward the end of the 1960s, Spinetta called Rodolfo Mederos—a *bandoneón* player who took part in various tango innovation and fusion projects—to record, for example, Almendra's first album (*Almendra* 1969) and Invisible's last one (*El Jardín de los Presentes* 1976), and another example is of Los Auténticos Decadentes to record, in the 1990s, with Alberto Castillo (a tango singer who developed the "fun," "classical," and less intellectual aspects of tango). *In extremis*, along this same line we find the case of Andrés Calamaro recording with a folklore singer who, for most critics, represented the most pop, commercial version of this genre. The *rock nacional* audience of the 1960s and 1970s also followed Joan Manuel Serrat, or later Silvio Rodríguez or Chick Corea, or even "avant-garde" folklore players such as Manolo Juárez or Chango Farías Gómez. This does not mean the same thing as the current listener combining Los Piojos and Shakira in one iPod, for what unified the field of tastes at the beginning of *rock nacional* was the idea of an aesthetic, ethical, and political "commitment" from which, without a doubt, something equivalent to Shakira would be excluded because of its "commercial" nature.

Encounters between cumbia and rock as well as the conformation of varied and not exclusively generic repertoires, find their conditions of possibility in two complementary facts. Over the last twenty years, *rock nacional* has incorporated "Caribbean" (reggae, ska, salsa, cumbia, etc.) rhythms into its traditional musical baggage, thus approaching the musical matrix of local "tropical" rhythms. On the other hand, some "tropical" music genres have been "rockerized" by modifying their instrumentation to make place for typical rock instruments and especially by opening up to social critique, which used to be absent from its repertoire. This does not mean there are no expressions that contrast this declared and practiced pluralism and that especially affect cumbia. While the cumbia-listening public is generally not rock-phobic (although many times they despise electronic music-"club" music as our respondents would say), some people who listen to rock and other genres manifest their exclusive hostility toward cumbia. This generally happens among those who, regardless of their social origin, identify with what is supposed to be good taste among the middle class who only listen to cumbia when in an exotic mood or for parody and degradation.

Finally, it should be noted that, without it being dominating, the idea of composing music with music materials as DJs do, is present in the practice of many young people who access computers to create their personal composition of repertoires. This, along with the increasing ease of access to music production and reproduction devices, as well as the relative profitability semi-professionalization offers to some adolescents, trains the listener's taste in an intrinsic, normatively plural aesthetic activity.

III. Transversal Genres and Themes

All these features of music appropriation relativize the category of musical genre, but do not nullify it. There is an empirical reason behind this: without the implication of their being exclusive, musical genres are still recognized as a system of differences in which the combination of certain characteristics designates a relatively customizable ensemble. On the other hand the relationship between the codes of acceptance of a genre and the everyday practices of music consumption that infringe these codes by undoing the "genre" challenges the notion of genre itself. However, this statement does not deny that there are recurring combinations of practices associated with social positions and transversal genres that shape forms of sensibilities. In this context, our description implies a call to the complexity that must be in the uptake of these recurrences to account for the nuances, displacements and porous borders between "genres" defined by musicians and the possible transformations of these sensibilities.

A necessary task for such purpose is to ascertain through the genres, understood as such, constant themes and motives that are a sign of these times, constant elements that work as a point for decisive and conflictive encounters and that uncover one of the most prominent aspects of the relationship between the young people and the music market.

III.1 Music and religion

In the first place, there is a recurrent spiritual, religious dimension, though not in every genre, since many of them still consider themselves demythologizing, supporters of realistic chronicles or fantastic but emancipated accounts. But in romantic music, in electronic music a spiritual dimension is invoked in music interpretation in very different ways.

Activating a Catholic or Christian memory, creating horizons of personal development and spiritualities allowing for more permissive divinities that are more or less personal, music goes together with the ever-tensional structure of what is usually called secularization. As shown by Giumbelli (2002), religion and secularization are part of a movement in which the intention of creating a frontier between what is religious and what is not is permanently overflowed by "monstrous" transformations of religion that, as repression in Freud, returns with other formats, renewing itself, entwined in different social arrangements.

For the young, religion, the expectation of finding beyond the human and natural realms entities that dialogue with one's own subjective process, is not only found in churches or religious movements.

In order to understand how music and religion are intertwined, we may turn to the ideas posited by Sanchis (1994). Stripping the concept of syncretism from any use associated with a normative vision, from religious orthodoxy, and from any exclusively religious belonging, he states that syncretism is:

> "*A tendência a utilizar relações apreendidas no mundo do outro para ressemantizar o seu próprio universo. Ou ainda o modo pelo qual as sociedades humanas (sociedades, subsociedades, grupos sociais; culturas, subculturas) são levadas a entrar num processo de redefinição de sua própria identidade, quando confrontadas ao sistema simbólico de outra sociedade, seja ela de nível classificatório homólogo ao seu ou não*" [The tendency toward using relations apprehended in someone else's world to give them another semantic meaning in one's own universe. Or even the way in which human societies (societies, sub-societies, social groups; cultures, subcultures) are taken to a process of redefinition of their own identity, when confronted with another society's symbolic system, with a homologous classificatory level or not].
>
> (Sanchis, 1994:7)

Thus, syncretism is a way of characterizing the processes of cultural innovation, development of synthesis, and reconciling symbolism that on the one hand might be religious, and on the other might be musical trends, political ideologies, therapeutic notions, and so on. Through this mechanism positions in any field are renewed in a dialogue in which there are different perspectives: interpellations that activate, recognize, and integrate plural sensibilities of the agents, and at the same time reveal positions that mix and make more complex the elements of that encounter. A given position in a field is pre-formed by a previous one, but, at the same time redefined by a more recent. In the dialogue of symbolic matrices that a subject is at stake through his trajectory, it will become visible the relative efficacy of each of these matrices, and also which matrix will act as a mediator for the other one, and also to what extent these matrices interpenetrate each other. Thus, it is quite possible to find out that a religious position is interpellated by a musical one, which at the same time is redefined by the religious interpellation.

In the case analyzed by Gallo and Semán, one may see how the continuity of evangelic faith may take place by following an evangelic rock band. And in the case analyzed by Gallo, Semán, and Spataro, the structure of certain religious experiences is one of the main elements employed and evoked by musicians such as Arjona. This specific case alerts to the seeming contrast: the religiosity of women who listen to Arjona and find in the Guatemalan singer the most positive and current echo of Catholicism, and who simultaneously are not beset by the perception of his music as a source of affirmation as erotic subjects that this same Catholicism, in its priest-like dimension, represses. However, the contradiction is only apparent, if that priest-like gaze is assumed not as a social description but as a strong claim that is disputed by the actions in which religion is interwoven with other networks of meaning and value.

But, in any case, beyond whether or not there is a contradiction (between religion and sexuality), a particular development combines intense and positively religious, sexual, and musical aspects into a logic that overcomes and criticizes the relation between Catholicism and Arjona. The work on electronic music will illustrate this point. In this case the spirituality mobilized by a musical genre not only matches with the intensification and pluralization of sexualities, but it is reinforced through a feedback between spirituality and sexuality that clearly exceeds heteronormativity (in electronic music, as in any other field of music, gender identities are questioned in their essentiality and performed in its randomness).

In the three cases we have mentioned, the quid is still, in its greater abstraction level, and with a gravitational, direct reference to each music genre, the seldom tackled presence of religion in contemporary Argentine

young music. This presence was even important in the origins of *rock nacional* and was, however, barely addressed as a subject (there were two versions of The Bible in less than five years, and several soloists, more prominently Raúl Porchetto, had a very charged religious message). Today, with the framework of social analysis opening, as well as the variety of wake-up calls made by reality, it is impossible not to consider it and emphasize it.

III.2 Music and sexuality

We also underscore throughout this book the omnipresence of the themes associated with sexuality that, deployed in quite diverse manners, converge in the objectification and redefinition of the repertoires, the gender positions, and the relation between them. In electronic music, at least in some of its privileged scenes (such as the local Indie), the ambiguous possibilities of genders and sexualities are celebrated, something that had never happened in the history of music genres among Argentine youngsters.

In romantic music, as shown by Gallo, Semán, and Spataro, Arjona's fans combine, as we mentioned above, a Christian reception of the Guatemalan singer with the vindication of listening and dancing to his music as a way of becoming aware of sensuality, sexual self-esteem, and the autonomy of erotic play. In cumbia, and sometimes in rock, an explicit, variegated genitality substitutes the metaphoric intention or, more accurately, the euphemistic intention (its classic use in those genres). For an inadvertent interpreter, this would be conclusive evidence of the sociocultural degradation brought about by neoliberalism. Things, however, are much more complex than they seem: if, on the one hand it seems unlikely we are dealing here with humans on the margins of the symbolic function (as would be entailed by this eventual interpretation mixing social charity with the rawest interpretive violence); on the other, we would ignore with such an interpretation the great series of transformations that have made sexuality a plane of activity, discussion, and play among young generations that, through such activity, discussion and play and not a priori, define gender relations and positions. The kind of gender and sexual deployments we are talking about here are not about (especially not just about) "machismo" or "women's objectification," but along with all that (which exists and has existed forever—although perhaps muffled) what we have found in our research is the activation of a field of action and representation that questions the previous places of sexual issues in the social arena. These interpretations should be developed beyond scandal as the advance of a novel agenda among the new generations.

Music and sexuality feed each other back. Music picks up and inscribes a social happening (a sexual revolution seldom mentioned but recently emphasized). This is intensified when the musical calling is organized from this revolution and has a bearing in the plane of sexuality proposing images and models, legitimating attitudes and fantasies, eroding censorship and redefining phobias. From a situation in which rock vindicated post-traditional but naive sexualities, more or less egalitarian, and many times homophobic, to the current circumstances, where the spirit of tolerance has a place next to exposure and sophistication, progress has been made, with an underlying change in generations and sexual questionings.

The variegated sexuality that has replaced the metaphoric intention in cumbia and rock cannot be considered a "degradation" of language to a point at which instinct is expressed nakedly (as if there could be human communication without metaphorical language—something all contemporary interpretations of human behavior reject). On the contrary, what we are dealing with here are the intentions of saying something through sexual provocation that must be interpreted, beyond scandal, as a symptom of something that has been thinly underscored despite the fact of its widespread currency, more so when compared with what occurred in Argentina in the past. It is from this perspective that these hypersexualized forms that repeatedly appear in music may be interpreted as an index of the incorporation of a new sexual agenda.

IV. Music Genres/Social Divisions

In the conditions of pluralization of access to music and musical tastes that we referred to in Section II, the relationships between genres and social actors do not imply a stable or *bi-univoque* correlation of the kind "a genre, a social group, some kinds of conducts," or of the type "disputes between genres 'x' and 'y' redraw the disputes between such and such social groups" (the so-called "homology thesis").

What we want to propose instead is that youth music presents a scheme of social contrapositions through recurring and juxtaposing concerns in which matters of class and ethnicity are disputed and proposed not in terms wider than those of the music genre, but through the genres.

Certain categories, which traverse genre preferences, are maintained. These represent a more significant fact than the relationship between spaces, genres, and social origins. They show that some phenotypical and moral categories serve as a vehicle for tensions within subjects and among groups in which the language of class struggle and racial confrontation comes to the forefront (a key issue in the relation between subjects and

musical scenes and among the latter). Mainly we are talking here of the tension between "*negros,*" "*grasas,*" and "*villeros*" on one side and the middle and upper classes on the other. In each of or within these groups, categories of mutual recrimination such as those shown by Garriga appear: rockers accuse *cumbieros* of having no message, and as Gallo and Semán observe in their research, "Indie" supporters perceive this same boundary regarding "rock *chabón.*" For electronic music fans, those who approach women rudely and disregard the etiquette prevailing in this genre are called "*cabeza*" or "*cabecita negra.*" Conversely, from cumbia to rock, and from both these forms to electronic music, the stigmatizing insult of "fag" can be applied to punish pretensions of aesthetic accentuation and refinement.

Social differences are not only inscribed within categorizations such as the aforementioned, but also in different aesthetic effort assessments. The proclaimed aesthetic emphasis of Indie and electronic music (which does not necessarily entail a greater "objective" aesthetic value) is opposed to declarations of social commitment, confrontation, or the fight against the establishment as articulated in certain branches of rock (although not even aesthetic positions stop having political implications, nor do the proponents of political stances abandon positions with aesthetical values and implications).

So we insist that it is necessary to understand that homologous relationships between music genres and social groups are not clear in general and even less clear given genre porousness. Still, this does not require forgetting that the matter of class and ethnic belonging is a key subject in youth music, both for accusatory strategy development as well as for the articulation of belonging.

Toward the 1980s, after the military rule and its relative social reclusion, *rock nacional* experienced a growth cycle and increased complexity and legitimacy among Argentine youth. It went from having scarce media presence to dominating almost all radio stations. The great Argentine rock bands, together with some of the historically most popular soloists became opinion leaders for the younger generations, and their shows were just as massive as those of great foreign musicians and bands that visited the country, mainly in the 1990s. Many of those Argentine musicians and bands had and still enjoy an important presence in Latin America, like Charly García, Soda Stereo (and subsequently its most prominent member, Gustavo Cerati, as a soloist), Los Fabulosos Cadillacs, etc. During that period, rock music developed internal differences that became appropriate for the most diverse tastes, in particular for popular sectors that had traditionally followed other genres (not counting exceptions such as hard rock, which has been followed by popular class youngsters from the beginnings of the movement in the 1960s). One of these sub-genres, described as

"rock *chabón*" (a more understandable name for it, albeit less accurate, is "barrio rock"), articulated a central change in the social dynamics of rock as a musical genre: not only did rock start to be followed by other audiences, but also the rise of small bands that performed in less public and commercial venues allowed rock to gain not only new ears, but also new performers. Hence, rock prevailed among the middle classes and expanded to the popular classes for almost 20 years. During this entire period, music in English, particularly disco, lost ground despite having been promoted in the mass media during the dictatorship (and having played the part of an antagonist to rock in a regime in which dancing, disco music, and superficiality were opposed to rock, messages, and depth). Toward the 2000s, "barrio" variants of rock called upon the fervor of the middle and popular classes within a context of questioning the social consequences of the sociopolitical transformation of the 1990s: young people who were going through a period of social exclusion and the destruction of their parents' progress expectations, protested through rock music. But this situation changed at the beginning of the 2000s, thanks to a combination of factors. The most accomplished rock musicians questioned these popular (quasi-plebeian) variants, which undermined their prominence in aesthetic terms: audiences had renewed and were looking for other things; and the Cromagnon tragedy (the club where a fire killed 194 youngsters during a Callejeros concert, a band associated with the popularization of rock during the 1990s) came to overshadow this facet of rock as other musical trends that had been maturing blossomed and reached critical mass in the public scene. Since this scene was structurally pluralized as a result of what we mentioned at the beginning of this introduction (the effects of fragmentation, activation, and individualization afforded by new technologies), substitutes in the field of rock music did not reach the same magnitude of popularity and thus did not succeed rock *chabón* as musical movements of such encompassing and lasting influence, but rather as a grouping of movements that carried youth preferences in diverse ways (new technologies, supply pluralization, and greater musicalization of leisure spaces generated multiple options, many of them very short-lived). Among these general displacements of the music scene, it is worth noting the following.

On one hand, electronic music, which in the 1990s was the heritage of those who distanced themselves from the dominance of *rock nacional* and redeemed the most powerful and characteristic remains of disco culture (innovation, long parties, designer drugs) began to be ever more widely publicized. Creamfield parties, previously only for those in the know, became hypermassive and started allowing the participation of youngsters from popular neighborhoods, to the point that their original audience began looking for alternative places to differentiate themselves from the latter.

On the other hand, the Indie phenomenon proliferated within the middle class in bands of different sizes, between small and mid-sized, which first captivated the college student audience and then projected itself into the middle-class mass. The Indie phenomenon is hence anchored by emphasizing aesthetics over content, celebrating multiple sexual options, distancing itself from rock's "old dinosaurs," not worrying about orthodoxies and admitting poetry, design, and diverse music genres, including DJ performances, in their shows.

In this context, social differences are mainly correlated with the sociospatial distribution of their predominances. On one side, differences between genres are spatialized in such a way that cumbia dominates the Buenos Aires metropolitan area, while electronic music prevails over the capital and the northern metro area, and Indie reigns in the capital as well, in areas with college audiences.

This is all combined with a phenomenon with a different trajectory: subjects from different social paths may meet at some musical scenes: youngsters are decreasingly rockers, consumers of electronic music, or cumbia fans exclusively. The codes of these scenes and others are ever more complex, more capable of taking other genres into account, but at the same time, increasingly subject to relativization by users who know them to perfection and activate them situationally without being taken in a definite manner by any scene. They dance at the Creamfields, slam to the beat of Indio Solari (a very famous *rock nacional* interpreter), and if their family invites them to a dance, they sway to tropical rhythms. This does not mean everything is possible: for example, it would be difficult for a young person such as the ones we characterize in this hypothesis to feel attracted to groups with a sexually ambiguous aesthetic or with poetic pretensions such as those driving Indie music groups.

Notes

1. It is really curious that even though the majority of studies on music and youth assume that "youth" is a social construction, they only deal with human subjects that range from 14 to 30 years old. In order to question this "a priori" we present in this volume an article on the Arjona's fan club, a club in which young and not-so-young people congregate around a unique and shared faith, not fragmented by any age line.
2. This way of conceiving syncretism as a symbolic process and its form very much coincides with the conception that is at the core of all research in this book: the fact that the significance music acquires in society may be understood as the effect of a game between discourses and narratives (Vila 1996).

2

Ritual Transgression and Grotesque Realism in 1990s Rock Music: An Ethnographer among the *Bersuit*

Silvia Citro

In 1990 I sang rock n' roll
My color was underground
Metaphors are no good to a dying nation
Those crazies scream like I'm screaming now:
Sons of a bitch! Sons of a bitch!, as I can do nothing, I curse . . .
Bersuit Vergarabat, *Como nada puedo hacer*
(CD *Bersuit Vergarabat y punto*, 1992)

> Escaping society a little rocks. (. . .) And people also come to have a good time, you don't pay to feel in the pits, and you somehow support what you believe. Normally, if you come to a band concert you've listened to it before. If you have listened to it, you have chosen, you come and you are a fan. And when you are here, you know the lyrics, you know what they are expressing and you back that them, and on top you have fun. This is the good thing that the concert has, beyond all the spotlights.
>
> *Fernando, Bersuit fan, 16 (1996)*

> Rock declared youth's rejection of the boredom, surveillance, control and normalcy of the straight world as their own imagined future. Its politics consisted of its constant effort to differentiate itself from that other world, the normal, which was defined, not solely by a chronology of age but by a phenomenology of boredom (. . .). Rock constituted itself

> as a space of 'magical transformation' in the face of youth's own necessary transformation into its own other, adulthood. Youth celebrated its own impossibility in rock. (. . .) the register of that difference was the body and its politics was fun. (. . .) The body of youth in rock was always a body on display, to others and itself, as the mark of a celebration of energy and fun.
>
> *Lawrence Grossberg, We gotta get out of this place (1992: 180–181)*

Introduction

I did my first ethnographic research with the rock band Bersuit Vergarabat, between 1995 and 1997, in Buenos Aires. At that time, Bersuit was a new band still in the underground rock circuit composed of male musicians in their thirties. Most of their fans were 15 to 25 years old, and mostly middle-class males heading toward poverty because of the consequences of neoliberal economic policies. Thus the "underground color" mentioned in the song quoted in the epigraph, song that also talks about "keen on marginality," and "representing just a few."

In those days Argentina was still a young democracy—just 11 years after the end of the dictatorship—where the middle class was beginning to clash with the policies of the second administration of President Carlos Menem and his crass neoliberalism, expressed, among other things, in the drastic privatization of state-owned companies and the reduction of public expenditure, as well as a foreign policy described by a peculiar expression of the Foreign Minister who, blending sex and politics, promoted the "carnal relations" with the United States under the George H. W. Bush government. Also at that time there was manifestation of indignation for the pardons to those responsible for the crimes of the military dictatorship—the same ones who are currently on trial under a very different Peronist government.

A sharp criticism of the policies of the so-called Menemism was one of the main characteristics of the Bersuit production in those years. That is why they say "metaphors are no good to a dying nation" in the song partially quoted in the epigraph that opens this chapter, and they often turned to explicit disapproval by calling the members of the establishment "sons of a bitch." But in the admission that "as I can do nothing, I curse" we can see the limits and "resignation" that with which youth cried out and "celebrated" in rock music that Grossberg pointed out. That is also what Fernando—the young Bersuit fan—seemed to acknowledge when he told me that the experience he encountered in rock music to "support" his "beliefs" and also "enjoy" and "have fun," allowed him to "escape *a little,*" at least, "from society." And if, as Grossberg claims, the "register of that

difference" and partial transgression of the "normal" or hegemonic adult world was the body, and fun its policies, one of the challenges here is to try to unveil what bodies and what policies of fun have been promoted by rock culture across different countries and times through its mutations, metamorphosis, and intermingling with local cultures and histories.

The hypothesis underlying this chapter is that in the Bersuit concerts, a peculiar sexed body quite similar to the way the body was deployed in the esthetics of the popular festivals Bajtín (1987 [1930]) called "grotesque realism" became one of the prevalent means to epitomize the difference and transgressions of both the rules of bourgeois morals of the adult world and the neoliberal policies of the 1990s. Although several authors have analyzed the role of the grotesque in central countries (Kohl 1993; Halnon 2004, 2006), my point here is that in the case of Bersuit and their fans, this style took distinctive elements from the local culture and used them in their confrontation with the establishment by means of a provocative language of gender and sex.

Transgression is a characteristic component of festive rituals with a two-fold dimension. On the one hand, it can be an intersubjective experience lived through the staging of drama and/or aesthetic languages removed from everyday routines, or focused on some of these usual behaviors but enhancing or blowing them up to trigger high emotional states. Such are the meanings derived from Durkheim's (1968: 391) classical definition of ritual "states of effervescence," or Freud's (1992: 587) of "instinct liberation" favored by festivities, allowing the "fulfillment" of that which is normally forbidden. More recently, Turner (1989, 1992) also emphasized the antistructural dimensions of *liminality* and *communitas,* observable both in "social performances" (including social dramas) and "cultural performances" (including esthetic or stage dramas)—an example of which is the rock scene. On the other hand, Bajtín's works, and later Stallybrass & White's (1986) show how many of these dramatized transgressions occurring at rituals and festivals may operate as instances of resistance to hegemonic power when invested with political content. This is what took place at the Bersuit performances of the 90s, according to the hypothesis I try to prove here.

Before the analysis, I want to make a few comments on the research process for this work. By the mid-90s I was very close to the subjects of my ethnography—I was myself a young ethnographer educated at a public university decidedly anti-Menemist and with a long left wing tradition, and was pursuing my own artistic practice. In fact, I met the "Bersuit guys" at an improvisation and musical composition workshop during their early days when only some 50 people attended their performances. A couple of years later that number had grown to 300, and I took part—as

a dancer—in some of their concerts. Thus, carrying out ethnography of a new band with whom I had bonded, made friends, and even shared a common aesthetic view allowed for a particularly close proximity to the musicians and their fans, and the interviews were carried out during concerts and other social occasions like birthday parties and gatherings.

Ten years later, that situation had changed substantially. In 2007, Bersuit had been on tour through several Latin American countries, Spain, and the United States. They had released nine albums, had won several Platinum records, and a national award for Best Band of the Year, and they held a concert at one of the country's largest stadiums attended by 66,000 people. By then I was already a teacher at my university, and had also began to publish my work abroad, and I attended that huge concert merely as a part of the audience. Meeting the "Bersuit guys" backstage after the concert as we used to, was not as easy then. I would say I had *grown* just as the Bersuit had. Therefore, revisiting those experiences and times at the request of the editors of this book also involved self-reflection of my own passage from youth to adulthood—not only in relation to my professional practice but also in a wider existential way. And from this reviewing process sprang a twofold intention: the *wish* to continue *embodying* (even if it is only in this *other* body of reflexive writing) the Utopian youthful wish to "escape society a little" that rock 'n' roll and other forms of artistic imagination still open to us; and on the other hand the *need* to reexamine what I hope are now more mature and perceptive senses of how those drives to transgression still contained subtle traces of power and dominant relations—expressed, in this case, in a gender key. From that perhaps dialectic tension between the old *wish* and the fresh *need* was born this consideration of my ethnographic practice with the Bersuit and their fans in the conflictive 1990s.

Bersuit in the 1990s: The Eruption of a Peculiar Grotesque Realism

Bersuit began to play in 1989, and it was one of several bands the local rock music critics called "the '90s renovation" because they introduced fresh aesthetic forms. Bersuit and other bands like Divididos, Las Pelotas, Los Piojos, Los Caballeros de la Quema, or La Renga were considered somehow to be the heirs to seminal groups like Sumo and Los Redonditos de Ricota, and several media at the time associated their styles with "popular," "transgression," and "social criticism" ones.

As a whole, the Bersuit musical production cannot be identified with any specific rock genre, as they used bits of rap, ska, heavy metal, or symphonic rock in their work. There are also abundant references to musical genres already part of the local rock compositions like folk,

"Andean music," or tango; besides instrumental compositions that the band members identified as "conceptual" and generally "unclassifiable," though they admit links to free jazz. However, one of the distinctive traits of the Bersuit sets—and some other bands born in the 90s—is the inclusion of genres up to then alien to rock, like dance rhythms of Afro-Latin American musical traditions: *candombe* and *murga* (carnival genres from the Rio de La Plata region), and cumbia. The Bersuit went even farther, using *flamenco*, Mexican folk, or a regional genre called *cuarteto*. The trend was a growing musical eclecticism through the "borrowing" from these other genres that always sprang from what the band members called "rock sound." They are musical quotations (mostly melodies and rhythms, and sometimes formal structures) that, when played with the basic rock instruments—the combo of "drums, guitar and bass" that define its timbric and rhythmic identity—and processed through the amplifiers, "sound like rock 'n' roll." This interpretation by the band members seems to confirm in part Frith's (1999:19) claim that in later years "rock describes not as much a musical (or contents) style as an auditory/aural set of values." To the basic set of instruments, Bersuit often adds keyboards and, on occasion, guest musicians from other genres, like percussion groups from *candombe* and *murga*, or Andean *charango* players.

The diversity and musical innovation of Bersuit, and in some cases, their lyrics, set them apart from what was called "rock *chabón,*" also a 1990s expression characterized by the "stone" style (that is, influenced by the Rolling Stones) and, according to some critics, by the "simplicity" and "shallowness" of its music and lyrics. There are, however, some Bersuit traits that are close to this latter local rock variety—references to soccer, the hood, parties, and the "*bardo,*"[1] both in the contents of some of the lyrics and practices during concert performance.

The word "*bardo*" describes situations that favor provocation or transgression of accepted norms, like scenes of "partying, madness and letting go of control." It also refers to fights, violent conflict, or rioting. According to a Bersuit fan, *bardo* was "the logical rebellion intrinsic to rock, the liberation or channeling through that art." As for the association with soccer, it is the subject of some of the lyrics, and as we shall see, the audience performances during concerts were also very similar to the behavior of soccer fans during matches.

In sum, we could say that there was deliberate eclecticism on the Bersuit musical aesthetics, continuing with, but also breaking the parameters of previous traditions in local rock music by their ever more prominent use of new and provocative borrowings from other genres. An interesting illustration of this is the impact on the mass media in 1999 when the band

singer declared "*cumbia* rocks," in answer to the claim of another rock singer (Cristian Aldana, from the band *Otro Yo*) who had said, "*cumbia* sucks." As we shall see, these opposing aesthetic views express wider ideological values that influence the musical genres. Such is the case of the association of cumbia to the lower popular classes, and especially since the emergence of a local expression called *cumbia villera,*[2] to criminality; and even the persistence of a historical pattern of the Argentine identitarian makeup that privileged European cultural traits, and despised and rejected those of African or indigenous origins.

By the time I was conducting my fieldwork, the band's repertoire included songs from their first two albums—*Bersuit Vergarabat y punto* (1992) and *Asquerosa alegría* (1993). In those days they also presented a third one—*Don Leopardo* (1996)—and started playing some compositions from their next album, *Libertinaje* (1998). I will focus mainly on some elements from their third and fourth albums and the musicians' opinions of their work. In 1996, a well-known rock 'n' roll radio station announced the soon-to-come *Don Leopardo* as "madness, magic and commitment." These terms synthesize the band's style at the time—the idea of "commitment" associated with the political affiliation its members hold to date, while "madness" and "magic" are their definition of *bardo*. In the interviews and talks I had with *Pelado* (Bald) Gustavo Cordera—the band's singer—and Juan Subirá—keyboard player and composer,[3] they mentioned time and time again the idea of political commitment expressed through rock music:

> Pelado: I think music must have poetry, but within a social frame (. . .), we want to vindicate the combative spirit of the '70s, the wonderful break through of the pioneer bands. Because rock music works, exists, but when it becomes just a pastime it turns into something dead.

This identification places the band on a continuous line with the earlier attempts of political and cultural resistance that Argentine rock music expressed, particularly under the most recent military dictatorships (Vila, 1985, 1987). Songs like *Homenaje a los locos del Borda* (*Bersuit Vergarabat y punto*), *Encapuchados o Despedida Cruel* (*Don Leopardo*), or *Vuelos* (*Libertinaje*) are instances of the effort to blend poetry and social commitment. Other songs, instead, bring forth a direct opposition to the military, the police, and the Menem administration—*Como nada puedo hacer* (*Bersuit Vergarabat y punto*) or *Fuera de Acá* (*Asquerosa alegría*)—and the trend becomes clearer in their album *Libertinaje,* with *Sr. Cobranza* (a rap composition by "Las Manos de Filippi" popularized by Bersuit), *Se Viene,* and *C.S.M.*

As for the *bardo* and the "madness," they are linked to the initial days of the band in the early 1990s and the political atmosphere characterized by Pelado as the "end of the Alfonsín spring." The phrase refers to the disappointment and skepticism that followed the initial enthusiasm triggered by the return of a democratic regime in 1983, with the Raúl Alfonsín administration. The time of the *bardo*, therefore, spanned the decline of certain progressive utopias (symbolized by the conclusion of the trials of the Junta members responsible for the disappearances during the military dictatorship) and the beginnings of the neoliberal period of Carlos Menem:

> Pelado: When we started in '89, (. . .) we were born when this idea [*bardo*] was the thing. The whole Alfonsín spring was coming to an end, the '80s were dying out saying OK, now we're free, the culprits are in prison, no more *desaparecidos*, now we can be happy, let's dance, groom ourselves, wear nice clothes and sing seduction as the supreme poetic form. So, the disillusionment and the shattering of that Alfonsín spring made room for new proposals in the '90s, somehow connected by a thread with those of the '70s, but with some built-in repression within the minds of the rock musicians, because the military did such a ruthless job spreading dread, didn't they? So there was a twofold task. Not just to shatter the world's structures, but to break apart the structures within yourself, so to speak. Take yourself apart, punish and beat yourself down, a smashing job, and that's where the whole business of the *bardo* comes from, if you wish (. . .). The *bardo* blooming in the '90s was majestic. We were a horde of people trying to push the boundaries of what was allowed, fucking in the johns, doing coke [cocaine] everywhere, drinking to stupor. The body was a collective asset.

In the Pelado's stories, the *bardo* assumes a double dimension—social and individual—as a means to try and break the structures of the inner and outer worlds. Through actions and states involving mainly one's own body—like sex and consumption of alcohol and drugs—these young people seemed to break free from the repression and fear instated by the military dictatorship, together with a certain skepticism or political disappointment in the democratic administration that followed. *Don Leopardo*, in particular, condenses some of these *bardo* meanings, giving them a peculiar mythic and religious sense. What follows are some fragments of this character's story written by Juan, published with the surrealistic graphic design of the CD:

> *Don Leopardo* is the son of the chief of a tribe from the Mar del Plata region (. . .), who turned out to be so unruly, so out of bounds that he took a stand against his own death (. . .). His spirit roams about and can take over one or many heads at a time. He goes into the organisms that invoke him through

> weakness, vices, sleeplessness and resentment. He creeps into the hypothalamus and from there rules over senses and acts.

The text mentions a number of "witnesses" who explain *Don Leopardo*'s "spirit," which almost always manifests itself in the shape of an animal. The stories take place at parties and "joints" where *Don Leopardo* attempts to sexually possess women, defy the police, and even confront God. The first six songs in the album speak of these topics, with ironic hints to drugs (*Bolivian Surf*), the military (*Bolero militar*), death (*Cajón 5 estrellas*), and God (*Cielo Trucho*), always laced with sexual innuendos and musical quotes enhancing their ironic character—like their use of a "bolero" or a Mariachis style of Mexican folk. In *Cielo Trucho*, for instance, *Don Leopardo* sings to God: ". . . open up the *cantos* ["chants," but also "buttocks" in Argentine argot] of Heaven your ass will be so sore. God chickened out, the sun will soon come out, if it doesn't I'll get it out . . ." And in their performances, Pelado held his genitals and sang the final line, "If thou wisheth come down and take it." This song introduces a narrative turn in the plot of the story, as God punishes *Don Leopardo*'s defiance with a wealth of goods he won't be able to enjoy, since life in Heaven is immaterial (*Abundancia* and *Ojo por ojo*), which leads him to the madness and suicide hinted at in *Croata* or *La Mujer perfecta*—based mostly on improvisation. My intervention as a dance performer in the Bersuit concerts was precisely in these songs, whose music and lyrics were more experimental. The last six songs were composed mainly in minor chords with lyrics filled with images of loneliness and bewilderment (*Madrugón de Penas*, *Encapuchados, or Despedida Cruel*), metaphors of drug trips gone wrong (*Querubín*), and a final reference to death in *Réquiem*.

For some of the band members, *Don Leopardo* is much more than fiction. They talk of the "Leopardine state" in terms of a shared experience that began in a camping outing in Mar del Plata that prompted most of the songs and texts included in the album. Thus, *Don Leopardo* symbolizes a free-for-all area where body practices play a relevant role through sex, dance, intake of stimulants, and it also shows the limits of that freedom with the looming presence of death. In my opinion this work is a metaphor of that *bardo* of the 1990s and the critical peak it reached at a time when Pelado and other band members were trying, in their own words, to "recover" from the debauchery and return to the studio, for it was more than three years since their last album:

> Pelado: . . . if we didn't realize that we were a step away from death, that the train had crashed against a giant wall and that from our smashed heads against that wall there was no way back. (. . .) Now we have to kind of cover

> up that blunder and try to get back all that wasted energy, well used up, but get it back because there was nothing left.

In the local history of rock music, the figure of another bald singer—Pelado Luca Prodan—leader of Sumo who died at 34 in 1987, apparently due to cirrhosis of the liver, looms large as to the tragic consequences of the *bardo* at the time. In fact, one of the songs in *Don Leopardo* (*En trance*), included in that third section expressing bewilderment, remembers him—in both, his band's musical style and in the lyrics: "Luca didn't die, Luca didn't die, the one who died was me." In that way, the *bardo* of the late 80s and early 90s, summarized with a local color the mythic "sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll" of the American rock scene, including the tragic consequences of the excesses in transgression that killed several of their members.

So, until the late 1990s, most of the Bersuit songs dealt with the above mentioned topics: *bardo* and partying with a parodic coloring filled with sexual innuendo, a tragic and critical view of that *bardo*—especially in *Don Leopardo*—social criticism, and political commitment. Sometimes these topics were put apart from each other in different songs, but more often than not, political criticism and sexual parody were two sides of the same coin of transgression. For instance in *Bolero militar*—an ironic look taken of a gay relationship between two military men—or of that God who, in *Cielo Trucho,* is threatened with rape. In previous works (Citro 1997, 2000a), I have analyzed how these sexualized references popped up in different Bersuit lyrics and performances and were used to turn around the power symbols associated with the military, the police, and the government. And that is why, as I said before, "grotesque realism" is one of the distinctive traits of the band. Quoting Bajtín, "exaggeration, hyperbole, profusion, excess are the most distinctive characteristic signs of the grotesque style" (1987 [1930]: 273). But what is peculiar to carnivals is that, through this style there were "inversions of symbols, thoughts and crucial images of the mainstream culture" by means of the "crass material and corporeal" (ibid., 49), that is, everything related to the "lower part of the body, belly and genitals, and therefore, also acts like intercourse, pregnancy, birth, food intake and satisfaction of natural needs" (ibid., 26). Thus "grotesque realism" has been the aesthetic language of choice in the popular expressions of resistance to the hegemonizing attempts of the powers that be.

I will proceed now to analyze two songs that are good instances of these aesthetic traits. At their concerts in 1997, the band began to play a song known then as *Comando Culomandril* whose title changed when recorded as part of the *Libertinaje* album to *C.S.M.*, an acronym of the name of President Carlos Saúl Menem. The lyrics refer to the power relations

between dominators and dominees, using the metaphor of acts of anal sex practiced by that Commando:

> Baboon Ass Commando, first aid kit handy, prepare the gauze and lower your pants, Even if you try to flee, we'll break it apart. Baboon Ass Commando, guarantees your future, deflowering wholesale, Enjoying your pain, breaking ass non stop we'll keep on top. (. . .)

The enunciation of the lyrics imitates the diacritical traits of the lowest popular speech[4], and the music genre is also typical of those classes, since, according to the authors "it's a kind of *cumbia litoraleña.*" Moreover, anal sex as an expression of power and violence over the other, particularly between men, is a common figure of speech among soccer fans and has also echoes of certain prison practices, like the raping of those guilty of rape. An interesting transformation was that at the concerts, the line "breaking ass non stop we'll *keep* on top" gradually changed to "breaking ass non stop we'll *get* on top," and through this imaginary take over of power, young males from the public jumped on stage and sang along with Pelado, dancing with their bottoms bared, imitating the moves of penetration or being penetrated.

Changing the lyrics and this performance synthesize the typical technique of "grotesque realism"—to invert the symbols of power by means of the "crass material and corporeal." In this case, the unchecked exercise of presidential power is shown as active sexuality engaged in the "wholesale" "deflowering" of his victims. That traumatic experience of domination–violation, gets turned around here through hyperbole and humor, characteristic elements of the grotesque. This kind of inverted roles allows for a imaginary change in the relative positions of the agents: it is now the dominees (band and audience) who take power over, cheerfully using the same "weapons" that had been trained on them, and this operation takes place to the tunes of cumbia, the musical language of the popular sector considered by other musicians—to continue with the physiological associations—just "crap," while for Bersuit "*cumbia* rocks."

It should also be noted that power relations expressed by means of anal sex are part of a characteristic pattern in certain expressions of popular culture, where the one being penetrated—assimilated to a passive subject position—is linked to the feminine or to a feminized maleness (such as applied to homosexual males, popularly called *putos*[5] in Argentina). The above mentioned expression advanced by the Menemist Foreign Minister about Argentina having "carnal relations with the U.S." (which originally meant having the kind of close relationships family members have), was re-interpreted on this sexual key: if we have carnal relations with the

powerful (U.S.), surely Argentina would occupy the passive position of dominee in anal sex.

Let us take a look at how this gender/sexual symbolism, which invokes in a grotesque way a hierarchical and homophobic heterosexual pattern, became an ever more present feature in later Bersuit productions. Their seventh album (2004), for instance, was called *La Argentinidad al palo*, a popular turn of speech alluding to male erection. The cover illustration shows the band members dressed as sailors, standing one behind the other, with large bulges in their crotch exaggerating their genitals. The song of the same name, used in the commercial promotion, parodies everything that is supposed to make Argentines great and important, reproducing a number of phrases, voiced as headlines related to political and economic events in recent Argentine history followed by a number of gross sexual expressions ("You want to fuck me with that dead prick? Mine is much larger than yours! Jerks like you I fuck on my feet"). It ends by saying that Argentines "can be the best, or also the worst just as easily." The music of this song uses rhythmic passages from *malambo*, the only solo male folk dance, where the *gaucho*—a controversial historical character, symbol of maleness, bravery, and physical stamina—shows his "dexterity" in intricate footwork. Finally, their next album is called *Testosterona* (2005) and the cover image strongly suggests male genitalia.

Back to the concerts in the 90s, just as the male "ass" performed a takeover of power in *Comando Culomandril*, some female agency appeared in another song, *Hociquito de ratón*. The lyrics referred to women's breasts with an analogy to mice snouts,[6] while the musical style was traditional rock 'n' roll. During the concerts, Pelado always invited women from the audience on stage, and at his and the audience's request, they took off their T-shirts and bras while singing and dancing, while the audience accompanied with raised arms, opening and closing their hands as though grabbing their breast. The lyrics say:

> An army of boobs attacks the nation, We see mice snouts from a distance,
> Bathed in love with their sweet milk.

"Boobs" seem to condense here some of the key female symbols in the collective imagination: the traditional view of a nurturing and loving motherhood ("Bathed in love with their sweet milk"); female seduction expressed in the bare breasted rock dance defying "moralistic censorship," as well as the threat perceived by males in women's agency—the image of "an army of boobs" attacking the nation while helpless males (their "cigarettes and pants fall down") "run."

Both the "baboon ass-breaking commando" and the "armies of boobs"—hyperbolic images of male and female sexuality—also allude to two key figures of recent Argentine political history that spread fear and terror in the years of the dictatorship: the "army" and the "commandos" in charge of disappearing people. These images confirm that, as Bajtín (1987: 89) claimed, in popular celebrations "fear and lies vanished at the triumph of the body material" because "humor," "obscenity," and "parody and jeering imitations" are means to overcome the fear inspired by "oppressive and limiting powers."

We may then conclude that, in the case of Bersuit, the aesthetics of the grotesque became the means to try and "defeat with laughter" some of the fears left over by the dictatorship and Menemist administration, as well as some of the tragic consequences that excesses in transgression or *bardo* behaviors might have. In the next part I analyze how these esthetic practices could also be observed in the performances by the audience, which turned the concerts into festive rituals staging and legitimating these political and subjective transgressions.

The Concert as a Ritual of Transgression

> Going to a Bersuit concert is like a lifeline. It's not just that I dig the lyrics or the music, it's more like a ritual around the music. Going to a Bersuit concert has to do with my history, meeting my friends, hear what I myself think said in that special way Pelado has.
>
> *Interview to Susanita, Bersuit fan, 19 (1996)*

> Without ritual there is no going into the Leopardine state. You have to go through a number of preset steps which include reef, alcohol, bad-mouthing the police and the government, stand together with all the people of your species, singing before a concert and also play.
>
> *Interview to Pelado, Bersuit singer (1996)*

As we can see in the epigraphs, both the band and the audience experienced the concerts as a festive ritual, for it involved getting through a "number of preset steps" leading to a "special state" removed from everyday life: either the "Leopardine state" in the band's myth or that "lifeline" that got the young people in touch with their own history and thoughts allowing them to "escape society a little." In previous works (1997, 2000a), I have analyzed in detail how the band and audience practices followed a sequence, organization of space, distribution of roles and symbols repeated at each concert, imbued of the dramatic atmosphere characteristic of all ritual performances.

Early on, Bajtín had pointed out that popular festivities are very much like a theater performance because of their "sensual and concrete" character and a "powerful playing component," though they are also different because they "ignore any distinction between actors and audience (. . .), spectators do not attend the carnival, they live it" (1987[1930]: 12). I think these traits of popular celebrations are also present in rock concerts, since the different ways in which the audience participates turn them into actors of the whole performance. Although no one can deny these concerts are "shows"—you pay a ticket to listen to a band that is offering an artistic product, advertised through the media—the audience has not come just to watch and listen, but to sing and dance along with those on stage. Some of these participation acts are similar to those of other popular music concerts—singing along, waving or gesturing, or dancing accompanying the music. At the Bersuit concerts, two types of *pogo* could be observed. The first kind involves the participation of young males only, which is closer to the type produced in the punk medium. It is practiced in groups that form a circle in the area just off the stage, opening a clearing in the crowd. Then they run toward the center or around the circle, leaping and bumping violently into each other. Despite the powerful clash of bodies, most *pogueros*[7] do not consider it violent, but rather claim it is imbued with "good vibes," since "normally you don't fight anybody" and "if you fall, they pick you up," though they also mention occasional excesses that may lead to violence. The other type of *pogo*, more massive, involves the entire central area of the audience and includes some females. Jumping to the rhythm of the music leads to cushioned contacts between the bodies. As the people stand very close together, all possible movements are in block, left and right. At times, this practice has close resemblances to the jumping and movements of the soccer fans. Sometimes, contact between bodies results from arm waving and shaking outward, in a type of movement similar to a local carnival dancing (*murga*).

As I said before, a peculiar new element in the rock music of the 90s was the strong resemblance to soccer fan groups. Their influence can be observed not only in this generalized practice of *pogo*, but also in the practice of making and hanging homemade banners, identifying the neighborhood and soccer club affiliation of the fans with lines from the band's lyrics.[8] Similarly, they wear the same kind of clothes worn to attend soccer matches: jeans, trainers, and T-shirts—sometimes with legends and rock band images—or even soccer shirts. This kind of style seemed particularly striking in women who, for the most part, did not differentiate themselves from the men either in attire or in gestures and movements. This construction of their body image denoted a style the young people themselves

associated with a certain "unconcern," as opposed to the fashion of other young groups they derogatorily termed *conchetos* —whose main trait is to be "concerned" about clothes and appearances and flaunt certain brands or fashion fads. Until the 1980s, the Argentine rock slang for those representing the stereotype of the wealthier class was *cheto*. A later addition of the prefix *con* gave the term a close association with the Argentine equivalent of "cunt" (*concha),* and, thereby, also to the insult derived from it: *conchudo*. Thus, this disqualifying feminization of the other is further evidence of another appropriation of this trait of soccer popular cultures: the use of sexual language to express power relations, and more particularly, as is the case here, class relations.

Another typical audience performance is the singing of anonymous collective slogans and chants interspersed with the band's sets. Many of them belong to a common repertory shared by the rock scene, political rallies, and soccer fan groups, with occasional changes in the lyrics. Here is an example that once again exhibits grotesque realism traits:

> Menem, Menem, motherfucker, we starve to death, we're beaten by the cops, you hit on the old folks, you're a bastard, you're a bastard.

Following a rock band, a soccer team, and belonging to a certain neighborhood were closely associated identitarian marks among these young people, which conformed a mesh of symbols that allowed them to identify and build strong bonds based on affection. Attending a concert or a soccer match, hanging with your 'hood friends to drink or smoke are "spare time" activities shared with peers, and thus young people get away from spaces and routines controlled by the adult world (like home and school). All these practices are part of the attempts to transgress controlled spaces and attain some autonomy.

So, in the concerts the audience creates its own performance with distinctive aesthetics, parallel but connected to what is going on onstage, and even sometimes sharing the stage, as described in the scene of half-naked bodies. It should be noted that in my talks with the fans, they often claimed that attending a music show in itself was not the thing, but rather all that they were going "to do" there, that "ritual" built around the music, as Susanita explained. Also, when asked why they fancied Bersuit, the first significant utterance was "feeling":

> *Poguero* A: I dig them, see? What Pelado does on stage gets through to you. I feel it, even if one day they come up with some bullshit . . .
> *Poguero* B: Now then, you don't have to dig just about anything. What? The guy tells you to go hang yourself and you'll do it? No, that's crap, man.

Going to the concerts and "follow the band wherever" is for many youths a way to uphold them, just like soccer supporters do with their teams. Even *pogo* practices are explained that way:

> *Poguero* C: *Pogo* is a way to show the band support . . .
> *Poguero* D: Right, put some balls from down here, so they feel great up there . . .
> *Poguero* C: It's not the same . . . I play the bass in a band, and it's not the same to come out and play for a dead audience, all quiet, than to rock for a jumping, cheering audience. That rocks . . .

We see here one of the characteristics of every ritual participation: to have a role to play in the event, a function not limited to mere appreciation, but much needed to achieve efficacy. In other works (1997, 1998) I have analyzed how important participation is for young people, and how certain aesthetic choices meant to somehow discourage that participation and "communication" between a band and its fans introduced tensions and ambiguities. One instance of this was the first Bersuit concert in 1996, when they presented *Don Leopardo* with some stage innovations: actors and dancers performing on stage and among the audience, sculptures and paintings on the sets and, in addition, they changed their usual pajamas for tunics and face tattoos to invoke the mythical and religious character *Don Leopardo* has for them. The audience held back in expectation, did not always sing along, and *pogo* came through in a few songs. In the second part of the concert, though, when the band played their most popular hits wearing their usual pajamas, some of the young men jumped on stage, all songs were accompanied, and there was plenty of *pogo*. On the way out, one of the fans told me: "I liked this concert, it was fine to have the show first and then the other thing . . ." All in all, the fans had positive views of these novelties—the "show"—but set them apart from "the other thing," their own thing, what they "did" more than "saw" during the concert. Another concert attendant remarked on the difference—"a better show"—but did not much approve of the "changes" like the use of fences between the stage and the audience, the "normal" duration compared with previous concerts that lasted longer, less "communication" between the singer and the audience, or the fact that more "impromptu" actions used to happen apart from the show:

> *Poguero* A: The guy [*meaning Pelado*] used to communicate a lot more with the audience, and now, he did a kind of playacting on the stage that [*making a face*]. I sort of liked, but Pelado used to communicate more with the audience—I have a tape recorded in '89 and the guy talked more to the people—talked all the time—

Poguero B: It was more—people and audience, a set finished and he said—Hey man, I dunno, he talked to us—not so much now, but anyway—
Poguero A: (. . .) Look here, Pelado is a lot more chilled now—I remember once the guy was on stage totally [*indicating by gesture he had consumed some stimulant*]. And he fell off the stage!
Poguero B: —and when he played at Obras—he lost his voice—!

These changes during the performance weakened somehow some of the festive elements as they widened the gap between audience and actors, and reduced the audience to a more passive role of observer and they had an important impact on some fans, who spoke of a "shock," "being amazed," "don't get it." That the concert might be a true festivity and a good show was something some considered possible, but was for others a contradiction, or was not very satisfactory:

Poguero C: It's a party for me, to come here, jump, scream, it's a party. And listening to him, even more so.
Poguero D: We were just saying the other day that Bersuit has lost touch with the audience—
Silvia: And that makes it less of a party?
Poguero D: Yep, it does for me—I mean, it's a different kind of party—one I don't dig very much. I mean, I like it, but I don't—

Despite the controversies or whether they accepted or not "that other kind of party," "playacting," or a "very neat show," there were usually two poles of understanding among the fans, two ways to live and perceive the concert: those having to do with attending a show by the band, and those rooted in that "shared by all" party, where a band and its fans come close and seem to become equals. And this latter experience also reminds us of that *communitas* feeling that, according to Turner (1989), arises in groups that have a marginal character, placed at the fringes or cracks of the social structure. At the concerts, closeness and the direct, undifferentiated contact of *communitas* acquires not only a symbolic dimension, but is also experienced through bodies touching each other, since the predominant dance form—*pogo*—might be defined as a dance of intense body contact. This powerful contact between adolescent bodies is another aspect completely opposite to the legitimate physical interactions in the bourgeois adult everyday life, since most of them are tainted with what Picard (1986) terms "contact taboo," which circumscribes and codifies the contacts considered licit between bodies, inhibiting and/or sublimating pulsional drives. Moreover, in the main stylistic traits of *pogo*—frenzy, exaggerated movements, strong body contacts, intense dynamics to the limits of stamina—we can also find a distance from the historical dominant bourgeois

trend toward "moderation" in the expression of feelings and sensibility (Elías 1993). Finally, it might be considered a counter-hegemonic practice from the perspective of body discipline techniques (Foucault, 1987) that certain institutions try to force on these youths, especially at school. So, for the practitioners, *pogo* involves a peculiar transgression of daily *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1991), with a "liberating" effect:

> *Poguero* E: Besides, it makes you feel great, man, pogo sends you off—when the vibes are good it sends you off—you do as you wish, no one will consider you a freak—get naked, keep your clothes on, jump and leap, do your thing and no one cares—it rocks—
> *Poguero* F: I only do *pogo* in the songs I like, I sing along or get jumping, like shaking off the rage—I come here in any rag, no one judges. On the street, instead, you can't go out like this. Here you're what you are, you scream, do as you please, without fucking up, of course.

Bodily transgression of the daily *habitus* of the adult world can also be observed in those performances that exhibit partly nude bodies or play out representations of sexual acts usually kept private, like masturbation. This is what happens in the sets *La Papita* (*Bersuit Vergarabat y punto*) or *Masturbación en masa* (not recorded) where sexual behavior is dramatized and placed in the spotlight. Generally, the whole concert setup is identified as a space to "unburden yourself," to "liberate," as opposed to daily life:

> Luciana: (. . .) you chill out, hang out with your friends having a good time on a Saturday, doing your thing—whatever comes up, no inhibitions—no one's out to check on you, or recriminate. Every day there's somebody breathing on your neck, telling you what to do, criticizing [*alluding to her family*]. Here I can sing, dance, shout, move freely. Wanna wave my arms, I just do it.
> Pablo: (. . .) people just fade away, you get into the music, before I know it I jump, mimic, dance and play out. Luciana told me the other day, I didn't notice, I get off by myself—unloading all, catalyzing lots of things, lowering your defenses. Look at Susanita, who went with bare boobs on stage and you see her out there, all shy and modest!

In these testimonies we can see that young people considered the concert as a place of transgression, involving not just thoughts, feelings, or discourses, but one's very own corporal experiences. Liberation and catharsis appear in connection with actions like "shout, dance, move and dress as I please," related to behavior supposedly forbidden or frowned upon in the daily world of adults. They are, to a large extent, induced by sensations and emotions arising from body movements and musical

stimuli that take place during the concert and are, in turn, related to the ideological contents of the lyrics and speeches of the band (Citro 1997, 2000b). Fans claimed that the "lyrics were solid," meaning "they are up front," "don't cave in" to power, and they also "deal with our issues," or that attending a concert is a way "to support what you think, what you believe." Quite often, the band itself arouses feelings of admiration for certain transgressions or behaviors to the point that some fans quoted lines from the lyrics or Pelado sayings as a way to interpret or explain things.

Some fans not only appreciated "the message" contained in an artistic expression, but also believed in it, much like what happens in a ritual. Bersuit offered these youths a transgressive and critical view of the world, and the concerts were the locale where that vision was embodied in a ritual performance, and was thus legitimated and believed to be true. As a matter of fact, all festive rituals involve corporal, emotional, cognitive, and volitive facets of the experience, enhancing them by means of extreme sensorial input/output, which efficiently leads the participants into "wishing" what is "mandatory" (Turner 1980): that is, the meanings and values that are legitimized by the ritual. In the context of these concerts, transgression was "mandatory" and prompted in the audience the wish to "escape *a little,*" at least, "from society."

Some Final Thoughts, a Little More Than a Decade Later

On hindsight, the Bersuit concerts in the mid-90s, and particularly after *Don Leopardo*, were a turning point in their performing trajectory, a bridge between the *bardo* and a professional career, between being nearly an obscure band and the popular success they would eventually become, the self-made recordings, and the contract with a large multinational music company. They went from an independent, eclectic, and experimental production to a number of more conventional hits made under the expert guidelines of Oscar-winning musical producer Gustavo Santaolalla, from concerts experienced as ritual performances to regular rock shows. This bumpy ride, very much like the one traveled by other rock bands on their way to becoming market products, seems to have reached its peak expression in Bersuit's current aesthetic choices. After the last Bersuit album in 2007, entitled with an interrogative sign ("?"), there have been rumors of the band splitting, and two of their most important members have made very different solo albums. In *Fisura Expuesta* (2008), Juan Subirá confirms the trend toward eclecticism and experimental music, with strong references to tango, a poetic language with echoes of the *bardo* and tragic content and surrealistic and raw graphics—somehow similar to

Don Leopardo's—where I took part as a performer.[9] The back blurb in the album quotes Lucrecio:

> Life is too hard; humanity too weak; work too consuming; pleasures too vain or too few; pain too frequent or too excruciating, and luck too unjust or too blind for us to believe that such an imperfect world might have divine origin!

Unlike Juan, Pelado Gustavo Cordera, in *Suelto* (2009) resorts to a more conventional musical style, with lyrics about love and a shade of *New Age* spirituality and wellness, with two hearts on the album cover. On his web page, Cordera defines his last work:

> "Suelto" is a love story that runs a hard and labyrinthic path going from possession to liberation. I view "Suelto" as a contribution to popular love music from a different perspective. For me, love has a woman's face, it's the Earth, the Moon, the stars, the feminine, fertility. Love is passive, not active. It's not so much action as grace.

I think these two albums are an aesthetic expression of the diverging paths taken a decade later by the 1990s *bardo*: the tragic "exposure" of the wounds or "gaps"[10] left over as consequence of the excesses of those days, in a renewed musical key blending tango and rock, in the first case. And in the second, the "liberation" of that *Leopardino* spirit that "possessed" the bodies through a *new age* sort of spirituality, played out in songs that combine torch and rock. In this latter production we witness an interesting transmutation of the feminine: It is not seen anymore as the sexual object of the male, a metaphor of passivity—domination, the object to the tango lament or the grotesque parody, but as a kind of *quasi*-religious principle or "grace" linked to fertility and love, a powerful incarnation of generic "Nature." This hypothesis should be subject to new studies, but it is likely that this type of transformation maybe evidence of the influence of typical postmodern ideologies and values, which, under different guises and meanings, still reproduce a hierarchical conflict between genders.

The second part of this work has attempted to show how that transitional moment of Bersuit in the '90s, became manifest in the contradictions we observed in the fans, as some of the festive dimensions of the concert clashed with those of the show. Despite these changes, the concerts were still the festive venue that allowed a temporary and ritualized transgression of the adult world. The point I have tried to make is that the young people gathered there not only lived an experience of confrontation to the

disciplinary attempts on the body by that adult world—either in *pogo,* or the exhibition of bared breasts by females or bared bottoms by males, or the mass public parody of a "mass masturbation"— but also contested, in this way, the established powers of the time. It was precisely this transgression of bodies grotesquely sexualized that became one of the prevalent languages of political confrontation, in a local edition of the role of cultural resistance played by the "crass material and corporeal" in the history of popular cultures. We have seen also how that resistance also involved certain gender patterns that set on stage, with biases and ambiguities, heterosexual hierarchies and homophobia.

At the beginning of this chapter, I agreed with Grossberg when he said that the youth celebrated its own impossibility in rock. Indeed, that is the bottom line position of the young people, together with ritualized political transgression that was celebrated and legitimized in these concerts; and they look like immovable obstacles: young people will not change their structural position vis-à-vis adults by singing at the Bersuit concerts "tell your momma to shut up," and no matter how they dressed (or undressed), moved, or sang as they pleased did any of their expressions of political opposition make any social difference. However, half-nude bodies dancing in front of thousands of people while singing about "armies of boobs attacking the nation," about that "ass-breaking commando" taking power, or while insulting those who represent power and the establishment, there is an effective imaginary inversion of the positions of dominator-dominee. It is more than just a mental or symbolic device, it incarnates in the "experience" of their own flesh and blood, or, after the phenomenological perspective of Csordas (1993), we might say that it is "embodied imagery." Thus, these experiences may become practices of empowerment, which, though transient and limited to a festive ritual, have consequences beyond the concert, for they become part, like many other social practices, of the participants' subjectivity. One final example is good evidence, I think, of this perspective.

In 1996, *Se Viene*—a song that announced in ska rhythms that "the reckoning is coming, of my guitar, of your government too (. . .), this trash is rotting, if this isn't a dictatorship, what is it?"—was sung and *pogoed* only by a few excited youngsters. In the following years this song became part of the slogans of the social protest against Menemism, while another song from the Bersuit repertoire—*Sr. Cobranza*—was censored in 1998 due to the explicit criticism of political figures of the time. Social protest against Neo-liberalism grew and peaked in the December 19–20, 2001, riots, which caused the fall of Fernando de la Rúa's government. Many of those teenage Bersuit fans who chose to follow the band—among other "fun" options—in the 90s, also chose to be a part of the social demonstrations—among other political options.

To conclude, then, artistic imagination and rituals of resistance in the popular sectors are unlikely to cause structural changes or social upheavals, but they can make a significant contribution to the formation of empowered subjectivities that may undertake to effect those changes. Embodied imagery and the reflexivity processes involved in the production and reception of musical performances produce meanings and values that may be crucial in the construction of the subjects' identity, for, as stated by Frith (1987), music is not just an expression of group identities already conformed, but also contributes to shape them. When these meanings and values find expression in highly ritualized contexts—and, therefore, highly charged with emotions and feelings—they imprint the subjects more strongly and that is a part of the peculiar efficacy of the ritual.

More than a decade later it has become evident—with what I hope is a more mature ethnographer's view—that all these experiences transformed not only the subjectivity of those young fans by my own as well, enriched nowadays with a deeper understanding of the gender issues at play at that time.

Notes

1. To avoid trans-cultural confusion we have kept the original term, which is amply discussed in the text.
2. *Villera* refers to the outlying overcrowded shantytowns where people who belong to the popular sectors live.
3. Besides Pelado and Juan, the band also had two guitars, a bass, a drum set, and one or two guest singers.
4. Like missing "s" endings or the use of "e" and "pa" instead of "de" and "para."
5. *Puta:* feminine, popular designation for prostitutes.
6. Transposition of animals and people is another trait of grotesque realism.
7. *Pogueros*: those who do or dance *pogo* at concerts.
8. The banners of soccer fans at the stadiums also showed occasional rock symbols.
9. The art of both albums is by photographer Salvador Batalla (www.batallasalvador.com.ar). The cover and back cover images of *Fisura Expuesta* are a part of a photography art project we made together based on a surgical procedure I underwent.
10. The term "gap" ("*fisura*") is a popular reference to the physical and psychic sequels of alcohol or drug excesses.

3

"Rockers" Moral Limits in the Construction of Musical Communities

José Garriga Zucal

Introduction

In Argentina, many young people are identified as "rockers" or rock music lovers. Some of our sources told us, thus indicating a community membership: "Me, I'm a rocker." This self-identification is the point of departure in the construction of a "we": the rockers. This is the way a community that, at first sight, seems to be supported in some particularities of a music genre is built. However, even though, at first, the scenario seemed to project some clarity about the limits of this group's dynamic, it quickly becomes more complex and opaque since the definition, "rockers," is not necessarily related to the sharing of certain musical tastes. The people that include themselves in this community have a varied list of interests in which artists with different styles are arbitrarily contained in the "rocker world."

One of the interviewees, who defined himself as a rocker, listed out some artists he liked: Sumo, Bersuit Vergarabat, and León Gieco, among others. The last one, according to his own point of view, could not be classified as a rock musician, but was one of his favorites all the same. Moreover, he said he liked León Gieco because of his artistic trajectory, and that was why he could include the artist in the rock category. Then, replying to a question about the classification of this artist he said:

> M: It's like as he belonged and not, he's in the folk music, he's into rock, he's everywhere. I like his way.

J: What's that way like?
M: Eh, It's kind of . . . he puts himself in the place of the people, he's kind of a "leftist" . . . he's realistic.

León Gieco's "way" as an artist that combines rhythms of folk music with rock, is the particularity that includes him in the rocker field, a "way" that is less related to music than to his political preferences. It is his "way"—putting himself in the people's place, being a "leftist," and being realistic—that makes him a rocker. This characterization comes from the lyrics, from the commitment of the artist to political topics, etcetera; this is how the inclusion of an artist into the rock field is related to a moral standing. Alabarces (1993) indicated that the differences between rockers and non-rockers are not related to music but to "attitude," and that these differences arise from the confrontation with the adult world and commercial structures (Vila, 1995).

In the same way, the categorization of the subjects as rockers is not associated with the music they listen to but with the evaluation they make of their practices as listeners. Those who define themselves as rockers also listen and dance to other music styles, but they are characterized as rockers—in certain contexts—according to a perspective that evaluates their own practices and those of others, according to the moral principles of "rock."

Since 2005 we've been conducting an analysis of musical preferences of the popular classes in the province of Buenos Aires in the Centro de Investigaciones Etnográficas (Center of Ethnographical Research) of the Universidad Nacional de San Martín, Argentina. As part of this research I have conducted 50 in-depth interviews when visiting rock bands at rehearsals; I've also conducted fieldwork in rock concerts and in cumbia dance halls. We interacted with young people from the urban popular classes who usually listened to rock or to cumbia and who constituted, in that difference, a divide between the two styles: "cumbieros" and rockers.

Furthermore, these rockers are not the only ones who define themselves as rockers in Argentina. Our informants constitute a groupality in their difference not only from the fans of other music styles like cumbia or electronic music, but also from other ones that claim to be rockers but, according to them, are not. Whether they are "softies" (how pop listeners and musicians are pejoratively identified) or "hardies" (heavy rock lovers), these rockers draw imaginary borders over a territory they say belongs to them: the true "rock." This border marks a clear territory enclosing the initiated, "the lads," giving them an unmistakable air of authenticity and moral membership that distinguishes them from those who are not one of "the lads." This territory and its borders are drawn over the foundations of

moral premises that say what is right and what is not, who can feel being part of that community and who can't.

Taking everything we have said into consideration, it is evident that for these rockers rock is a moral community (Bailey, 1971: 17) that shares a group of values that distinguishes and differentiates it from others. Each moral space defines the limits between the acceptable and the non-acceptable according to the values of a social group; a construction that is both historical and dynamic but at the same time ambiguous, considering that the limits are either not clear or too mobile (Fassin and Bourdelais, 2005). The definition of the acceptable and the unacceptable—for both the artists and the public—is related to a group of values that construct and (re)create the frontier of the universe of rock.

In this article we will analyze two moral attributes—to be oppositional and out of control—that conform the sense of membership in the rocker field in Argentina. These groups of definitions, both dynamic and unstable, mark the membership to a community that has the "chetos" and the "negros"[1] as alterities. The objective is to analyze the search for differentiation constructed around those alterities based on these qualifying statements.[2] Naturally, these moral statements are commonly broken in everyday practices, but it is also true that they function as a performative frame to those practices. The oppositional and the out of control are articulated as effective distinction vehicles for the rockers, vehicles that construct a "we" wild and committed and, at the same time, creates "others": docile, non-political, submissive, adjusted to the moral status quo, and well-mannered.

Oppositional

These rockers are defined by a group of values. These specific characteristics define an "inside" and an "outside." For these rockers, those mostly referred to as rock *chabón*[3] fans, the oppositional —transgressor—is one of the marks that define the membership.

These rockers conceive of themselves as both transgressors and oppositional. The question is oppositional to what and transgressor of what. There is only one possible answer: to the "system." We should, then, identify what the system is to these rockers. This question, however, does not have a unique answer. The "system", as used by these rockers, orders a group of diffuse alterities: the music market, the structural injustices, the arbitrariness of the police action, etcetera. Therefore, "the system" allows for pointing out the limits of the classification of the rocker world: the ones who "settle"; the ones who "sell themselves"; the ones who give in to

the interests of power; the ones who use repression, torture, and make the militants disappear—these people are excluded from the rocker universe.

This, a very imprecise definition of alterity, orders (in an unstable and asystematic way), a system of values that enunciates what is possible and what is not in the rocker world. This is why the rockers value bands according to the way in which they produce and promote their records and concerts, whether they are—or became—"commercial" or not. They evaluate the musicians through a combination of ethical, aesthetic, and commercial political indicators. These parameters vary in each historical moment. One of the attributes that some of the rock bands defend is "independence." The self-management in the production of their concerts and records and the distribution of their LPs and CDs are undertaken to avoid the signing of a contract with a big record label. To be a follower of an "independent" band means to be "more of a rocker" while being a follower of a "commercial" band means not being an authentic rocker (Garriga-Salerno, 2007).

Besides, rockers consider that the lyrics of the bands they follow must address the structural injustices, such as poverty, marginalization, unemployment, showing something that other musical styles, according to them, hide. As many styles emphasize diversion and dance, rock, on the contrary, must emphasize social and political messages in their lyrics. Therefore we find in rockers a deep interest in what the songs say. A common point made in the interviews was the importance the lyrics had on music. This went to the extreme of pointing out that they did not listen to music if they did not like or were not interested in the lyrics. One of the interviewees said:

> I didn't listen to anyone of them. But I think if their lyrics were wrong you'd listen to the lyrics and I think that you wouldn't continue listening to them because you're listening to something that bothers you, you know? I am talking in that political sense, do you understand what I mean? And you would not listen to it even if it had good music and all. You'd not listen to it.

The oppositional morality is constructed over the value of the message, over the lyrics. In the construction of that discourse the *message* has an immeasurable relevance. Many of those interviewed said that what they like the most about music are the lyrics. On the contrary, for the rest of those interviewed, the ones who professed admiration for other musical styles, music is bonded to diversion, to dance. Therefore, for them, music is important only if it is danceable with no regard for lyrics.

For rockers the content is so relevant that the *lyrics* of the bands they follow must have a *message*. The message is not only in the lyrics, but also

in the image the rock musicians portray. That image is identified with a lifestyle both oppositional and *transgressor*. This lifestyle differentiates and distinguishes them from other styles. Music is not worth it, it is meaningless, if the messages don't have a meaning. For them, music is not a pure diversion; it must express a relationship of commitment with the social world.

This is the way in which they define what to be committed with "reality" is all about. That commitment places them ideologically (and imaginarily) on the side of the oppressed, on the side of the "people." The "commitment" toward the people is, in the symbolic economy of the fans, a non-political form of politicization. The rockers as oppositional and transgressors, participate in the political world, showing the places in which power and its acts perpetrate the injustices; but these maneuvers are never a part of a political project nor do they occupy a clear platform of ideological or class antagonisms (Garriga-Salerno 2007).

In a concert by the band Intoxicados [intoxicated] in a discotheque in Greater Buenos Aires the public sang, "Let's see, let's see, who directs the band, the united people or the fucking cops" while waiting for the band.[4] The public presented itself as "the people" in conflict with the police through this chant. The forces of security are related to repression and persecution. Therefore, this same public sang, "Borom bom bom, borom bom bom, the ones who don't jump are fucking cops."[5] The police are conceived as an Other associated with repression, but also as the armed wing of the State, which controls them, persecutes them, and subjugates them. As Alabarces pointed out:

> . . . the rocker conscience (fragmentary, contradictory, political in a non-classic way) defines an enemy and that enemy is the State, the law, or better, its repressive organ: the police . . . (1996: 68)

The rockers, who associate themselves with the people, looked for in the *messages* of their favorite musicians references to the "abuses of the system," the abuses of the armed forces in the 1970s, and condemnations to the injustices of the system. But they do not only look for them in the lyrics, but also make it a theme in their chants at the concerts.

In 2005 La 25 [The 25th], a band identified with the type of rock inspired by "The Rolling Stones," performed at the Luna Park, a traditional sports stadium usually used for concerts and shows in downtown Buenos Aires. Hundreds of young people came together in front of the stage, jumping and singing and waving their t-shirts. The repertoire of this public was varied. On one hand, the chants were directed toward the military that had taken power by force in the last dictatorship; some verses

went, "We have to jump, we have to jump, the ones who don't are the military,"[6] or "Execution, execution, to all the military who sold the nation."[7] The rhythmic jumps and the mosh accompanied the public chant. But the chants were also mixed with claims for justice for the young people killed in a fire during a concert of another rock band. One of these songs mentioned the corruption of the politicians in charge, that is, that they were responsible for the massacre in which 194 young people were killed. The chant went, "Not the flares neither the rock 'n' roll, our lads were killed by corruption."[8] When the chant finished there was a sustained applause of the public in tribute to the memory of the deceased. The applause was not only a tribute to the memory of the deceased, but also a claim of justice, committing the participants of the concert in the search for an explanation of what happened.

For these rockers the unconceivable, the intolerable in moral terms, is a lack of commitment and a lack of solidarity. The latter is expressed as being of help to the people in need. Charity concerts are common in the world of rock. Both artists and the rocker public participate in a solidarity network that mobilizes in various situations, such as after a natural disaster. Solidarity is part of the "commitment."

But solidarity is also a practice among peers. An occurrence during our fieldwork in the concert of La 25 is a good example of the conjunction between moral values and practices. We had an extra ticket because one of the members of our research team had not been able to come. We were at an entrance line that advanced very slowly and, near us, a young man yelled that he needed a ticket. We decided to call him over to offer him the extra ticket. The young man offered us 10 pesos. We answered that the ticket had cost us 25. He began to haggle the price of the ticket using different arguments: he said we'd lose the money, that we should sell it to him at a lower price considering he had no money, etcetera. We could not say that we had lost the money because it was not ours. Being stubborn, he offered us 20 pesos and added that this offer would leave him without change to return home. The line moved forward and he saw that his chances of getting a ticket were increasingly more difficult. In an ironic tone he asked, "And where's rock 'n' roll?" The question was completely rhetorical and linked our attitude of wanting the full price for the ticket with the absence of a rocker's morality. Through and through rockers, unlike us, would have shown solidarity by selling the ticket at a lower cost. In the action of keeping the ticket and not selling it to the young man, we were a clear example of the lack of solidarity—a serious fault that put us outside of the rocker field.

The "commitment" to reality places the rockers in contest with those who make society a paradise of injustice. But they are not different only

because of this self-conception. The committed "we" allows them to separate themselves from the non-committed, the ones who see only diversion in music and dance. The value of the messages in rock music highlights the lack of it in other music styles that do nothing to try to change social reality.

Out of Control

In the same way that not "settling" and not "selling themselves" did, drug and alcohol abuse functioned as signals of identity. Therefore, the rockers took a positive spin on the term "de la cabeza" or "turned upside down," a native way of referring to those under the influence.[9] The fans in the concerts of "Bersuit Vergarabat" sang: "Ole/ole/ole/ola / de la cabeza con Bersuit."

Another chant, usually sung by the assistants at the concerts went:

> C'mon X (name of the band) with the balls to the front; 'cause all the people ask them to; a flag that says Che Guevara, a couple of rock 'n' rolls and a joint to smoke; to kill a fucking cop to take revenge for Walter and all over Argentina carnival begins.[10]

To smoke a joint together (in reference to the consumption of marijuana), and violence toward law enforcers ("to kill a fucking cop," repeats the chant) creates a "we." 20.M.D., from Monte Grande said:

> I listened to LuzBelito for three whole days. I played the CD over and over again locked in my house with Enrique. We bought it in Puente La Noria. It's been two months since I last took a heavy drug: not a "nevado" or anything like that. Only "fasito." I went to Morón to try and rescue myself, to try to think . . . I'm now studying, I'm in second year of secondary school. I'm a cachivache [a mess], I'm in rock 'n' roll but I think of a future after all this.[11]

"To be in rock 'n' roll" is, for 20.M.D, impossible to separate from his excesses. He qualifies himself as a "Cachivache" [a mess]—a humiliating term used to refer to those who are lost in life—and predicts a change when he overcomes this stage. On the relationship between young rockers and drugs, Alabarces says:

> (. . .) the consumption of "forbidden" substances means to play with the limits of [the] body . . . and to play with the limits of the dominating moral. If the prohibition is set by what is vaguely acknowledged as the power, as the system; if the body is only legitimate as hysterical eroticity of the images

> of the industry so, then, mosh, drugs, and alcohol, the *reviente*, are efficient oppositional practices (1996: 67).

"To be in rock 'n' roll" or "to be turned upside down" has little to do for these rockers with experiencing altered states of mind to access new levels of perception. It is in the lack of control, in the recklessness ("reviente") that the morality of abuse differs from the morality of the "caretas [posh]." At a concert, a young man behind us shouted to Juanse, the singer of the Ratones Paranoicos [Paranoid mice], "Juanse, invite me a pass." The young man, out of his mind, asked to be given a dose of cocaine—a "pass" that, according to him, was consumed by the artist. He repeated the request over and over again while shaking his body. He mumbled incoherently, evidencing his recklessness, that Juanse was as high as himself. The interesting part of this episode is that his claim was not really asking Juanse for drugs. Juanse, 30 metres away from him, could not even hear his request for drugs. The message was, then, a clear and concise signal of the rockers' identity. Through the acknowledgment of the abuse he looked for a position in the recklessness, in the debauchery—inside the world of rock.

Not Chetos nor Negros

The rockers build a double alterity. On the one hand, they distinguish themselves from the "caretas" and on the other, from the "negros". The double alterity is sustained in some moral statements: the committed, the oppositional, the solidarity, and the recklessness are articulated in a system of practical differences. Chetos and negros define native categories directly linked to morality and indirectly related to music.

Brubaker and Cooper say that communities are relational bonds that unite people. They say, "community denotes to share a common attribute" (2001: 50). And they propose two ways to establish communal affiliations, the first one links people as part of a network system and the second one relates people as an adscription to a category. Both ways are intertwined. The feeling of shared membership, as a unifying element, in the case of the rockers is conjugated with the adscription to a moral system.

A chant sung repeatedly by the rocker public goes: "We're the niggers, we're the greasy / but not the chetos."[12] This self-identification as "negros" or "greasy" (a pejorative for the poor in contraposition to the chetos) has the objective to establish a difference from the "chetos" but hides the cleavage of membership that distinguishes them from the other "negros", the "negros villeros." For the rockers, the "chetos" have a lot of money and the "cumbieros" are "negros," "villeros."[13] This distinction from the "chetos" is sustained in their life experiences; the "chetos" have no economic problems

or work issues, and have the necessary money to get smoothly to the end of the month, and the lack of problems takes them away from experiences considered a constituent of being a rocker. These experiences are unified in a particular worldview, in a determinate way to *read* life. Fabián, in an interview said, "I'm ugly and 'negro,' that's why I could not be a cheto . . . I come from a low social strata."

They are also distinguished by their position in life, forming two worldviews. An interviewee, marking the relation between musical preferences and the ways in which life is faced said: "If you listen to march you are a fucking cheto . . . Not because you have money but they're other "bichos" [literally "bugs," but in this context, other kind of people], they're something else . . . they're different." This phrase shows the constitution of the divide between the rockers and the "chetos"; the adscription to a musical preference seems to be, for many interviewees, a defining way of life.

This same divide is established to separate rockers from those who listen to cumbia. While it is often conceived as the music of the "villeros," pointing to a class difference, that difference is based on the moral characterization of its listeners, the "negros", marking a cleavage within the popular sectors.

30.M.A—another interviewee—in a reference to social adscription and to musical preferences, said that in the "villa," cumbia was all that was heard. But, immediately after, he also mentions that the social ascription of the rockers and cumbieros was the same. Both genres are distinguished by their commitment to the style. To him, rock wanted to "narrate social problems in its lyrics," creating a style with deep meanings. Depth and commitment can be found in both the lyrics and the fans. He said that, instead, "Cumbia is to flow and go."

A big section of the rockers say they listen to other musical styles, for example, heavy metal. Nevertheless, when they talk about music, they mostly mention the styles they don't listen to, that they dislike "cumbia" or "march" or *electronica*. Ángel, in an interview in his house, replied as follows to the question about the music he did not listen to:

A: Cumbia villera.
J: Why?
A: Because I don't like it, I don't . . . I'm not comfortable listening to that music.
J: How is that? Because of the music, the lyrics?
A: Musically because they're kind of square lyrics . . . I don't like it.

The divide that allows the construction of the "we" excludes these musical offerings defined as "square" in a clear reference to the lack of depth

of their lyrics. To define the lyrics of the cumbia villera as "square" is a pejorative way to refer to a music style that, for the rockers is the opposite of commitment and depth.

Those who don't consider lyrics as relevant are the "negros" or "chetos". Therefore, the boundary of the oppositional leads them to mark a difference from the "negros" and from the "chetos" as they have a non-committed relationship with music.

30.M.A., for example, said that he listened to cumbia but as a "diversion," as a distraction. Many of the interviewed opened their hearts and said that despite their dislike, when they went to parties they danced to that music. 27.M.C said that he liked rock, but cumbia was linked to parties and diversion. He added, "Cumbia is to dance . . . either you want to have fun or you go dancing, it is mandatory to dance cumbia." The real musical taste of the rockers is defined by what they hear at home or with friends, and not by the places they go dancing or to have fun where they listen to, and even dance to, the music they don't like, emphasizing that the key is to be with friends and have fun:

> Most of the times that happens because they play music you don't like . . . there you can't go and complain "hey, play music that I . . ." No, you have to swallow it. But you have a drink, listen to some music . . . you see if you can pick up a woman, you see how it is? But the night is like this, you have fun with the lads . . . it's that more than anything, you're sitting in a place with the people you want to be with . . .

Among the rockers exist discourses in which they show an instrumental use of music both different and distant from that moral universe that includes rock among their preferences. The "cumbia" or the dance (as a music style) is used for diversion, for the seduction of women, and for the act of dancing. These "shallow" styles are associated with sexual conquests and diversion. They are, for many of them, musical consumptions that are not completely decided by them:

> If I go dancing it's because everybody goes and because I'm not gonna stay at home on a Friday night, sleeping at 12 am. We go dancing because it's a must . . . Nobody forces you or anything like that, if you wanna go. . . . I have a good time . . . but it's hanging out what that is. If I go to see a band it's because I like it, I pay 20 pesos . . . going dancing costs 5 pesos . . . a ticket to a concert of a Rock band costs 20 pesos . . . 30 may be . . . you may spend 30 pesos on a drink in a dance club, but for a band I pay it with pleasure, because I go to listen to a band I like. It's the same thing as when you're given a new pair of trousers, if you bought it yourself it's because you like it, if someone gives it to you as a present and you don't like it, you use it because you have to, but you don't like it. It's kind of similar to that.

Therefore, for some respondents rock and cumbia point to two very different dimensions of what is generally referred to as music. In this sense, many of the interviewed point to the difference between the lyrics and the music itself. There are lyrics to listen to, to understand, to reflect on, and, on the contrary, there are some songs that lack content and are only made to dance to. This division is important because, as we have already said, the rockers refer to a deeper meaning of rock marking a contraposition to the simplicity of the cumbia. 27.M.C, indicating a deep contempt for cumbia, said:

> I like Cumbia, I dance it, but listen to it . . . listen what these guys say . . . as I was saying before, you like to listen to the lyrics or the music . . . I like the lyrics the most, with the music as a background, having a line of music and listening to the lyrics, but this [referring to cumbia] . . . the music covers what they sing, besides, they have no voice . . . as I said, they were born without that part of their brains and they don't know how to sing nor to be creative.

On the one hand, there is rock, which through its deep lyrics has a message of commitment toward social reality. On the other hand, there is cumbia, linked to the fun and to the shallow. The perception of the difference is such that many rockers feel that in relation to the cumbia, they speak about two very different cultures. 27.M.C, for example, said that rock and cumbia were *"like water and oil,"* two elements that should not be mixed. 30.M.D, in front of some cumbia friends took the reasoning to the extreme and said:

> Rock 'n' roll moves people, it's a culture, rock 'n' roll is another culture. You're not gonna compare rock 'n' roll culture with the . . . Rock 'n' roll is culture. A pure culture that forms you as a person in the head, what they wanna do with their lives; cumbia forms them too: it forms them to go stealing, what for? To be killed, you see? It's like Cypress Hill, Tupac or Eminem. Like those people, you see? People who walk with evil. They're formed for war. And here the cumbia wanted to do that and it didn't work because our society is already very violent, you know how this is. Everybody has lots of problems. The first place where it can blow out, it blows out. You go dancing, you get drunk, and get into a fight. That's because of many things: what's going on with your life, in your house, for example.

The informant said that rock had something that forms you as a person, while cumbia forms violent subjects related to the criminal milieu. He repeats many times that rock is culture, implying indirectly that cumbia is not.

But this division that defines cumbia as a shallow diversion against the commitment of rock is not shared by everyone. 32.M.R said that both were oppositional styles, and he liked that, especially when it was cumbia villera or *cordobes* quartet. He mentioned a particular band whose lyrics harshly represented the experiences of the popular classes:

R: Damas Gratis is very related to Rock and Roll.
J: In which way?
R: They're oppositional to a . . . to a system . . . You have to see, because there's music that is not . . .
J: You find a similarity in the lyrics?
R: Yes, because they're rebellious, they go against a system people in power want to impose on you, whether you like it or not, it's the system, but . . . There they have some similarities, that is the reason why they play together . . . The Mona [Monkey] Gimenez [. . .] the guy doesn't beg for anything, never, the guy bought a house, a car, has a wife, a son, he's everything and the best; and the Mona Gimenez got to play with them all, . . . there's something with him . . . The Mona has a lot of oppositional songs. There are songs like "quién se ha tomado todo el vino?" [Who has drunk all the wine?], but there are songs about certain things . . . that are experienced, really, or they seem [like reality] . . . No, they don't seem to be, they're experienced.
J: And do you like those oppositional lyrics?
R: Of course, yes, I like to listen to any rhythm.

According to this interviewee, both rock and cumbia were related in their oppositional profile. But many others interviewed did not think like 32.M.R. They said that there was nothing oppositional in cumbia. They argue that while cumbia lyrics very often described the life of the marginalized in a harsh way, they considered that such harshness was negative. The limit is marked by the way things were described, it did not matter as much their contesting capacity but the ways they were expressed. As a matter of fact, many of the rockers interviewed said that cumbia had lost all "poetry." On this point, another interviewee said:

D: It's a social reality the one they talk about, but how they talk about it . . . one thing is to say it one way and they say things in a way people, sometimes, don't like. I don't care about what they say, they're not gonna change my life because they say: "let's smoke something or take something else." But I think that the way they say it, the way they reflect it in each song . . . I think it's not right; considering the society in which we're living, people misunderstand things, things are always misunderstood . . . and the way

> they say it I don't like . . . they could say it in some other way. That is what I think it's not right.

The "ways" things are said in the songs are what put distance between the rocker model and the cumbia. Although the rocker poetry is more similar than different to the cumbia, there is an imaginary that maintains that rock lyrics use metaphors and create complex lyrics in comparison to the cumbia lyrics, which are characterized by their simplicity and a raw representation of reality without any kind of allegories.

It is important to stress that the poetic value of rock lyrics, the way in which the authors manage the way they display poetic images, is closely related (and evaluated in relation) to the political position that both, public and musicians, have regarding the "system." The cumbieros who in their lyrics show the pressing reality of the most affected social sectors, do not pass the critical scrutiny of the rockers, who claim that they do not do anything to change the social situation of those poor sectors. The value of the message is relevant if it confronts the "system." This is why many rockers like bands that sing in another language, not understanding the content of the lyrics, but supposing that what they share with those artists is an anti-system stance. The rocker image displayed by those foreign bands, linked to the oppositional, to the *transgressions,* and to the recklessness places these bands into the realm of the acceptable.

The rock culture builds a different ethos from that of the cumbia with which they only share the socioeconomic characteristics of their respective audiences. The "cheto" is an alterity located in the antipodes of the social map and is conceived also as a symbol of diversion and shallowness, but above all as the representative of a sharp class distance.

In sum, the mechanisms of distinction between the "chetos" and the "negros" have different arguments. To point out a difference with the "chetos", they say that their life experiences vary because of material differences. The rockers put up with misery and poverty, they know the "streets" and their roughness: the fights, the police repression, etcetera. The different social and material experiences are set in idealized positions in relation to the "system." The rockers unveil its injustices while the "chetos" use the music for fun and do not relate it to commitment. On the other hand, the difference between the "chetos"—"caretas"—and the rockers is related to recklessness as the former do not use drugs. With the "negros cumbieros" with whom the rockers share some material and cultural experiences, the road of differentiation is related to the resistance to the system. Resistance that, as rockers, they sustain as a badge and that the cumbieros do not seem to be interested in. The distinction in terms of recklessness is unviable as both groups share a common imaginary regarding drugs and abuses.

Internal Frontiers

The moral limits that demarcate "the lads" from the Other are reproduced inside the rocker sphere itself. The moral definitions that identify diacritics that help to differentiate them from the "chetos" and the "negros" can be useful tools to distinguish them from "Others" that are closer. The classification of "real rockers" can expel from paradise even those who play or listen to rock, those who, at some point in time, shared with the group the same moral values but who, in the group's eyes, have abandoned that path, those who have "settled" into the system.

In the concert of La 25 a chant was repeated: "And there you see / and there you see / it's for the 'Pulposa' / that watches it from the tv."[14] When we asked about the meanings of the chant we were directed to some differences inside the field. The Pulposa is a rock band from the same neighborhood as the La 25; both bands compete to be defined as the more rocking one. A spectator said that La 25 was authentic and the "babosa" [slug] (as he called the other band in pejorative terms) was not "one of the lads"; he also said that "*they're a lie*." The differences were not marked in relation to the musical styles but in reference to the authenticity of the message. In this sense, many times we've heard rockers criticize a lack of coherence between the message some of the bands proclaim and their actual practices. The fans of the Ratones Paranoicos are a good example of this practice as they criticize the singer of the Redonditos de Ricota, Indio Solari, who, according to them, "lives in a mansion" and does not have the characteristics of a "real rocker." They do so, to contrast Solari's lifestyle to the leader of their band, Juanse, despite the fact that he lives in a similar place.

But the border of the "we" marks at other times a closer "Other." In the concert of La 25 in Luna Park, the most fervent—those who jumped and moshed in front of the stage—satirized those who watched the show from the seated area who were not as active participants as they were; the insults and the mockeries were directed toward their peers, the fans of the same band. Accused of being "sour" and "gay," a difference was proposed between different ways to experience the show. But the double accusation was also directed at a class difference because the seats cost more.

27.M.C, speaking about a rocker song he didn't like, mentions a particular type of rocker that he does not like either:

> . . . Look, sometimes they create stupid songs; there is a song called "Beatles" and it's bullshit, it is made to be consumed by the pricks, the "rocanrolingas," those dumbs—I don't like it very much, but there are some songs that are really good.
>
> J: Wait a minute, what are the rocanrolingas?

C: Those pricks who believe they're a mixture of punk and cumbia . . . I call them rocanrolingas . . . they say they like rock, but . . . you see them and they buy 500 pesos sneakers, they dye their hair blonde . . . they're weird . . . for me they're very weird people.

Here, the lifestyle of young people is related to class membership. The weirdness of these people is related to an abusive degree of spending on sneakers and to strange hairstyles. Both signal a different membership, linked to other fields that are not part of the rocker style—a style based in moral values.

Three Questions as a Conclusion and Nondefinitive Answers

First: are rockers facing a contradiction?

The rockers organize their identitarian attributes in moral oppositions; ways of legitimate membership built on abuses and rebelliousness are what generate this identification-differentiation. They create a universe of symbols that distinguishes them from the hegemonic discourses that view drugs and other transgressions negatively; this group of symbols places them, discoursively, against the injustices and the oppressions of the system. This position is transformed into rebelliousness, into resistance to the "system." However, these resistance gestures do not respond to an elaborate political position but they are organized in an unstable and dynamic way, and even, sometimes, they are a mélange of poorly articulated alternative and hegemonic values. This is why they fall into such obvious contradictions. They think of themselves as politically correct when they point out the injustices of the system, but they are politically incorrect when they point out the cumbia villera as a music style of the "negros".

And here, "blackness" is not related to the color of the skin but to the intellectual sharpness of the followers of that style. Guided by their oppositional and transgressive moral discourses, these rockers are placed beyond, way beyond, any discriminatory or judgmental discourse. A good part of their actions is to reveal the inequities and injustices of the system.

Therefore, to distinguish themselves from the "chetos" is correct in political terms because the chetos are associated with the dominant classes, that is, to power. Then, the border that differentiated them from the "chetos" is presented, made visible and, we must say, overacted. On the contrary, the argument that sustains that cumbia is the music of the "negros" must be hidden, disguised, because it means that politically correct people use the words of power to refer to the dispossessed. The border with the "negros" exists—and it is unveiled in this work—but it is covered and disguised.

Second: are these frontiers pure symbolism?

It seems that the construction of the borderlines is more than a symbolic operation of distinction. It is an operation related to the material experiences of class. One of the young people we interviewed said:

> In those years I was . . . maybe I was a bit shy on the issue of going to the clubs, but I did not feel less than the others for not having, for example, a pair of Nikes, that were new then. I saw that everybody went with Nike and I was with Topper . . . and then the Rock 'n' Roll appeared in my life and in Rock 'n' Roll you don't need to use a pair of Nike, with a dirty pair of sneakers and with a pair of boots and a pair of torn trousers you can travel to Japan. . . . For the economic situation I liked more the rock 'n' roll. I liked it more because I didn't need to have a pair of sneakers."

Is what is being said here pure rocker rhetoric?

We think it isn't. The identitarian limits are placed and built over a number of experiences. The everyday experiences place them closer or further to certain musical styles. The frontier with the chetos and with the "negros"—"villeros"—unveils these social differences.

Collective identities are intimately related to the conformation of communities, to the creation of a membership. From Maffesoli (1990) onward, many social researchers have thought about the constitution of unstable and varied communities as urban tribes. The urban tribes are eventual, discontinued associations that generate temporary and ephemeral identities many times adjusted to the cultural industry and its paraphernalia. De Marinis (2005) says that the idea of choice that emerges in the "new communities" has a false smell of "freedom," a course of action voluntarily adopted; the false smell of freedom seems to forget the structural conditions that limit the possibilities of choice of most social groups. This issue has brought us an ingredient that must be clarified, all social subjects can "choose" between different discourses that interpellate them. This is why to talk about identities includes talking about choices. The "choice," and this is why we keep it within inverted commas, of the rockers has a number of possibilities, distant from the "choice" that other social groups have. The difference is related to the identitarian possibilities they have.

Rockers have social experiences that place them in the middle of both groups. However, the materiality of the border is not logical when you rebuild differences within "the lads." The internal boundaries seem to be grounded on symbolic issues of belonging and do not rely on the material ones. Then, to conclude with the question we cannot avoid asking ourselves how material are the borders that rhetorically appear to be sustained

in symbolic bases, and how rhetorical are the differences in the frontiers that seem eminently material.

Third: is recklessness a transgression?

May be it is. May be it is not.

Rockers turn the recklessness into an emblem. An emblem that in their perception is presented as a sign of rebelliousness to the system. We cannot avoid asking if self-destruction is or is not a method of resistance.[15]

On the one hand, it seems that the destruction of the body is the destruction of merchandise, a vital process in the capitalist reproduction. It is, then, an attack against the system. On the other hand, the construction of a positive value—in the debauchery, in the use of drugs—where the rest of society openly tries to hide it, can be defined as a statement of resistance. In fact, a great part of society advocates for the negative consequences of drugs when these rockers create another approach to the phenomenon.

However, we might think that drug abuse is not rebellious because it is reproducing the social position of the dominated in the social structure. What kind of resistance can we grant to such abuses if they do not attempt-or even propose-a change in the structural relations of society? It seems that the debauchery is pure hedonistic pleasure as dancing is for the cumbieros.

Notes

1. We will keep both categories "chetos" and "negros" (niggers) as it is the way the informants refer to those they are describing.
2. It would be necessary to do a separate study of the operations that the cultural industry has in the creation and recreation of these frontiers.
3. The term was created by a specialized press at the beginning of the 1990s. Academically, it is analyzed by Semán and Vila (1998) and by Semán (2005). "Chabón" is "boncha" inverted. In the Buenos Aires' slang at the beginnings of the twentieth century it meant "silly." The rock chabón is a portion of the big rock universe. It is characterized by a rustic style, with nationalist veins that came from the suburbs of the big cities and exhibit a class membership different from the one that characterized the rockers. Before the appearance of rock chabón, most of the rockers came from the urban middle classes; the new style functioned as a mechanism of inclusion of the relegated sectors of society.
4. In Spanish: "A ver, a ver, quien dirige la batuta / el pueblo unido / o la yuta [policía] hija de puta."
5. In Spanish: "Borom bom bom, borom bom bom / el que no salta / es un botón [policía]."
6. In Spanish: "Hay que saltar / hay que saltar / el que no salta es militar."

7. In Spanish: "Paredón / paredón a todos los milicos que vendieron la nación."
8. In Spanish: "Ni la bengala, ni el rockanroll, a nuestros pibes los mató la corrupción."
9. In Spanish there are two ways of describing the state the informant is referring to. "De la Cabeza" [literally, "of the head"] and "dado vuelta." We translated the other expression—"turned upside down"—which is the closest English translation of the Spanish expression.
10. In Spanish: "Vamó X (Nombre de la banda) con huevos, vaya al frente / que se lo pide toda la gente / una bandera que diga Che Guevara / un par de rocanroles y un porro pa' fumar / matar un rati para vengar a Walter / y en toda la Argentina, comienza el carnaval."

    Walter Bulacio was murdered in a confusing episode in 1990. He was arrested by the police while waiting at the entrance of Obras Sanitarias Stadium where "Patricio Rey y Sus Redonditos de Ricota" was holding a concert. The young man was beaten by the police at the police station and was hospitalized, in agony, for several days. A week later, he died. The case has never been closed.
11. There are several terms used by the interviewee that need to be clarified. "Luzbelito" is the name of a CD of the band "Patricio Rey y Sus Redonditos de Ricota". "Fasito" and "Nevado" are the names that refer to, respectively, marijuana and a joint covered in cocaine. "To rescue himself" is the native way in which young people refer to the abandonment of drugs.
12. In Spanish: "Somo' los negros / somo' / los grasas / pero conchetos no."
13. "Villas Miserias" are what the poor neighborhoods of Argentina are called. Pejoratively, poor people are called "villeros."
14. In Spanish: "Y ya lo ve / y ya lo ve / es para la pulposa / que lo mira por TV."
15. The question about resistance is in this case—and only in this case—produced in a sphere that presents itself as resistant and not as a speculation of a group of intellectuals that look (we look) for resistances as a product of (our) political interests.

4

Cumbia Villera and the End of the Culture of Work in Argentina in the 90s[1]

Eloísa Martín

Introduction

The *cumbia villera*[2] emerges in Argentina in the second half of the 90s as a genre that both reveals and enables to construct a certain kind of world: that of the young people from the poorer neighborhoods of Buenos Aires and the Greater Buenos Aires. Poor people who do not perceive themselves as poor, either in the sense of being deprived or as objects of pity, instead positively assert that which in the dominant gaze stigmatizes them. The pejorative adjective "villero" used to characterize the inhabitants of *villas*—shantytowns—is here proudly acclaimed and recuperated as a mark of difference within this musical genre. To be a *villero* is, in the gaze of "others," worse than being merely poor: it means to like and deserve poverty. It is a stigmatizing interpellation of something that or someone who is ontologically inferior, or incapable of progress.

This chapter presents and contextualizes the uses of a social category, the "*pibe,*" in the *cumbia villera*[3]—a category that, in its contemporary use, moves across the generational divisions between childhood, youth, and adulthood. To this end, I will first analyze two different types of discourses: on the one hand, the lyrics of the *cumbias* and, on the other, the interviews to and news about the *villero* groups[4] who appeared in the graphic media between the emergence of *cumbia* in 1999 and its peak at the end of 2001.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section briefly summarizes the context in which this particular genre is born. In the

second section, I propose a comparative exercise: to contrast the themes present in this genre with the hegemonic values of dominant sectors of society that have guided the practices of previous generations of poor people in Argentina. We consider the *villera* presence that the *pibes* mobilized through this type of cumbia as two-dimensional. On the one hand, it expresses dissidence with the ideals that linked work and family with notions of masculinity. And on the other hand, as a form of disagreement with the social exclusion these *pibes* suffer (from the networks of the dominant order of the state, the market, the law, and hegemonic values), expressed in two different ways: (1) that of recklessness and (2) that of a desire for inclusion, yet not in the terms promoted by the dominant order. We will witness an unresolved ambiguity between the breaking of the disciplinary world and the reaction to the social disintegration in which the *pibes* do not want to be either controlled or excluded. My analysis will show that the networks of the hegemonic power are not as rigid or imposable, not even in the dominant sectors, where capillarity and preeminence are usually assumed. This chapter presents a comparative analysis between the horizons of this *villera* presence and the hegemonic order and values that, at the same time, reveals and serves to construct the specificity of the category analyzed—"*los pibes*"—and that of the music genre these *pibes* like—*cumbia villera*.

In this sense, I argue that *cumbia villera* does not "express" or "reflect" the "reality" of the young people from the poor neighborhoods of Buenos Aires and the Greater Buenos Aires. Instead, I claim that the *cumbia villera* brings to light and forges the construction of a certain kind of world (which does not mean to "reflect" it) creatively using the materials available in its context—the latter understood not only as an "objective" sociological structure, but also as a world of meanings and narratives. Nevertheless, since this context is inherently ambiguous, it is possible to observe various disruptions of the dominant order. In the lyrics and the journalistic interviews with musicians we find that, while some question the prevalence of the dominant capitalist order, others seem to work within a space and rationality closer to it. This ambiguity will be analyzed in the third section of this chapter, where I will consider the role the media have played in defining the social space occupied by the *cumbia villera*. I will observe that, when faced with the activities of the media, the *villeros* feel the need to "define" themselves. They embrace rigid positions, often to defend themselves. This need can generate tensions between the possibility of recognizing the positive value of the creative, not only as a reaction to the dominant order, but as what Guattari calls the processes of singularization "the disruptive processes in the field of the production of desire: it concerns the movements of protest of the unconscious against

the capitalist subjectivity through the affirmation of other ways of being, other sensitivities, other perceptions, etc." (Guattari & Rolnik 2000: 45).

I. Buenos Aires Is Not Only About Tango: Tropical Music and the Emergence of *Cumbia Villera*

The *cumbia* that arrived in Argentina had already been transformed in Colombia, its country of origin, because of its introduction in the commercial music circuit. This music genre, originating in the second half of the nineteenth century, had already ceased to be considered a regional folk style before arriving in Argentina. In fact, it became one of the national Colombian symbols and, according to Peter Wade (2000: 236), it had been "modernized."

What today can be identified as Argentine *cumbia* comprises a wide range of regional and stylistic variations: there is the cumbia *norteña*, *peruana*, *santafecina*, *santiagueña*, *cuartetera* (stylistically linked to the cordoban cuarteto), *grupera* or Mexican, romantic (Cragnolini 1998: 299), *cumbia* show, traditional, and *villera* (Perez 2004: 11), as well as half a dozen of identified variations within the latter. This genre that at first glance appears so broad can be regrouped in a wider musical collective: the "bailanta." "Bailanta" is defined, from a non-native reading (such as the media and some analysts advancing a discourse linked to the dominant common sense) as a group of music genres and also the spaces where those genres are performed and danced to. The term also qualifies the aesthetics, products, and persons who adhere to it. This non-native view characterizes the "bailanta" as grotesque, humoristic, and *picaresca* (Elbaum 1994: 194), common, tacky, and not very creative (Cragnolini 1998: 295). A reading closer to native views and this specific sector of the musical market defines what others call "bailanta" as "tropical music." This latter definition includes, together with the *cumbia*, heterogeneous rhythms that are not necessarily "tropical ones," such as the *cuarteto cordobés* and the *chamamé.*

The "tropical market" strongly developed in the mid-80s, and by the 90s it had already produced a wide network of distribution and production,[5] especially through two record labels (*Leader* and *Magenta*), TV and radio programs (many neighborhoods-based or "illegal" FMs radios), specialized publications and, currently, various Websites. In contrast to this *cumbia* labeled "romantic" or "commercial," another style of *cumbia* emerges at the end of the 90s, claiming for itself the pride of being called "*villera.*"

Cumbia villera emerges at a historical context in which structural transformations were being consolidated. The remains of an Argentina that was

once considered the most developed country in Latin America—roughly defined by its economic development, the rate of formal education, access to public health, and the politicization of important sectors of the population—coexisted with a tendency toward the deterioration of social conditions that, while according to the literature (cf. Filmus 1999) can be traced back 25 years ago, in the 90s acquired speed and an unprecedented depth.

During the 90s, the growth of the unemployment rate, the fall of actual incomes, the labor flexibilization legislation, the dismantling of health and retirement governmental services, the growth of the informal economy, among other factors, resulted in the impoverishment of a section of the middle classes and the end of the horizons of social mobility through education and employment for the popular sectors (cf. Minujin & Kesler 1995; Beccaria & Lopez 1997; Merklen 2000; Feijoó 2001). In this social context, other subsistence strategies were consolidated as viable alternatives to employment. Some alternatives rested on palliative state actions, such as food bags for families or unemployment subsidies; other mechanisms relied on the gaps of the market, for instance odd jobs denominated "changas," the offer or imposition of services, and some non-monetary exchanges of goods; many of those other mechanisms entailed a range of illicit activities that went from begging to theft and drug trafficking. At the end of 2002, the informal economy in Argentina reached 50 percent of the GDP—while 40 percent of those who had a wage were unregistered—the use of bank services (checks, credit and debit cards) had descended to a much lower level than in the 1980s, and the demonetarization had been worsened by the use of different types of treasury bonds (both federal and provincial) and all kinds of credit notes as if they were of legal circulation. It is in the intersection between the popular world of the *cumbia* and this "sociological context" that the *cumbia villera* starts to play its music.

Rejected by the record labels of the tropical market, Pablo Lescano, identified as the "creator" of the *cumbia villera*, saved money to pay record studios, and in August 1999, with a "pirate" edition, he recorded the first CD of the group "Flor de piedra" ["Stone Flower"]. By the same time, other groups made their appearance: "*Yerba Brava,*" "*Guachín.*" A while after that, Lescano himself founded "Damas gratis" ["Free for ladies"].[6] The year 2000 saw the birth of "*Los Pibes Chorros*" ["The thieving kids"], "*Meta Guacha,*" "*El Indio,*" and "*Mala Fama.*" In addition, throughout the year 2001, "*Bajo Palabra,*" "*Dany y la Roka,*" "*Sipaganboy*" were created. In a few months, the *cumbia villera* became an unexpected commercial success; nearly 300,000 CDs were sold (cf. Iglesias 2001)—a number that represented 25 percent of the Argentine record market according to

information of the record companies (without considering the illegal editions that could encompass 50 percent of sales) (cf. Colonna 2001)—and several weekly performances, between presentations in popular dances and TV shows, were common occurrences.

The *cumbia villera* does not camouflage the traits of poverty. These traits are taken up, thematized, and turned into an aesthetic ideal. If in the early 90s so-called romantic *cumbia* professional producers selected young, beautiful, thin men with traits considered to be "white" to form musical groups, the *cumbia villera* would prefer the "negros."

Contemporary popular genres as reggae, rap, and axê have claimed the black identity in their repertoires, where the accepted "blackness" referred to an ethnic content. The lyrics and style of the *cumbia villera* not only take for granted the meaning "negro" acquires in Argentina, which encompasses a class element in addition to the ethnic component, but add to the meaning of being "negro"[7] that of being *villero*:

> " . . . *I'm a villero [shantytown resident], . . . - I'm a negro because I like cumbia . . .*"
>
> (Flor de Piedra, "Cumbia cabeza," La vanda más loca 1999)[8]

The lyrics and style of *cumbia villera* embrace the aesthetics already put forward by *rock chabón*. The confrontations with the police, the drug and alcohol abuse, the masculine sociability in the street corner have already appeared in the lyrics of groups like "*Viejas Locas*" and "*2 Minutos*" (cf. Semán & Vila 2002), and Bersuit Vergarabat (cf. Citro 2000 and this volume) as well as the critiques to high fashion trends by using more "casual" clothing: t-shirts, jeans, sneakers, sport outfits, and fake trendy labels bought at the informal markets that surround urban train stations.

Previous research (Szulik & Kuasñosky 1994; Semán 2000; Semán & Vila 2002; Citro 2000) analyzes similar groups of young people who inhabit such social contexts, and are called upon by the aesthetics of national, metallic, or rock *chabón* (the latter, in many cases, created by musicians of similar social adscription as those of *cumbia villera*), yet do not identify themselves with the aesthetics of *cumbia*. If the style is similar, if the topics of the songs are the same, if the social background of the musicians is equivalent to that of the rock *chabón*, then why do these young people remain loyal to the *cumbia villera* and not the rock *chabón*? Moreover, why do many of the fans of *cumbia villera* say they do not like rock?[9]

> *I'm an ethnocentric: for me is cumbia and nothing else but cumbia.*
>
> (Pablo Lescano, IN: Riera, 2001: 64)

> *Here* [in the shantytowns of the north of Greater Buenos Aires] *you play rock and the DJ will be hit by a bottle and will pass out.*
>
> (Pablo Lescano, IN: Bellas, 2001: 11)

We see, then, that there is an *additional* meaning that must be considered along the fact that the selected music is *cumbia* instead of rock. Music is not a mere "medium" for the transmission of a "message," nor the "background" of a content that can only be found in the lyrics: according to Fornäs (1997), the division between lyrics and music is solely analytical. Then, if the comparison with other music genres is a valid methodological strategy, this does not necessarily entails they are interchangeable. The same "message," put in a different musical rhythm, is not only not "received," but may generate tensions, as Lescano's words convey.

II. Voices of Dissidence

The voices of dissidence in *cumbia villera* appear in a context where two experiences converge: on the one hand, that of the disciplinary power that reached the *villeros* in a sporadic and incomplete manner; and on the other, that of a set of socioeconomic transformations marked by the crisis and disintegration of a particular type of social bond and organization that the *villeros* resist to leave behind.

In the sections that follow I will analyze—through the lyrics and some interviews with musicians—the ways in which the *villeros* frame their experiences in contrast to two of the disciplinary apparatuses of power: that of work and that of the family. First, we observe how work ceases to be the "natural" and legitimate activity to acquire subsistence resources, and the implication this process has in defining the masculinity of the *pibes*. Subsequently, I suggest to reconsider the new nuances feminine sexuality acquires, which are thematized in the lyrics in order to rethink the role of women—more specifically that of the *pibas*—in romantic relationships, and the ways in which *pibes* and *pibas* relate to each other.

a. The end of the culture of work and a new set of values

Far from being considered an utmost legitimate channel to define social roles and a source of economic sustenance, in the *cumbia villera*, work is perceived as a means of exploitation and, above all, as an activity only performed by the *otarios*—a slang that labels those considered "fools."[10] Conversely, *cumbia villera* lyrics show that the world in which work,

consumption, leisure, and legitimate forms of masculinity are intertwined is either a distant one or it is not the only possible alternative.

In these lyrics, we observe three areas that point toward the new role work acquires in the *villera* poetics. First, we identify the fall of the model that associated leisure and consumption with productive and paid work, now perceived as divided. This presents a break from three axes: the indivisibility of work and leisure, productivity being the criteria that organizes space and time, and the principle of the control of the means of production and consumption. Second, we analyze the reification of theft as it undermines the role of work as the main legitimate practice for subsistence and presents itself as another valuable possibility—and not as a random event or accident—in any person's everyday life. Finally, we observe the distinctive value attributed to money in the *villas*: neither as the key element or universal equivalent of capitalist societies nor as the representation of a specific use of time and personal energies. In the *cumbia villera* we find the idealization of a time without rules, in which work, savings, and sacrifice are replaced by theft, consumption, and leisure.

We need to clarify that the analysis of these topics in the lyrics does not attempt to express tendencies or to understand them as total identitarian affiliations. For instance, Pablo Lescano, although one of the most radical in his *villero* viewpoint—and in apparent opposition to the perspective of his own musicians—, argues that he works for a living: " . . . *I didn't win the lottery: if I made any money, I did it working. (. . .) I don't 'curto' nothing. I work*" (P. Lescano, IN: Riera, 2001: 63).[11]

If work has in fact not completely lost its positive valorization, in the *cumbia villera* the emphasis is set on leisure, consumption, or theft as strategies in a context where work ceased to be the axis of masculinity. For example, the song "Quiero Vitamina" ("I Want Cocaine") (from the popular group of *cumbia villera* Damas Gratis) makes reference to the effects of cocaine consumption, drug abstinence, and the need to obtain further drug supplies in order to feel energetic (Damas Gratis "Quiero vitamina" 2000).[12]

The prevailing notion of time in the *cumbia villera* distances itself from the discipline of school and work: as not administered time, the succession of week nights and mornings do not regulate or differentiate leisure from activity. On the contrary, rather than the clock or the calendar, it is the effect of drugs and alcohol, consumed at any time of the day, which distinguishes the line between wakefulness and sleep. In this way the *villeros* present themselves as owners of their own time, where every day can be equally enjoyed since there is no work that can organize the week. Meta Guacha, in "Cumbia Chapa" (from the CD "Lona, Cartón y Chapa" 2000) value staying at home listening to *cumbia* because if they lack money, work, or "changuitas" (odd jobs), they rather stay home listening to *cumbia*.

The lack of work—expressed as poorly valued, barely as a "changita" (odd job) that allows them only to collect spare change—is not lamented. On the contrary, time, considered as always available, is framed as uninterrupted leisure and continuous partying. However, we must not interpret this as a romantic vision of unemployment or as a situation desired by the *villeros*. What the lyrics are conveying is that work is not the most important and structuring pillar of everyday life, or the main support for the construction of masculinities in deprived neighborhoods. From the lyrics of the *cumbia villera* emerges the image of other types of configuration of practices and values.

In this perspective, drugs and alcohol consumption (in the same way as theft) occupy now the space traditionally taken up by work, at least in two levels. On the one hand, it defines the transition to adult life, in a different understanding from that of previous generations (which included access to the job market and establishing a family), and in relation to a different type of leisure as that of childhood.

On the other hand, drugs and alcohol consumption play an important role in the construction of a certain idea of virility, as it assumes one has to have "aguante" (endurance) to consume them. Additionally, the collective consumption of drugs defines a space of male sociability. The "aguante," a term coming from the jargon of soccer fans, defines the central value of the *pibe*'s world. It refers to courage, value, and moral and physical endurance. It is a "harangue," a shout of war, a demand. To have "*aguante*" is not to back down, not to run away, not to complain. It is about bearing pain and what causes it. It is to stand up against aggressions even when in inferior conditions. The fights in bailes or in neighborhoods, the participation in risky activities (such as armed robbery), and drugs and alcohol consumption are situations in which the *aguante,* and thus virility, are put to the test. In this sense, to drink alone is a characteristic of a "mouse" (selfish, stingy), or of someone not enough of a man to "*aguantar*" the effects of alcohol and drugs, who became an addict unable to participate in collective leisure activities, such as the "descontrol" (recklessness) among friends, and turned his drinking into a sign of feminization, as expressed in songs like "Arruinado" from Yerba Brava:

> Look at him
> lying alone in the street corner
> smoking and drinking alcohol
> ruining his life.
> (Yerba Brava, "Arruinado,"
> Cumbia Villera, 1999)

This song, that works as a fable, shows the failure of controlling the consumption of drugs and alcohol, thus, revealing the specificity of the

morality at play. The main character of this song used to participate in purely masculine practices: he had a group of friends with whom to hang out, he played soccer, he went to the stadium to support his team, and women fell for him. However, now, because of a woman, he was left alone because he gave in, he could not "*aguantar*" the rejection of a woman nor the effects of drugs or alcohol that left him numbed, without any will ("re pancho," quiet as a dog). In the praise of "recklessness" (*descontrol*), there is an implicit notion of control that must be taken into consideration in the same way as the idea of "*aguante*." There are boundaries to "recklessness" to limit the chance to give in to complete *descontrol*, which would mean the fall of masculinity, or death without glory. In the ability to limit vice, the "*aguante*" is also put to the test—even though this is a less recurrent usage of this term.

One of the situations in which "*aguante*" is verified is during thefts. That is why one of the most usual harangues that musicians direct to their public is, "*aguante* the *pibes chorros* [the thieving kids]!"

> "In the records I can't say things '*de frente mar*' *[slang for straight away] but in the demos that I do for my friends of the villa there's the complete phrase. There I overdo myself and sing "Aguante los pibes chorros.*"
>
> (Pablo Lescano, in Bellas 2001c: 7)

In the *cumbia villera* more than in any other popular genre, to analyze the lyrics we need to consider both what is said and the silences, the blank spaces that will be completed during live performances. The reason for this is that *cumbia* is not only to be danced by the public, but also to be sung. These spaces found in unfinished rhymes—yet virtually written—are made to be completed in dialogue between the musicians and the audience, entailing more or less explicit insults.

The "*pibes chorros*" are the heroic figures of the *cumbia villera*. The favorite subject in the poetry of "*Flor de Piedra*" and "*Damas Gratis,*" whose lead singers, in between songs, shout: "C'mon the *pibes chorros*" or "*aguanten the pibes chorros.*" To the point that *pibes chorros* gave the name to a band. It must be noted that *pibes chorros* does not refer to an individual hero, an ideal person, but it refers to the collective: it's the *pibes*, the group of *pibes,* which condense and represent the values of the *villera* masculinity. They are the real *villeros*: "negros," "*cabezas*," "thieves, lazies, crazies"; the exact opposite of the "yuta" (the police) and, in many cases, the subject and target of the *villera* poetic.

Nevertheless, the *villeros* acknowledge that theft is frowned upon and that "defending" it in the lyrics (considered as "vindication of crime" by the media) implies the risk of reinstating the equivalence between poor

youth and criminality, a parity they do not fully acknowledge. In the previous quotation, we see how Pablo Lescano is aware of the risks implied in explicitly supporting thieves, while assuring that he has never stolen, even though he had the chance to, because his parents raised him not to do it. Even if he had friends in prison, he underlines that before becoming a musician he worked in a pillow factory (cf. Riera 2001: 62). A total identification with the stigma of the thief is avoided: even though his courage and "*aguante*" are valued and that "*the pibes chorros*" are put forward as a symbol—defined as distant from the "bad guy" of bourgeoise law—the thieving kids still are not considered an ethical model to follow.

What we find here is a situational legitimation of stealing and an explanation of this evaluation that is not and does not pretend to be universal. Tonkonoff (1999), who works with young people from popular neighborhoods of the Greater Buenos Aires, argues that native categories mark symbolically the fact that, in a context where state legality is not the rule that organizes social relationships, almost everybody combines legal and illicit activities to survive. Thus, as the song commented below indicates, the logic of the state order that punishes breaking the law with imprisonment is flexible for the youth. This logic is alien for the *pibes chorros.*

There is a particular *cumbia* ("Aguanten," 100 percent Villero, Yerba Brava 2001) that narrates the true story of an assault with hostages that took place in mid-2001. Once the assault failed and the police discovered and surrounded the thieves, one of the thieves shouted at the news cameras as he was being led to the police patrol: "*¡Aguante' los pibes chorros!,*" as the scream of a warrior, of someone who even defeated (in prison) does not give in. As these images were transmitted on television, the ambiguous figure of the *pibe* combined the weakness of a very young and skinny teenager being taken by the police, with the power of his scream and turned it (not the young man) into a symbol for the *villeros.*

The lyrics reconstruct the position robbery holds in everyday life and, thus, it legitimizes it. To rob, as it is understood in the *villas*, has become an almost natural and regular way of obtaining resources, to the extent of being considered a "profession" in the *cumbias*. For instance, in the song "Las manos arriba" (Los Pibes Chorros, "Los Pibes Chorros," Las manos arriba 2001), the lyricists say that they do not steal from the poor and claim a sort of "method" to rob a bank:[13] "*We look for the tip [the exact information] and we enter a bank.*"

They claim they rob the wealthy and not the poor not because of interclass solidarity. In the *villa*'s ethical framework, the difference between an acceptable and an unacceptable robbery is who the victim is, being the thefts of known people or neighbors an unacceptable one. Nor is it related to a social bandit ethic, for they do not steal for the purposes of distributing

in a Robin Hood style, nor because they are "ratones," that is, cheap people. They rob only where there is money, and they consider themselves "men," they have "*aguante*" to put themselves at the risk of gun robbing.

The recurrent presence of gun use in songs has a specific meaning. It can be read as a rhetorical attempt to build or to present an acceptable trait of a formerly extraordinary and thus illegal masculinity model (at some point this was an extended normative perspective of the popular sectors in Argentina). A "real" man must now be prepared for using a firearm—against the police, or other inhabitants of the *villa*, or with the potential objective of robbing. For a "real" man, death is a plausible alternative, the exemplar of courage, expressed in the "*¡Aguante' los pibes chorros!,*" scream of assertiveness and resistance.

Only in exceptional cases thefts lead to acquiring a significant amount of money for the *pibes.* Whether it comes from theft, begging, or small jobs, money is scarce. Therefore, money in the everyday life of the *villas* circulates differently than in downtown. In addition, other ways of exchange exist where money is not necessarily the "universal equivalent of exchange" and it is not always obtained through work. This situation was aggravated by the depth and reach of the economic crisis at the end of the 90s. Outside of formal work, surviving took place in the gaps of the market in the form of "changas" (odd jobs) and moved toward a broader group of activities more or less illicit that extended from begging to theft.

In the lyrics, money appears in two ways. A more traditional analysis questions its role as mediator of social relationships. A contemporary viewpoint, on the other hand, sees money outside from its links to work.

As seen in other popular music genres,[14] money can be obtained from women (who maintain men, as the Yerba Brava song "El mantenido" suggests). On the other hand, money belongs to upper class people, who bring it to the *villas* in exchange for drugs, as shown in the Bajo Palabra "Concheto arrepentido" song.

> He believed that with money he could buy everything
> He hated the villeros, and negros sickened him off
> A cumbia would never sound in his car
> (Bajo palabra, "Concheto arrepentido,"
> Bajo Palabra, 2001)

The lyrics of this song prove the questioning of the role and value of money in social relationships; money cannot buy friends or a woman's love ("Your dirty money cannot conquer a villera"), it cannot transform anybody into a "true" man. According to this perspective, money corrupts *villa* values (by definition are opposed to it), turning them into "*conchetos.*"

This is shown in one of Yerba Brava's main characters, the "*pibe cantina,*" who would have betrayed the *villeros* values by making a lot of money with very little effort or risk (he "wins the lottery"). He uses this money for his own benefit and enjoyment, exposing, thus, his abandonment of *villa*'s aesthetics: he starts to dress elegantly, to wear dark glasses, to use a Rolex watch and jewels (all elements that would define, from their perspective, a "*concheto*" aesthetics), instead of the sneakers and the quintessential cap of the *pibes*.

As explained above, in the "Cumbia chapa" lyrics, money appears in its less significant and valued form, that it, as mere coins. This presence of money informs of a certain type of consumption—one that can be accomplished with coins, such as beer at a shop—as well as the way in which it is obtained—through the "mangazo" (a native category explained below), and small offenses.

In this sense, the lyrics show that the money necessary for consumption and obtained through having "*aguante*" appears as detached from work, effort, and savings articulated with a logic of postponed satisfaction. In regard to consumption, as already explained, it opposes and bursts the time disciplining and energy logic that work demands. On the other hand, obtaining resources detached from work is now a regular and legitimate form of subsistence.

When the "villero" poetic subject constructs its masculinity, the "*aguante*" substitutes the space work used to play in terms of legitimate and valuable social roles. As part of this logic, thefts and the "mangueo"—a form of begging that does not appeal to the figure of the "pitiful men"—are ways of obtaining money where the one who asks for money places himself, momentarily, in a position of strength through three strategies: cheating, lying specifically to those who are strangers, and more or less threatening others. For instance, Damas Gratis's "Todo roto" (2000) song shows how the "mangueo" carried out by a group of young men fails when inflicted upon someone that belongs to their same world. The song describes a situation in which when a boy goes to pick up his girlfriend, some guys stop him and ask him for beers. He couldn't believe what was happening, because he considers himself "cabeza" (black, poor, loser), that is, without the money to invite anybody with beers. But, even though they were many and he was alone, he still says "no" because he was "polenta" (strong, brave) and started a "catanga" (fight/mess). Obviously, because he was outnumbered, he was beaten hard. However, he showed them that he had "aguante."

According to the aforementioned three strategies (unprepared, fool, or coward), the main character of this *cumbia* is rendered a potential victim. Nevertheless, he rejects their demands with the same logic in which they

were made: that he, a "*cabeza,*" has "*aguante,*" and faced them and stood by the consequences: "he was hit like in a bank" (he was hit a lot). Then, the value of money is measured not by its quantity but by the way in which it was obtained, hence informing on the traits of the giver and of the receiver.

It is in this context that the musician's interpretation of their work and the obtained earnings must be considered. On the one side, they are trapped by the market because music becomes a "profession," and they become label record's employees. In the edition dedicated to "Yerba Brava," *Leadermusic.com,*[15] says that six of the eleven required music tracks to complete the first CD had to be written in one week, resulting in intense and uninterrupted work days necessary to fulfill the stipulated terms of the signed contract.

On the other hand, they do not seem to fully adapt to market standards. Despite the success obtained in sales and in the media, club owners are still reluctant to hire them because of the content of their lyrics and the type of audience they would allegedly attract. According to Juan Carlos "Monito" Ponce, the voice of Yerba Brava:

> *. . .there are many clubs where we can't play because of our lyrics . . . because of the people we bring, people with low income. They're discriminated for being "villeros", for wearing worn out sneakers or torn pants. They think one goes dancing to fight or steal.*
>
> (cf. Leadermusic.com)[16]

Given that the origins of the *cumbia villera* can be found at the leaks of the market (please note the first recordings were "illegal"), its dissemination, in part, still takes place in these market gaps. Pablo Lescano himself facilitates his band's demos even before being launched by record labels:

> *Piracy is not my problem, it's a companies' problem. It's harder on their pockets. As far as I care, fuck them. I am given two "mangos" [pesos] for each record, so they can shove them up their asses . . . I'm not interested. I'd rather give them to a pirate, so they can reach people.*
>
> (Riera 2001: 63)[17]

Lescano expresses here an external relationship with money. Even though he would earn more money if piracy ended, he does not care because it would imply stinginess on his behalf. Moreover, giving his demos away is part of a masculine solidarity ethics by which caring too much about money is frowned upon.

b. Are women objects?

The *cumbia villera* reveals in its lyrics the nuances that femininity in general, and female sexuality in particular, nowadays express. Starting with the representation of women the "*villero*" poetic subject constructs, one can begin to think about the changing role of women within couples, and, in a family model that, according to the literature on low-income sectors, is generally defined as hierarchical, holistic, and traditional. The active role of women challenges us to reconsider the dynamics assumed in families of popular sectors.

To make a virtuous girl fall for you, to get married, and have kids with her does not seem to be a desired horizon for the *pibes,* at least judging by the lyrics of the *cumbia villera.* At the same time, women are faced with the question that arises from a more traditional definition of women's role in their relationship with men, and with a reexamination of female sexuality, reenacted by both "*villeros*" poetic subject[18] and women themselves.

According to the literature on popular sectors and contemporary popular music, the "traditional" family model is based on an ideal representation or pattern of femininity, and its corresponding detours, as exemplified in Brazilian popular music:

> In the masculine imaginary represented in Brazilian Popular Music, the woman operates as a hinge in the conflict between the need or obligation to work and the desire for pleasure. She plays two roles simultaneously. The first role is that of the representative of the world of order—aligned to the institution of the family—that functions as an agent of the principle of reality, that is, as a symbol of the obligation to bring money home and of daily monotony. Opposed to this, the woman as lover represents a potential source of pleasure. In this case, however, she is a dangerous character: not being in the world of order, she can easily transform into a "piranha" [easy woman] and, by abandoning him, transform him into an *otário* [fool], the reverse of the *malandro* ["bad boy," rogue, rascal].
>
> (Oliven, 2001: 4, my translation)[19]

In Argentina, a similar argument can be applied to both the *tango* and the romantic cumbia (even when the latter cunningly grapples with sexuality in comparison with tango's modesty), also to the *cuarteto* and *folkloric* music (cf. Cejas et al. 1995). According to this perspective, women appear in the *cumbia villera* as prostitutes, materialistic, or traitors.

Even though "good women" as a mythical ideal or as a goal to be reached are absent from the *cumbia villera,* the figure of the mother

remains as the only feminine figure with positive attributes, as these lyrics show:

> *But not of the "vieja," sacred and the biggest* (Meta Guacha, "No me toques la vieja.")
>
> (Lona Cartón y Chapa, 2000)

Maternity is thematized in a similar way as in *tango* or rock, in songs like "Amor de madre" [mother's love] (Guachín, Las dos caras de la villa) and "Mamá soltera" [single mother] (Meta Guacha, Lona Cartón y Chapa), and it preserves the feminine figure and projects an aura of sacredness to it. Within a more traditional reading, women operate as the axis of the family or as its potential disruption, but they are always viewed as passive objects of masculine sexual desire.

The novelty that the *cumbia villera* introduces is a very nuanced representation of the active role of women in sexual relationships. A woman no longer expects a man's courtship, she's the owner of her desire and, if she changes sexual partners, she does it in the pursuit of pleasure:

> *She doesn't do it for the money, only for the pleasure.*
>
> (Damas Gratis, "Se te ve la tanga," Damas Gratis, 2000)

Women, as an active subject of desire and intercourse, must be understood within a context where sexually experimented women start to be valued:

> *I want the 'turras, vivas' (. . .) I like them that way even though I have to stand the consequences.*
>
> (P. Lescano, in Dillon 2001:2)

According to Francisco Romano Labate, owner and writer of the lyrics of Meta Guacha,

> *The role of women in society has changed; some time ago women had an immaculate role when actually they were everything all the work and men were suffering. Ever since Gardel until now men are "cornudos" [cheated], well, now they have to put up with it. Because now women enjoy cheating and nobody wants virgins, now the more sexually experienced, the better.*
>
> (Dillon, 2001: 4)

Male sexuality appears with some ambiguity, expressed in the representation of an active femininity although not necessarily ordaining. If, besides

the mother figure, there is no other option than the traditional "easy women" figure, these women can actually be valued exactly for what they are: sexually active women, threatening, and maybe because of that, attractive. The appearance of a specific nuance in feminine sexuality—and its correlation to their relationship to men—reveals the need to reflect on the family by considering the situational evaluation women engage in when faced with the possibility of being labeled a "puta" (slut or whore, depending on the context), and how this possibility can, at times, be viewed as a stigma or as a positive estimation.

c. Toward a villera identity?

In parallel to the content of the lyrics, it is in dialogue with the media where musicians seem to succumb to the temptation to reduce, in terms of identity, the possibilities that the *cumbia villera* has to affirm and build a dissident world vis-à-vis the dominant one. At the same time, they also seem to relinquish to offer a positive version of what they do in its creative originality—that is, not as mere resistance. In some interviews, they seem to allow the possible over-codification of their identity belongings—the *villero* one—and recognize themselves in the offered mirror that contains and exorcizes them. When *cumbia villera* is considered a mere chronic, when they think of themselves as "*negros,*" or when they distantly talk about thefts, drugs, and alcohol abuse in lyrics and shows, they take refuge in the stereotype of the excluded as an apparent fragmentary attempt to defend themselves from stigmatization and to resignify the categories by which this stigmatization takes place.

(1) Demonized or glamorized, *cumbia villera* would finally refer, for the media, to the context of the Argentine crisis at the end of the millennium. An approach that the *villeros* themselves assume and reelaborate when referring to their musical production as a testimony of life in the *villas:*

> *The cumbia villera is more testimonial; it is about seeing the reality of the villa, their experiences. It is about things that happened to others and that we profit from to make some lyrics.*
>
> (Yerba Brava, in http://ciudadtropical.con.ar/reportajes.asp?not=356, downloaded February 2, 2002)

The *cumbia villera*, in this paragraph, is presented as a chronicle of what happens in poor neighborhoods of Buenos Aires, thus, informing about the marginality to which the "*negros villeros*" are condemned.

Similarly to what L. Vianna (1998) remarks in the analysis of sambas of Bezerra da Silva, the category of the "negro" is not necessarily attributed to those whose skin is dark (not white). On the contrary, "[the] negro identity—victim of exclusion and prejudice—is confused with the one of people—excluded from the mechanisms of social justice" (Vianna 1998: 48). In the Argentine case prevails an identification to the people, and to the populist narratives they make use of, where poverty is a situational, not chosen, and above all "honorable" condition. It is, in this sense, an oppositional poverty to the so far analyzed *villera* logic:

> *We, the ones who conform "Meta Guacha" managed to make discographic material so that those who don't live in the villas can know how we live, what we feel, and what things we need, maybe so they can understand that we're just like any other human being, that we work, that we are often exploited by a corrupt society, and that the few coins that we are given are only enough for mortadela [a very cheap cold meat], cheese and the rest we use it for mats, cardboard and metal sheets, materials with which we build our honorable but precarious houses.*
>
> (Meta Guacha, presentation of their first CD: "Lona, cartón y chapa" in their Website: http://metaguacha.tripod.con.ar/discografia.htm, downloaded February 3, 2002)

This is completed in the lyrics of "El discriminado" [The discriminated] (which refers to a young boy who dies because of his poor origins), that addresses marginalization as a sociologically built destiny:

> *Because of being a negro villero he was doomed.*
>
> (Yerba Brava, "El discriminado," Cumbia Villera, 1999)

The testimonial character of the *cumbia villera* appears to be built, then, as a chronicle of poverty, suffering, and discrimination, product of an unfair "system," and aims, through this chronicle, to call upon the attention of a non-supportive "society." In the same way that media over-codifies through using sociological categories, the *villeros* themselves are trapped in this operation, making it their own narrative, and adopting it as the rationale behind their "way of being," which undermines the plenitude of their existence. Sociologization not always corrodes power, and, in this case, it collaborates to reinstate it.

(2) Being a "negro" in Argentina involves the color of the skin and the features of the person, however the "negro" identity does not depend solely

on these features; it also incorporates in its construction definitions of class and moral qualities.

> *My face gives me away. They see me as related to "kidnapping," I have the face of a criminal and even when I have the documents and car papers, the police will take me anyway.*
>
> (Pablo Lescano, in Correa & Labate 2001: 56)[20]

> *I'm not allowed at the clubs because of my looks, but in Coyote or Buenos Aires News [medium high class clubs in Buenos Aires] they dance to my songs.*
>
> (P. Lescano, Bazán 2001: 93)

The white and European Argentine imaginary within the Latin American context denies the Andean, "mestizo," indigenous, and "cabeza" physical traits, and understands them as a (racial) exception to Argentine identity. An arbitrary equivalence between morality and phenotype is taken to its final consequences, where the "white" incorporates the positive values and the "negro" the negative ones, and the real whiteness that matters is that of the "soul." The *villeros* seem to identify with the dominant discourse about the "negros", and to embrace the place assigned to them. In this way, Meta Guacha recovers this discourse and inverts it without escaping from its logic. Claiming not to be addressed as "negro," the singer says:

> *What are you saying to me!*
> (Meta Guacha,
> "Alma blanca," Lona,
> cartón y chapa, 2000)

This song gives in to a reification of the "negro", and, thus, to the universalization of the dominant ideology that, as Guattari (2000) affirms, reduces the processes of singularization in terms of identity and affirms that, despite our differences, we are all the same. The *villeros* seem to assume the "politically correct" discourse, which considers individual differences from a perspective where the always debatable episteme that produces this discourse appears as neutral and reconciling, while imagining that differences are not really differences, but diverse magnitudes of the same substance, and not the outcome of different political regimes.

(3) In regard to chronicle making, when the *villeros* face "vindication of crimes," or plain crime accusations, they position themselves as mere narrators of a reality (theft, substance abuse) that does not include them, or, from an over-codified sociologicizing perspective, forces them

into doing something that, if not vitally necessary, would not have been done:

> *What better than "Guachin" to reflect in its music and lyrics the everyday stuff, through this new style of cumbia that is called cumbia villera (. . .) The villa is not all that's portrait. It's not that everything's wrong, nor we drink all day long (. . .) But I am not a supporter of celebrating the pibes who steal or do drugs (. . .) our music reflects what we live, but we don't celebrate it, that's the difference with the other groups.*
>
> (interview to Guachín, in http://ciudadtropical.con.ar/reportajes.asp?not=356, downloaded February 3, 2002)

The *villeros*, in these testimonies, may seem to head toward a definition of their identity that crystallizes experiences that are inherently inassimilable or unmeasurable. Far from embracing a dissident position, the *villa* logic, transformed into an "identity," can be gobbled and returned to the system, by its institutionalization, and its domestication in a classifiable and less disturbing minority identification.

The previous allegations, nonetheless, continue to surprise us in their defense of laziness and drug and alcohol abuse found in articles and *cumbia* lyrics. Still, it must be considered that these testimonies were made, mostly, in the terrain of the "other"—the space of the media—and under their rules and logic, a situation that may lead us to think of an effective manipulation of their identification belongings. This suspicion entails the hope that their investment in the defense and glorification of the "*pibes chorros*" remains outside of the interviews, but well represented in the lyrics and shows, where the symbols of their "bad life" are upheld. On the other hand, these concessions did not take place randomly, but at a time of tougher police and media criticisms.

The relevance of asserting the possibility of manipulating the media appears clearly in the following analysis, where the *villeros*, beyond a conscious attempt, move away from the identity over-codification, by building another logic that constitutes them politically. Then again, due to the content of some of their lyrics, the media characterizes *cumbia villera* as protest music, yet the *villeros* deny it*: "We have no intention of denouncing, we're apolitical"* (Fabián Gamarra, singer of Yerba Brava, in Pavón, 2001).

As opposed to Argentine rock,[21] the *cumbia villera* refuses to propose itself as a vehicle for "rebellion" or "raising conscience." It admits no political intentions. Contrary to protest rock, which was never meant to be danced to, the *cumbia villera*'s only intention is to amuse

people. The *cumbia villera* is made to be danced to and not to build an opposition:

> *I have no "way" with politics, I'd kill for politicians to do things right (. . .) [Corruption] [d]oesn't affect me at all. What can I do? A protest in the park with the elderly, retired? What for? If that doesn't change anything.*
>
> (P. Lescano, in Correa & Labate 2001)

They pose a critical reading that, on the one hand, (as it is clear from the previous quotations) does not configure a mere "resistance," which reacts against the hegemonic culture. On the other hand, this reading is nonpartisan and rejects any belonging to the political system—even in a wider cartography that includes political parties and social movements. Nevertheless, they are not anarchists: the affirmation of apoliticism is the product of how foreign the different ways of political and union associations are perceived to their lives. In contrast to the previous generations, politics is no longer a tool of their experience in the world. Even so, and maybe because of that, they are politically significant: it's the terrain of the playful, the aesthetics, and not in the political or union memberships where, maybe, *cumbia villera* can leave its seed.

In addition, this disruptive effect is present in the breaking of the political notion of struggle, in the action of not being dependant of the state, and by tearing down a dependent and claiming position. In the *cumbia villera,* no one asks for work, "social justice," the distribution of wealth, or even thinks within a logic of social upward mobility. Through their music, they "simply" render positive a way of experiencing the world. The more they are being pushed out of any social safety nets, the more they become detached from the state. The *cumbia villera* expresses, also, a rupture from a dominant disciplinary game, in which they are the less favored players, not without a certain nostalgia for an order that no longer exists, which did not privilege them, yet in some ways protected them. From this ambiguous double reference, the *cumbia villera* informs of an experience not associated with the dominant order and the disciplinary horizon that links work and family as an ideal of masculinity, revealing, thus, a world that blooms in the gaps of the dominant system.

Notes

1. A preliminary version of this article was presented at the *IV Reunión de Antropología del Mercosur*, in 2001. Since then, the socioeconomic context has changed and given signs of improvement, and the *cumbia villera* does not play

such an important role today as it did in the year 2000. Yet, the analyzed topics and the more structural general changes still remain.

2. I'll refer generally to *cumbia villera*, including the differences within it. The *cumbia* "*cabeza*" would vindicate drug and alcohol abuse, while the "*villera*" would denounce poverty and the exclusion of the inhabitants of the *villas*. We may also include the "*cumbia rapera,*" "*del barrio,*" "*callejera,*" "*gangsta,*" or "*chabón.*" Miguez (2006: 39) analyzes the thematic heterogeneity in the lyrics of the *cumbia villera* focusing on the construction of prototypes of identity and alterity. Such heterogeneity, pertinent even for natives, will not be analyzed in this chapter.
3. The notion of the *pibes* refers to young people who do not assume an adult position, but are no longer kids: they act with a freedom that is related to their age, but also in accordance with the content of their social roles (the *pibes* are expected to have less discipline than ordered young men, who are framed by the educational and labor discipline). Arguably the generalization of the voice of the *pibes* goes hand in hand with the age extension of youth and the redefinition of the social roles of young people in contemporary Argentina. The growing importance of the roles that are alien to the world of educational and labor discipline are coupled with the extension of the equation "young people" = "*pibes,*" to the extent that the proliferation of the age groups not previously considered as young yields to the idea of *pibes grandes* [older ones].
4. I'll use the term "*villero*" to refer to those who listen or dance to or produce *cumbia villera*, as a way to differentiate them from those who adhere to other types of *cumbia*, and, for example, in the same sense as "tanguero," "funkero," "rocker," or "chamamecero"; free from negative connotations.
5. According to an article of the *Clarin* newspaper (Almi, 1999), at the end of the 90s, record and ticket sales to *cumbia* dances generated 130 million dollars a year. Sales reached 6 million CDs in the whole country and 1,500 tickets per weekend in the clubs of the capital city and the Greater Buenos Aires. The owners of the two enterprises that control the editions of *cumbia* records, *Leader* and *Magenta,* also own some of the dancing clubs in the capital city and the Greater Buenos Aires (adding up to nearly 300, according to the article), radio and TV shows, and specialized magazines. At the end of 1996 the first show of *cumbia* was broadcast on national TV (as *cumbia* already had several cable TV shows): it was "A pleno sábado," a three-hour long show where different groups promoted their music. Then, "Pasión Tropical" was born on Azul television, and it was aired on Saturdays and Sundays from 6 to 9 pm.
6. P. Lescano's activities as a music producer did not stop there. He created two other groups: "Jimmy y su combo negro" (Colombian *cumbia*) and "Amar y yo" (a style located between romantic and *villera cumbia*) and produced their compositions.
7. The social category "negro" in Argentina does not necessarily refer to the Afro-Argentine or the Afro-American. Rather, it refers to the phenotypical indigenous inheritance of a great part of the Argentine population, mostly from the northeastern and northwestern provinces of the country (amongst

which traces from the Afro population can also be found). Originally known as "cabecitas negras," they were politically linked to Peronism when part of the rural population arrived in Buenos Aires as laborers during the Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) period of the 40s. In time, this category changed and represented, in some way, the "poor without dignity," that is, those who do not work because, in the popular imagination, they would not want to, they would rather be drunk. The *negros* live at the *villas miserias*, where the notions of the "*villero*" and the "negro" are tightly connected.

8. In Spanish, "*que soy un villero, que soy un negro porque me gusta la cumbia*" (Flor de Piedra, "Cumbia cabeza," La vanda más loca, 1999).
9. However, this must not be considered as an exclusionary identity mark. In the neighborhoods other genres are also listened to among the young, rock and "hybrid" versions of *cumbia* are mixed with other genres: rap, reggae, samba, and even rock chabón, the *cumbiastone*. In this sense, and from my fieldwork experience in a poor neighborhood in the north of the Greater Buenos Aires, the definition of "legitimate" rock (that is, appreciated and listened to by the *villeros*) is selective, and can include the groups "Patricio Rey y sus Redonditos de Ricota" and the British "Rolling Stones," but exclude Argentine rockers such as Charly García, Luis Alberto Spinetta, and the American band "Aerosmith."
10. Similar references can be found in the Brazilian samba as L. Vianna (1998) and R. Oliven (1989, 2001) show.
11. This statement must be also considered as a counterpart of another one that refers to the "manufactured" bands by record label companies, whom he regards as real thieves: "*. . . if I went to see Comanche, I would hit my head to a wall . . . how could they be such thieves! A mini disc, choreography and five stupid guys took all the money*" (Bellas, 2001b: 11). In this sense, and as we'll see, what's worth for the *villero* masculinity—for the workers or the thieves—is the effort and the risk that is put in place to obtain what it is wanted.
12. As happened to other chapters in this book, it was impossible to pay the amount of money that was requested by the authors of the songs to publish the lyrics we mention in this chapter. Therefore, it is impossible to quote them at length. The absurdity to treat academic products as if they were commercial ones makes even less sense if we know that the lyrics are readily available on the Internet. The only thing that the reader has to do is to enter the name of the different songs we mention here in any search engine to rapidly find those lyrics.
13. Szulik and Kuasñosky also point out theft as the main "productive" activity of the young groups they worked with (1994: 265).
14. In the case of Brazilian popular music Ruben Oliven, 1997, can be consulted.
15. *Leadermusic.com* is a publication, sold in newsstands, of the *Leader* record company, which is sold along with a copy of the CD of the group to which the number is dedicated. The same editors publish, with an identical format, *sitiotropical.com*, that in an interview in volume 3 advanced the arguments I reproduce next.

16. In Spanish, "*. . . en muchos boliches no podemos tocar por nuestras letras . . . por la gente que convocamos, gente de nivel económicamente bajo. Los discriminan por ser villeros, porque van con zapatillas gastadas o un pantalón roto. Creen que vas a ir a un baile a pelear o a robar . . .* " (cf. Leadermusic.com).
17. In Spanish, "*La piratería no es mi problema, es un problema de las compañías. A ellas les duele más el bolsillo por el asunto. Por mí, que se vayan a cagar. Me dan dos mangos por disco, entonces que se los metan en el culo. . . . No me interesa. Prefiero dárselos a un pirata y que lleguen a la gente.*" (Riera 2001: 63).
18. Lyricists are all men. Except for *La Piba,* who claimed that she co-wrote songs with her producer, although maybe her producer only authored the songs to "support" them within the record company and to benefit from author's copyrights. This is a regular practice among artists who are not yet established in the tropical market.
19. See also Oliven 1989.
20. In Spanish, *Mi cara me vende. Me ven pinta de "secuestro," tengo cara de chorro y por más que tenga los documentos y los papeles del auto, igual me llevan.* (Pablo Lescano in Correa & Labate 2001: 56) *A mí no me dejan entrar en los boliches por portación de cara, pero en Coyote o Buenos Aires News* [a medium high-class discotheque in Buenos Aires] *bailan mis canciones.* (P. Lescano in Bazán 2001: 93).
21. P. Vila (1989) shows how, through national rock, young people (in the after years of the dictatorship) "created and supported new values" (id: 123), in opposition to the ones "imposed by society" (id: 124). The author shows how rock is established "in front of a social system characterized as hypocritical, repressive, violent, materialist, individualist, routinary, alienated, shallow and authoritarian" (id).

5

Cumbia and Latin-American Migration in Buenos Aires, Argentina: Identity Negotiation Processes in Two Ethnic/ National Dance Halls

Pablo Vila and Malvina Silba

In Situ 1

It is Saturday night and Malvina goes to Cachaquísimo, a dance hall located in a working-class Buenos Aires suburb, which is frequented mostly by immigrants and second-generation young Paraguayans. She arrives at 1:00 AM and the music playing is "Los Chicos del Anden," a very well-known Argentine cumbia villera song by Yerba Brava. Malvina is waiting for her boyfriend to arrive. In the interim she is asked to dance by a young boy, Carlos, and the following conversation ensues, which accentuates the feelings of racial discrimination and tension that sometimes characterize certain music venues in Buenos Aires:

"*My name is Carlos, what's yours?*"
"*Malvina.*"
"*Do you want to dance?*
"*No, thanks but no.*"
"*Do you have a boyfriend?*"
"*Yes.*"
"*Are you expecting him?*"
"*Yes, in a little while.*"

"OK. So we can dance."
"No, really, thanks."
"Look, I'm Argentine."
(Surprised by the statement, it took a while for Malvina to come up with an answer . . .)
She puts her hand on his shoulder and, with as positive vibes she can muster to call up,
Malvina replied:
"Me too, no problem, but I don't want to dance."
"OK then, bye bye."

It is clear that Malvina's prospective dance partner thinks that she may discriminate against him and not wish to dance with him if she believes he just arrived from Paraguay, and that she may feel more disposed to dance with him if he is actually born in Argentina. This is so because racism in Buenos Aires is quite rampant and Paraguayans are one of its targets.

In Situ 2

It is Saturday night and Malvina and her friend Amanda go to Kory, the most prominent Bolivian dance hall of Buenos Aires city. They arrive and the music playing is "Bombón Asesino," by Los Palmeras, another well-known Argentine cumbia. Malvina, once more, is waiting for her boyfriend to arrive and, again not long after they have arrived, a number of young men whose phenotypic profile in no way distinguishes them from their mostly Bolivian dance hall counterparts, asked Malvina and her friend (neither of whom was phenotypically Bolivian—Malvina much taller with lighter skin and eyes, and her friend, shorter than she, but also very light-skinned) to dance. Interestingly enough, just as had happened with Malvina in the Paraguayan dance hall, these young men took for granted that denying their ethnic/national background and showing an Argentine pedigree would help them in their attempt to dance with Malvina and Amanda. Thus, the first young man said his parents were Peruvian, but he himself Argentine; the second said he was from the province of Salta, and the third, that he was "from here" and, in reference to the people he had come with, pointing to "those over there," he claimed that "they're Bolivian." As we can see it is not by chance that Bolivians are also a ready target to Buenos Aires's xenophobic relationship with its "darker others."

It becomes clear from these two fragments of conversation between the women and prospective dance partners that in Buenos Aires (as shown in these two different bailantas) race/ethnicity/skin color/accent and perceived ethnic origin in relation to what it means to be Argentine

defines the nature of many significant casual relationships, and that to be of Bolivian/Paraguayan/Amerindian origin means that one will be classed as an "outsider," an "other," due to widespread racial hierarchies that place those most close to a Hispanic/European white Argentine model in positions of dominance, and those of Amerindian origin as "negros" or lower down the social scale, itself mapped onto/defined by, among other things, racial/ethnic/national origin.[1]

The two vignettes that open this chapter introduce us to the complex processes of identity negotiation that occur in the most important dance halls that Paraguayan and Bolivian young people go to every Friday and Saturday night to enjoy themselves. Dancing Argentine cumbia in the context of a clearly ethnic (non-Argentine) dance hall, while somehow denying their ethnic backgrounds if they feel it is necessary to "conquer" a young woman and dance with her, is the way many young members of the two most important Latin American immigrant groups currently living in Argentina accomplish the complicated task of performing their "otherness" (clearly marked on their bodies), in the context of "white" Buenos Aires. This chapter attempts to understand these complex processes of identity negotiation where cumbia (its lyrics, music, choreographies, and performances) occupies centre stage.

The chapter begins with a brief introduction to cumbia and the places where it is danced in Buenos Aires. After positioning our research in the context of racial and ethnic studies in Argentina, without which the meaning of the term "Negro" as it is used in Argentina cannot be understood, we start documenting the complex processes of identity construction that young Bolivians and Paraguayans undergo in the context of a city whose inhabitants consider themselves to be "Whites" and portray the immigrants from neighboring Latin American countries as "the racial, ethnic, and national other."

We do so by analyzing the commonalities and differences between two very popular ethnic dance halls, a Bolivian (Kory) and a Paraguayan bailanta (Cachaquísimo). In these dance halls we show how diverse references to what is Bolivian and Paraguayan are complexly intertwined with allusions to Argentine cultural markers (Argentine music at the forefront) in a dialogic relationship (a continuous conversation) that illustrates the complex processes of identity construction these young immigrants undergo in contemporary Buenos Aires (a city that does not welcome them with open arms, except as cheap and disposable labor).

The chapter ends with a general discussion on what the meaning of "the ethnic" is in a globalized world. In doing this, we consider how complex the mixing of the Bolivian, Paraguayan, and Argentine (but also U.S., Colombian, and Mexican) musical artefacts is. These artefacts are

combined in both of the bailantas to position the young people that pack them every weekend either as "Bolivian" or "Paraguayan" immigrants living in Buenos Aires.

Introduction

Cumbia, one of the most popular Colombian dance genres with lyrics, spread all over the Latin American subcontinent in the late 1950s and early 1960s. In Argentina, even though in its origins it remained quite faithful to the Colombian cumbia of the 1950s, the genre was modifying its music, rhythm, instrumentation, and choreography over time. Currently there are several types of cumbia in the country, differing from each other in terms of their music and types of lyrics, such as the romantic cumbia, the Santa Fe cumbia, and the villera. However, in its different incarnations, cumbia is the dance music of choice of the Argentine popular sectors, prominently of those living in Buenos Aires whose ancestry is either from the Argentine countryside or from neighboring countries such as Bolivia and Paraguay. In a word, cumbia, from the point of view of official, mainstream, "white" Argentina, is "música de negros" [Negro music].

Since the late 1980s, cumbia has been homogenized and stigmatized as "bailanta music" in the mass media; and bailanta and bailantero are labels that serve to address genre musicians and fans as mestizos (Negros), and immigrants (either from the Argentine countryside or neighboring countries—especially Paraguay and Bolivia).

In contemporary Argentina, making "Negro" synonymous with bailantero multiplies the stigma: if being called Negro is derogatory, appending bailantero to it maximizes the insult. The fact that cumbia is also the music of choice of immigrants from Bolivia and Paraguay (who are often more indigenous in appearance than provincial Argentines) only serves to confirm the affinity between cumbia and "Negros."

In the present chapter, our aim is to examine the bailanta phenomenon from the perspective of a topic that was touched on above: cumbia is the music that young Bolivian and Paraguayan immigrants choose to dance to. In short, it is the dance music of choice of "the Negros' Negros."

While a handful of studies have been conducted on cumbia in Argentina (Alabarces 2008; Cragnolini 1998, 2006; Elbaum 1994; Flores 1993; Lewin 1994; Martín 2006, 2008; Míguez 2006; Pujol 1999, 2006; Silba 2008a, 2008b; Vila and Semán 2006), none has attempted to understand why Bolivians and Paraguayans have chosen cumbia, "Argentine style," as their favorite form of dance music. This chapter, based on fieldwork in two of the most important dance halls ("bailantas") of the Bolivian and Paraguayan communities in Buenos Aires, attempts to fill this academic

void. Considering that the Paraguayan and Bolivian communities are the two most important immigrant communities of the country (they comprise 35.2% and 25.3% of the immigration coming from neighboring countries [Buccafusca 2009]) and that Argentine racism against them is quite rampant, understanding this process of cultural identity negotiation can shed some light onto the difficult process of adjusting to a country that, for the most part, does not necessarily welcome them with open arms.

Our research question approaching the topic was: what accounts for cumbia's appeal to Bolivians and Paraguayans, who enjoy dancing to it every weekend in bailantas everyone knows as "Bolivian" or "Paraguayan" bailantas? An initial, extemporaneous response would be that it plays a part in negotiating the complex identity of Bolivian and Paraguayan immigrants living in the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires, a city identified in the hegemonic popular imaginary as "white" and "middle class," within which they occupy the position of "underlings' underlings," given the animosity many residents feel toward "Negros" that aren't even Argentines.

It is noteworthy that each of these two immigrant communities establishes its own relationship with cumbia, and that both are different from that of Argentine cumbieros. What do we mean by this (table 5.1)?

Table 5.1 Kory and Cachaquisimo's main features

	Kory	*Cachaquisimo*
Clientele	First, second and third generation young Bolivians	First, second and third generation young Paraguayans; Paraguayan families
Location	Buenos Aires City Working Class Neighbourhood	Greater Buenos Aires Working Class Suburb
Physical setting	Very well kept recycled theatre	Very precarious warehouse
Music repertoire	Cumbia Romántica, Santafecina, Villera, Bolivian, Sonidera, Colombian	Cumbia Romántica, Santafecina, Paraguaya (Cachaca), Chamame, Mexican and International, Melodic Music
Food/bar details	Alcoholic drinks, Empanadas	Alcoholic drinks; Hamburgers, Hot dogs; Paraguayan food. Comprehensive Food Court.
Differing features	Radio link Very strict security measures Relatively expensive entrance tickets and beverages	Virgin Sanctuary; Family presence Paraguayan food street vendors Very lax security measures

Kory Wayra, the Bolivian *Bailanta*

While immigration from Bolivia is not new, a growing number of people have been coming in from the country since the 1990s. According to the 2001 census, the number of foreigners born in Bolivia and living in Argentina was 233,464. While the numbers themselves are significant, among Argentines and Bolivians alike exists the perception that there are many more Bolivians in Argentina than what the census claims (the same occurs regarding Paraguayans). According to Buccafusca (2009) the problem is one of nomination: it is not the same to talk about "Bolivian immigrants" as it is to refer to a "Bolivian community," because the last term refers to both, the immigrants and the offspring born in Argentina. As a matter of fact, the data that appears in the Web site of the Bolivian community in Argentina (http://www.comunidadboliviana.com.ar) claims that by the year 1995 there were approximately 1,300,000 Bolivian inhabitants, of which about 850,000 lived in Buenos Aires and the Greater Buenos Aires. A similar number is advanced regarding Paraguayans, and for the same reasons, that is, there is a confusion between immigrants and "a community of ethnic people." This "confusion" between Bolivian and Paraguayan immigrants and Bolivian and Paraguayan ethnics is very important to understanding the process of "othering" that these communities undergo in Argentina. Because it implies that the possibilities of "passing" after several generations of living in Argentina does not work for the offspring of Bolivians and Paraguayans in the same way it historically worked for the offspring of European immigrants. In other words, the descendants of Bolivians and Paraguayans continue to be addressed through the stigmatized representations their parents received at the time of their arrival (Grimson 2005; see also Caggiano 2005).

Most of the Bolivian immigrants live and work in urban centers, above all in Buenos Aires, and are employed in construction, textiles, open markets, and domestic services. At the same time, they are highly involved in the production and marketing of vegetables. According to Grimson and Paz Soldán (2000, 12), most Bolivians are employed in highly unstable working conditions, due to their lack of legal papers to work in Argentina (the same occurs with Paraguayans).

The most important bailanta of the Bolivian community in Buenos Aires is "Kory Wayra," but most people refer to it only as "Kory." To the casual visitor, at first glance there is not much difference between Kory and any other nonethnic/national bailanta of Buenos Aires: the facility is very similar, the choreography of the dance is the same, and the cumbia musicians that appear on stage every Saturday night are the same. However, a more attentive observation of Kory shows a Bolivian edge and a complex

thread of discourses (understood as those artefacts that construct meaning in a terrain where meaning is contested, where discourse can be either a narrative, a disposition of a stage, the form the line at the entrance of a bailanta takes, the food offered cumbieros, the color of the walls, the pictures on them, etc.) that work to address the Bolivian [lo boliviano] within the bailanta setting.

The most important of them is a dialogical relationship that Kory has with one of the more prominent radio stations of the Bolivian community in Buenos Aires, Radio Urkupiña. This is crucial for understanding what type of "Bolivianness" is constructed in the bailanta, especially when taking into account the fever pitch the topic has acquired in light of the autonomist proposals currently circulating in Evo Morales's Bolivia, and the president's attempt to maintain national integration. In this regard both the radio station and bailanta support Morales's integration efforts by attempting to minimize the ethnic/regional differences locked in bloody conflict in Bolivia today.

An interesting aspect of the apparently symbiotic relationship between radio (including its Web site) and the bailanta is that, in practice, it is more dialogic than symbiotic: the radio station sets forth an identity proposal that the bailanta responds to with a similar but, at the same time, different one. How does this work? In our view, the constant dialogue that is established between the radio and the bailanta (where many hours of radio broadcasting and a prominent space on the Web site are dedicated to Kory and its music, and the most important radio announcers are the bailanta presenters who, repeatedly, allude to the radio in their interventions at the bailanta) produces a dialogue between the "Bolivian" ["lo boliviano"] and the "Argentine" ["lo argentino"] as indispensable components of a Bolivian immigrant identity in Argentina. Not only that, but the dialogue itself has an intergenerational dimension, with the word "generation" being understood in the dual sense of age (the radio station representing to some extent the adult world and the bailanta that of young people) and of the migrant generation (the radio station attempting to represent both Bolivian-born migrants and those born in Argentina, and the bailanta, which caters to the young, spotlighting Argentine-born Bolivians).

For its part, the radio/web page ensemble mainly plays the role of affirming Bolivianness "in general" (not without contradictions, of course), in large part by playing primarily Bolivian folk music. That is, the radio station provides the music that the community in general, and almost certainly its adult members, want to "hear." The radio and the web page present an odd mixture of vindications of what might be termed "what the popular imaginary understands as authentically Bolivian," invoking folklore, ethnic roots, useful information for Bolivians residing

in Argentina, along with cumbia villera videos and advertisements promoting the Kory bailanta as a mega disco called flamboyantly "The Power of Pompeya." In a word, the radio and the web page direct their appeal to young and old alike. However, the radio plays Bolivian folk music most of the time, which is not the case in the bailanta. Indeed, a visit to Kory shows that the vindication of Bolivian folk music so prominent on the radio station and web page "disappears" or "is concealed," and Kory, in situ, becomes just another bailanta, sans the Bolivian tinge that the radio and the web page seem to promote.

This happens because Kory, with its emphasis on Argentine cumbia, expresses the assimilation attempt of many Bolivians to a city that does not really welcome them, above all in the case of the youth who go and dance there habitually, many of them, of course, the Argentine-born sons and daughters of Bolivian immigrants. Thus, the musical bands that take the stage at Kory are the same bands that go to any other bailanta in Buenos Aires; the public reacts to them in the same way they react in a nonethnic bailanta; and they dance to the songs in the same way. In point of fact, only when the presenter mentions Bolivia or Bolivians does Kory distinguish itself from other bailantas. This is really not a surprise because, in fact, Kory is not strictu sensu a "Bolivian" bailanta, but a site of negotiation of a Bolivian identity in Buenos Aires, not a site of a plain affirmation of "Bolivianness," but a place for its complex negotiation.

In this sense, the bailanta offers these Bolivian young men and women not the music that the Bolivian community, in general, likes to hear, but the music that they in particular like to dance to. Within Kory, dancing to Argentine cumbia, what they construct through music and dance is, fundamentally, a "bailantero" identity that connects them to other Buenos Aires's bailanteros, without ethnic and/or national differences.

But just as the bailanta is a significant part of the radio station and web page, inside the dance hall, the radio station plays an important role, which is why we have termed the relationship between the two dialogic. So while "Bolivianness" is almost indiscernible in the music played at Kory, it does make an appearance in the radio announcers that become presenters in the bailanta, whose presence is overwhelming and absolutely distinguishes them from their counterparts in nonethnic Buenos Aires's bailantas. For example, before the live music begins, the presenters are on stage asking the disc jockey to play a certain song, or "directing" choreography on the dance floor. This is the period of time when questions like "let's see, where are the people from Bolivia" evoke a strong response, with people applauding, shouting, and jumping up and down in order to be seen.

As a setting for negotiating identity in which Argentineness plays a more fundamental role than on the radio, it is no accident that the

presenters follow this up by calling for a response from "the people from Argentina," which elicits an equally euphoric reaction from certain sectors of the public. The fact that the presenters/radio announcers were adults born in Bolivia and not the children of Bolivian parents born in Argentina, which is the case for a large part of Kory habitués, adds another dimension to the relationship between radio station and bailanta emphasized above. Thus, these radio announcers/presenters are important in the bailanta because they bring not only the radio station, but also the world of adult Bolivian immigrants inside Kory.

What we find here is, clearly, a continuous conversation between radio station and bailanta serving in the construction of a valued identity for Bolivian immigrants living in Buenos Aires. On the one hand, the music this community, especially its young people, dance to is not Bolivian: it is Argentine cumbia. That is, the music through which their bodies express an identity is Argentine. And given the importance of corporality in identity construction, this is not an irrelevant factor. Furthermore, there is an entire series of other cultural markers redeemed by these immigrants in support of their identity as Bolivians in Argentina: the music played on the radio station, the presenters constantly referring to "Bolivianness," etc. In this sense, the radio station and its announcers express a Bolivianness conversant with Argentineness (the music played in the bailanta), thus negotiating a very special bailantero identity, especially when viewed in light of a certain negation of Bolivianness also present in the bailanta to be discussed below. It is as if Bolivianness appears and disappears in relation to Argentineness in a game of hide and seek that shows how complex constructing a Bolivian identity is in the intolerant atmosphere of Argentina (where Bolivian immigrants are periodically beaten—even murdered—and many of them constantly exploited via a slave-labor economic regime).

The interesting thing (and we will be back to this point when we analyze what occurs in the Paraguayan bailanta) is that it is precisely cumbia, a musical genre of Colombian origin, that embodies this version of "Argentineness" ("argentinidad") that these Bolivian immigrants want to be close to. It is not northern Argentine carnavalitos or huaynos (musically indistinguishable from Bolivian carnavalitos and huaynos), or the Peruvian version of cumbia (with its interesting fusion with the Andean huayno—something potentially attractive to this Bolivian community that is also Andean in origin and cultivates huayno as a native musical genre) that these young Bolivians want to dance at Kory, but Argentine cumbia.

This is not surprising at all, because the issue of identity and its cultural markers is established contextually and historically, where to dance cumbia in its Argentine version (because cumbia is the music that currently

is danced and enjoyed by the Argentine youths that Bolivian immigrants know and, complexly, relate to) is much more important for these young people and their process of negotiating a migrant identity in Buenos Aires than dancing tango, regardless the fact that tango is "the" native Buenos Aires dance and cumbia is not. This is so because cumbia addresses two sides of these young men and women's identifications that tango cannot address: their age subject position and their class subject position (due to the current tango's tendency of being some kind of "snob, middle class" music or being music "for tourists").

That constructing an identity in the chauvinistic context of Buenos Aires is a complex matter for Bolivian immigrants is expressed, not only in the identitarian dispositive described above (in which the dialogic relationship between radio station and bailanta plays a key role), but also in the type of encounters that take place within the bailanta. This is so because the bailanta (above and beyond being the milieu in which people enjoy music and its incarnation in the body) is "the" context within which courting and seduction of the opposite sex takes place. As we showed in the vignettes that opened this chapter, three young men approached Malvina and Amanda inviting them to dance and in doing so they denied they were Bolivian like "the other" Kory habitués. In our opinion, keeping in mind a similar occurrence in the Paraguayan bailanta, in these three cases a certain measure of denial of Bolivian identity can be detected, representing an "acting out" of precisely what the bailanta addresses: the non-"Bolivianization" of the dance experience. In any case, this is yet another way of negotiating Bolivian identity in Buenos Aires.

This is one expression of the identity negotiation process played out locally in accordance with well-defined strategies that, without "lying" or "denying being Bolivian," allow a valued identity to be offered up for the consideration of the "other." To achieve the goals pursued, the only requirement is to display those aspects of the multiple identifications that all participants have at their disposition in any given interaction. Well aware of the prevalence of xenophobia in Buenos Aires, these young men chose to stress the "non-Bolivian" side of their identity when asking an Argentine to dance in a bailanta (because they were actually born in Salta, Peru, and Buenos Aires), which does not mean that in a different context (seeking a job in a shop owned by Bolivians, for example) they would stress their Bolivian side (because their parents and grandparents were born in Bolivia).

If we consider that the quite Bolivian name of the bailanta, "Kory Wayra" (o Huayra), simply becomes "Kory" in the colloquial usage of many of our interviewees (without the inexorably Bolivian "wayra" or "huayra" in the name), and that Kory can sound like a quechua name or a

female nickname, like Corina, for example (a name that is not Bolivian at all), the complexity of the identitarian negotiation that is being produced in the bailanta comes clearly to the fore. "Kory" is not the negation of "lo boliviano," but without the second part of the name, Wayra, it is not its plain affirmation either. As was the case with the young men asking Malvina to dance, whether interviewees used the long or short version of the name was determined by the specific strategic requirements of the particular encounter with the "other." In this sense, the bailanta, without the radio, is not the negation of the Bolivian identity of its constituency, but it is not its plain affirmation either. Only when the radio enters the equation (and it does constantly in the daily interaction of the bailanta) is the other side of the complex migrant identity (the Bolivian part) of these youths also addressed.

Cachaquísimo, the Paraguayan *Bailanta*

Something completely different occurs at Cachaquísimo, a bailanta located in a very popular barrio in Greater Buenos Aires. And this in spite of the fact that many of the identitarian construction problems Paraguayans face in Argentina are very similar to the ones Bolivians face. As occurs among Bolivians, language (Guarani in this particular case, not Quechua or Aymara), music, and food are the basic markers of a Paraguayan identity among these immigrants in Buenos Aires.

As was mentioned above, Paraguayans constitute the biggest immigrant group in Argentina. There were 325,046 Paraguayan immigrants in 2004. More than 70% of Paraguayans living in Argentina live in Buenos Aires and they mostly work in construction, domestic services, and commerce.

Interestingly enough in Cachaquísimo "la paraguayidad" (Paraguayness) is present everywhere. Starting from its name, which refers to the Paraguayan version of Colombian cumbia, "cachaca" or "kachaka," continuing with the color of the humongous billboard at the entrance of the bailanta (the same of the Paraguayan flag); followed by the prominent presence of Paraguayan food in the site; to culminate with the presence of a small sanctuary of the Caacupé Virgin within the bailanta itself. Paraguayness ("lo paraguayo") has a constant presence in the bailanta. Cachaquísimo is also totally different from Kory (and from most of the nonethnic bailantas of Buenos Aires) because even on a Saturday night it is a "family oriented" bailanta, not a dance hall that targets only young people. This fact totally changes not only the internal dynamics of the bailanta, but also the kind of music that people dance to there, music that, in different ways and without minimizing Argentine music, somehow emphasizes "lo paraguayo."

Thus, if on the one hand, a tray of empanadas at the bar is the only ethnic touch linked to food at Kory, the centrality of Paraguayan cuisine in the buttressing of such ethnic identity is much more prominent in Cachaquísimo. Starting with the presence of the "Parador Cachaquísimo" a few yards away from the bailanta entrance, followed by the selling of "chipa" and "sopa paraguaya" (two very popular Paraguayan snacks) outside the dance hall to the line of people waiting to enter the venue, to culminate with an array of Paraguayan dishes offered in a "patio de comidas" (a food court inexistent in any other bailanta we visited) that occupies a very prominent place in the bailanta setting, the ethnic/national marker that food represents in Cachaquísimo is much more prominent than what occurs at Kory.

The presence of the sanctuary of the Caacupé Virgin is another ethnic/national marker that puts Cachaquísimo into another league regarding both the nonethnic bailantas and Kory as well. Given that the virgin with a Guarani name is viewed as protector of the Paraguayan people, the presence of the altar is, beyond a doubt, fundamental for constructing identity among Paraguayan immigrants in Argentina. It goes without saying that in neither nonethnic bailantas nor Kory are sanctuaries or altars to be found, because religion does not have a lot of room in a sexualized place like bailantas.

Finally, and very important for this chapter, what distinguishes Cachaquísimo from other bailantas (Kory included), is the kind of music that people listen to and dance to there. Even though at Cachaquísimo many Argentine cumbia bands perform on a regular basis, this bailanta is characterized by the presence in its musical menu of chamamés and Paraguayan polkas, as well as the more popular Paraguayan variety of cumbia, the cachaca or kachaka. Additionally, Cachaquísimo is the venue where the more successful artists of the "movida tropical" in Paraguay (who are less known in Argentina) habitually perform when they come to Buenos Aires (mostly to perform in Paraguayan bailantas, but not in the nonethnic ones).

The presence of folk music in a bailanta is a completely bizarre phenomenon in the contemporary Buenos Aires's musical scenario, because nothing like this occurs either in the nonethnic bailantas or even at Kory. In general, young people from Buenos Aires's popular sectors do not dance to folkloric genres in their places of leisure. Something completely different occurs at Cachaquísimo, where an important portion of the musical offering consists of chamamés and Paraguayan polkas, rhythms that, when recognized by the audience, are warmly celebrated with applause and shouts. Those songs constitute, without any doubt, the most celebrated moments of the entire night, during which the typical native Guaraní

shout (the "*sapukay,*" or shout from the soul) is repeatedly called out. The interesting thing about what occurs at Cachaquísimo when chamamé is performed is that, on the one hand, many of the chamamés that provoke the more emotionally charged moments of "paraguayidad," are Argentine chamamés, like, for instance, "Tomate una dosis de chamamé" [Drink a dose of chamamé], by Amboé, one of the most popular ones during our visits to Cachaquísimo. On the other hand, if sapukay is considered at the Paraguayan bailanta as being "the" marker of "paraguayidad," the same shout of the soul is vindicated as a "traditional Correntino custom," that is, a native tradition of the Argentine province of Corrientes, highly influenced by the Guaraní culture as well.

On the other hand, we noted with surprise that many of the people participating in this highlight of the evening knew how to dance neither the chamamé nor the polka, but that did not stop them from joining in the festivities, as if dancing and celebrating folklore at that particular moment was part and parcel of being a real Paraguayan, linking themselves to the supposedly unmediated national roots offered to Cachaquísimo's habitués by the chamamé and polka. The other ingredient that functions as an ethnic/national marker in Cachaquísimo and that speaks clearly of the complexity of the construction of a valued migrant Paraguayan identity in Buenos Aires is the prominent presence of cachaca, or Paraguayan cumbia, in the musical offering of the site.

Finally, another cultural marker that stresses the "paraguayidad" of Cachaquísimo is the presence in the bailanta of the most popular representatives of the "movida tropical" in Paraguay, some of them barely known by the Argentine public. One of them is, curiously, Lalo, a Mexican singer who currently lives in California, who has a phenomenal success in Paraguay with a musical genre that, because of the lack of a better name, we can denominate as "Pentecostal tropical music," due to the centrality of the presence of Jesus in many of its songs.

The very interesting thing about this entire scenario is that, in the case of Kory, the identitarian negotiation that characterizes the complexity of being a Bolivian in Buenos Aires on its "acculturated" side involves liking Argentine cumbia and all its variants, and the side of the identitarian negotiation reaffirming Bolivianness entails daily listening to Bolivian folk music on a radio station symbolically linked to Kory; however, the same process of negotiation occurs entirely within the bailanta in the case of the Paraguayan Cachaquísimo. This is done through the coexistence of different musical genres, some of them addressing "lo argentino" (Argentine cumbia above all), and some others interpellating what today, and in Buenos Aires (and this is very important for our argument in this chapter), it means to be Paraguayan.

Why is this crucial for our argument? Because the Paraguayan bailanteros consider many of the songs enjoyed at Cachaquísimo to be "their" own Paraguayan music but, in fact, from a strictly musical point of view, it is not. Thus, for instance, a good proportion of the chamamés Paraguayan bailanteros vindicate as theirs are, in fact, chamamés written by very well-known Argentine authors and interpreters, such as Tránsito Cocomarola, Antonio Tarragó Ros, Los Alonsitos, and Amboé. But even more important, the central place that cachaca plays in the musical programming of Cachaquísimo and the presence of a Mexican American singer consecrated in Paraguay are, perhaps, the Paraguayan identitarian markers that these young bailanteros use the most to stress their Paraguayness there.

This is so because compared to chamamé and polka that, in some sense, allude to the Paraguay of the past, cachaca and Lalo are representatives of the popular Paraguay of today, of the contemporary popular music that they themselves listened to while living in Paraguay before migrating to Argentina (Lalo has been very popular in Paraguay since the late 1980s), or the music that their family and friends who still live in Paraguay listen to today and they themselves enjoy in their frequent visits to their country of origin.

In other words, the crucial point here is that, in fact, the issue of chamamé being Argentine and the songs that Lalo sings being Mexican have a complex relationship with the construction of being a Paraguayan living in Argentina. We know (because we asked about it on account of our surprise) that the majority of the bailanteros at Cachaquísimo are totally unaware of the fact that a great proportion of the chamamés that they enthusiastically celebrate with the typical sapukay shout are, in fact, Argentine chamamés. "Lo paraguayo" is, in this case, what they believe marks them as Paraguayan in a very particular context, in our case, that of living in Buenos Aires. If the same "indubitable Paraguayan ethnic/national mark" becomes an Argentine cultural mark in some other contexts (for instance, dancing chamamé and shouting the sapukay in a bailanta located in Corrientes province—a province that shares an extensive border with Paraguay—a province that is considered by many as the cradle of chamamé), and cannot be used to mark "lo paraguayo," it does not matter, because the important thing is how such a cultural marker works in the particular performance context where the ethnic/national marker is put into action. With the music of Lalo something very similar happens: it can work as an identitarian marker of "lo paraguayo" in Buenos Aires, but by no means can play the same role for the Paraguayan community living in California, for instance.

If what we are saying here has some level of verisimilitude, it complicates in a very interesting way the issue of the ethnic/national identity of Bolivians and Paraguayans in Buenos Aires and how music plays an important role in its definition, where the "ethnic/national" becomes how the transnational is worked out differentially in diverse countries. What is ethnic/national in this context? The (imaginarily constructed) ancestral heritage or the globalized contextually popular in each country, or both? Our argument is that the third option (both) comes closer to what is going on in Cachaquísimo. If that is not the case, it is very difficult to understand how Argentine chamamé, chipá, and sopa paraguaya can work together with Mexican music in the construction of a valued identity of a Paraguayan living in Buenos Aires.

And finally, to state the obvious, for the Paraguayan immigrant in xenophobic Buenos Aires constructing an identity is as complicated as it is for a Bolivian immigrant, and this is clearly expressed in the gender and national issues that come into play during the courting and seduction practices taking place in any bailanta as we showed in the vignette that opens this chapter. Without ruling out another mere coincidence, what is interesting in the encounter Malvina had with Carlos is that, just like at Kory's, the person feels the need to clarify that, unlike other "natural habitués" of the site, he is as Argentine as Malvina. What do we mean by this? When Malvina refused his request to dance, the young man did not say: "Look, I'm a leftist, too," or "Look, I'm not gay," "I'm 5 foot 6 like you," or "I'm Catholic, too." He felt called upon to refer to the ethnic/national component of his encounter with Malvina in order to distance himself from what he thought was the real reason for her refusal to dance with him: a female Argentine doesn't dance with Paraguayans.

Also extremely interesting in this particular encounter with the "other" is that, although the framework of ethnic body markers determining identity was the same as in the Bolivian bailanta, they functioned in a very different way. Since Carlos was not dark-skinned as the young men had been at Kory's, skin color was not an issue; rather, the way he spoke was what gave him away as Paraguayan. And this brings about something different in the ethnic encounters between Argentines and Paraguayans, something that modifies the prejudiced construction Argentines made of Paraguayans, and, consequently, also modifies the way Paraguayans negotiate their identities in Buenos Aires. As many Paraguayans are lighter-skinned than their Bolivian counterparts, the ethnic marker used by Argentines for "distinguishing the other" many times is deflected from skin color to manner of speaking, which is just as difficult to hide as the former.

Conclusion

The two cases we have presented in this chapter offer some areas of reflection that can be used for future studies on the relationship between music and ethnic and national identities. On the one hand, it shows the complexity and diversity of the processes of identity negotiation of those populations coming from neighboring countries whose bodies are ethnically marked as "other" in the context of chauvinistic Buenos Aires and its "white" imaginary. On the other hand, it shows how important are the cultural markers that music provides for such a negotiation. Additionally, it brings to the fore the complexity of the working of those musical markers in a globalized world where it is not longer clear what is Argentine, Bolivian, Paraguayan, Colombian, or Mexican music. Thus, what functions as a very important musical marker for Argentine "Negros" is a Colombian genre, highly influenced by Argentine rock and Peruvian cumbia in its instruments, where the lyrics vindicate precisely the white middle-class critiques about those "Negros," that is, their drug usage, and their delinquent activities and so on and so forth.

In the case of the Bolivian youth that we observed at Kory, we have identified a dialogical relationship between a radio station and the bailanta in which the radio supports the Bolivian side of such an immigrant identity, while the bailanta, complexly, supports the process of acculturation of these young women and men (many of them born in Argentina), but through the mediation of their liking of a very complex cultural artefact, cumbia, that is, a music genre of Colombian origin, somehow "Peruvianized," ("peruanizada") "rockerized" (i.e., in some way, Americanized), and, over time, Argentinized ("argentinizada").

In the case of Paraguayans who dance at Cachaquísimo, we have found that the identitarian negotiation occurs entirely within the bailanta itself, where the Argentinized and Paraguayinized musical products are quite different from Kory's. The fact that Paraguayans choose the romantic cumbia to identify themselves with Argentineness is not unrelated to their preference for Lalo and los Descalzos's rendering of a particular type of tropical music: cumbia villera is (musically, performatively, and lyrically) its exact opposite, while the Paraguayan variant of the cumbia, the cachaca, is not. So, while incompatible with the contents of cumbia villera, the identity-construction narratives created by Paraguayans living in Argentina are in tune with the Argentinized romantic cumbia, at least within the family oriented, highly Paraguayanized Cachaquísimo space.

As we can see, a very complex scenario that talks loudly of how important music is in the process of identity construction for these two migrant populations in Buenos Aires.

Notes

1. In Argentina the label "Negro" does not necessarily refer only to skin color or phenotypic features (which are a given); these characteristics also form part of a larger imaginary construction encompassing not only geographic, class, and political implications, but moral ones as well. Lately, there has been a growing academic interest in the complex construction of racial and ethnic identities in Argentina, a complexity that is behind the paradox that people who are phenotipically mestizos are nonetheless addressed as "Negros," where the label is used to name people of Native American heritage and people of African ancestry as well, depending on the situation. In a nutshell, what this scholarship demonstrates is that in the late 1930s and early 1940s there were a number of different demographic and political issues (the huge migration of people of Native American ancestry from the countryside to Buenos Aires, their political mobilization by the Peronist Movement, and the animosity—personal and political—that such a migration generated among the mostly white population of Argentina's capital city) that resulted in the labels "Cabecita Negra" (black head) and "Negros" being (pejoratively) applied to the internal immigrants who became one of the most important groups of political actors in the Peronist project. In the last two decades or so, the increasing immigration from Bolivia and Paraguay added complexity to the picture, because the pejorative stance spread to the members of these communities as well, where racist connotations were combined with chauvinistic undertones.

6

Cumbia Villera or the Complex Construction of Masculinity and Femininity in Contemporary Argentina

Pablo Semán and Pablo Vila

Since its introduction in the early sixties by groups like Los Wawanco (a group of mostly Colombian and Central American students living in Argentina), Colombian cumbia rapidly became a dance of choice for Argentine popular sectors (an Argentine sociopolitical term that encompasses working-class and lower-middle-class people). Its popularity was particularly marked in Buenos Aires's suburbs and the suburbs of other major cities of the country, where many of its followers were internal migrants from the countryside.

At first, closely following the original format made popular by the pioneer groups, in a step-by-step process the genre underwent different mixtures with Argentine folk rhythms. In the late nineties a new mixture developed, called "cumbia villera" (which can be translated as "cumbia from the shanty town"), which is a more electric variant of cumbia where keyboards usually replace the original accordion and an electric drum set replaces the acoustic percussion of the past. Thus, in terms of its music, cumbia villera developed upon a music genre, cumbia, already hybridized in its country of origin, Colombia. Cumbia moves from the countryside to Colombia's big cities in the 1940s, and it is a genre characterized by the combination of Afro-Colombian elements with traits that belong to the Andean huayno.

In strict musical terms cumbia villera operates with a limited number of resources unified by a dual objective: to be the sonic support for the clear

transmission of the song's message, and to serve as a rhythmic impulse for the dance. Therefore, its melodies use a limited register—generally a fifth—very accessible to untrained voices. At the same time, due to its relationship with the Andean huayno, these melodies often take advantage of pentatonic turns. Thus, its harmony also tends to move in a modal domain quite marked by the sequence A-G-A, the distinctive musical trait of cumbia. The binary meter supports, in a moderate tempo, two rhythmic levels: the patient redundancy of the quarter-eight-eight figures that represent the Andean element which, at the same time, serves as a background for the rhythmic intervention of the Afro-Colombian level—a sputter of syncopated rhythms released by the Latin percussion. All these musical resources are enveloped by the sophisticated electronic sound (bass, electric organ, and percussion) that powerfully contributes to sever many popular music from their place of origin, and to make them apt not only for their international circulation, but also for their local reterritorialization, as is demonstrated by cumbia villera. In the case of the development of the genre in Argentina, a very important nonmusical element—the lyrics—helps to confer cumbia its local specificity.[1]

In terms of its choreography there are two main ways to dance cumbia villera, one, that we can describe as a more "traditional" way, linked to cumbia romántica, and the other one, called meneaito, which is generally danced by women alone and is a more modern dance step. The traditional or romantic cumbia is danced, almost without exception, by couples holding hands. The choreography is similar to salsa, but the rhythm can be faster than the former. It is a combination of steps in four movements in which feet are moved back and forth and toward both sides. The genre is characterized by very marked hip and waist movements, where women's movements are more pronounced than those of the men. The male partner is in charge of turning the female around (as in rock and salsa) assuming a leadership role in that regard. In terms of occupancy of space, the ideal way to dance cumbia is to move around the entire dance floor.

The meneaito, the other way to dance cumbia villera, is a more individualistic way of dancing. The meneaito (to wiggle) has the following features: opening your legs with your knees also opened, and moving your pelvis in circles, you move toward the floor in this position. Then, you repeat the same move to stand straight again. As it can be perceived by this description, the meneaito is a much more provocative dance step when compared to cumbia romántica, and when females dance it (and most of the time only females dare to dance it), they attract a lot of attention. The interesting thing is that these dance steps are not exclusive of particular dance halls or people, because, in general, they are combined and danced in sequences. Many people know how to dance both, but the meneaito requires much

more expertise and less people actually dare to dance it. Over time the meneaito has inspired other sexualized ways of dancing cumbia villera that are either variations or innovations of the original dance step.

Finally, cumbia villera is danced to in dance halls popularly called "bailantas" (a term that became stigmatized over time and was replaced, by those who enjoy cumbia, by the more neutral "baile"). These are venues widespread around Buenos Aires and the Greater Buenos Aires that target dancers from the popular sectors. The entrance tickets are very cheap, the consumption of alcohol very high, and, against the law, they usually accept minors (sometimes 13 or 14-years-old patrons). Bailes combine recorded and live music, usually one or two very short performances (around 30 minutes each) by popular cumbia villera combos.

If in the past cumbia's lyrics were devoted to romantic themes, cumbia villera introduced a sudden change in which violence, drugs, and sexist and obscene topics replaced the traditional love-related themes of its predecessors. To depict the genre in its entirety, we can say that cumbia villera is characterized by an approach to topics related to urban violence in general, illegal practices, use of drugs and alcohol, police violence, and different situations where the authors of the lyrics attempt to chronicle the social situations the poorest populations of the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires endure every day. This reference to urban violence can be found not only in the lyrics of this musical genre but also in the names of the bands: los Pibes Chorros (the Thieving Kids), Yerba Brava (Strong Herb—meaning marijuana), el Punga (the Pickpocket), Supermerka2 (that refers to "Merca" for cocaine), and the covers of their CDs, as well as the various performances these bands offer on musical and television shows. At the same time, in terms of gender relationships, many of the songs of the genre have moved from depictions of romantic love to misogynist, sexist, and even obscene depiction of women and sexual relationships, as we will abundantly show below. In this chapter we want to display the complex relationship many young women in Argentina have with the sexist and obscene lyrics of cumbia villera that, many times, portray them as "sluts." In the process of doing so we will also show how certain "activation" of female sexuality is at play, and how such activation produces the fear that many male-centered lyrics seem to depict. The data from which our analysis originates is based on fieldwork that started in December 2005 and continues nowadays, in which we interviewed musicians and followers of different popular musical genres in the Greater Buenos Aires. At the same time, several months of participant observation were conducted in concerts and dance halls. But why do we claim that cumbia villera is misogynist? Let's consider what a very popular song, "María Rosa" (by Yerba Brava), says about women.[2]

The author of the lyrics is absolutely sure that María Rosa, with her sexy dancing movements literally "provokes" her male audience. But why does she provoke in that way? According to the lyrics, she does so because she wants somebody to buy her a drink. Such behavior supposedly transforms her into an "easy girl." According to the lyrics, "her panties are very loose/if you don't bring her to your bed/she gets very angry." And the author of the lyrics assumes that María Rosa gives sex, and she does not really care about it because she is, of course, very easy. These lyrics encapsulate the most important characteristics of the genre, and, at first glance from the point of view of somebody versed in modern literary theory (a point of view that, as we will see in the chapter, does not necessarily coincide with the way listeners and dancers interpret these same songs), these lyrics conceptualize females as being only objects of male pleasure, claim that the free exercise of their sexuality equates a female to a slut, and see everything a woman does as having a male behind its intention. The striking thing is that, as it occurs with many other popular genres all over the world (rap in the United States, salsa and reggaeton in the United States and the Caribbean, funky in Brazil, etc., etc.), we also found in our fieldwork that a very important part of cumbia villera's audience is composed of young females. Obviously, possibilities of contradictory interpretation are allowed not only by the lyrics of cumbia villera, but also by the music and the different practices linked to this music genre. Based on this a central hypothesis of this chapter is that, for us, the subject positions proposed by the music, the rhythm, and the lyrics of cumbia villera are evaluated in different forms by the multiple narrative plots that members of both genders use to understand themselves and "others." Violence in cumbia villera has been treated in some articles in very general terms. However, the conflictive relationship between genders remains largely untreated in spite of the fact that, as we will try to demonstrate in this chapter, in the circulation and appropriation of cumbia villera (especially regarding women's issues), the definition and the position of women are registered as very controversial.[3]

1. Men without Reins

Let us return to the lyrics of the song quoted at the beginning of this chapter to find possible directions for its meaning, knowing that those directions will not be the final word on the issue until we understand the meaning listeners give to them. Some preliminary observations can be made: considering the point of view of the narrator (implicitly a heterosexual man, as the majority of cumbia villera singers are), it is clear that

the targets of the movements of the protagonist of the story (María Rosa) are heterosexual men, and the goal of those movements is to promote their sexual excitement. Here, the way sexuality is treated clearly shows a man's point of view, without any consideration of a female's perspective. In this sense the woman's desire in these lyrics is far from being hers. As Frances Aparicio points out (1998, 209), it is a sexuality imposed from the outside, "from the man's sense of power over her body, identity, and life. While female desire is alluded to . . . it is never self-defined but rather marked precisely by the absence of any female voice. Masculine desire, in contrast, is overdetermined. . . ."[4] There is no place for any other possibility in the story, such as that María Rosa dances to enjoy herself, to express herself, or even to arouse other women. In most of this music's lyrics desire and female sexuality as the women experience them are invisible, repressed, and, above all, built by this specific masculine perspective.

On the other hand, the intention attributed to buying a drink leads us to think that the protagonist seeks payment for showing off. According to this same lyric line, María Rosa not only wants some kind of economic gain but also is described as "easy." The use of the metaphor "loose panties" reveals a certain reconstruction of the standards of metaphorization: while historically prior Argentine music genres avoided any genital references other than those that were indirect, cumbia villera appeals to very popular sexually explicit expressions of contemporary Argentine males. It can be added that the lyrics clearly state the protagonist's preference for casual sex and her dancing is related neither to the pleasure of dancing per se, nor to the search for a lasting relationship. At the end of the song the negative value ascribed to the protagonist of the story is insinuated and finally asserted. María Rosa "doesn't care" to "give herself" to a man who is not her partner. She does not even care what the action of "giving" (*entregar*) additionally suggests in Argentina, that is, anal sex, which can be considered an autonomous key to pure sexual pleasure because it is not related to reproduction, or perhaps, a simple consent to men's (usually insistent) will.[5] The object desired by men as a trophy, and generally given bit-by-bit by women with different forms of negotiation, gets another value in this particular case. María Rosa doesn't care about "giving it" even if doing it reduces her "price" and adds deeply to her negative characterization. She, who is not interested in love, is revealed as a voracious and "vicious" female and so she is characterized as being "easy."

In these lyrics, quite typical of this musical genre, another very interesting element can be appreciated: the use of synecdoches that utilize a piece of clothing related to female sexuality to represent a woman as a whole being. This kind of approach can be considered in terms of what Aparicio (1998) understands as compartimentation and objectification. In songs

like "María Rosa," the thong or panty works as a totalizing metaphor that implies men's possession of women's sexuality. Therefore, in the type of synecdoches using body parts (the heart in bolero, for instance), those parts are transformed into a representation of a whole or are "reduced to a status of instruments of the masculine desire and fantasies" (Aparicio 1998, 135). In the specific case of songs like "María Rosa," these parts are the entrance orifices (such as the allowed one in the vaginal coitus, or the forbidden one in the anal coitus—which goes against the normative ideal of reproduction), and are represented, metaphorically, by a private female garment.

However, this is not everything, and it is not as clear as it may appear. The existence of an aggressive intention is undeniable, as well as the direct use of the language of genitalia, something without precedents in the history of Argentine popular music. Here, definitely, are all the components that the average sociological analysis would point out and criticize as plain "symbolic terrorism," including plenty of pejorative descriptions of women. All these characteristics supporting Pacini Hernandez's very important point that "if song texts serve to deal publicly with private emotions, then these songs revealed conflictive and indeed disturbing changes in gender relations"(1995, 159). Now we think a deeper analysis is necessary to establish terms, relations of force, and other phenomena that the above-mentioned "standard interpretation" somehow veils.

2. Things that Men Cannot Manage

The song that we have previously quoted still offers some clues that have not been examined until now. For example: when it says "Loose panty, how that pleases," who is being pleased? What if María Rosa is the one feeling pleasure? If the following line of the lyrics states that she doesn't care, perhaps it is because she is not concerned by what people say about her attitude, maybe she actually wants and prefers what she is doing. There are other songs that support this perspective. One of them, not by chance, is sung by an emblematic band of the genre, Damas Gratis [Ladies for Free]. "Se te ve la tanga" [Your thong can be seen] (where the thong replaces the panty) advances the following kind of argument. According to the writer of the song, he cannot but laugh when he sees the girl of the story (Laura) dancing in a miniskirt. Why? Because while dancing with such a diminute piece of cloth she is constantly showing her thong, something that the writer equates with her ardent desire to be carried on as soon as possible to a motel to have sex. At the same time, the writer is absolutely sure that Laura is doing all this for pleasure, not for money. According to him, Laura

is a "fast girl," one that rapidly takes off her little panty and "go down, down, down, down . . . back and forward, back and forward . . .," that is, have sex with passionate enjoyment.

Once again, here appears the image of the "easy woman" represented by the metaphor of "being fast." At the same time, it is quite clear that the one who cannot wait here is the woman, who not only shows an active role in the lack of patience, but, most importantly, in the reasons of her actions: the happy-go-lucky search for pleasure.

However, what we want to propose here is that any analysis done from a gender perspective has a great deal to gain moving from only criticizing males who supposedly reify women, to a perspective that tries to decipher the infantile attitude with which these men, dominant but besieged, contemplate the lively sexual activity of some women and fantasize that most of them exhibit that behavior. Naked kings, but oblivious, they only vaguely intuit the fragility of their kingdom. Maybe the fact that they laugh with a qualified laughter, rather than crying out of fear, signals their tenuous grip on reality. We think the fact that the narrator of the story laughs with Laura's acts is very symptomatic, because the masculine voice no longer describes a passive object; instead, it describes a power, a force. Such a laugh shows either a difficult complacency or, perhaps, a masculine attempt to assimilate the rap, or to try to maintain control (or at least the appearance of having it) that, in some way, has been inexorably lost. In one way or another, the woman addressed by the laugh is no longer what she was in the previous interpretation of the song. One thing is a woman who can be addressed as a "possession," subordinated and diligent, or as a complementary companion, and a completely different thing are these women who don't perfectly fit in the place men design for them, and who don't seem motivated to activate themselves, not even in men's stories, by a simple masculine solicitation.[6] In this regard the fantasized "voracious" girls of many cumbia villera songs perform the role of the imaginary scenario that tries to address the anxious question these young men do not know how to answer: "what really do these young women want from us?" (Zizek 1989, 114). As such, it also provides the coordinates of these young males' desires, constructing the frame enabling them to desire something.

We also have another image of women, similar to the one we were proposing in the previous paragraph (a woman who is proud of her non-masculine activated autonomy and sexuality), if we look at the musical performance of the few female representatives of the genre. These cumbieras give their voice to a feminine character that resembles what we have surmised in our reinterpretation of the masculine lyrics; they do express, to a certain degree, masculine domination, but, at the same time, they also address the insecurity of its form and prevalence. Singers like La Piba

[The Female Kid], does not show any conflict in affirming the value and the choice for a casual sexual relationship [a "transa"], something historically attributed to men, the sole owners of desirable sexual nomadic behavior.[7] A good example is the song "La transa." La Piba begins with a refrain before she actually starts singing this specific song. In that sentence she dedicates the song to all the girls that are not fond of compromise and prefer "transa" (casual relationships/casual sex), wittingly asking them: "you are not going to marry, are you?"). In the song, the writer of the lyrics comments that her mother continuously asks who is the boy who always comes to pick her up to go dancing. The protagonist points out that her mother does not believe that the guy is only a friend, she really wants to know if there are positive feelings between her daughter and the guy. To the continuous questioning of her mother, the girl of the story answers that the guy definitively is not her boyfriend, but only "a transa" ". . . nothing else/Nothing happens, mom." The song ends with another La Piba's exhortation (now to the guy of the story) in which she advises him not to believe the boyfriend role that her mother suspects he is performing.

The polarity that exists between the boyfriend and the "transa," between the mother's generation that does not accept this kind of relationship, and the daughter who claims it, shows once more the active women that so frighten young men. And these active women not only appear in the free expression of their desire, but also in the production of signifying categories (like "transa") that legitimize the kind of relationships that are born out of such a desire, in an attempt to impose a new order of things that can accommodate such a new desire. In other words, these women do not want a serious relationship with men because they want to avoid the latter's notorious lack of responsibility. It is not the case either that they are assuming a male role model for their own behavior. What we have in these lyrics is the construction of a female subject position that values her sexual freedom as a woman, who does not want to cut short her leisure time as "piba grande"—the native term used by these girls—that is, a young woman in her twenties who does not live alone, but with her family, does not have kids and does not want a stable sexual partner either.

Thus, on the one hand, "La Transa" shows how some discursive topics of the masculine bands of the genre are resignified by a feminine voice, showing that behind a supposedly common discourse we can see the actual activation of women. Another good example in this regard is the song "Se hacen los piolas" [They believe they are smart] where the female narrator claims as hers many of the excesses that are usually attributed to men (drinking alcohol uncontrollably, stealing, selling drugs, etc.). As usual, La Piba starts the performance of this song with a refrain, now directed to "all those assholes who like to play clever."

The lyrics tell the story of a girl who likes to go dancing and drinking beer with her female friends all night long. She claims that she likes all the cumbia bands, but cumbia villera in particular. It seems that she has a cumbia band with her female friends, which people of the shantytown like a lot. The last part of the song points out that usually boys believe they are more clever than girls because they are the only ones who drink, "and the boys believe they are smart and they don't know that we have stolen from them the 'ladrillo' [package of marijuana compressed that is used to make cigarettes];" to finally point out that they are the new "fieritas" of the shantytown.[8]

The lyrics of the song appear to be stressing that girls can be as masculine as boys; that they can compete equally in the criminal world, and have the same kind of fun males enjoy. If this is so, it's because these girls are vindicating a power they did not have in the past. This does not mean we don't have to discuss what the real possibilities of autonomy and agency are for these young women. We must consider that the kind of deviant activity they vindicate, which proposes what is usually understood "masculine" as the dominant model to follow, does not seem to let them have paths of their own. Beyond this valid discussion, it is now clear why the masculine fear we identified above, the fear of losing its historical dominant position, has some compelling reasons. So, in their attempt to put their everyday experience into words, men talk about a femininity that they cannot understand any longer. They insult, humiliate, and joke about what is seen as both new and threatening. Here is where the fantasized construction of these active women, whose only purpose seems to be to please men, occupies a prominent role in the lyrics of this genre, because it is only through fantasy that these young men can relate to these active women, that is, insofar as they enter the frame of their fantasy (Zizek 1989, 119).

If some of the women of Argentina's popular sectors, as portrayed by cumbia villera, do not advance their new identities from a well-defined and definitive voice, if they do it subverting the symbolism that used to be masculine-centered, that does not mean that they don't, at least in some way, advance a new identity. Perhaps the men who joke about these sexually active women are revealing concerns that are difficult for them to recognize. We are not going to accompany them in their deception with our analysis. When these women sing, they don't yield the initiative, showing in the process (and with practices that accompany those songs), a potential reason for the exacerbated aggression of men. The changing relation of forces between genders, the fantasized male construction of the sexually active female and the actual activation of women that we have described so far, acquire more visibility and richness in the series of interviews and

observations that we have conducted in cumbia villera's venues. In those interviews and observations we had access to the practices of appropriation of the lyrics and the music of the genre. Therefore, we will move now from a textual analysis of the lyrics to an analysis of the interviews and observations we did in different cumbia villera scenes.

3. Bitch: To Be or Not To Be. Between the Voiceless Virtuosity and the Captured Voice

We believe that the effect of cumbia villera in the process of identity construction can only be evaluated in relation to the forms in which the followers of the music genre actually incorporate its music and its lyrics in their own diverse narrative plots (Vila 2001). Having said that, we can also point out that many of the possible receptions can be grouped together into what Andrade (2005, 10) has obtained for an answer to a question he addressed to a group of girls from Fuerte Apache (a very well-known poor neighborhood). The answer was almost unanimous: "When we go dancing we sing those songs, just for fun. But really, it makes us feel very angry for what they say, because they talk shit about women." The aim of what follows will be to observe the elements and possible articulations that this ambiguous and contradictory conjunction can lodge.

a. Everything is rejection, but not all rejections are the same

If on the one hand there are different kinds of rejections by females of the lyrics, there is also a common element of rejection by most women who find that those lyrics "*les dan con un caño*" [literally it means "they hit them with a pipe," but the way it is used in Argentina means: "they treat them badly"], making them feel ashamed. However, these different forms of rejection will be exposed together with different types of relative acceptance with which they coexist in a conflicting way. To answer the question of what is considered offensive from the point of view of many of the girls we interviewed let us take one of the terms they used to make sense of that negative feeling. These girls assert that the lyrics *las bardean. Bardear* means *hacer bardo*¸ to act against the norm, to cause scandal, *descontrolar, armar quilombo* [to behave quite badly]. And what is it that these young women feel has been *bardeado*? Mainly—but we will see next that this is not totally true—their image of honorable women, their identity of being "*recatadas*" (modest). It is this, and not their individuality, their desire, or the possibility of expressing themselves freely if they want and where they want, which many girls believe is questioned and threatened.

b. Ambiguities and tensions in the reception of the lyrics

The qualification of the lyrics built through humor, the shame brought together with the partial acceptance of the positionings offered by cumbia villera, and the disassociation with the possible commitments those lyrics imply, are a second dimension of the reception we found among our interviewees. But we have to point out here that this new dimension is not totally different from plain rejection: it emerges over its surface, but allows the seeing of other ways of relating to the music.

From Denied Love to Agreed Humor

One of the most recurrent ways in which reception operates is that it gives to these lyrics an intention or a humorous possibility that is the only condition under which many women can accept the description of themselves contained in those lyrics. As a matter of fact, this possibility seems to be common to many other women in similar situations, as Aparicio reminds us when she comments on what happens among salsa followers: ". . . Latinas who are active listeners and consumers of salsa music continuously rewrite patriarchal and misogynist salsa texts. They engage in 'productive pleasure,' which allows them, as culturally bound receivers, the opportunity to produce meanings and significations that are relevant to their everyday lives" (1998, 188; see also Fairley 2006; Manuel 1998).

This, in terms of the processes of identification that many times are the source of the enjoyment of music and dancing, can mean that in the context of the place of enjoyment, the dance hall or baile, the positioning they can take from the lyrics of cumbia villera (those that denigrate or *bardean* women), is only accepted in humorous terms ("*en joda*" as the interviewees usually say). We know that when those same lyrics are listened to out of the context of the dance hall (the place where everything is for fun), they assume an offensive content that instigates the "*bronca*" (rage) and the "*vergüenza*" (shame) that these interviewees usually experience. In this way, the kind of reinterpreting done by these female listeners of the meaning of the lyrics that denigrate them still keeps carrying on the partial and imposed acceptance of a content that in many other circumstances will be rejected (see the pioneer work of Peter Manuel 1998, 15, for a similar reaction among his interviewees). If these girls wish to completely avoid the dissatisfaction that implies the relative acceptance of those lyrics, they should partially exclude themselves from dancing to them, and just accept and dance to the songs whose lyrics offer them acceptable subject positions, such as objects of love, of indirect sensualities, of abandoned

feelings advanced by melancholic men and the like. However, some of them, instead of accepting the exclusion that would keep them safe from accepting an identification they reject, make a concession in the process of identity construction: they interpret the identification offerings they do not recognize as their own, by inverting the value of those offerings, and taking them as a joke.

Ambiguous and Contradictory Feelings: Shame, Disassociation, and Admired Horror

Another reaction that we found very common in our sample is that many interviewees feel shame when they listen to those lyrics.

Mariana:[9] [Cumbia villera's lyrics] *se re zarpan* [they are totally off the mark]. They are terrible. No, they make you feel bad. It makes you feel ashamed.
I: Why? Which ones do you remember?
Mariana: Because of the lyrics, that "they do a blowjob" and all those things [laughter]. And I stop there because I feel ashamed.

Mariana does not feel "rage" for the way cumbia villera pictures women (as happened with other girls we interviewed), but she feels "ashamed." Such a shame can be understood as the possible effect of a complicated commitment, because it implicates the subject in a contradictory relationship. Mariana's phrase tells us about a certain morality from which she, who accepts it, feels the lyrics are shameful. So, she does not feel personally attacked by the lyrics, but it is a morality that is being transgressed. Hence, Mariana refers to a moral limit that is overstepped by the lyrics and that clearly appears in the notion that the lyrics "*se zarpan,*" which means that they go beyond what is socially and culturally acceptable. However in that "*se zarpan,*" it is also said that, at the same time that there is an excess that can be criticized, it is not necessarily the direction of that excess that is being criticized. This becomes clear when we take into account that Mariana criticizes the lyrics not because they "*se zarpan,*" but because they "*se re zarpan*" *[se zarpan* a lot], which implicates that being *zarpado* to a certain degree is not necessarily bad. Additionally, these interviewees bring out the dichotomy dancing/listening previously mentioned with all the ambiguity about cumbia villera that such a dichotomy implies:

I: Can you remember any lyrics?
Lorena: I don't know, stupidities, right? They say that the girls show their cunt, things like that . . . I feel ashamed, but it is cool . . . cumbia villera

has some *zarpadas* lyrics [totally off the mark], but it is okay. Sometimes there are things that make you feel ashamed. The lyrics are very *zarpadas.*

Mariana: Sure, above all that, maybe the music is cool but what they say, [it's not], right?. . . .

Lorena: . . . really this is not for listening; it is more for dancing. For listening, but not for the lyrics. It is more for dancing. *Se zarpan* a lot with the lyrics.

The "I feel ashamed, but it is cool" of Lorena gives us some clues about how Lorena (the one who dances and enjoys the baile) accepts the positionings of cumbia villera as they are expressed in the music and the rhythm of the genre. Meanwhile Lorena (the one who is also a daughter/girlfriend/wife), who listens to music at home, does not identify herself with the positionings offered by the lyrics of the genre. According to Aparicio, this is a common strategy of "selective ways of listening" that tends to "erase or undermine those elements that may cause ideological dissonance—in this case, the lyrics—and stress the musical aspects (the rhythm and the musical arrangements) and the song's value as cultural reaffirmation" (Aparicio 1998, 226–227). At the same time, this strategy allows reconciliation between the elements that our informant perceives as both a breach and as conflicting. Aparicio, who describes this strategy when she refers to the ambiguity with which her interviewees related to salsa texts (that the author considers misogynist), states that (1998, 226–227):

> This strategy allows them to engage in their respective productive pleasures . . . As a consequence of this gap between the music and the lyrics, consumers strategically choose specific listening modes and social contexts in which to engage a particular song . . . [for instance, a particular] song is one to be played at a party and danced to . . . women would repeat the lyrics, dance to it but the analysis of it, they would object to it.[10]

At the moment of trying to find a justification for the contradiction that these women perceive (that a woman can like cumbia villera with its lyrics that "*les pegan con un caño*" [denigrate them]), again appears the fragmentation of identity as the possibility of closing the breach that such a contradiction opens. Let us see how that disassociation works in the description offered by Lorena about why some girls can get along with cumbia villera.

Lorena: That is what the girls like the most, all the *villero,* because *lo norteño* [a variety of romantic cumbia] is not listened to very much in the bailes. That [cumbia villera] is what is most listened to.

I: Why? Do you have friends who like cumbia villera?

Lorena: Yes, because they like it. Always cumbia villera; you go to the dance hall for the boys; you dance cumbia villera for the boys. I don't know. Everybody comes mostly for the boys.

Lorena's comment shows, one more time, a very complex picture. We know from many interviews we have done, that most of the girls like more romantic cumbia or *norteña* than cumbia villera, that *norteña* is what they listen to at home. Why do they prefer listening to traditional or *norteño* type of cumbia? Because, the romantic topics offer them a female subject position with which they can attune some of their narrative identities without much trouble.[11] But these same girls are attracted by cumbia villera because it is in the dance hall where the possibility of approaching men is fulfilled. The subject position "woman" to whom Lorena identifies with (the one cumbia norteña talks about so romantically) needs to find a partner in a site (the baile) in which females are defined by males through the lyrics of cumbia villera. As a consequence, many girls have to feel, desire, and practice (at least partially) their femininity in the baile environment from that male-defined subject position. To accomplish that requires a process of identity fragmentation where the "woman" (who sees herself as a romantic partner, a mother, etc.) is momentarily split from the baile-goer, who assumes this latter position in order to be able to interact with men. What the "*bailantera*" has to accept to be seen as such and to be accepted as a dancing partner is a positioning that has elements that the same girl, in other contexts, mostly rejects. In other words, these cumbia fans have to accept, to different degrees, the positioning that defines and prefers them as "sluts," "ass bearers," sexually active, accessible and even "vicious," or sex obsessed. Interestingly enough, many times the same addressing process occurs even when these young women only want to dance for fun with their girlfriends, because oftentimes young males interpret their dancing with other girls as a "showing off," as an invitation to be seen to eventually lure them to a sexual relationship.

There is a kind of environmental constraint that, sometimes in contradiction with the girls' wishes, carries them to offer their own bodies for the masculine imaginary as it is expressed by the cumbia villera lyrics. In some ways this has been observed by Frances Aparicio (1998, 228), who points out that her salsa study " . . . suggests that perhaps not all women are willing to sacrifice the pleasures of parties, music, and dancing, spaces meant for collective sharing and for friendship, to confront and address ideologies that affect them in their everyday lives." The girls we have interviewed do not reject being called "sluts" in the name of an autonomous exercise of their sexuality. What they claim is some respect in relation to their current roles as sisters and girlfriends (or even their future roles as wives) from

those males who, making theirs the messages of cumbia villera, denigrate them. It is in this specific connotative context that we believe that our female interviewees contradictorily approach men in the baile, that is, with all the problems entailed by approaching them under the particular ways men's desire for women is portrayed in cumbia villera.

Acting like "Sluts"

However, disassociating themselves from the misogynist message of cumbia villera was not the only strategy we found in our sample. In other cases we found a very interesting instance in which some girls seem to adopt the feminine positionings offered to them by cumbia villera's male stance.

I: How do girls dance in the bailes you go to?
Lorena: Showing their panties, wearing shorts skirts, *re-zarpadas [totally crazy]*. There's a song called "Revolea" and they get pretty crazy with that song. Some of them, some others don't; some dance it normally, but there are others who don't.

In this way, some of the girls we interviewed state that for some followers of the genre—but, of course, not for them—dancing cumbia villera in the baile is not linked to a tactic and/or an unwilling acceptance of the music in order to be able to enjoy the party, but is a joyful acceptance of the elements that for other females are the reason of their "rage," "shame," or, at least, "contradictory enjoyment." Similar themes were present in the interview we had with Samanta, Fernanda, and some of their girlfriends. These cumbia *sonidera* fans still criticize the lyrics of the songs of the main bands of cumbia villera because of the way they portray women:

Samanta:[12] There're some lyrics that are ok . . . but, you know, for me, Pibes Chorros and Damas Gratis [the two most important cumbia villera combos], it's just too much, I don't like it, it's way too much.
I: And what do they say about women?
Samanta: They treat them like sluts, like tramps, available, easy to go to bed. And that's just too much.
Fernanda: For me, cumbia villera, . . . I like it for dancing. I don't like the lyrics, . . . maybe the music for showing a *colaless* [naked buttock], but only when dancing, not after that.

However, if on the one hand these interviewees tell us again what we had heard before (the lyrics "se zarpan," they treat us like sluts, I only dance

to this music, I don't pay attention to the lyrics, etc.), on the other hand they bring up issues that will appear in a clearer and stronger manner among other interviewees. What we have here is an instance in which, somehow, the lyrics seem to be actualized, but with a twist, because while showing their naked bodies can be consensual—as Fernanda says—these girls do not see this kind of performance as transforming them into "sluts."

Fernanda listens to the lyrics and positions herself in relation to them from the point of view of a character that, on the one hand, accepts showing her naked body while dancing, but on the other hand rejects the idea that such a performance within the jocose atmosphere of the dance hall would transform her behavior of baile-goer (a behavior that she gladly accepts) into the identity of a "slut" (which she does not accept). In this kind of narrative, even the "doing" of a particular action that is identified with the "easy woman" identity, is not transformed into a "being."

What these interviewees also mentioned was the ambiguity that this perspective entails:

> **I:** How do you feel when you listen to the lyrics?
> **Samanta:** I don't really know . . .
> **Fernanda:** For an instant it's really cool, because you get jumping around, dancing . . .
> **Samanta:** Yeah, but then it makes you think that you're accepting what they say since you're cheering up for it. It's kind of agreeing with what they're saying.

Both Samanta and Fernanda are aware that enjoying this type of music implies in some way agreeing with the message that they recognize as offensive and disrespectful toward them. Samanta's "I don't really know" answer is a clear example of the conflict that such an acceptance implies. As we will see in the following paragraphs, Samanta—as Lorena stated before—enjoys cumbia villera, but only as a baile-goer. As an inhabitant of the shantytown, working woman, or as a daughter, she doesn't. This is the ultimate reason for the lack of resolution on the subject. In the internal dialogue that is carried out by the different characters Samanta performs on a daily basis, everyone has good reasons to believe what they believe and to act the way they do. That is why there is no solution to the tension that is apparent in the way Samanta lives/narrates her contradictory identifications.

Another very interesting possibility of female positioning regarding the misogynist message of cumbia villera was developed by Ana, Carina,

Elizabeth, and Julia, who deployed a narrative that stressed that: "cumbia villera's lyrics describe reality: most of the girls are sluts, . . . except us."

I: In relation to what they say about women, what do you think or how do you feel when you listen to cumbia villera?

Ana:[13] That most women are like they're pictured [in the songs] . . . few girls are modest, not fooling around. We are decent and modest. We are homely girls. But most of the other girls are jumpy . . . the famous groupies.

It's remarkable that in this kind of narrative the performers (masculine figures) are not the ones to blame for always trying to hit on women, because, supposedly, girls tempt and provoke this kind of behavior from them. It is for this reason that cumbia villera's lyrics, according to these interviewees, only describe what is really happening (in this way reproducing, somehow, male's discourse). The interesting thing is that this type of behavior (offering themselves as the object of men's sexual satisfaction), transforms itself from a simple action into an identity. For this type of narrative it is not the case that, "sometimes," these girls are trampy, and other times they are not; but the issue is that they are truly "groupies," in the sense that this particular subject position seems to mark their entire existence as individuals. However, Ana, Carina, Elizabeth, and Julia have no other choice but to admit that, because they are also followers of some cumbia villera bands, the "groupie" identity somehow also applies to them. They discursively "solve" this problem by establishing a difference between "groupies that go into the band's trailer and groupies who don't;" differences that they treat as identity markers that separate different kinds of groupies. In this sense, they, who define themselves as "groupies, but quiet," would follow the performers but only "outside their trailers," and they would only need a "simple smile" from them as a way to fulfill their romantic desire. On the other hand, the "trailer groupies" are literally the "easy girls" that cumbia villera describes, whose desire appears only to be satisfied when they offer sex to the performers of the bands:

Elizabeth: Well, there're different definitions of being a "groupie."

I: What kind of differences?

Elizabeth: To be a "groupie" is to follow several bands.

Ana: And "groupie" also means getting with everyone . . . with each one, or all of the performers.

Julia: You see, we are groupies, but quiet groupies. We follow several bands, we are fans of them but we don't go into their trailers, we don't do anything. There are some other girls that go inside the trailers and, well . . .

Ana: They take turns.

Julia: We know what's going on. They have sex with every one of the performers of the band. As soon as they're done, they head into another trailer. All night long. They enjoy themselves. But we enjoy ourselves in our own way.
Elizabeth: We enjoy ourselves if they come and just say: "hi, how are you doing."
Julia: We just beg for a smile, nothing else. That's all.

Thus, in this kind of narrative, the "blame" goes from the composers to the girls, as if the composers had the right to portray the girls as "sluts" if the girls are "trailer groupies."

Other girls we interviewed not only accept the positioning proposed by the music and the rhythm of cumbia villera ("The dancing part is obvious, the lyrics are meant for dancing, but . . ."), but also recognize that in the playful environment of the baile, they often act out what is proposed by the lyrics, although they find it insulting to women.

Liliana:[14] There are some lyrics that are pretty cool, because we can fool around, we can fool around among us when we go dancing, they sing those lyrics to us, but . . .
Estefanía: The dancing part is obvious, the lyrics are meant for dancing, but . . .
Noelia: When you listen to them for the first time, they're kind of *re zarpados* [out of league].
Liliana: They are *re zarpados*, but later you sing them and really enjoy them. Besides, we go there to see the guys.
I: The guys . . ., you mean the performers?
Noelia: Yeah, most of them are really great.

On the one hand what we have here is the difference these interviewees establish between the rhetoric and the semantic character of the lyrics, accepting the former and rejecting the latter. As Peter Manuel insightfully points out (1998, 14–15):

> In class discussions of . . . songs, students often acknowledged how the text, with its rich alliterations, internal rhymes, and rhythmic delivery, contributed to the kinetic drive of the music; at the same time, they often seemed to regard the literal "message" of the text as insignificant. Such an orientation would explain how lyrics could be rhetorically original and expressive while adhering to stock themes (such as boasting, or glorification of sex).

On the other hand, we find here again what we have encountered before: the same lyrics that are considered offensive and rejected when they

attempt to enter into narrative plots where they do not fit, are resignified and accepted, in a playful manner, in narrative plots that are unfolded around notions of amusement and desire. In this way, the different subject positions proposed by the music, the rhythm, and the lyrics of cumbia villera are evaluated differently by the multiple narrative plots that these girls use to understand themselves.

Furthermore, in the statement of Noelia and her friends a new source of possible identifications appears: the musicians who sing those songs. Such a source, even though in itself does not add anything new to the material already offered by the music, the rhythm, and the lyrics, nevertheless modifies the way in which these music, rhythms, and lyrics are decoded. When Liliana states that "we go there to see the guys," and Noelia supports this with the phrase "most of them are really great," what they are saying is that their interpretation of the lyrics is not literal, that is, it is not necessarily linked to the explicit content of them. Rather, such content is mediated not only by the music, as we saw above, but also by these girls' knowledge and appreciation of those who sing the lyrics. This means that it is possible to shift the interpretation and the positioning in relation to cumbia villera lyrics that denigrate young women when they are able to think that the performers do not mean what they are saying, or that they are, in fact, just joking around.

That is the reason why, when referring to what occurs on the dance floor, Noelia proudly tells us that "the dancing is at its best, the dance floor explodes," when the performers (that she knows are "really great") start playing the songs that in any other moment would be considered by her as misogynist. Noelia's account introduces us to another interesting dimension in the relation between music and identity: the relation that exists between music and those identities that many people only dare to experiment "virtually," but that they do not allow to go beyond virtual reality and enter their everyday life experiences. As Tia De Nora points out (2000, 158–159):

> . . . music may serve as a model of where one is, is going, or one "ought" to be emotionally . . . Music is one of the resources to which actors turn when they engage in the aesthetic reflexive practice of configuring self and/or others as emotional and aesthetic agents, across a variety of scenes. In this capacity it also serves as a means of melding present to future insofar as it may be applied in ways that permit cultural innovation in nonmusical realms . . . [in that regard] music may serve as a resource for utopian imaginations . . .

What De Nora proposes is that music has the capability of being used, prospectively, to sketch sentiments, states, or even identifications that are

aspired and partially imagined or felt (2000, 53). This is what we believe occurs in the way some girls construct their identifications in relation to the music and lyrics of cumbia villera. We believe that the narrative plots of some young women do not reject the positionings proposed by cumbia villera in the way we have shown so far. On the contrary, those narrative plots accept those positionings, but only as a virtual possibility to be performed in the playful environment of the baile. In other words, what these young women allow themselves to do is to explore, virtually, in the esthetic sphere of music and dance, one possible identification (that of a slut) something that they would never accept in their everyday life outside the dance hall.

An episode that we witnessed during our fieldwork perfectly illustrates what has been pointed out above and the limits under which some girls "act like sluts." Quela[15] goes frequently to bailes. She dresses in a flashy way, and dances in a manner in which her hip movements—she's fully aware of this—are celebrated by men. She is conscious of the effects of her presence, and of what her dancing performance produces in men—although she claims to be faithful to her partner. Once, as she exits the baile and crosses the street with the particular clothes and manners she uses inside the dance hall, she hears out loud from somebody's vehicle: "Slut!" to which she immediately responds, "How do you know I am a slut if you haven't fucked me?!"

For Quela, as for some of the other girls we interviewed, there's a practice of connotation, limitation, and management of the signification of what they accept under the label "slut." Some girls accept multiple relationships, something that for many of them (but clearly not for others), for the performers, and for the cultural categories of the social group in which this genre develops, signifies being a "slut;" but, at the same time, they are able to decide when they "do not want to be one." Other girls suggest sexy performances and appearances, but they do not go further than that.

A very complex range of possible identifications are at play here, and celebrating their inaccessibility is, somehow, restoring a good deal of power for these girls in a context where male discourse attempts to reduce that power *in extremis*. If this is so, with this kind of narrative identity, these girls would be advancing a pretty radical way of "listening as women" to the lyrics and music that cumbia villera offers them. Regarding "listening as women" Aparicio (1998, 218) points out:

> [Many of her interviewees] minimized the power of the male singer and rewrote the meaning of these lyrics from their own perspectives and their own life experiences. This feminist recourse, which I have earlier called *listening as women*, balances out the power differentials between the dominant

> presence of male singing and writing subjects in popular music and the multiple women listeners whose life experiences and gender locations are being systematically repressed and excluded in the texts they receive.

To conclude this section of the chapter we could say that girls that reject, accept, or negotiate in different ways the positionings cumbia villera's lyrics offer them would be exercising in a particular way the "productive pleasure" that Aparicio (1998, 197) talks about when referring to salsa dancing. That kind of productive pleasure produces, among other things, a gap between the content of the lyrics and the dancing performances in the dance halls. As Manuel insightfully points out (1998, 24): ". . . social practices embedding music can effectively negate such features as sexist lyrics; thus, even the most misogynist dance-hall song could in some respects come to constitute a soundtrack for the assertion of female autonomy on the dance floor."

Conclusions

We can now gather, combine, and elaborate on the effects of the last part of the chapter with the conjecture suggested in the first two parts of this essay. What we pointed out above was that the lyrics of the cumbia villera stage, in a negative and violent way (invoking something than can easily be labeled as "symbolic terrorism"), through a masculine and intimidated gaze, the traces of sexually active women who, in a way, defy male's authority. The reality that underlies this masculine nightmare is present in the reception of cumbia that we described in the third part of the chapter. These girls are not sluts; they are only not as "modest" as they used to be, although they limit the context of their "liberation." In this sense, some of them play "being" sluts and here resides what the lyrics reflect, in the context of a historical process where references to women and men have been progressively sexualized and specified in relation to moral definitions concerning genders and their relationships. In this specific scenario some girls search for and like sex, and, for a determined period of their lives, they do not link this situation to family bonds of provenance or destiny. In this context girls can dress up, be nude, move their hips and attract men—something that, in a sense, has mainly been promoted by the men themselves—but, as the example we showed above illustrates, they choose whom to be with and the limits those who desire them must respect. This autonomy gets inscribed in masculine signifiers, like "sluts," with all the aggression and negativity that this word implies. But this inscription, like the tip of an iceberg, does not wear out the phenomenon. The component of struggle that underlies this scenario is what must be emphasized in

order to fully understand the complex ways in which cumbia villera helps both its male and female followers to understand who they are in gender terms.

Notes

1. We want to thank Ramon Pelinski for his help in deciphering the musicological traits of cumbia villera.
2. Considering the amount of money that was requested by the authors of the songs to publish the lyrics we analyze in this chapter, it was impossible to quote them at length. Academic products like this one were treated the same way commercial ones are treated, as if thousands of dollars on copyright royalties were going to end up in the pockets of the authors, which of course, is not the case. The absurdity of this treatment makes even less sense if we know that the lyrics are ready available in the Internet. The lyrics of "María Rosa" can be accessed at http://www.musica.com/letras.asp?letra=1516740; "Se te ve la tanga" at http://www.mp3lyrics.org/d/damas-gratis/se-te-ve-la-tanga/; "La Transa" at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xZW-tr0Errw; and "Se hacen los piolas" at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HgjoiSBEZCw.
3. Something similar was found by the pioneer work of Deborah Pacini Hernandez on Dominican bachata, which "was transformed from a musical genre defined by its concern with romantic love into one concerned primarily with sexuality, and moreover, a specific kind of sexuality: casual sex with no pretense of longevity or legitimacy . . ." (1995, 153).
4. Even though, musically speaking, salsa does not have anything to do with cumbia villera, we found Aparicio's book very helpful in understanding our subject matter for several reasons. On the one hand, because we have found that her analysis of the lyrics fundamentally coincides with ours, on the other hand, because some of the comments she received from her interviewees are very similar to the ones we got from ours.
5. Jan Fairley (2006) also found an obsession with female buttocks in regetón cubano.
6. As Manuel points out in his pioneer discussion of misogynist lyrics in Caribbean music (1998, 18): ". . . some expressions of misogyny in popular music maybe indicative less of the actual social subjugation of women than of angry male backlash and resentment against genuine female emancipation . . . the prodigious amount of overt misogyny in dance halls might indicate a *greater*, rather than lesser, degree of female autonomy in Jamaican society . . ."
7. Interestingly enough, something similar was found by Pacini Hernandez (1995, 180–181) in her groundbreaking study on bachata among some female bachateras of the sixties, and by Manuel (1998, 21) among some Jamaican female deejays.
8. "Fierita" [little beast] is the name used among disadvantaged groups in Argentina to name the new type of young men. So, the girls of the song are describing themselves as "the new female fiera."

9. All the names of our interviewees are pseudonyms, and we have changed much of their biographical data to protect their anonymity. Mariana is 24-years old and works as a clerk in a small grocery store. Lorena is 21 and, at the moment of the interview, she was unemployed. Both finished high school and live in Florencio Varela, a Buenos Aires working class suburb.
10. Something similar was found by Manuel (1998, 14) among his interviewees, dancers of different Caribbean rhythms: "Most Caribbean popular music is in fact dance music, in which the literal meaning of the text maybe functionally secondary to purely musical aspects providing rhythmic drive. Accordingly, students testified that they often ignore the lyrics of songs, especially in the quintessential listening context of the dance floor."
11. This does not mean that the romantic cumbia, like the bolero, is not a possible source of sexist and misogynist discourse and that it reifies women as well. What we want to show here is how different narrative identities (even used by the same girl) are connected, in different forms, with the different lyrics and musical genres, one that supposedly respects women, and another that clearly denigrates them.
12. Samanta is a 22-year-old young female. She is currently unemployed. Fernanda is 16 and still in high school. They both live in Lomas de Zamora, a Buenos Aires suburb.
13. Ana is a 22-year-old pharmacy employee. Elizabeth is 20-years old and unemployed, and Julia is 23-years old and works part time at a bakery. All of them, but Julia, finished high school and live in Buenos Aires. Julia lives in Ituzaingó, another working class suburb of Buenos Aires.
14. Noelia and Estefania are both 17-years old and high school students. Liliana is 16 and still in junior high. All of them live in Santos Lugares, Buenos Aires.
15. Quela is 19-years old. She works as a low skill clerk for the federal government and is finishing her secondary education by taking night classes in a high school for adults. She lives in Lavallol, a working-class Buenos Aires suburb.

7

Catholic Inflections and Female Complicities: Syncretism in a "Fan Club" in Buenos Aires

Guadalupe Gallo, Pablo Semán, and Carolina Spataro

Introduction

It is Saturday afternoon. The bar is filled with a few pensioners foreign to the event, along with a group of about 40 women who have gathered for an activity that has been growing for over the past ten years, and that they consider unusual and fun. They are happy and excited about the upcoming attractions, as they usually are on the first Saturday of every month, the day set aside for these meetings. Their activities as members of the "Ricardo Arjona Fan Club"[1] are varied, and include everything: from social aid to dancing, from aesthetic comments to commercial promotion and "leisure" activities, which, in each trajectory, are described as "therapy," mystical experiences, and the cultivation of friendships.

Why is it interesting and how is it possible to have a sociological interest in a fan club? This work arises not only from the scarce consideration of this type of phenomena in Latin America, but also from certain premises that facilitate delimiting and answering a set of necessary questions before arriving to what is a key matter: what is the point of the interactions weaved together in this type of institutions? And, what can they reveal about the links between religion, aesthetics, and subjectivity?

We will briefly cite the premises that first encircle the phenomena and then allow us to question it. Given their reconfiguration, mixture, and hybridization in cultural circulation, the popular, the scholar, and mass culture constitute abstractions, or, perhaps, archaeological pieces

(García Canclini, 1992). This means that mass culture is constituted in a heterogeneous, rich manner that bears multiple social determinations and temporalities, which may be the reason behind its impact (and may only be acknowledged by studying it). This affirmation must necessarily go hand in hand with the practice of a sociology capable of attending to the products of massive circulation, from a framework that questions the prejudices on the aesthetic and social value of these products with alternatives, and investigations without falling, due to the negation of legitimation (Grignon, 1992), into what some authors have called electronic neopopulism (Sarlo, 1994). In societies like ours, where certain institutions of secondary socialization appear to be in crisis, where religions redefine their forms of social existence, where music is increasingly present (Yúdice, 2007), where energies, times, and hopes appear many times arranged around certain icons, it would be idle to refuse to research certain phenomena because they represent allegedly "poor" and fleeting cultural forms. Perhaps, these cultural forms reveal parameters and continuities necessary to restore through the always recommended distrust on impressions.

The second premise is a methodological one. We know about the existence of an intensive, systematic, planned, and specifically segmented circulation of certain songwriting and record label production that promote these cultural products. However, we know little about the modes of reception and signification these products adopt. The ethnographic strategy is thus appropriate: the emotional forms that prevail over the experiences of the appropriation of music of mass consumption are socially created and diverse, but can not be probed without trust, common communication codes, and a context in which trust is articulated and the activity of symbolization that grants meaning to music is explicit. We learn much more through expecting actions registered in real time, and in-depth interviews derived from that trust, than with questions that narrowly predefine the options available.

Through an ethnographic strategy, we hope to identify models of appropriation of an aspect of the "cultural offer" in a fan club, as a way of determining their forms of representativeness. But this path had a surprise in store. The fan club was the center of dense activity, capable of hybridizing social and personal traditions of performance, which were crucial in terms of the knowledge available in the spheres these traditions crossed: mainly those of religion and personal transformation experiences. In this train of thought, the hypothesis this work intends to demonstrate arose in the light of the ethnographic experience: the cult of the singer is developed amidst the double pathway of the deployment of Christian echoes (Catholic, to be more precise), and the assumption of "post-traditional"

parameters of sexuality. Our observations will allow us to underscore what is central in this article: the discernment of the way certain figures characteristic to the Catholic experience (especially those associated to the Romanized, post-council Catholic development) appear in spheres, like the one we will describe, where women of popular sectors negotiate their aesthetic preferences. We will also see that the development of an interpretive community (made up of women of different ages) linked with the consumption of music whose language is associated with the Catholic religion and its popular uses posits the need to redefine the categories that relate culture and popular religiosity. To clarify, our reading of the practices of the fan club and their link with religion is not derived from a reasoning that would assimilate the phenomenon of *fanism* to fanatism, as a degraded attitude, and consequently a religion (as could be done from a positivist perspective or one that is ignorant of relevant literature). Something else can be said in relation to this: the association we pointed out does not overlook the fact that in other contexts, and based on native categories, a careful distinction has been drawn between fans and devotees, and between Catholic and other forms of sacralization (Martín, 2006). If in the aforementioned case, the cited distinction and distance are justified because they are empirically necessary, in our case, on the contrary, following the same logic, Catholicism is one of the foundations that need to be considered when analyzing native interpretations of the fan clubs.

Edifying Readings at the Fan Club

The bar recounted at the beginning is in downtown Buenos Aires, not more than 500 meters from the Obelisco, southward on Carlos Pellegrini Avenue. For decades, the bar, at night, has been a haven for music shows of a lesser category, while on weekday mid-days it is a cafe-diner for increasingly older and poorer costumers (youngsters choose more "in" places or cheaper quick meals). On Saturdays, with the disappearance of office workers, employees, and vendors, this bar transforms into no man's land. This deserted place, halfway from various points of the city and the suburban belt surrounding it, became the meeting point for the group of women who created the "Arjona fan club." The location is not random: it is equidistant from all their places of residence and grants no privileges to anyone, but at the same time, because of its downtown location, it allows for an outing that gives greater value to the trip taken every time the club meets.

Most women sit along a row of tables making up a long, narrow space of around 8 meters from one side to the other. A 50-year-old woman who acts, dresses, and takes care of her body as if she were a much younger

woman, conducts the meeting. The way she does it, does not seem spontaneous: she calls to order trying to make the women concentrate first, and then sanctions distracting behaviors to assert her power. Her calling attention stimulates action and understanding through the repeating and underscoring of her words. This action is accompanied by posters, clarifications, and deliberately simple instructions, together with a diction style that resonates with, that of, Argentine elementary school teachers.

With such gestures, she says: "*I want to invite a friend of ours who is sitting next to me, Anita . . . she's going to read a little something we found, which Maria gracefully provided*." That young woman, sitting in a wheelchair and embedded with the moral authority earned through her ostensible capacity for sacrifice, waits for silence and reads a text:

> *World peace is talked about and prayed for. Politicians claim to seek and aspire to peace. Peace is invoked in speeches and meetings, because peace, like love, is a useful and excellent letter of presentation. It looks good to talk about and wish for peace but, how many people really work for peace? It is many of us who, every moment of the day, try to be at peace with themselves, that is the only way one can do something effective for peace. It is an absurd paradox to talk and even pray for peace when the one talking or praying hates and lives in disharmony with themselves and others. Peace is all harmony, harmony with oneself, with others, harmony with nature, with God. . . .*

The texts that this 30-year-old woman usually reads are almost always of this nature: spiritual, with a message to "reflect upon" and strengthen a moral profile. These messages exceed the very narrow framework of a religious denomination, but relate to Catholicism, to the more general truths of Christianity, and to all the truths that are a part of what is considered the diffused religiosity of the new age (spiritual advice to affirm the self and change the world, starting with personal transformation). She finishes reading and slowly places the text on the table, resting on the silence to extend the moment for a few more seconds. Anita played a role similar to that of a priest during mass, making silence the terrain for personal reflection that is now nourished with an edifying message. A round of applause follows.

The "sensitive" presentation above described is not a coincidence in our argument. It reflects a conviction that came into being thanks to our observations. The modality of encounters informed by school or church may be understood in light of Fiske's observations (1992) on the fact that *fan culture* is a form of popular culture that echoes the traits of official cultural institutions. The formats learned in other institutions, such as school or Sunday school, are important in the trajectory of these women, not only as learning experiences, but also as experiences of assuming forms

of leadership and recognition. In fan clubs, these forms are reupdated and mobilized to organize encounters in a D-I-Y exercise, which also reminds us of Isambert's (1982) description of popular religiosity: a dialogue between the experience of popular subjects and their time, which explains why popular religiosity is not only about candles and tears, but also about the recovering of heterogeneous and contemporary elements in the production of the sacred (this is a case where the production of the form is not solely religious, but it dialogs constantly with religion). In their modes of meaning production, the members of the club even recover the "minute for reflection" post-Council Catholics have consecrated as the moment that follows the homily. We shall see that what is recovered is much more, and much more structuring.

2. Works

Let us delve deeper into the fan club before establishing the theoretical conditions of our discernment. Let us approach a matter that is, perhaps, lateral. What is the goal of the fan club? In principle, the club attempts to honor the music idol and widen, if possible, its margin of recognition. The members of the club organize to request songs of the new records to be played on the radio and attend different live or "*in absentia*" presentations, such as simultaneous record launches, celebrations of record sales, etc. Moreover, they celebrate Arjona's birthday and dedicate themselves to exploring and commenting on the universe of topics addressed by his lyrics. At meetings, it is common to collectively interpret Arjona's lyrics and to discuss their systematic division into love, social, spiritual, and dance themes. In addition, the fan club has many members who can devote more time than necessary to these tasks, creating thus a dynamic whose objectives and practices imitate Caritas's endeavors in some popular parishes.[2] The sequence of these practices includes identifying a group in need of help, developing a material aid response mechanism for the affected group, permanent monitoring of these tasks during the bulk of the meetings, and especially, following up tasks undertaken by the members. For example, the club takes great pride in its privileged link with the "*Dar es dar*" project, where the women in the group do manual work (knits, handcrafts) to provide aid to populations marked by a special type of deprivation.[3] In this sphere, Martina's (one the group's leaders) organizational skills prevail, articulated as a practice aimed at "women-students" treated *en masse,* and demanding the members to respond to a calendar of obligations and to receive permanent stimuli for their good performance. This is not anecdotal. This mechanism is characteristic of a specific generation and

a particular trajectory: women who relate in the public arena from a code learned at school, churches with schooling programs, and state bureaucracies. And this trace is complemented by the welfare inclination of giving a seemingly spontaneous (though unavoidable, according to the members' *habitus*) appearance to the activities the group maintains. The way they treat each other, the propensity toward "charities," and their targeting of a certain kind of beneficiaries (or of a certain way of defining them: those damaged by nature and disease, that is, those who went through some sort of natural probe or were victims of misfortune, never the result of a social or political process) show that their transit through the Catholic church (which prescribes charity especially for those suffering from impediments they "are not responsible for") has not been in vain and has instilled in many of these women a program of actions that may be implemented in any organization. It is not that social conditions are invisible to the members of the fan club. Instead, it is a matter that reinforces the point of our analysis: knowing and activating in other contexts the discourse referring to social causes, the members prefer, mostly because of evaluation and appreciation schemes learned from other experiences, to aid those who they implicitly or explicitly refer to as "the misfortuned" rather than to "the excluded," even when the referent of both notations is the same person. As we will later see, further evidence will demonstrate that this is not a speculation without referents, hence we should not forget to register the terms in which the club responds to the thankfulness given by the *Dar es dar* organization. When the organization manifests: "*Ricardo Arjona united you, and I imagine he is happy today because he knows you care about others,*" they respond with a song by Arjona pinning their intentions along with their identity. In an interpretation where Christmas is fundamental, but exceeds formalisms, they find in the idol the source of a declining characteristic of Catholicism:

> "*Christmas is not about the party, or the lights, or gifts or cakes. Christmas is the child born again.*"

In this extract, one can see the type of Catholicism associated with the fan club. As opposed to a form of subordination and fetishist prostration, where hysteria and miracle-working mix with impunity, the fan club works within the logic of institutionalized, Romanized Catholicism. The Catholic Church, as a machine of moralizing and organizing social work, has yielded uncountable fruits, and these, like the seeds birds disseminate in their migrations, germinate in the spaces that cover the trajectories of those passing through the church. And if Catholicism turned into learned teachings, a catechism of questions and answers, a scholarized

and scholarizable body of knowledge, and becomes the soil where the Catholic Church builds modernity, we find in this legacy the presence of the emphasis on the social. And one along the other is now the result of several generations of transformed Catholicism: a sediment that circulates as a free value and may join other practices and mark them with its particularities. That is the case of what we are going to discuss in the next part of the chapter.

Our argument has to do with an additional point, which could make our proposition either thicker or weaker. In principle, it may be suggested that the "works" are a need arising from another situation. The women participating in this fan club (and others) may be accused of being hysterical and of wasting their time in an activity that is futile for society and family (depending on who the accusing party is, the accusation might be *political, pastoral, or familial*. It can also be made by political agents or sociological pseudo-analysts, religious agents, family members or therapists). In relation to this accusation, doing charity work may be a resource for legitimization and defense. However, we consider this argument does not force us to change the nature of our assertions: the search for a path to legitimization, which may be recognized as a fueling devise, does not end at other activities, and the format described so far, in the same way as the one we will later see, belongs to the Catholic heritage.[4]

3. To Announce, to Testify, and to Care for Ricardo Arjona

Catholicism, as if it were a group of *a priori* experiencial categories for these subjects, is activated in the musician's reception and reaches its highest efficacy in a series of recurrences, which allow to deepen and extend our interpretive hypothesis: Arjona's reception is constituted under forms that the subjects cannot avoid: announcing, testifying, and caring for the relics of Arjona's presence configure a group of "obligations" that are acquired by joining the club.

To announce

We may now advance with other aspects that complement this hypothesis. It is not only about how much of Arjona's message is interpreted in connection or continuity with the increasingly interesting version of the religious experience the activists in the fan club experiment, but also about the *evangelical* attitude arising from the experience. Not only they interpret these songs in a particular way, but also attempt to make their interpretation of Arjona known, as one would make public aesthetic and

moral values through a singer-songwriter. This may be disregarded if the perspective of the observer became naturalized, that is, impacted by the fact that the music idol is the object of an enormous media campaign, that, given its saturating intensity, may be perceived as impossible to overcome or to balance.

From the fans' point of view—women speaking with other women—the situation is different, because no media campaign is as big as their enthusiasm, and the message they bring to other women is one amongst many other offers, therefore the idol is just another one of many. As it happens in diverse aspects of the cultural or religious trajectory, these trajectories are always seen as facing a plural offer, which combines various influences in such a way that what propaganda makes available, the word closest to them authorizes or induces. So the taste or preference for Arjona not only depends on massive media bombings, but often—and just as it happens with many other massive (and not so massive) music phenomena—depends on the intervention of an authoritative voice, and at the same time, on a close one, which allows whomever wants to buy the CD of "that musician being played so much," to prioritize it in the shopping list imposed on him or her as a menu by marketing.

Therefore, it is clear that their activities are considered as valuable by them, and from that perspective, they seem to act from the same position as a youth who, enthused by the performance of a Hungarian (independent) Magyar electronic musician or an (also independent) iconoclastic Basque singer-songwriter, imaginarily assumes meaning and prominence in the odyssey of making their values known. It is not by chance that our informants seek our understanding and complicity in certain types of actions, which entail making Arjona present where he is not (whether by mentioning him incidentally in a conversation, or making a thousand calls to radio stations to increase the number of plays his hits receive, two proven ways of exercising the search for additional promotion).

Activism is also linked to another element. Members of the fan club are quite conscious of Arjona's singularity as they invoke him: they are neither captured in nor do they totally believe in the model of a woman who has traded some freshness for self-confidence, wisdom, and anxiety that, according to the male perspective deployed by the author, characterizes 40-year-old women. It is neither (at least as a declared value) about worshiping a sex symbol (the motto of the club declares, "*Ricardo says he prefers an attentive ear to hysterical screams*"). That other Arjona, whom they see mainly and explicitly as an intelligent, metaphorical, moral, and social critic, is just as important as the romantic Arjona, though less noticed, and thus more underlined: the one who, in some way, may be listened to for therapeutic benefits.

This may sound, perhaps from afar, like an evangelizing attitude. A set of motives that animate the club practices allows us to think that such a similarity is not derived from a judgment external to the situation, but from the fact that this attitude, together with other motives linked to the announcement (testimony, sacrifice, the relic value of some of the idol's personal belongings), show us that certain meanings associated with Catholic practices are present in the group's semantic universe.

To testify

The experience of belonging to the club develops within the paths that regularly address topics such as contact, recovering from and processing pain, gratefulness, and the resulting testimonies on the club's charity work or on the idol, as the members experience it.

The former takes place through a somewhat obvious path: the club admits lonely people who find unrest in their loneliness and a solution in their arrival to the club (beyond their fondness for Arjona). The latter, however, is more complex, more specific, and even though less generalized, it is more defining of some of the club's attributes: the club itself is the place for a healing experience where the meeting with Arjona and fellow club members triggers personal reflections.

Some may not find an answer to the origins of their unrest, but find relief in the club. They learn to get over their problems by realizing others are "worse off" and thus complain less. Some may find in these circumstances a union and a coincidence, which goes beyond Arjona but operates through his persona. This is all summarized in meetings through a common formulation: "*Arjona brought us together and we are grateful to him.*" This goes beyond gratefulness. One form appears to be adhered to the task of expressing the belonging to the club: this form, which apparently imposes itself as an *a priori* category, is that of the testimony. Testifying on the club's and the idol's impact on the life of its members, a format imposed at every meeting where, as unexpectedly as regularly, there is always the possibility to assess that life would be much worse without that encounter.

It is not surprising that several women members of the club play with one of the stigmas lying upon them, and that they transform it into what, from their point of view, can be possible. Fans are not what the word "*fan*" and its more extended degrading terms "nuts," "fanatics," or "hysterics" imply. Instead, there is a certain emotional vulnerability they identify with repeatedly: ailments, melancholy, deprivation, love ache, and sensibility for world troubles, all features that their personal

testimony attempts to show they are overcoming thanks to Arjona and his club.

To care for

A competition with a peculiar prize takes place at a clearing next to the tables where the fan club meets. Couples dance in a strip, parallel to the tables, which is no more than three meters wide and eight meters long, with movements they call "Latin," accompanied by an Arjona song they classify as "Latin" as well (a kind of slow salsa that implies raising the arms while holding the dance partner, swaying the hips ever so often to the sides, and then rapidly turning with an effort that multiplies the bodies' "mass"—these women, some of them rather large, configure a dynamism that alters space and images).

They close their eyes and concentrate on their dancing as their faces show the gesture of someone enacting genuine, sensual love, while embracing their own figures and feeling that beauty possesses them. They seem to have fun and be happy at the moment, as one of them will remind us.

What was the prize awarded to the best dancer? What was the reason for such a display? The price had been previously announced by one of the club leaders: the boots Arjona had personally given to the club as a memento during one of his visits to Buenos Aires. Murmurs were heard when it was announced the boots were going to be awarded, and when the mechanism for the contest was unveiled, there was marked enthusiasm.

Our statement may seem exaggerated, but we'll see it's not so in light of some other facts. Let us say the situation was quite similar to the one we witnessed in an apparently very distant location: the assignment of the image of the Virgin within a Catholic prayer group in Lomas de Zamora (a Buenos Aires working-class suburb). The boots and the image circulated as symbols, asserting an enormously valuable absence and forcing those who eventually received them to testify to their merit. In the case of the dance contest, the prize was awarded, after several rounds of dance evaluation, to one of the group leaders. To us, the fact that the winner was close to the group leaders was evident as a reason for suspicion for those supposedly only judging the merits of the dancers as such. The decision on who was the prize-winner became legitimate because the winner not only was one of the best dancers, but also one of the most active and sacrificed members of the group. Because of that legitimacy, because the boots would remain in good hands, and because they would be well cared for was necessarily a reason for happiness, and any lack of satisfaction about the contest outcome was hidden and buried. That special care continued

at the winner's home, or at least in her narrative, which informs of the status these boots had in the group: she seldom looked at them, only taking them out on exceptional occasions and storing them in a special place. The boots that circulated as relics in a prayer group and granted prestige to the hostess were treated by her as sacred, extraordinary objects worthy of truly reverential respect.

4. Dialectization of Received Catholicism

We will see how the fan club also processes and includes an emotionality where the idol and Jesus are combined, and where the formats of cultivating a taste for Arjona are anchored in the Catholic experience (even when this may serve sometimes to dialectize that experience and displace it in senses not prescribed or expected by Catholicism, as we will see in the following analysis).

For some of his listeners, the experience of listening to Arjona is a way of discovering the freedom to speak, expressed and perceived in wordplay itself. While a scholarly critic may consider his lyrics a display of extreme literalness and literary poverty, many of his fans render them as the exact opposite. From the memories of their cultural consumption trajectories, they indicate that this has been the most moving and the clearest sensation of wordplay they ever experienced and the freedom this implies. A freedom that is not only literary, but also has the capacity to be appropriated and turned into a varied and singularly felt message, which otherwise has been perceived as a monotonic, anodyne word, without a space for thought, and therefore authoritarian.

One of the club leaders (a 50-year-old woman from the popular sectors) finds ethical and aesthetical references in Arjona, partly because he represents the possibility of a critical dialogue with her Catholic experience. It is as important to consider that her interpretation of her relationship with Arjona has set in motion the possibility of distancing herself from her heritage, as is the fact that she referred to his music mainly in terms of religious matters. In her case, the religious sentiment was being questioned to be reformed and adapted (not as a way to renounce it, but to contain it within an ampler personal experience[5]):

"I found 'Jesús verbo y no sustantivo [Jesus: verb, not noun]*' and I thought it was marvelous, the nerve of saying . . .*

Jesus is a verb, not a noun; that thought implies . . . 'people, don't divide faith, borders are for countries, in this world there are more religions than happy children" among other things . . . right? And then . . . I don't know.

P: And why did the lyrics moved you?

Maybe because of the simple way he said it and his daring to criticize all . . . He talked about the Mormons too, all religions in general, not only Catholics, about all of them; and each he criticizes from his own perspective. He says '"I was baptized when I was six months old and they never asked for my opinion,'" he says '"there was a piñata, a party . . .'" and he wasn't even aware. Why do you have to be defined within a religion?

It seemed very open, very personal, I say this because I like it, it's what I feel, he says so, maybe it's a way to see oneself reflected. And with that I was telling you, that I'm shy, that I can't let it out . . . it's like, '"wow, that's good, he said it so well.'"

I love his way of saying it, the way he says things. Maybe it's an impossibility of mine to . . . uhm, well I would love to have that, not so much nerve, but that way of saying things, when you say what you feel and what you don't; if you like it, good, and if not it's also o.k., right?

Since I'm old school, it's like you are playing this tape that was put into you and it's very hard to climb out of, like the education that your folks gave you, you can't see anything other than what they taught you, you know?"'

Let us explore the quote to recover from it not only the discovery of freedom in the metaphor, but also of the "*nerve*" of calling things by their name, which the fan community identifies as a challenge to hypocrisy. In both, the metaphor and the explicit underlining of things by Alicia, this middle-aged leader, reception effects come into play that were unexpected for us, but were later confirmed by other informants and scenes. On the one hand, there is the selective, privileged listening of religious themes in Arjona's music in general, not only in one song like the one quoted by Alicia. The possibility of listening to the truth of the Christian message—grace, words of encouragement, motivation within an atmosphere of despair, and the consequent need to give testimony—was mentioned to us by other interviewees who found in the songs assets we had not even suspected, but became habitual as we started to get to know the fan club and its routines. There is also something else she mentioned: parts of Arjona's attributed legacy are the redeeming of the plurality of speech, the metaphorical game that may be played in the modulation of a religious message. If they can discover in these songs what before they could have otherwise acquired at church, they find it here in a different way: heterodox, free, and above all, customizable and pleasurable (in two senses of the word: pleasure rehabilitated as a motive and the pleasure of aesthetic wordplay). The former—the attribution of a sense of spirituality to a musical experience—may be understood within the framework of what in other cases has been called cosmological perspective.[6] By contrast, the latter—the aesthetic appreciation of the metaphor and the freeing value of

the religious message—must be understood within the context that refers to the presence of values and individualizing practices we have verified in different cultural segments, where individuals from popular sectors practice religions or form communities to interpret musical or cultural references.[7] In the case we are analyzing, as well as in those cited above, we find there is a need (acknowledged in practice by the composer, in the way in which he embraces his words) of setting aside formalities and generalizations, which render meaningless emotions into a general formula, and give songs a more personal expression.[8]

We may proceed a bit further in this direction. Listening to Arjona, being an accomplice of what he says (Spataro, 2010), and the fact that certain experiences acquire meaning with his words, includes in these women's experience acknowledging their sexuality and the value of sexuality in itself, though in its connection with love, commitment, and family. There, where academics might feel affected by political incorrectness, we have repeatedly found that the recognition of love's sensual character, or that of specific sensations, is one of the reactions that Arjona's lyrics promote among his female followers. Thus, the singer who invokes and convokes in part Jesus also happens to be a sexualizer who, with his "*intelligent*" lyrics, fosters among women in their 40s the feeling that "*you don't need a cleavage to seduce, you are alluring just the same*."

In the same individualizing and sensualizing sense, for some, the experience of listening to Arjona entails the possibility of noticing an emotional conflict they are going through in a subconscious and anguished form, or even of certain aspects of the feminine condition his fans find extremely well described like in the song Arjona dedicates to the menstrual period.

Conclusion. Syncretisms: A Fan Club's Catholic Inflection and the Relationship between Religion and Culture

How should we address this type of phenomena in which agency in the sphere of cultural consumption is deployed with religious brandings, especially a Catholic one? What does this allow us to say about the junction between religiosity and popular taste? We briefly state the premises from which it is possible to theoretically picture a representation of a new historical phase of popular religiosity. As a result of this, we could say that a special type of syncretism expresses a new phase of popular religiousness, as defined in the introduction of this book. This concept of syncretism lacks of normative impulses and emphasizes, instead, its character of pure symbolic operation.

In the case analyzed, we found that a religious position is questioned by a musical position, which is, at the same time, redefined by this act of

questioning. But the point we want to make is that this religiousness shows particular features, even though it was activated in the context of the fan club shared by lower-middle and lower-class women in the city of Buenos Aires and its suburbs, and it is based upon one of the classic pillars of popular religiousness.

When we refer to popular religiousness, we basically think about the use individuals make of the notions set into motion by diverse religious institutions and cultural movements. But we tend to think of popular religiousness most commonly within the framework of an opposition between the traditional and the modern, most often characterizing the popular as traditional. So then, what happens when the "traditional," what has been prepared to be reused, the heritage of what is easily manipulated, includes the sediments of religious modernization, such as the effects of the processes of centralization, democratization, rationalization, and ties to social issues, which have transformed Catholicism over the course of the twentieth century?[9]

We may thus formulate the following hypothesis to understand the phenomena: the sedimentation effects we have been describing are already incorporated into the social agents and conform a symbolic matrix that can be activated independently from the fact that the context of action is "religious" as such or not—since from the agents' perspective these divisions are neither the same nor as defined as they appear to analysts. Martín (2006) has done an ethnography of singer Gilda's fan club and through theoretical paths not unlike the ones we have synthesized here (though certainly more specific) has advanced some conclusions that are worth comparing to our own study of a different fan club. In her study, the activation of elements related to Catholicism is relatively weaker and is accompanied by a convincing argumentation aiming to surpass any Catholic-centric interpretation. Our study initially followed that recommendation up to the point in which our data, despite our caution and our original plans, imposed another direction for interpretation. Of course, we will need to make additional research to determine if the differences we found obey to diverse modes of existence of the phenomena or to differential interpretive emphasis. These sedimented effects have greater possibilities of being activated the more the realities of "de-institutionalization" are asserted, in other words, with the dissolution of the religious, which entails more precisely (a) the redefinition of the religious in terms of diverse and disperse practices and (b) the rearticulation of the relations between the religious sphere and other fields of practice in terms of their greater porosity, and their interrelation with the field of general culture (Bourdieu, 1986: 106).

Finally, there is another immediately related facet we may develop further in future research, but should be mentioned here. While in this

club there is religiousness, there is also always something characteristic of feminine mass consumption. As may be understood in light of what is mentioned in Spataro (2010), that which Radway detected in mass literature appears in the life of this organization: the collective elaboration of a relationship with music may be seen as the collective elaboration of a feminine ritual where women explore the consequences of their common gender social condition and try to define this collective meaning among peers. In this process, music plays a central role, as it is the motive for these encounters. As Frith points out, "it is not that social groups coincide in values later expressed in their cultural activities (. . .) but that they can only recognize themselves *as groups* (. . .) *through* cultural activity, through aesthetic judgment" (Frith, 2003: 187). Therefore, music is not a way to express lived experiences but a way to develop them collectively.

The fan club, between its Catholic determinations and the emergence of a tenuous gender perspective, beyond mere fanaticism, articulates a contingent tie between fields of practices that to us are not only separate, but also in great oppositions (religion, aesthetics, sexuality), yet in the syncretism of the "other" are, at least for now, hybridized in the production of small and fleeting differences (see Martín, 2006).[10]

Notes

1. The Arjona Fan Club we refer to is an organization of supporters who recently obtained the denomination of "the official Ricardo Arjona fan club in Argentina" from Warner—the record company managing and promoting Arjona. This organization is about ten years old, and it congregates an active group of 40 people who get together each month for a series of tasks, the heterogeneity and nature of which are to be addressed throughout this article.
2. Caritas is a Catholic relief, development, and social service organization.
3. An association that receives voluntary contributions to support soup kitchens and poor households. It has members who contribute with $5 to $10 a month, and they also take donations of food, clothes, etc. http://www.fundaciondaresdar.com.ar/inicio.htm. The fan club is a permanent donor and sometimes the meetings are attended by an association representative.
4. Specific bibliography gives an account of this debate, but in our case, the discussion has been mobilized by Libertad Borda's reading of various communications and comments we appreciate and take into account insofar as possible.
5. This questioning is not only justified by the extracts of this interview (one should also take into account this woman's practices and assertions more generally).
6. With this we want to indicate a form of presence of the sacred that disregards the divide between the transcendent and the immanent, and, in that

framework, gives way to a symbolic universe that arranges the sacred immediately and recurringly in such a way that there is always the possibility of invoking the sacred in any circumstance.

7. Elsewhere we have mentioned that certain elements linked to an individualist conception (desire, autonomy, therapeutic practices aimed at enlightening and deepening these aspects of experience) are constituted in popular sectors in a temporality and a singularity that differ from the development present in the middle classes. In this context we have portrayed the interaction between religious experience and individualization in intersections as diverse as those appearing between young music and evangelical faith (Semán-Gallo, 2008), psychotherapy and religion (Semán, 2008), and literature and religion (Semán, 2006).
8. For many of these women, Arjona is, to religion, similar to what singer-songwriters as diverse as Serrat or Charly García were to everyday life, love, hypocrisy, and institutional formalisms to women from other generations. We emphasize that is about a different socioeconomic level, a different timeframe, and with other connections, like religion.
9. We based the detailed description of what we refer to in this period on the research developed in between 1980 and 2000. We mainly based our description on Mallimacci (1992).
10. What Banaggia states about the conversion phenomena may be applied to these syncretisms between cultural and religious formats: "*abandonando o requisito missionário de 'substancialização' de unidades, deixa de fazer sentido falar em continuidade (ou, o que seria pior, em 'sobrevivência') em oposição a mudança. Se o antropólogo parte, em vez disso, da idéia de que sua matéria de trabalho consiste em multiplicidades complexas, parcialmente conectáveis, outro quadro se apresenta—um quadro que não impede que se pense em conversão, desde que conversão possa dizer outra coisa. Precisa dizer, talvez, uma espécie de transformação ou translação, uma relação entre versões elas mesmas em efervescência contínua*" [abandoning the missionary requirement of unit "substantialization," it no longer makes sense to talk about continuity (or, what would be worse, about "survival") as opposed to change. If, instead, the anthropologist starts from the idea that its object of study refers to complex, partially linkable multiplicities, a different outlook emerges: one that does not prevent one from thinking about conversion, for conversion might mean something else. Perhaps anthropologists need to talk about a kind of transformation or translation, a *relation between versions*, themselves in continuous effervescence].

8

Pleasurable Surfaces: Sex, Religion, and Electronic Music within the 1990–2010 Transition Folds

Guadalupe Gallo and Pablo Semán

Introduction

The party is held at a relatively exclusive location of the city: close to the river banks, in a complex of fashionable restaurants, cafes, and art galleries, surrounded by wide avenues, green areas, few houses, and scarce bus services to grant access for those with no wheels or taxi fares. And yet, evidently a large number of the audience have walked almost a mile and waited for public transportation, making an enormous effort to overcome that barrier and attend, rounding up the social mix of the event: from hairdressers from the periphery to artists from other art scenes, from those who just turned 18 to experienced 40-year-olds, a conspicuous minority, noticeable and noteworthy.

The premises are huge: an oblong space nearly 400 meters long by 150 meters wide. Halfway along one of the long axis of the hall on a raised stage—30 by 15 meters—there is a DJ cabin with all the usual sound fixtures—loudspeaker columns and large LCD screens. Opposite to that large rectangular space are the wardrobes and the stalls selling speed drinks, alcohol, and above all, mineral water to compensate the dehydration caused by the dancing, the heat, and the drugs. The "party" starts sluggishly at midnight, with the people warming up in tentative swaying steps and walking around the place to find the most comfortable spots

with more or less circulation, trying to assess the optimal distance from the loudspeakers for the ideal sound. For some of them, arriving at the programmed electronic event is but a crowning of the evening—the "party" started earlier, at one of the group members' places or at a bar where they drank away the time waiting for a "cool time" to get there (they generally try to time their entrance with the first effects expected from the substance of choice or simply for the time when "the party starts to rock"). Most of the people take up places they will seldom leave through the "night," which usually lasts to at least 7 a.m. Small rival groups stand in circles leaving their bags and backpacks on the floor, ready to serve as impromptu tables to prepare and share drugs and drinks through the "night." They bring with them coats and jackets for the time they leave, clothes to dress up there, some inflatable dolls, banners, masks, dark glasses, toys or blinking light decorations, bandanas, lollypops, and candy to boost the sugar levels—all of which underline the value of their symbolic infantile attitudes. Indeed, they often mark their space as if they were kindergarten kids by means of a token sign or roping it up with tape or fluorescent ribbons, to make sure no one in the group gets lost or anyone who does not belong enter without permission, abusing a trust guaranteed by the underlying ideology of the event but severely curtailed by particular practices.[1] Many wear colored ribbons or headbands with little antennas in a ludic gesture vindicating childhood, seen as a sign of infantile purity, openness, innocence, exploration, lack of prejudice and, perhaps, also sexual polymorphism that may include, among its many shades, indifference itself.

The dancing begins slowly and sets the ground for a meeting of sensual play, sexual behaviors, and spiritual experiences where these terms come together and redefine each other. We do not mean to say that sexuality and religion are apart—as indicated by the common understanding that they exclude each other because Catholicism, for one, frowns upon any sex outside the boundaries of marriage or even procreation. Religion has always been a metonym of sexuality: any Pentecostal or Catholic hymnbook suffices to realize that this separation is, rather than actuality, something to be read as symptomatic. We do mean, instead, that in electronic dance music, sex and religion come together on condition that they define each other in a specific pattern of juncture/separation.

The dominant analysis made by any social researcher over 40, would define electronic music as a peculiar genre at the very limit of being defined as no-music. "A noise that cracks your head" is what many people may perceive on first hearing it. And this is not a chance effect, but rather the result of a number of elements, which may be interpreted as anti-mainstream peculiar to this music genre, aimed at feeding this

assumption. The volume must be high enough for the sound to become physical, weighing on the body with a solidity that transcends the decibels common to most concerts or events of other musical genres. Bringing into play a wide scope of sound ranges and a volume that impacts breathing and heart rates, it reaches levels that could seem extreme. The length of the sets, beyond most Western parameters of mainstream musical forms, like song, themes, or choruses is, in itself, a novelty. Whether these features indicate an aesthetic purpose or a questionable and willingly excessive practice, we shall see that it is also relevant because of the use the participants make of it: a search for and a precise length of pleasure, and the effort of dancing. The process of creation and composition (the extraction, selection, decomposition, combination, reconstruction, and articulation of genres, songs, and sounds) expressed by each set[2] educates and recruits followers as a result of the way the composition plays out: exposure to something new and unknown or a fresh presentation of the known. The same sound or track, the same song used, modified, combined, and played differently in different events may acquire diverse meanings, broadening both the perception of the old and the acquisition of the new. Electronic music is considered an aesthetic and music genre because of the above-mentioned characteristics, but also because of the varied, intended, and combined addition of audiovisual resources (lights, images, texts, audio, sirens, voice-off) that are an intrinsic part of its definition as music. Because dancing is central to them, and due to the variety of drugs and stimulants usually associated with this sort of musical experiences, they constitute a space of interpellation, eminently multisensorial, where technical, auditory, and chemical components (Blázquez 2009) dialogue with different verbal and paraverbal utterances offered by a number of mediators/performers who lead and modulate the experience.

All the above explains how pertinent is Foucault's notion of *device* applied to the heterogeneous disposition of material and symbolic facts which, at a given social locus gives rise to arrangements conveyed and articulated (in this case, applied to certain dance styles, representations, use of chemicals, and consciousness) in a transversal manner. This is the stuff DJs work with: they are supposed to be able to sense the mood of the dancing crowd, their wishes, expectations, and demands on the DJ's performance, and, therefore, be aware of the outcome and consequences their interventions will and should have. We want to emphasize our thesis in this chapter: electronic music, as a device, allows the meeting and specific deployment of sexual and religious experiences and, through them, affects the expression and constitution of youth cultures, renewing the way they have been portrayed in the rock or cumbia contexts.

2. Notes on Electronic Music in Argentina[3]

From Rock Chabón to Electronic Music

Throughout the 1990s a number of authors claimed that a period of time of that decade[4] could be characterized as the moment rock music reached other ears and other voices.[5] The encounter between popular classes and rock music offered a basis to voice discontent and complaints, an exercise of nostalgia and rebelliousness expressing the changes of life expectations for the young people from Greater Buenos Aires—from the native chronicle of the failure of any work project they might have (in other words, upward mobility by means of education and work), to contesting the legitimacy of those courses of action through the glorification of different types of "illegalities" (ranging from robbery to postulating a time outside the boundaries of the disciplined agenda of the typical worker). The same contents that popped up in rock music had a parallel (and a certain feedback) in cumbia and somehow became one of the most powerful expressions of the way the rapid social transformations consolidated in the 1990s were inscribed in the social fabric.[6]

What has been happening in recent years with electronic music may be viewed as a complementary and contrasting way of linking society to music. In particular, music that inscribes and enhances elements pertaining to the neoliberal trends that pervaded Argentine society from the 1990s on, including the fact that this shift took roots in a contest with the past and the arrival of popular sectors to rock music. We refer here not just to something that seemed to predict the tragedy at *República Cromagnon*[7] and its effects on the rock 'n' roll scene (hindsight criticisms of the genre, accusing it of "poverty" and thus blamable for the fire). We mean also elements that, rather than as a reaction, brought something fresh to the scene from earlier times, in a way both tenacious and defining as well as definitive—a new level of development in an agenda that was individualistic, hedonistic, and questioned the mainstream expressions of gender and sexuality. Through the music scene this agenda could even spread toward other social groups. In a way we are thinking about what the "liberal" culture brought to the youth's world during the neoliberal period, even when it combined various and contrasting forms, its social face, on one side, and its economic exclusion, on the other: electronic music is not in itself neoliberal. Although it shares—as part of a period—some individualistic features, at the same time it contains the possibility of a pluralistic and egalitarian discourse ("multiculturalism") that has been subject of contradictions, tensions, and ethno-class inflections in its process of massification in Argentina. Thus, it was not unexpected that when the 2007

Creamfields edition was held in the Autodrome of the City of Buenos Aires—in a venue that maximized the appeal of the call—the attending "regulars" referred to the "newcomers" with the derogatory "*negros,*" while many others hesitated or even failed to attend for fear of being mugged, getting lost, "not knowing how to get there," or it being "too far" because it was held in a city area far from the usual turf of these electronic events.

We use one last image to wrap up this panorama: It is significant that toward the end of the 1990s, shopping-mall music was almost invariably rock 'n' roll and is currently electronic music. The predominance of a massive genre has been passed to another, each of them associated with a different ethos. That of rock 'n' roll has been minimally described, while that of electronic music has barely been touched upon. That is what we will attempt here, in a deliberately generic approach, throwing light on contrasts, which will become clearer and sharper as the current research advances. We describe here some elements of that ethos, linked to individualistic ideals strongly emphasized in the last 20 years and with renovated originality.

Some landmarks of electronic music in Argentina

Although the adoption of resources pertaining to electronic music started in the 1960s, only toward 1980 would a scene dominated by electronic language emerge in Argentina under the influence of pioneer bands like Virus, Los Abuelos de la Nada, or artistic projects like the one led by musician Daniel Melero who, among many others, offered a novel type of aesthetic and musical performance up to then never seen in the national rock music scene.[8] The emergence of these new aesthetic and musical languages—which made dance their theme and priority—had precedents and was ridden with conflicts. Such an emergence was related to major breaks and discontinuities in relation to the use of technologies for musical creation, to the redefinition of what music is and what is understood as a musician, and the configuration of patterns of socialization in social youth gatherings available for musical performances. Therefore, the local electronic music scene was not born out of any particular principle or ideology, but rather out of a number of factors that converged (musical, aesthetic, and artistic trends in general, new technologies, and new modes of socialization, and consumption of the young), which led to the erosion, instability, and multiplication of the settings of the musical gatherings of the young.

In the early 1980s, a number of discotheques and dance clubs, like Rainbow, Palladium, and New York City, used to dedicate a moment of

the "night"—usually just before closing time—to the new musical trends ("what's new," "weird," "interesting," and also "most electronic"), which as yet had few followers though they had already begun to be set apart from the taste for and influence of pop and disco music. The young people gathered, beyond the dominance of electronic equipment in music production and the gender classifications—always problematic—in music, found in the act of dancing, the body expressions, as critical elements of choice and taste, linked closely to the emergence of the "local electronic culture." Some of these discos, for instance, hired young dancers who, dressed up in very colorful, provocative, and striking futuristic costumes, danced all night mounted on the loudspeakers, invigorating and propelling the party atmosphere. They also worked as budding PR agents, attracting and recruiting a specific target of potential participants identified by their glamour quotient, vanguardism, eccentricity, innovativeness, modernity, or transgressive attitude.

By the mid 1980s and early 1990s the number of dancing clubs and electronic music venues had increased manifoldly in Buenos Aires, catering to a minority group of "experts" and experience seekers. At the same time, some bands like *El Signo* or *Los Encargados* were exploring musical forms by applying new technologies and state-of-the-art equipment. The electronic circuit is stabilized as an option and as a musical aesthetic reference in the night life of the city, and it becomes more heterogeneous (in spaces, artistic proposals, areas or subgenres, and even with new time schedules with the beginning of the first "after hours") opening new debates that stressed the analysis about the dance scene, discussions about the ideas of what is "mainstream" and "underground," the "alternative" and the "massive," the "disco," "the club," "the joint," and also about the "anonymity" or "recognition" of the DJ. Some of these pioneer venues (later on considered emblems of the local dance culture) were Bar Bolivia, Age of Communication, Ave Porco, Morocco, El Dorado, New York City, El Cielo, Bs As News, Pachá, Club Caniche, Fledermouse, the K2 after-hours, and many others. They replicated ongoing editions of electronic parties organized by cultural centers like the Goethe Institut or Fundación Proa; and these first raves—Underground Park, Buenos Aires Dance Parade, among others—are held with audiences of more than 2,000 attendees at each event (Lenarduzzi, mimeo, 2009). Though the phenomenon should not be narrowed to electronic parties and raves,[9] nor to the historic time when the earlier editions of these events took place, in the 1990s there was a considerable consolidation of electronic dance culture in the local context. In those years also, the figure of the DJ grew and changed from sound or muzak man to a professional with know-how, technical, and performing skills responsible for the vibes and responses of a "good dance floor."

The spread and consolidation of the local electronic music circuits toward the end of the 1990s implied, in turn, the beginning of a period of formalization in the production of the "electronic night" and its numerous events. There appeared personalities and organizers, sponsors interested in promotional actions, as well as the formalization of the musical production, the training of future DJs and an associated market—DJ agents, networks dedicated to the transmission and diffusion of know-how and music productions. At the same time, contacts were established with the international scene and markets, with frequent visits of well-known foreign DJs, and the use of the Internet virtual space to exchange information about the "electronic culture" and to promote events (Lenarduzzi, mimeo, 2009).

In the 2000s, and despite the egalitarianism and pluralism that the movement of dance music claimed to have, it became evident that its massive appeal gave rise to a number of tensions. On the one hand, there were events and parties that attracted huge crowds, like Creamfield, whose first edition was in 2001, and a proliferation of venues where electronic music was the main attraction. On the other hand, those who saw themselves as "insiders," "clubbers," or were old enough to have been part of the "golden time" of the local electronic culture, held a very critical view of this expansion. They argued that the original spirit had been lost, as well as the standards of quality of the music, interest for the dance, and the "live" performance practices.[10] Many chose to redefine a more selective space for their "parties," more socially exclusive, seeking smaller venues, holding events that were barely promoted and have a niche attendance. They even organized anti-Creamfields events meant for "the underground," "the faithful," "the clubbers," which were meant to represent what was authentic and essential to dance culture. Beyond these tensions (which would become more radically polarized with the spread and growth of electronic music as a model of musical event and an aesthetic reference transcending the young crowds), the heterogeneous multiplication of the electronic circuits gave rise as well to a local market of producers, DJs agents, and sponsors in dialogue with the international scene and markets.[11]

Religion

Within the device organizing electronic dance music, spirituality is addressed and brought into play in several ways. We briefly describe them to support our proposal: this music genre takes roots in the same cultural milieu as New Age religious beliefs (understood as a set of representations,

practices, and institutions that privileges the values of individual autonomy, holds a critical stand regarding Western dualism and rationalism, and vindicates the holistic character of human experience and its symbolic universe, the continuity between self, unconscious, and divinity, and the immanence of the sacred).[12]

The contrast between the frivolity attributed to dancing and the substantial content attributed to music one listens to (or the persistent question of the "message," whether musical or poetic) is a classic theme of youth culture in Argentina. This tension that arises in most scholarly studies of youth music, has acrimonious local expressions since, for the last 20 years or so, the polar opposition between "discotheques" and "concerts" became the dividing line between the mainstream young musical practices.[13] In the electronic scene, this conflict has been solved in a complex synthesis. Dancing is not a shallow or trivial form of entertainment anymore. Marathonic dance is, for many natives, both an aesthetic commitment involving more than just length, and a means to reestablish the connection with one's own self, to liberate oneself, forgetting about the most immediate constraints, as well as a statement of identity through performance and visual presentation. In fact, with the emergence of this genre, the definition of audience changed to "dancers" (or, as Gore points out, the boundaries between dancer and spectator melted [Gore 1997]). Doing without others, without the current time, without the utility and functionality is a path of ascent, which, supported by extended repetition allows the decentering recognized as such, the forgiveness of the most immediate constraints, the thoughts aided by the disposition and distance that the music triggers (it distorts the known sound world and rearticulates the relations of the subjects with the sound stimuli). Conscious awareness is the result of the kind of disposition and distancing triggered by the music as it de-naturalizes the known universe of sounds and reformulates the subjects' relations to a wide and novel range of sound stimuli. Moreover, even without these possible effects, the dance—the progressive obliviousness of the world and especially the conscious awareness of the others —is a path often described and experienced as a shift of focus, a new opportunity to experience and discover one's self, inducing a dimension where one can meet again at a higher level, transcendent or immanent, beyond the usual self and, at the same time, an exercise of freedom.

Here we find parallel lines with New Age religious attitudes, as well as in the postulate of a continuum between mind and body. Hence the many native references to electronic dance that point to the construction of an integrated/integral/undivided self between body and mind—"dance to go into trance," "dance for the mind," "mental dancing," "dance with the mind," "dance to change your mood."

In these terms, dancing acquires a therapeutic dimension. Together with the several statements on the value of autonomy—the democratic leadership of the DJ, or the exercise of connecting with a self deeper than the daily egoistic individualism—we find the vindication of experience for its own sake, of living the party as a ritual foundation for the expectation and possibility of personal transformation and fresh interpersonal bonding.

In this same sense, another feature to be noted regards the symbolic and practical role of the DJ. The "party" is, ideally, a singular and non-repeatable event without a set script. The musical sequence, the set, is the result of a democratic momentary/instantaneous coming together of music, musicians, technology, and dancers. It is a collective construct with shared responsibility, and that is what makes each party unique. This communion or inter-subjective dialogue between dancers and the DJ is, and must be, constantly renewed and strengthened, and it is never warranted in advance. The relevance of the democratic ideals driving the party, the perception of the DJ as a facilitator or catalytic agent (Haslam)—or even a medium or shaman (Gore 1997)—who, unlike any other traditional musician, establishes horizontal relationships with subjects who are not just "audience," but active partners in the production of the "party" (Gore, 1997; Braga Bacal, 2003; de Souza, 2006, Blázquez, 2009), also has familiar echoes of the religious structures of the New Age movement (Pini, 1997). In both instances, autonomy is the preferred value in a performance that symbolically reduces the power of the musician and even his/her recognition as such. There is consensus in the bibliography dealing with this musical phenomenon to underline the faceless anonymity of the DJ (Wright 1998, Tomlinson 1998, de Souza 2006, Haslam, During), and describe it as characteristic of a democratic (Wright 1998) or impersonal (Gore 1997) medium.

In this sense, each party is ideally a single unit pervaded by a mood summoned and added to that explicit dialogue. The different substances used (from illegal drugs to alcohol of diverse varieties, combinations and degrees of purity) may be integral to this process which, in some way, brings to mind the experience of long trekking pilgrimages—walk, refrain, taking note of what truly matters to you, focusing on yourself until you are aware of other connections (with yourself and with others). Some speak of communication "beyond words," of "telepathic connections," that is, experiences well beyond the everyday routine ones. With or without drugs, it may happen something similar to that represented in a theatrical work about DJs where the star claimed "and one night, one night I saw God."[14] What was said with irony, because it is also so unexpected (for someone so hedonistic and "modern") and cliché (for times when these are often

staged epiphanies), was also uttered with a feeling that conveyed, in our view, deeply, committed authentic sincerity. The meaning of dance as a transforming and liberating experience becomes manifest when one of our interviewees, recalling his love of electronic music said that, for him, it was "synonymous with dancing and feeling right." In Ivan's case, dancing not only has a therapeutic and liberating effect (you can do as you please, whatever comes to you since it is ideally a dance without set rules or choreography), but it is also mixed with certain drugs in a systematic exploration of moods (Ivan, our interviewee, tells us he is trying the "therapy of pits," that is, taking LSD acid every weekend to find emotional balance and focus on his studies). It works for him as a measure of well-being—"If I don't go dancing, something's wrong with me. I try to come over to the disco at least once a month, or at least dance at home. . . . "[15]

That dancing may also have spiritual content seems to be confirmed also by the fact that this dimension is sought beyond the effects of drugs and stimulants, both legal and illegal. This is the character of the events, called *Fiestasanas* (healthy party) organized by DJ Cristian Trincado on condition of not doing any substances. It was not a question of moral objection. They privileged movement from and for the music, excluding other motives, external or chemical drives. The priority was also the point of arrival: the ecstatic trance, the transformation of one's state through dance, a new energetic alignment both individual and collective.

However, as Pini (Pini 1997) points out, the drugs themselves are not the appeal, or what eases the flux of energy on the dance floor or opens the channels of communication with the DJ, what elevates, charms, or transforms. A "cool party" may or not be accompanied by the use of drugs, stimulants, or alcohol. It is essentially defined by the dancing, and the energy vibes it produces together with the music—a convergence or the synergy of sound and movement (Peixoto).

Yet, all these similarities should not conceal something that in the comparative analysis is an obvious difference: the medium of electronic dance music takes in all these elements without attempts to achieve systematic formulas or regular and permanent institutionalization. Though much of the meaning of the experience of electronic music runs along parallel and isomorphic lines as those of the New Age religious movement, they run toward different horizons. New Age accrued, integrated, and codified producing new synthesis of spiritual ideologies meant to describe, prescribe, and recruit lasting adepts to its many organizations. Electronic music has some of its roots in the same historical period when New Age began, when there was a re-elaboration of the countercultural ideals. Yet beyond similarities and differences, it has led a nomadic existence: the parties, the DJs, the audiences circulated and each experience would always leave

something without any compulsion to be faithful, to set anchor, or to outlast the length of the experience (though this does not necessarily mean that there are no stringent criteria of evaluation of these experiences). This, besides our findings regarding sexual behaviors, sets limitations to the possibility to equalizing the senses involved.

In a rare text, Bourdieu (1986:105) clearly defines the properties of the historic conjuncture that provides the grounds for the dialectics linking agents and fields. He states that "the crumbling of the frontier of the religious field" joins a "redefinition of the soul and body division, and of the correlative division of the work of healing souls." In this context we find the end of the priest monopoly, his substitution for the DJ, the writer, the spiritual healer, because it marks the end of the religious sphere as the field to transact salvation goods on the basis of soul-mind-body separation, and also because the rules of the division of specialties and incumbency have been put into question. Electronic music, from production to reception, seems to offer the chance for the dissociation between religion and entertainment to blur and vanish. It deals with the divided experience, in fact, rejecting any set limits separating religion, performance, art, etc. And, moreover, this happens in a framework where native definitions—like those of New Age spiritual beliefs—contest the idea of divine transcendence and undertake the search for resources and procedures to find the "divine" on Earth, in human experience, in dance, and sexual practices.

3. Plural Sexual Expressions

The electronic music space is inhabited by subjects who make plural investment and bets and are plural as a whole and in themselves. At the start of the party we depicted in point 2, we see a sequence of approach modes between the participants. A group of gay men dance stripped to the waist—they exaggerate and show off the enhanced masculinity of their muscles, sweaty bare chests moving through the night, approaching, flirting, and hinting promises of sex. They spend the night in groups, some displaying hypermasculine features, others, instead, ambiguous or feminine traits. No attention is paid to women or hardly to anyone outside their group. Nearby, a woman dances with stereotypical sensual movements with her boyfriend and they are engrossed in each other. No one looks at them or at their sensual display and not even the boyfriend responds to her innuendo. Three women are dancing a little farther off, two of them come together and kiss discretely but without dissembling. Next to them, mixed groups of friends make a point of excluding any sexual innuendo, flirting, or forming couples among them.

We can add images from other parties to multiply and stress the nuances. In a corner, a woman sits showing her back through a deep-cut luxurious gown. Aloof, she keeps everyone at bay with her eyes. When the spotlight hits her face, a slight trace of a moustache shows under her nose, deliberately exposed. Her ambiguity is most stark and her feminine stance convincing enough to teach aspirant models to sail the walkways. At the center of the entrance hall, a man wearing very tight red pants, a black jacket with nothing underneath, and very long hair has just come in, looking around, well aware that people are staring at him. He waves hello as if his arrival marked the start of a great source of joy. His girlfriend, a tall and skinny woman, is dressed in comparatively spartan attire. He is a diva and she a subordinate soldier. They arrive, and the party seems to come alive for many.

We could paint a more detailed picture, but this is enough to make our point, evidence of a series of connected traits typical of the electronic music scene out of which we would like to point out two. First, the plurality of shared experiences underlines not only the weight of the democratic ideal of these communities—like no other youth medium—but also a potential fluidity of their positions and the reciprocal dialogue they all engage in, like a window display of sex and viable and allowed sexual interplay, which are instances of the central theme and offer each and every one identitarian possibilities as well as tolerance for the behavior of others. Second, sexual behavior is a recurrent theme in this medium: sexual choices and gender positioning are plurally displayed, they coexist and even interpellate—with no limits but regulated by norms aimed at keeping to a minimum rejections and invasions. Even the most provocative figure only earns an approach that results as an effect of subtle adjustment of expectations, something that makes it consensual even though it may be *post facto*. Any breach of this spirit is subtly impugned at once and also acknowledged with stealthy gestures of apology.

The way strangers are grateful for the willingness to share drinks or drugs (or information about where to get them), their respect for the boundaries of each group's dancing space, the celebration of the meeting of eyes and recognition find expression in a varied and elaborated exercise of tenderness, solidarity, empathy, and body contacts (hugs, endearments, and kisses in the mouth given regardless of the type of relationship). Friendly pats, smiles, passing back rubbings on shoulders and necks, caresses on the head, intake of drugs received from strange hands are the gestures that substantiate the fraternal mood that regulates all social interactions on the dance floor. Kisses on the mouth and more intense or committed body contact are also part of this brotherly ideal. These demonstrations, which may surprise the observer and even those who

receive them (though less so and just for an instant), are never acted out or received as illegitimate invasions. Nor are they born from confusions or ignorance regarding sexual leanings or the bonds the receiver may have with someone else, and they are by no means sexual openings or erotic invitations. They make fun of the usual accepted social etiquette, and in particular, of hetero norms, pointing at the inter and intra gender contacts and the set boundaries of property/intimacy of one's own body. These contacts denounce and expose the sexually contained and hetero-ruled order of everyday life. They are self-contained provocations, not aimed at contesting the sexual choices of the interacting subjects, but rather at exposing the frailty and contingency of the codes that this very scene has left behind—restraint, heterosexual norms, and stability of bonds.

Beyond the alternatives, across all of them, but because they are all present, sexuality remains at the center, like the main subject matter in a sort of congress where each presence is a presentation, and the universally acknowledged thesis is not just pluralism but also objectivation and focus on the practices. Even those who choose to have fun in a nonsexual way, arrive to that position as a result of their playing out of this common theme. In other words, electronic dance music as a device, as a locale for practices, is a medium where different sexual attitudes converge, activate each other, and conform different sexual behaviors, and where the sexual repertoire becomes more multiple and varied than the one prevalent in other music scenes, and more plural than what is usually allowed to young people. This diversity manifests and provides the foundation for a sexual plurality that is both the condition and result of the expected and experienced liberation of people who emphasize in their practices and discourses an antihomophobic stand, their opposition to any set of norms and, through this, explore an intense sexualization of the behaviors. Moreover, in that space the possibilities opened by sensual and sexual experimentation may even be understood as the non-resolution of the approach between subjects in terms of sex—the use of drugs as stimulants or inhibitors of this interplay of seduction and encounters, the manifestation of new forms of sexual expression, trying out sexual transient gender and sexual identities, which are by no means exclusive.

Thus, a young man may feel liberated in an electronic disco from the pressure of having to behave like a "true man" hunting for a girl to dance with and conquer or vice versa. Girls—who have never met—may flirt, gaze at, and touch each other in the moves of the dance. Meanwhile, others "glam up" (like drag queens or trans or like "artists" as they like to call themselves) alternating looks, some nights on, some nights off. An aesthetic production that involves planned behavior and body display according to what glamour and flamboyance demand.

Sex may become sheer autoerotism (Pini 1997), indifference, contextualized temporal experimentation. Anything "malleable" and "flexible" is highly valued, whereas "serious," "private," "final," "closed up," or conventional sexual attitudes are frowned upon. Similarly, there is a negative view of critical, disparaging, or segregating remarks or behavior, as a way to guarantee each individual search. In this context, autonomy is not just idealized individualism or fragmentation but also the possibility of plural and consensual connectivity in terms of native tribal customs (and this in no way means that we subscribe to the view that considers this a tribal phenomenon).

Identities and expectations exhibit their reciprocal variations and relativity, allowing everyone to adopt a relative stance. Here is a point where we can draw a partial conclusion: in electronic music, sexual behavior is put into question and constructed in its possibilities, mobility, connections, and expressions. We have found here something similar to what James Farrer wrote about the global disco culture in China as a cosmopolitan space to consume foreign sexual styles. "Becoming part of the sexual spectacle—becoming a desirable 'object'—is the paradoxical position of the postmodern sexual 'subject,' but it is not an arbitrary position. The disco is one place where Chinese youth, some more advantageously than others, become part of the sexual spectacle themselves, and thus part of a postmodern sexual world which, for them as for nearly everyone else, means subjecting themselves to the evaluation of the global market." (Farrer 1999: 163).

In electronic music there is no established choreography setting rules on who must move and how. Thus the range of possible movements may be as wide and varied as the dancers on the floor. Dancers may engage in an energetic dance mode involving the entire body and their aerobic stamina or may merely "be on the floor" with a minimum of body moves. Both dance styles, even if they are seen as the ultimate expressions of a continuum of possible movements (neither more relevant than the other) show the specific meeting of reciprocal redefinitions of sex and religion in electronic music.

Sexual behavior in electronic music is not aligned with dance understood as coupling mimicry. Sex is excluded from verbal language, and courting and flirting are displayed by means of a macro language of fraternal relationships, childlike behaviors (which Tomlinson calls infantile culture or borderline state between childhood and adulthood), autoerotism (Pini 1997), self-pleasuring and homo-social aura (Reynolds), sensorial self-exploration and experimentation (Blázquez technologies), and genital/coital indifference (Tomlinson) or presexual innocence (Reynolds). Sexual play is reinstated in dialogue with sediments of New Age

components or practices, that is, connected with spiritual elevation or solace. The dance is supposed to transform us, to reconnect us with ourselves at the very moment when we expect to reach an energetic communion and communication with the rest of the people. Being connected to your self is somehow being in sync with others in a sexual way which, we insist, may coincidentally be genital, but is always the theme and vehicle of a variegated array of libido aggregations. That is why in the free dancing mode—individual, solitaire, with another, with others—sexual expression aims at building "with everybody," including the DJ, a "good party." Dance here is not a representation of intercourse or even an encounter between gender-defined subjects, but rather an appeal to another/others to share and build together a musical experience on different levels of communion. Hence, two kids without specific gender or bonds meet at a corner and dance with closed eyes, barely swaying, deeply immersed in the set, favoring the "energy circulation" and their bubble of intimacy. Around them, a group of males dance with hair dripping with sweat because of their continual uninterrupted energetic movements and possibly due also to the intake of substances that induce sweating. Two of them, facing each other, align their bodies and synchronize their movements. At times it is hard to say who belongs to which group, for those who were dancing face to face are now holding each other's shoulders. They wave their free arms, shouting together—to everyone else and the DJ—"Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!" while looking at DJ Carla Tintoré in the cabin. She starts to applaud, not in response to the crowd, but rather celebrating the collaboration in the joint construction of a "good party."

Some Conclusions

The meeting between electronic music and religious beliefs results from the more general dynamics of shifting limits and structures in the fields of practice. On the one hand, we find a number of movements that have led to postulates stating the deinstitutionalization of religion, though it should be understood as the emergence and burgeoning of various modes of religious practices linked to individualization. In this trend, religion spreads to other fields of practice and admits different agents and goods, since it is considered not just soul healing, but also, as Bourdieu claims, a field that includes nutritionists, therapists, and martial arts masters. This same movement allows the field of music to incorporate practices and meanings, which may be viewed as religious, as in the case of New Age practices that, in turn, widens the scope of possibilities in electronic music. From the perspective of music, things run along the same lines: the aesthetic

and ideological explorations of artists and audiences, emerging within the framework of movements based on the same cultural impulse have led to an expansion and re-elaboration of similar motivations.

In this context, the device of electronic music consecrates multifarious sex as an individuation theme beyond the comparatively slack norms and uses, set by New Age spirituality, where sex is a result, a consequence, and is explicitly taken into account; whereas in electronic music it is at the very core of the practices. The first adopts a therapeutic perspective for deviations of the norm, while the latter sees no deviation and accepts all alternative behaviors on equal footing. In this sense, the device of electronic music goes further than the New Age liberal program, though based on the same assumptions. However, what we intended to show in our study is the development of a musical style, of an aesthetic movement, which was both cause and effect of one of the transformations that have characterized the last 30 years of Argentine history. Left far behind are the times when divorce was banned, and the disappearance of a young man raised suspicious eyebrows, when unconventional sexual leanings were stigmatized. In some urban mediums, at least, the advance of certain liberties seems to be irreversible. We do not forget or deny that, in contrast, nowadays poverty is criminalized and the life of underprivileged young people carries the stigma of criminal suspicions. Nor do we forget that one of the most dramatic and unavoidable outcomes of the last decades is inequality, exclusion, and the current trend of branding and targeting those who have been construed as superfluous. But the phenomenon we have presented here is indeed part of a complex reality that cannot be denied either: the socialization of an increasing part of our youths takes place, with consequences, far removed from the old despotic everyday norms, in territories that involve unpredictable danger zones, where pleasure and suffering become individual experiences.

Notes

1. Although they celebrate an atmosphere of inclusive dynamics and up to a point non-segregation, it does not mean that there are mechanisms of exclusion and moralizing towards to what is different.
2. The notion of a set fits the idea of a music session, where the DJ, besides choosing the musical sounds—in a generic sense—for his/her performance, combines, deconstructs, and recomposes them, modifying them in a singular way according to his taste, music style, and technology available.
3. Scholarly focus on the national electronic music scene as an object of research in social sciences is relatively recent. Our work follows the steps of a number of pioneer research projects. Expressing a wide range of theoretical and

methodological approaches to the dance culture in Argentina, we should mention the contributions made by Laura Leff, Milena Leiva, and Alejandra García (2003); Fabián Beltramino (2004), Clara Camarotti (2004), Bárbara Belloc (1998), and, most especially, Gustavo Blázquez (2009) and his research team in Córdoba; and Víctor Lenarduzzi (mimeo, 2009). We also wish to point out that our analysis of the local phenomenon of electronic music is part of an ongoing fieldwork and research.

4. More detailed consideration of this matter could show the problematic dualistic bias of this claim, only valid in terms of a conventional understanding.
5. This point is based on Semán (2006) and Semán-Vila (1999).
6. Martín (2008), has produced a description of cumbia where this parallel becomes evident. In Míguez-Semán (2006) you may find a logic that frames the development of rock and cumbia music in the 1990s, identifying minimal historical common denominators of the popular culture.
7. República Cromagnon was a venue in which several shows of this type of genre within the rock music were centralized.

   In 2004 a fire caused by the lack of controls under which the shows were performed had the effect of 194 deaths. The event constituted a turning point for the prestige of the genre, generating many hurtful critics from musicians and analysts.
8. In his book *Historia del baile. De la milonga a la disco*, Sergio Pujol points out that, in the Argentine history of dance, the phenomenon of *rave* and electronic music toward the end of the twentieth century is a completely new, nonrecycled manifestation, different from any previous space dedicated to dance music.
9. Parties or electronic gatherings (which originated in the United Kingdom by the late 1980s) were usually held in nonconventional premises where the *ravers* (participants) pursued new ways of diffusion and musical consumption that included, among other things, doing illegal substances, lengthy sessions of dancing and music, the performance of several DJs, and ample rooms to move and dance.
10. In our view, though electronic music makes up its compositions based on recorded materials (vinyl records, CDs, and synthetic instrumental and sound recordings), the instance/dimension of the "live performance" is as relevant as that of other scenes and genres since the selection/creation of the DJ has not been booked in advance in the encounter with the dancers. Although the instruments of creation are recorded materials, a "good DJ" must create "live," close to the dancers, with no premeditation or prepared arrangements.
11. Lenarduzzi (mimeo, 2009) describes this phenomenon that we also found in our research: the same burgeoning of events, venues, schools, DJ trainees, and the marketing circulation of numerous references and productions of "electronic culture."
12. The connection between New Age religious feelings and a number of contemporary social and cultural trends emphasizing autonomy has been pointed out by Carozzi (1999). Amaral (2000) mentions the element of immanence of the

sacred and the expectation of transformation permeating our own argument as a significant feature in the parallel between electronic music and the sensibility of New Age religious beliefs.

13. This is a property involving some generations and circles of participants, and less so those more recent or massive. The tension we describe does not mean there were no youths listening to rock 'n' roll and going to discos 10 or 20 years ago. However, what we mean to report here are facts like the ones condensed in the expression "punch-punch," the derisive category used by many young people to describe electronic music. This is an index of the degree to which, even today, the diacritics that we remember remain, and, even though they are not the whole experience, they still exert pressure in their constitution.
14. Carla Tintoré "Disc jockey," Teatro Sarmiento, 2008, also in www.archivotellas.com.ar.
15. It is a quandary to set apart this usage from what is generally reported as "addictions." For the purpose of this chapter we have overlooked those cases where addictions and compulsions lead to specific suffering.

9

"RESCATE" and Its Consequences: Culture and Religion as a Single Entity

Guadalupe Gallo and Pablo Semán

Introduction

In a straightforward and urgent rap verse, Ulises, the lead singer of Rescate, describes the feeling "zamarreo" produces in him. Later, he calls attention to the "foreigners" and asks them if they have something to offer and underlines the presence of Jesus in the line: "*You have no idea man, into whom you've just run*."[1]

This is how Jesus's call, expressed in one of its possibilities, is interpreted: as a small street incident in which a warning and an authority call upon seeing something unusual in what is the ordinary, in the immediacy understood as hell. In that immediacy and in that scene, there is the presence of Jesus ("you have no idea *man,* into whom you've just run"). The intensified repetition of the prophetic message acquires a new voice in that of the rockers whose aesthetics might have seemed spiritually incorrect to the eyes of the evangelic world, but today holds a privileged position in its agenda.

The song continues, and a change of tone occurs. The warnings and the urban narrator's, that is, the rapper's admonition give way to a change in key, and the miracle to be announced crystallizes into dance rhythms and, especially, into the "mosh," as a vehicle of ecstasy and Christian intensity (in the transition from one moment to the other something appears that resonates to the old symphonic rock heroic tone). It is insinuated that the lyrics accompany an epiphany that addresses a non-stopping madness

that will be understood, once the veil is uncovered. Then, the good news is straightforwardly and imperatively invoked: the lyrics encourage the audience "to see," to experiment with what seems to be a virtue of a few and what seems to be impossible (for example, a wall disintegrating or a paralytic jumping).

What is the value of these expressions that, very generically, we can include into the category of "Christian music?" What are the causes and consequences of these phenomena in the secular world and in churches? Is there a transformation of the "evangelic culture" and/or of the "youth culture?" These are the questions that make it possible to examine the phenomenon of a musical group such as Rescate (Rescue) as a paradigmatic form in the evangelic community.

The case of evangelic rock allows us to differentiate the ways in which religious culture and its changes are associated and expressed in the transformations of the youth culture and its musical expressions. But in order to trace those differences, it is imperative to incorporate the premises that refer to the particularity, the fragmentation, and the reciprocal openness that encompass those universes (in this case both the evangelic and the youth ones) into the analysis.

In this context, we will expose how an evangelic rock band ("Rescate") combines and synthesizes two moments: (1) The situation of the evangelic world in Argentina (and especially the contemporary youth), characterized by a quantitative growth and density that has transformed into a key cultural reference in a once exclusively Catholic local culture.[2] (2) The context of a juvenile culture created by local rock that has become a key reference for any movement, even for the evangelic religious groups that, at first, condemned rock.[3]

These matters become part of a more general issue: the relationship between youth cultures and rock, which this chapter considers in the context of the development of Christian music. Prandi (2007) has referred to the insurmountable barrier between "evangelic culture" and youth culture, as well as to the nullifying contribution of the evangelics to the contemporary culture in its legitimate expressions. We will understand the term "legitimate" as established to avoid an ex-temporary discussion about legitimacy.

More than just "old wine in new bottles," and much less than the substitution of the "youth" culture for the "evangelic youth," evangelic rock reveals the productivity of cultural synthesis movements in which evangelic and youth cultures dialogue with and transform each other.[4] Because of a matter of space and specificity we will only point out that there is a movement that precedes and complements the one we describe in this chapter. While in this chapter we will limit our analysis to how the evangelic world

contributes to a specific development of rock, we have demonstrated in other study cases how evangelism in Argentina has expanded by making use of the path already created by rock, and how rock has transformed the way evangelic faith is imparted. Part of the growth of Pentecostalism in Argentina must be explained through two co-implied factors: one is the capability some leaders had in identifying the young rockers of the 1970s and 1980s as those who could be converted if the language used to communicate was the same as that of the rockers, and the other is the creation of a narrative of conversion that rendered the rocker in crisis as "false rebelliousness" and encouraged rockers to take on the true fight of Jesus. This narrative model became increasingly perfected and enriched as it was becoming more efficient and the ones that assumed the role of ministers were young "former rockers" (Semán 2010). It is also important to note that this archetypal and recurrent trajectory has resulted in the formation of many "secular" groups that introduced the evangelic experience in its rhetoric and visual representations (an example of this can be found in "Logos," a musical group that gathers evangelic topics and musicians that was formed by members of one of the most important metal rock bands in Argentina).

i. Origins

"Rescate" is not just any word among the young evangelists, especially for the Argentines. It is an expression that has a great deal of significance in the evangelic language and also it is an acronym.

"Rescate" as an idiosyncratic expression can signify the action that God undertakes to save young believers, in other words, the voice that recognizes and symbolizes divine intervention during the crises presented as characteristics of the youth (in some way the word "rescate" makes what is implied in the idea of "Holy Spirit baptism" or "Spiritual victory"[5] in "juvenile culture" real).

The acronym R.E.S.C.A.T.E. (Kings at the Service of Christ in Extreme Times, from now on "Rescate")[6] is the name of this musical band that promotes a particular point of view on the problems faced by urban youth. In this case, "Rescate" condenses the way in which youth cultures assume the evangelic quest aimed at them, in specific reference to "juvenile" problems like "drug abuse" or "rebelliousness."[7] There is a two-way relationship between youth and evangelic cultures, which mutates across time. Among the various localizations and appropriations of an evangelic approach that followed the missions that originated in the United States or Canada, the first link between youth and evangelic

cultures in Argentina emerged out of the encounter between the youth belonging to the popular sectors, Pentecostalism, and larger evangelic campaigns led by ministers like "Pastor Gimenez" and his "Peace and love waves" (Wynarczyk-Semán 1994). The rationale behind this ministry is different and was established prior to the one of the musical band we are discussing in this chapter. Gimenez's ministry represented two moments in tension: the introduction of novel experiences by young people from popular sectors into the arena of evangelism, and the unfolding of a mission style and ministry that occupies a relevant position in the evangelic world. Nevertheless, and because of experiences like these, the concept of "Rescate" was born and granted with significance and propagation, that is, it was already a popular figure of speech in Argentine language before the rock band found its echo in society.

When considering the bonds between evangelic and youth cultures, we argue that while the word "Rescate" implies the popular and juvenile appropriation of the evangelic notion, the name of the "Rescate" rock band itself also indicates how the evangelic church projects its message into the juvenile world. The musical band was born at the end of the 80s and the beginning of the 90s as a juvenile Christian music band in a city in the Santa Fe province. In "Rescate" coexist two ways to address the intersection of the "evangelic culture" and the "youth culture" (though the second one prevails): on the one side, the juvenile recruitment to the evangelic proposal and, on the other, the attempt of some evangelic young people to dialogue with a "youth culture" equally constituted by and embedded with rock music. Following the example of what happened in the United States to music bands like Petra, White Heart, New Boys, and Michael Smith, "Rescate" begins a creative-artistic and religious process characterized by an approach to contemporary Christian music in general, and by an experimentation with so-called gospel rock. In this context of attempts to bring together "youth culture" and "evangelic culture," "Rescate" accomplishes a unique synthesis because it absorbs all the influences of Argentine rock from the 1980s and 1990s, and, as a result, it is unlike any of the American bands mentioned above.

The band was founded following the initiative of Ulises Miguel Eyherabide along with his American friend Jonathan Thompson, and is also the result of the inspiration they derived from American gospel music. Eyherabide is the leader and the guitarist of the band, as well as the composer of most of the lyrics. As one can imagine, he is one of the main intellectual forces behind the project and, evidently, its most representative public image; for that reason, we will refer to him at length. He is an architect, a graphic designer, and was raised in an evangelical family. He has been through college and, consequently, he has experienced the

reality of coming out as an evangelic "to the world," that is, not denying his faith but not without any conflicts either. If, in that exposure, he has felt the need for the church, it can also be said that "the world" represented for Ulises the opportunity to draw ethical and aesthetic components from it (his personal performance and his declared admiration for secular rock musicians are definitive examples of his positive approximation to the world): from those encounters with hopes and rejections emerges the solution with which he builds his own self, and with which he propels the project of "Rescate" ahead.

The core motive behind "Rescate" is to respond to the conscious or unconscious demand of church made by those young people without knowledge of God and who do not find the answers they need, or are clueless about what these answers entail. Through music, they propose to "take Jesus down from the cross and put him on the streets from where he should not have gone" (i.e., in their interpretation of the Bible, Jesus manifested himself in the streets mingling with people). Also, this *aggiornamiento* of Christ acquires another palpable dimension in the public functions of "Rescate," this bond provides an updated version of Christ palatable to young believers, who often find themselves not completely satisfied with their churches and the opportunities those churches offer to them. Christ goes out to the streets because young believers are already there or are about to leave the flock. The rescue of nonbelievers that, by necessity, are on the streets, and the recovery of believers who might leave the church are objectively present in the intention of "taking Jesus down": that means to be where there is a need for a "live and friendly Jesus," with a message of hope and direction during the turbulent teenage years. In the direction to overcome that breach, "Rescate" rehearses a synthesis between the spiritual-religious message, youth, and rock, thus attempting to offer an option to close the gap between Jesus and teenage nonbelievers.

ii. Projections

"Rescate" is a project that entails the assumption of contradictory risks young people face in relation to the world: it is about going and becoming distorted or influenced by the same world one searches for recognition and can not be detached from, but has no other choice but to enter it in search of new brothers. The two-way approach that links the world and the church presents four novelties: (1) the redefinition of the concerts in a cult key, and vice-versa; (2) the redefinition of the religious group and of the premises that define the legitimacy of religious practices and

the composition of a group of followers; (3) the relations established with different moments of the country's cultural industry and with what emerges from it as massive, dominant, and, in certain circuits, legitimate; and (4) the conditions in which these emergent identities are built and established in relation to mainstream society.

Cult and Concert in "Rescate"

The evangelic traditions have increasingly accepted worship and praying music that were either under the direction of the minister or under anonymous musicians or subaltern figures. Pentecostal churches (and evangelism in general) have shifted from demonization to acceptance and even promotion of rock, of its electronic instruments, or even Latin music. It must be said that the evangelic community is increasingly accepting the figure of the artist in the form of the musician. Those musicians who perform the characteristics of the diva—"we don't do this but for the glory of God, in spite of all their statements that demonstrate submission to God."[8]

The complexity of interactions and meaning that the presence of "Rescate" and its followers command in a space that gravitates between the evangelic and secular world includes fresh elements that redefine and play out the tensions between innovation and conservatism in the evangelic field. And by delving further into this topic that we appreciate the ways in which "Rescate" has had an impact among those young people who attend or are a part of Pentecostal churches.

Even though it may sound unexpected, we must say that the concerts of "Rescate," from a strict liturgical point of view, turned out to be of an exemplar of conservatism. This is evident, for example, in the role given to the group leader's voice in the general framing of each show: a systematic discourse that reinstates the history of evangelization, the history of the spread of goodness in social places of cultural significance. Presentations are more than simply concerts or shows or displays; they are instances of conquest of a secular space ("Rescate" plays in theaters or rock bars, and their performances always underline the novelty of the Christian presence in that place). The presentation sanctifies a place, because in the secular theater in which they are playing there are young people of God. Moreover, each concert does the work of sanctifying because it conveys the message of acceptance of a gift, of a lord, of a path, and also of a posture: the musicians of "Rescate," specially their leader, are not presented as stars but as products of a specific blessing to which they link both their skills and success.

It conveys the attitude of Christ's acceptance, and the performance that embodies the embracement of this acceptance, in the context of a "party" in which emotion and joy are created in a specific manner. The possibility of describing or naming those events ("party" and "joy") are based on something they also promote: the potential intersection between the Christian and the secular (an intersection that "Rescate" manufactures by weaving traditions and repertoires together, sometimes by simply reweaving previous pioneer approaches forged by other religious and/or music agents). It is the "party of rock"—combined with the party that the evangelic cult can become—a possibility amongst many others, but rarely articulated to the expansive musical and physical party that rock usually proposes, and that "Rescate" accepts with its own limitations of the "mosh" (rejected by the evangelists).

A presentation is not simply a concert because the songs have an order that adapts to that of the cult in its construction of a sequence of intensities and motives: in both, the *crescendo* accompanies the presentation of the blessing and the celebration of the final apotheosis. And it is not simply a concert as the leader's voice intersperses before and after each song to connote its meaning. This message is contained in a phrase or an exclamation that removes ambiguity in order to reinforce that the adventures or love described in songs are, in fact, metaphors addressing the relationship between men and Christ. With a contemporary, up-to-date language, and modes that redefine traditional contents—but have a systematic structure of translation—the succession of songs and lyrics of "Rescate" brings the evangelic message to an intimate and individualized dimension.[9] The proposal of a Pentecostal directed to the heart of each young person announces that life is possible in spite of its tribulations and family conflicts.

"Rescate" and the Redefinition of the Legitimately Evangelic

The activities of "Rescate" are organized in the frontier line between the world and the sacred. There is a projection in this frontier that aims at reaching young skeptics both aesthetically and spiritually, as well at those who belong to different congregations. Among these young people that consist of a second or third generation of believers, there are always those who have abandoned the congregation life and build all their spiritual activity in the "rescuer" community (that is, in the community of Rescate followers). In this context we find the case of believers who discover in the lyrics of "Rescate" a message that helps them reconcile with the religious

identity of their family, but find it impossible to identify with the minister's words or the congregation life.

Besides, once in the experience of the "rescuer" community, the space of the religious practice not only expands and diversifies itself, but also modifies the criteria of what is spiritually correct. The acceptance of rock in evangelic churches, brought about hand in hand with "Rescate", is controverted but, at this point, irreversible. It continues to be a topic of debate, and, yet, it has also come to stay. There is continuous energetic display of bodies crashing against each other in "mosh" as part of the "Rescate" presentations and, therefore, of a spirituality that expands to include what had often been excluded. Scenes include nude and sweaty chests, girls climbing on top of boys' shoulders, and couples kissing. This scenario and the corporal activities described were until now invisible to the evangelic world.

A similar but more significant transformation is the one that comes with the legitimacy that certain forms of dance acquire in some group presentations. Rock music and the diverse ways in which its questioning are embodied lead toward identifying rock with a hip movement that churches had been rejecting even when accepting the figure of "dancing in the spirit." The strength of the unwillingness to accept this type of dance by churches has not been broken but is giving way slowly. In the "Rescate" presentations, a new dance figure is added: the dynamic impulse that begins with bending up and down and crossing the hips, quickly moves toward the arms (they move and bend back and forth) and to the trunk, resulting in a weaving of the torso. Women, and especially those on the stage singing the chorus, resemble the traditional feminine Gospel singers in a choir. The difference is that these ones, unlike those who are oftentimes large and generally dressed in long flowing garments, are seen wearing miniskirts. Only a few images can convey the concept we want to underlie: a phenomenon like "Rescate" works by producing synthesis and, therefore, creates new cultural forms. From the evangelic viewpoint from which "Rescate" is positioned, this is tangible: it renders the church as something that is familiar, and in that way participates in the diversification and the resultant bringing together of groups of believers from diverse origins to the evangelic world. This does not happen in the sensational way evangelic critics propose. Compared to a secular rock concert, moderation and contention prevail over the functioning of certain censorships imposed by "religion." But this does talk about a way of articulation in the community of followers of "Rescate" that enriches the evangelic world as it recruits evangelic faithfuls, who have different degrees of belonging to this faith.

That is how the community of followers of "Rescate" operates both as a religious community and as a community of rock fans. They support the group by promoting the assistance to their concerts and, above all, organizing something of merit for Argentine musicians and the public: the spectacle displayed by the audience stresses the work of the musicians by means of combining the display of flags and fireworks. The fact that the followers of "Rescate," even with open disagreements between them, decide to go ahead with this performance is remarkable. After the fire in Cromagnon (see the introduction), this display has lost its legitimacy. For this reason, the relentless use of flags demonstrates the presence of a rock style orthodoxy in Argentina that underlines what we have been saying: the community of followers of "Rescate" is partially rooted in secular rock's aesthetics, movements, and specific expressions in Argentina and not only in the evangelic world. The frequent public demonstrations of admiration of "Rescate" musicians toward secular rock musicians must be understood in the same light.

What is Taken from the World

There is reinvention and reworking of the cult and the congregation in the concerts; and in the communities of young rockers, the evangelic world assimilates the secular one. But while this happens, Rescate's performances articulate a liminal zone between the juvenile evangelic world, non-evangelic youth cultures, and the secular cultural industry. This articulation forces the secular world to incorporate and open some room for "Rescate."

If "Rescate" is a synthesis between secular and the evangelic culture, it is necessary to understand more specifically "which" aspects of the secular world are absorbed and processed in this synthesis. From a viewpoint solely based on the perspective of evangelic churches and its adult members, what is being synthesized is only rock. However, at its core, "Rescate" does not assimilate heavy metal or its exorcized version, but the rhythms of Latin Rock and mostly the ones of rock that were listened to in the 90s by the middle-class youth in Argentina. The affinity of Rescate's fans with some of those groups gets vindicated as they reify the identity of the "rescuer" above other forms of membership to evangelic religious practices. For the young people who listen to "Rescate," the music of "Los Piojos," "Divididos," or "Catupecu Machu"[10] may be a part of a continuity of positive musical experiences.

On the one hand, Ulises, the group leader, incarnates a model of musical leadership that insists on that continuity: both his statements and

his physical performance speak of the bonds between his way of being and certain type of Argentine rockers like Andres Ciro, leader of Los Piojos. On the other hand, it must be pointed out that this penetration of the secular component in the band is clearly expressed in what Ulises puts into play—the *sex appeal* of the masculine, more specifically, the masculinity and certain aesthetics that rockers of some generations flaunt. He adds to the energy of the traditional rocker a conventionally cultivated androgyny and a mimicry of the infatuated songwriter (exemplified in the Argentine musician Andrés Calamaro). There are more elements imported to the evangelic realm than the ones that satisfy the conservatives (and the reformers), however this is all justified under the "examining all to retain the good part" leitmotiv. Even though under this leitmotiv feminine sensuality is partially allowed, it is evident that the masculine domain of sexuality has an unprecedented place.

What the World Takes from "Rescate"

It is still necessary to note on a variety of instances that reveal the evangelic appropriation of rock and the "rockisation" of the evangelic world. "Rescate," as a singular synthesis, receives acknowledgment from the secular world. First, "Rescate" is part of the multinational record labels catalog and their exploration of the selling capacity of the evangelic niche in the musical market. It can be said that this acknowledgment is a mere marketing tool that combines the growth of an "evangelic *niche*" and a huge company's need to demonstrate their capacity to fulfill any demand that may arise. But, in any case, it is still to be analyzed why this band and not any other is the one chosen by record label companies for that *niche* market. The fact that "evangelic music" has been recognized as a music genre in the Gardel awards, which consecrate local musical production, and that in 2008 "Rescate" won that award reaffirms our argument about the existence of an evangelic dimension in the music industry. Furthermore, "secular" musicians, recognized by the quality of their music within the rock *establishment,* participate in Rescate's recording sessions using their full names, legitimizing thus their belonging to the evangelic rock project. Likewise, a certain portion of the media portrays the band as a curiosity, and interviews and integrates them in some relatively systematic way into its agenda, implicitly appreciating the success they have attained in society. And then, these media make apparent, in certain ways, their surprise: "Rescate" musicians sound perfectly understandable, far from the propaganda and rigid formats that the sensibility of the young seculars would reject as old and authoritative. Finally, "Rescate" has been invited to

rock festivals like "Pepsi music," and their shows—the fact that they have performed without any troubles in a rock scene like the Argentine one that gives space to the public to veto, and which it is capable of whistling until muting an irritating proposal—are symptomatic not only of the acknowledgment, but also of a level of tolerance gained through respect that was not necessarily predictable.

Beyond Tolerance

When speaking of tolerance, the assessment that "Rescate" musicians forge, and the positioning they propose to the secular world they polemically speak to, is not free from significant nuances.

"Rescate" members attributed two characteristics to themselves, which one could assume have nothing to do with the evangelic world and, maybe, are monopolized by those who belonged to a liberal and secularized sensitivity. Ulises, following the tracks of other evangelists who have entered the evangelic faith from rock, argues something close to what Jungblut (2007) finds in some evangelic rockers ("we are the real alternative culture"). In the same way in which an informant said, "*Jesus is very crazy, the world is very careta,*"[11] Ulises respects the evangelic resistance to secularist "pressures": these pressures go from denying God to promoting bad habits. Neither is alien to the spirit of "Rescate" a claim for multicultural logic, which is invoked to comprehend the normality of the apparently paradoxical Christian rock. For Ulises, discrimination in terms of religious prejudice is the cause of how far behind Argentina is in the development of Gospel music and in the secular resistance to the entry of "Rescate" as a band and as a Christian music band. "*If Prince said thank God nobody would say he's crazy. Lenny Kravitz is more evangelic than Palau* [a well known evangelical minister], . . ." "*Nobody is scandalized because Lenny Kravitz delivers blessings . . . But if I mention God most people look at me as if I were a religious fanatic. And the truth is that sometimes is very tiring to be justifying my beliefs all the time.*"

In the interviews, Ulises Eyherabide says that he does not feel a contradiction or a conflict between his religion and the music he loves. Part of this consideration can be explained by what we have already suggested; the leader clarifies again ". . . *the separation between rock and Christ is developed in the Latin scene and more in the Argentine context, in Europe there's no division, everything is music.*" In the end, the music and the message converge in the same expression or are, maybe, inseparable from the same expression.

If we take into account the sociocentrism through which the evangelic world in Argentina is analyzed, even present in academic circles, we can

understand that this position that renews, in a dialogue with society, evangelic demands for recognition, has a clear political function. The discursive repertoire changes in order to demand equality and it does it for the benefit of the claiming group, because this demand is framed in a costly language for those who oppose them: it is not the same to demand for "tolerance," "permission for our faith" or worse, to "get to know Christ," than to affirm it as a right that is recognized by others.

This spirit is also manifested in the dialogue between "Rescate" and the contemporary political transformations: as it has almost never happened in the evangelic world, "Rescate" affirms as theirs the politicized vein of rock. In a necessarily metaphorical language and in moderated tones, "Rescate" refers to the need to face the powerful from the perspective of the weak by echoing Sanson's tradition—relatively active for the evangelists. "Buscando lío" ["looking for trouble"] is the title of Rescate's last album, and it is a complete innovation for a cultural segment that has always invoked order as something to be valued, much more so when this attitude is linked to the need to face "unequal fights" that include, for example, the Latino migrants in the United States or the situation of the poor.

Conclusion: Acculturation Really Exists

Considering what happens on both sides of the frontier in which "Rescate" functions, it does not seem risky to think that although the interchanges are established in a bidirectional way, the secular scene influences the Christian one and not the other way around. On the basis of this assessment, we can extend to the case of "Rescate" Prandi's (2007) argument about the nullity of the evangelic cultural contribution: the institutional networks linked to the evangelic religion partially absorb the massive and legitimate cultural production, and, at the same time, does not create any expression that can be capable of establishing a dialogue with that production (at least one that could be capable of being recognized as a massive and acceptable product, as a cultural value for some sort of authority—even for the authority that gives importance to becoming a best seller; to raise the number of buyers and create a particular market *niche*).

But the problems that assist this way of understanding the relations between the "evangelic culture" and the "secular culture" are neither few nor lacking of consequences. At the same time this perspective foreclosures the possibility of methodically analyzing these relationships and interchanges, and consecrates only a partial way to analyze the relationships between culture and religion in general.

If we admit that neither culture nor religion is an homogeneous entity, we can admit that both "youth culture" and evangelic religion have

different segments that may enter into conflict or become allies in diverse ways. "Rescate" operates in the frontier between these two worlds causing significant qualitative transformations: the evangelic space is surely the most affected one by these transformations. Through "Rescate," a series of actions that had been excluded or demonized turn into being spiritually correct: certain musical rhythms, spaces, ways of dancing, and building of the musician's image. The transformation that "Rescate" brings to the secular world does not lack factual and analytical relevance: to be able to be heard and present to the world of rock something that is contrary to or is distanced from its historically dominant definition turns rock music into a complex and contradictory music genre. At other moments, with the incorporation of popular sectors into rock, something new and polemical happened: other ears and other voices arrived to the rock scene, and new ways and discussions about the weight of the assumed contribution emerged. At that moment identifying the analysis with one of the factions in struggle was disqualified in the name of social science by what the analyst did not like (Semán 2005). It is imperative to ask ourselves if the disavowal of the recent evangelic contribution to the "youth culture" is not a repetition of the same prejudice.

Grignon and Passeron largely warned against the risks of the analysis in which the analytical perspective is one of the dominant actors in the conflict that is being described, blocking the potential and the positive contribution of the dominated (the classic case is the transformation of categories by those who sustain good taste in an analysis of the taste of all groups). The dominocentrism is a permanent risk by definition: analysts are always committed by one of side of power, and usually by the one that has the resources to define the situation at hand. And that is also valid in societies tensed by multiple, paradoxical, and changing conflicts, and it is even more common in the cases in which the emergent is recent, and its contribution is ontologically positive but yet weak and embryonic. In this sense, the supposed insignificance of the contribution made by the evangelic culture in the eyes of massive or legitimate culture is a problematic conclusion. How does a kind of sociocentrism prevent itself from minimizing the evangelic cultural contribution, especially at a time when these contributions begin to make a difference in society, due to their adaptation and demographic growth?

"Rescate," shows that the trajectory that goes from rock to evangelism is more frequent in popular sectors because of the consolidated evangelic presence in these social spaces. "Rescate," as a band, includes the fact that rock is an unavoidable reference for all young people, even for the evangelic ones. In the circle that unites the two trajectories, "Rescate" appears as the opposite to that which Novaes (2000) observed—while "Os racionais"

are exterior to the evangelic culture, "Rescate" belongs to *mainstream* society. However, both bands synthesize and build bridges between apparently separate, exclusionary, and irreconcilable worlds. This may dismantle the radical potential of youth culture or transform the evangelic one; the truth is that the novelty has already been established.

Notes

1. The song is called "Vean" [look] and belongs to the CD "Una raza contra el viento" [A race against the wind].
2. In terms of religious denominations, the evangelists represent more than 10 percent of the country's total population, but in certain urban groups and especially in medium and low stratums, they reach a percentage that varies between 15 and 20 percent. The religious denomination that drives the evangelists' growth is Pentecostalism that, according to some estimates, constitutes at least 80 percent of the evangelic (a group that includes Baptists, Protestants, Mennonites, Anglicans, and Methodists among other denominations).
3. In Argentina this has a specific (and different) meaning when compared to the United States, where evangelic culture is hegemonic (in Argentina, and especially in the popular stratums, the evangelic growth is a novelty). The situation of rock in Argentina contrasts to that of the United States, because in Argentina rock is a fairly newcomer to the world of popular culture. In the Argentine evangelic world, rock's presence is even newer: 20 years ago, most denominations considered rock as an irreparably satanic musical expression.
4. The investigation in which this work is based involved the attendance to different "Rescate" shows, and the construction of a media archive of audiovisual and graphic news, as well as interviews with group followers and the identification of Internet forums where group followers discuss from matters on the interpretations of the songs to the planning of meetings and actions to promote the group.
5. The conception of "Holy Spirit baptism" is one of the theological keys of Pentecostalism that, as opposed to the classic protestant conceptions that denied the contact between man and divinity, reintroduces the possibility that assists men to know about divine grace: the "Holy Spirit baptism" is the concept that groups diverse experiences that speak of grace, including the intense emotions and the miracle of sanctity. The concept of "Spiritual victory" adds and redefines "baptism" as it emphasizes the fight against the demons in the spiritual life.
6. In Spanish "Reyes al Servicio de Cristo Ante Tiempos Extremos."
7. Patricia Diez (2006) has worked in her ethnography the connotation and the weight that this word has to define, from the viewpoint of the youth from popular sectors, the situation of those who try to leave or moderate the consumption of drugs. "Rescatado" [rescued] is a word frequently used

by the youth in Argentina, in which "youth culture" and "evangelic youth culture" meets.

8. In the Brazilian case Marcia Leitao Pinheiro (2008) has made a similar observation in the context of a wider investigation than ours.
9. For example, the translation of the concept of baptism in the spirit, as a more profound and lasting forgiveness than any other forgiveness (either the one coming from parents or psychoanalysis), is for some of the young interviewees the best formula of the evangelic message, at least the one that provides them with the most accurate explanation of their faith. This is based in the consequent association of that baptism to psychological phenomena and, in particular, to cultural guilt-forgiveness dynamics.
10. Three of the most important rock bands in Argentina, which gather thousands of fans each time they play in a stadium and/or a theater.
11. "Careta" is a pejorative expression used to refer to middle and upper classes in Argentina.

Notes on Contributors

Silvia Citro, PhD Anthropology, University of Buenos Aires, 2003 (UBA), is an Associate Professor at the Department of Arts and Department of Anthropology (UBA). She is also a researcher of the CONICET and lead the research team Anthropology of Body and Performance (www.antropologiadelcuerpo.com). She has published more than thirty articles in academic journals and books (*Journal of Latin American & Caribbean Anthropology, Yearbook for Traditional Music, Review: Literature and Arts of the Americas, Latin American Music Review, Anthropos, Revista Transcultural de Música*). She is author of the book *Cuerpos Significantes. Travesías de una etnografía dialéctica* (Biblos 2009).

Guadalupe Gallo (Bahía Blanca, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1979) is Anthropological Science professor at the University of Buenos Aires (UBA) and a doctoral student in Social Anthropology at the Institute of Social Studies (IDAES) at the National University of General San Martin (UNSAM). Currently, she is doctoral fellow of CONICET and develops ethnographic research on dance music production in the city of Buenos Aires.

Eloísa Martín holds a BA in sociology from Universidad de Buenos Aires and a PhD in Social Anthropology from Museu Nacional (Universidade Federal de Rio de Janeiro). She is a professor at Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro and the associate editor of *Current Sociology*.

Pablo Semán, BA in Sociology (1991) and PhD in Social Anthropology (2001) University of Rio Grande do Sul, is a professor of Sociology and Anthropology in Argentina and Mexico and a researcher specializing in popular and mass cultures (religion, musical use, bestsellers).

Malvina Silba (Buenos Aires, 1977), has a degree in Sociology (2005), a PhD in Social Sciences (2011) from the University of Buenos Aires, and a CONICET Postdoctoral Fellowship. Her research explores the various forms of youth cultural production of popular sectors in relation to cumbia music. She teaches the Popular Culture and Mass Culture Seminar at the School of Social Communication of the Faculty of Social Sciencies (UBA).

Carolina Spataro (Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1980), Bachelor Degree in Social Communication, Master in Communication and Culture, and PhD student at the Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, Universidad de Buenos Aires. She is an Assistant

Professor at the Popular Culture and Mass Culture Seminar at the School of Social Communication of the Faculty of Social Sciencies (UBA).

Pablo Vila is a professor of Sociology at Temple University. His research focuses on the social construction of identities in two different locales; the U.S.-Mexico border and Argentina. On the U.S.-Mexico border, he has researched issues of national, regional, racial, ethnic, religious, gender, and class identities and has published several articles and five books (the last one is *Border Identifications: Narratives of Religion, Gender, and Class on the U.S.-Mexico Border*). In his work on identification processes in Argentina he has researched the way in which different social actors use popular music to understand who they are and act accordingly. This part of his research has resulted in several articles and four books (the last one *Troubling Gender: Youth and Cumbia in Argentina's Music Scene).*

José Garriga Zucal (Buenos Aires, 1976) has a degree in Social Anthropology (UBA), a Masters in Social Anthropology (UNSAM), and a PhD in Social Anthropology at the Universidad de Buenos Aires. He is also a Researcher at the Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Técnica. He teaches at the Universidad Nacional de General San Martín and FLACSO.

References

Alabarces, Pablo. 1993. *Entre gatos y violadores. El rock nacional en la cultura argentina*. Buenos Aires: Colihue.

———. 1996. *Cuestión de pelotas. Fútbol, deporte, sociedad, cultura*. Buenos Aires: Atuel.

Abu Lughod, Lila. 2005. *La interpretación de la(s) cultura(s) después de la televisión.* Etnografías Contemporáneas I, Buenos Aires, pp. 57–90.

Alabarces, P. and María Graciela Rodrigueaz. 2008. "Música popular y resistencia: los significados del rock y la cumbia", in *Resistencia y mediaciones. Estudios sobre cultura popular*, ed. P. Alabarces and M. G. Rodríguez, pp. 22–56. Buenos Aires: Paidós.

Andrade, Juan. 2005. "Cuando en la villa subieron el volumen," *El Monitor de la Educación* 5 (3).

Aparicio, Frances. 1998. *Listening to Salsa. Gender, Latin Popular Music, and Puerto Rican Cultures.* Hanover and London: Wesleyan University Press.

Bailey, Frederick George. 1971: "Gift and Poison." En *Gifts and Poison: The Politics of Reputations*, ed. F. G. Bailey. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Bajtín, Mijail 1987 [1930]. *La cultura popular en la Edad Media y en el Renacimiento. El contexto de Francois Rabelais*. Buenos Aires: Alianza Editorial.

Banaggia, Gabriel. Forthcoming. "Conversão, com versões: a respeito de modelos de conversão religiosa."

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1986. "La disolución de lo religioso." In *Cosas Dichas,* pp. 100–107. Buenos Aires: Gedisa.

———. 1991[1980]. *El Sentido Práctico*. Madrid: Taurus

Brubaker, Rogers, and Frederick Cooper. 2001. "Más allá de la 'identidad.'" *Apuntes de Investigación del CECYP* (7): 30–67.

Buccafusca, S. 2009. "La población boliviana residente en la Ciudad de Buenos Aires. Breve Diagnostico sociodemográfico en el marco de la migración limítrofe." *Revista Calidad de Vida UFLO*, Universidad de Flores 1 (2): 259–75.

Caggiano, S. 2005. *Lo que no entra en el crisol. Inmigración boliviana, comunicación intercultural y procesos identitarios.* Buenos Aires: Prometeo.

Cejas, Rina. 1995. "Los cuarteteros en Córdoba, un fenómeno de identidad socio-cultural." *Revista de Investigaciones Folkóricas* 10 (Buenos Aires): 20–27.

Citro, Silvia (ed.). 1997. *Cuerpos Festivo-Rituales: un abordaje desde el rock*. Tesis de Licenciatura, Departamento de Ciencias Antropológicas, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, UBA. 233 páginas.

———. 2000a. "Estéticas del rock en Buenos Aires: Carnavalización, fútbol y antimenemismo." In *Pesquisas recentes em estudos musicalis no Mercosul, Serie Estudos 4,* ed. M. E. Lucas and R. Menezes Bastos, 115–140. Porto Alegre: Universidad Federal do Río Grande do Sul.

———. 2000b. "El análisis del cuerpo en contextos festivo-rituales: el caso del *pogo.*" *Cuadernos de Antropología Social* 12: 225–242.

Cragnolini, A.1998. "Reflexiones acerca del circuito de promoción de la música de la '"bailanta'" y de su influencia en la creación y recreación de estilos." *Actas de las IX Jornadas Argentinas de Musicología y VIII Conferencia Anual de la A.A.M,* ed. E. Roig, I. Ruiz, and A. Cragnolini. Instituto Nacional de Musicología "Carlos Vega," Buenos Aires, pp. 293–302.

———. 2006. "Violencia social, adolescencia, significante sonoro y subjetividad: el caso de la cumbia villera en Buenos Aires." In *TRANS-Revista Transcultural de Música*, No. 10. Available at http://www.sibetrans.com/trans/trans10/cragnolini.htm.

Csordas, Thomas. 1993. "Somatic Modes of Attention." *Cultural Anthropology* 8 (2): 135–156.

De Marinis, Pablo. 2005: "16 comentarios sobre la(s) sociología(s) y la(s) comunidade(s)." In *Papeles del CEIC—Universidad del País Vasco*: www.ehu.es/CEIC/papeles.

De Nora, Tia. 2000. *Music in Everyday Life.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Diez, Patricia. 2006. "Ni careta ni quemado, rescatado. Usos del cuerpo, adscripciones identitarias y morales de jóvenes varones de Bajo Flores, Ciudad de Buenos Aires." Tesis de Maestria. Maestría en Antropologia Social. IDES-IDAES/UNSAM. Buenos Aires.

Durkheim, Emile. 1968. *Las formas elementales de la vida religiosa*. Buenos Aires: Shapire.

Elbaum, Jorge. 1994. "Los bailanteros. La fiesta urbana de la cultura popular." En *La cultura de la noche. La vida nocturna de los jóvenes en Buenos Aires,* ed. Mario Margulis, pp. 181–210. Buenos Aires: Espasa Hoy.

Elías, Norbert. 1993 [1977]. *El proceso de la civilización*. Buenos Aires: FCE.

Fairley, Jan. 2006. "Dancing Back to Front: *Regeton*, Sexuality, Gender and Transnationalism in Cuba," *Popular Music* 25 (3).

Fassin, Didier. y Bourdelais, Patrice. 2005. "Introductión: las frontieres de l'espace moral." In (comp.) *Les constructions de l'intolerable. Etudes d'antropologie et d'histoire su les frontieres de l'espace moral*, ed. Didier Fassin and Patrice Bourdelais. Paris: La decouverte collection "Recherches."

Feijoó, María del Carmen. 2001. *Nuevo país, nueva pobreza*. Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica.

Filmus, Daniel. 1999. "Presentación." En *Los noventa. Política, sociedad y cultura en América Latina y Argentina de fin de siglo,* ed. Daniel Filmus, pp. 7–10. Buenos Aires: FLACSO, EUDEBA.

Flores, M. 1993. *La música popular en el Gran Buenos Aires*. Buenos Aires: CEAL.

Fornas, Johan. 1997. "Text and Music Revisited." *Theory, Culture & Society* 14 (3): 109–123.

Foucault, Michel. 1987 [1975]. *Vigilar y castigar*. Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI.

Freud, Sigmund. 1992 [1913]. *Totem y tabú*. In *Obras Completas*, 24 Vols. Buenos Aires: Amorrortu.

Frigerio, Alejandro. 2002a. "'A alegria é somente brasileira'. A exotización dos migrantes brasileiros en Buenos Aires." *Argentinos e Brasileiros: Encontros, imagens, estereótipos*, ed, Alejandro Frigerio and Gustavo Lins Ribeiro, pp. 15–40. Petrópolis: Vozes.

Frith, Simon. 1987. "Hacia una estética de la música popular." In *Las culturas musicales. Lecturas de etnomusicología,* ed. AAVV. Madrid: Editorial Trotta.

———. 1996. "Music and Identity." In *Questions of Cultural Identity*, ed. Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay. London: Sage.

———. 1999. "La constitución de la música rock como industria transnacional." In *Las culturas del rock,* ed. Luis Puig and Jenaro Talens. Valencia: Pre-Textos. Fundación Bancaja.

Fairley, Jan. 2006. "Dancing Back to Front: *Regeton*, Sexuality, Gender and Transnationalism in Cuba." *Popular Music* 25 (3).

García Canclini, N. 1992. *Culturas híbridas. Estrategias para entrar y salir de la modernidad.* Buenos Aires, Sudamericana.

Garriga Zucal, José, and Daniel Salerno. 2008. "Estadios, hinchas y rockeros: variaciones en torno al aguante." In *Resistencias y mediaciones. Estudios sobre cultura popular*, ed. Pablo Alabarces and María Rodríguez. Buenos Aires: en prensa.

Grimson, Alejandro. 2005. *Relatos de la diferencia y la igualdad. Los bolivianos en Buenos Aires*, 2nd ed. Buenos Aires: Eudeba.

Grimson, Alejandro, and E. Paz Soldán. 2000. "Migrantes bolivianos en la Argentina y Estados Unidos." In *Cuaderno De Futuro*, No. 7, Programa de las Naciones Unidas Para el Desarrollo (PNUD), La Paz, Bolivia. http://www.revistadesarrollohumano.org/Biblioteca/0079.pdf.

Grimson, Alejandro, and Pablo Semán. 2005. "Presentación: la cuestión 'Cultura.'" Etnografías Contemporáneas, no. 1, Escuela de Humanidades de la UNSAM, Buenos Aires.

Grossberg, Lawrence. 1992. *We Gotta Get Out of This Place.* New York: Routledge.

Guattari, Félix, and Suely Rolnik. 2000. *Micropolítica. Cartografias do Desejo*. Petrópolis, Vozes.

Halnon, Karen. 2004. "Inside Shock Music Carnival: Spectacle as Contested Terrain." *Critical Sociology* 30 (3): 743–779.

———. 2006. "Heavy Metal Carnival and Disalienation: The Politics of Grotesque Realism." *Symbolic Interaction*. Special Issue on Popular Music in Everyday Life. 29 (1): 33–48.

Isambert, Francois André. 1982. *Le sens du sacre. Fete et religion populaire*. París: Minuit.

Jungblut, Airton. 2007. "A salvação pelo rock: sobre a "cena underground" dos jovensevangélicos no Brasil." *Religião e Sociedade* 27 (2), Rio de Janeiro.

Kesler, Gabriel. 1997. "Algunas implicancias de la experiencia de desocupación para el individuo y su familia." *Sin trabajo. Las características del desempleo y sus efectos en la sociedad argentina,* ed. Luis Beccaria and Néstor López, 111–160. Buenos Aires: UNICEF/Losada.

Kohl, Paul. 1993. "Looking Through a Glass Onion: Rock and Roll as a Modern Manifestation of Carnival." *The Journal of Popular Culture* 27(1): 143–162.

Leitao Pinheiro, Marcia. 2008. Na Pista da Fe: musica festa e outros encontros culturais, entre os evangélicos do Rio de Janeiro, Tese de Doutorado, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Instituto de Filosofia e Ciências Sociais, Programa de Pós-Graduação em Sociologia e Antropologia.

Lewin, H. 1994. "Siga el baile: el fenómeno social de la bailanta, nacimiento y apogeo." In *La cultura de la noche. La vida nocturna de los jóvenes en Buenos Aires*, ed. M. Margulis, pp. 211–34. Buenos Aires: Espasa Calpe.

Maffesoli, Michel. 1990. *El tiempo de las tribus*. Barcelona: Icaria.

Mallimaci, Fortunato. (1992). "El Catolicismo Argentino desde el liberalismo integral a la hegemonía militar." In *500 años de Cristianismo en la Argentina,* pp. 197–368. Buenos Aires: Cehila-Nueva Tierra.

Manuel, Peter. 1998. "Gender Politics in Caribbean Popular Music: Consumer Perspectives and Academic Interpretation," *Popular Music and Society* 22 (2).

Martín, M.E. 2006. "No me arrepiento de este amor. Um estudo etnográfico das práticas de sacralizacao de una cantora argentina." Tesis Doctoral, Programa de Pós-Graduacao em Antropología Social. Doutorado em Antropología Social. Universidad Federal de Río de Janeiro. Museu Nacional.

———. 2008. "La cumbia villera y el fin de la cultura del trabajo en la Argentina de los 90." TRANS Revista Transcultural de Música 12. Available at http://www.sibetrans.com/trans/trans12/indice12.htm.

Merklen, Denis. 2000. "Vivir en los márgenes: la lógica del cazador. Notas sobre sociabilidad y cultura en los asentamientos del Gran Buenos Aires hacia fines de los 90." *Desde abajo. La transformación de las identidades sociales,* ed, Maristella Svampa, pp. 81–119. Buenos Aires: Universidad Nacional de General Sarmiento/Editorial Biblos.

———. 2006. "Estilos musicales y estamentos sociales. Cumbia, villa y transgresión en la periferia de Buenos Aires." In *Entre cumbias, santos y piquetes. Las culturas populares en la Argentina reciente*, ed. D. Míguez and P. Semán, pp. 3–54. Buenos Aires: Biblos.

Minujin, Alberto, and Gabrieal Kesler. 1995. *La nueva pobreza en la Argentina*. Buenos Aires: Planeta.

Oliven, Ruben George. 1989. "A malandragem na Música Popular Brasileira." In *Violência e cultura no Brasil*. Petrópolis: Vozes.

———. 1997. "O Vil Metal: o Dinero na Música Popular Brasileira." *Revista Brasileira de Ciências Sociais* 12 (33).

———. 2001. "O imaginário masculino na música popular brasileira." Trabalho apresentado no Seminário Temático *Cultura e Arte na Sociedade Contemporânea: novos desafios, novas estratégias* na XXV Reunião Anual da Asociación Nacional de Pesquisa e Pós-Graduación en Ciências Sociais. Caxambu, MG.

Pacini Hernandez, Deborah. 1995. *Bachata. A Social History of a Dominican Popular Music.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Picard, Dominique. 1986. *Del código al deseo: el cuerpo en la relación social.* Buenos Aires: Paidós.

Pujol, S. 1999. "Cumbia en Constitución, Tango en Broadway." In *Historia del Baile: de la milonga a la disco*, pp. 327–52. Buenos Aires: Emecé.

———. 2006. "Los caminos de la cumbia." Available at www.revistatodavia.com.ar/todavia13/notas/txtpujol.html.

Sanchis, Pierre "Para nao dizer que nao falei de sincretismo." Communicacoes do ISER, 1994, no. 45, pp. 5–11.

Sarlo Beatriz. 1994. *Escenas de la vida postmoderna.* Buenos Aires: Ariel.

Semán, Pablo, and Pablo Vila. 1999. "Rock Chabón e identidad juvenil en la Argentina neo-liberal." In *Los noventa. Política, sociedad y cultura en América Latina y Argentina de fin de siglo*, ed. Daniel Filmus, pp. 225–258. Buenos Aires: Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales/EUDEBA.

———. 2002. "Rock chabón. The Contemporary National Rock of Argentina." *From Tejano to Tango. Latin American Popular Music,* ed., Walter Aaron Clark, pp. 70–94. New York & London: Routledge.

Seman, Pablo. 2000. "Los jóvenes de los sectores populares del Gran Buenos Aires y el fin del milenio." Trabajo presentado en la XXIV Reunión Anual de la ANPOCS, Petrópolis, RJ.

———. 2005. "Vida, Apogeo y Tormentos del Rock Chabón." *Pensamiento de los Confines*, no. 17: 177–189.

———. 2008. Psicologización y Religión en um barrio del Gran Buenos Aires, in Debates do NER, 9–44 Porto Alegre, n. 8. ISSN 1519 843X.

Semán, Pablo, and Guadalupe Gallo. 2008. "Rescate y sus consecuencias. Cultura y Religión solo en singular." In *Ciencias Sociales y Religión/Ciencias Sociais e Religiao* (10): 73–94. Publicación de la Asociación de Cientistas Sociales de la Religión del MERCOSUR, Porto Alegre, ISSN 1518 4463.

Silba, M. [and Carolina Spataro (coauthor)] 2008a. "Cumbia Nena. Jóvenes bailanteras: entre las líricas, los relatos y el baile." In *Resistencia y mediaciones. Estudios sobre cultura popular*, ed. P. Alabarces and M.G. Rodríguez, pp. 91–121. Buenos Aires: Paidós.

Silba, M. 2008b. "De villeros a románticos. Transformaciones y continuidades de la cumbia." In *Emergencia: cultura, música y política*, pp. 41–62. Buenos Aires: Ediciones del CCC. Centro Cultural de la Cooperación Floreal Gorini.

Spataro, Carolina. 2010. *Conversaciones con una fan: modelos de feminidad y masculinidad en la música de Arjona.*

Stallybrass, P. and A. White. 1986. *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression.* Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.

Szulik, Dalia, and Silvia Kuasñosky. 1994. "Los extraños de pelo largo. Vida cotidiana y consumos culturales." *La cultura de la noche. La vida nocturna de los jóvenes en Buenos Aires*, ed. Mario Margulis et al., pp. 211–234. Buenos Aires: Espasa Hoy.

Turner, Victor. 1980 [1967]. *La selva de los símbolos.* Madrid: Siglo XXI.

———. 1989 [1969]. *El proceso Ritual*. Madrid: Taurus.

———. 1992 [1983]. *The Anthropology of Performance*. New York: PAJ.

Vianna, Letícia Costa Rodrigues. 1998. *O vencedor de demandas. A trajetória e obra de un artista popular*. Tese de doutorado. Rio de Janeiro, PPGAS MN/UFRJ.

Vila, Pablo. 1985. "Rock Nacional: Crónica de la Resistencia Juvenil." En *Los nuevos Movimientos Sociales,* ed. E. Jelín. Buenos Aires: CEAL.

———. 1987. "Rock Nacional and dictatorship in Argentina." *Popular Music* 6 (2): 129–148.

———. 1995. "El rock nacional: género musical y construcción de la identidad juvenil en Argentina." In *Cultura y pospolítica. El debate sobre la modernidad en América Latina*, ed. Néstor García Canclini. México: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes.

Vila, P. and P. Semán. 2006. "La conflictividad de género en la cumbia villera." TRANS, Revista Transcultural de Música 10. Available at http://www.sibetrans.com/trans/trans10/vila.htm.

Wade, Peter. 2000. *Música, Race, and Nation.* Música Tropical *in Colombia*. Chicago and Londres: The University of Chicago Press.

Wynarczyk, Hilario, and Pablo Semán. 1995. *Panorama Actual del Campo Evangélico en Argentina.* Buenos Aires, Facultad Internacional de Educación Teológica.

Yúdice, George. 2007. *Nuevas tecnologías, música y experiencia*, Barcelona, Gedisa.

Albums and Songs Cited (faltan traducciones)

***Don Leopardo* (1996)**
"Masturbación en masa" (not recorded)
Bersuit Vergarabat y punto (1992)
"Como nada puedo hacer"
"Homenaje a los locos del Borda"
"Hociquito de ratón"
"La Papita"

***Asquerosa alegría* (1993)**
"Fuera de Acá"
"Bolivian Surf"
"Bolero militar"
"Cajón 5 estrellas"
"Cielo Trucho"
"Abundancia"
"Ojo por ojo"
"Croata" or "La Mujer perfecta"
"Madrugón de Penas"
"Encapuchados o Despedida Cruel"
"Querubín"
"En trance"
"Réquiem"

***Libertinaje* (1998)**
"Vuelos"

"Sr. Cobranza"
"Se Viene"
"C.S.M."

La Argentinidad al palo **(2004)**
Testosterona **(2005)**
? **(2007)**
Fisura Expuesta **(2008) [Exposed Gap]**
Suelto **(2009) [Loose]**

Index