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Valeria Manzano

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## “ROCK NACIONAL” AND REVOLUTIONARY POLITICS: *The Making of a Youth Culture of Contestation in Argentina, 1966–1976*

On March 30, 1973, three weeks after Héctor Cámpora won the first presidential elections in which candidates on a Peronist ticket could run since 1955, rock producer Jorge Álvarez, himself a sympathizer of left-wing Peronism, carried out a peculiar celebration. Convinced that Cámpora’s triumph had been propelled by young people’s zeal—as expressed in their increasing affiliation with the Juventud Peronista (Peronist Youth, or JP), an organization linked to the Montoneros—he convened a rock festival, at which the most prominent bands and singers of what journalists had begun to dub *rock nacional* went onstage. Among them were La Pesada del Rock’n’Roll, the duo Sui Géneris, and Luis Alberto Spinetta with Pescado Rabioso. In spite of the rain, 20,000 people attended the “Festival of Liberation,” mostly “*muchachos* from every working- and middle-class corner of Buenos Aires,” as one journalist depicted them, also noting that while the JP tried to raise chants from the audience, the “boys” acted as if they were “untouched by the political overtones of the festival.”<sup>1</sup>

Rather atypical, this event was nonetheless significant. First, it briefly but directly spoke of rock culture’s social and gender dynamics, showing that it had amassed a constituency that crossed class lines, yet was overwhelmingly male. Second, it showed the keen desire, albeit fraught with apparent difficulty, to create a common space for youth articulated through the notion of “liberation.” As it unfolded in Argentina and most other Latin American countries during the 1960s, “liberation” encompassed both political and cultural meanings, for exam-

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1. “Numerosos conjuntos celebran el triunfo del FREJULI,” *La Opinión*, March 30, 1973, p. 22; “Con música de rock, 20.000 jóvenes celebraron el triunfo peronista,” *La Opinión*, April 1, 1973, p. 1.

ple, "national liberation from neocolonialism" in its left-wing Peronist version, and "individual liberation from conventions and repressions" in the sense that rockers gave it.<sup>2</sup> This article argues that in Argentina rock culture sensitized young people to cultural and political authoritarianism, thus crucially contributing to the shaping of a heterogeneous, multilayered, and increasingly radicalized youth culture of contestation, organized around different meanings of "liberation."

The historicization of rock culture offers a vantage point for analyzing the relationship between culture and politics in the Latin American 1960s. In the late years of the decade, Argentina's rock culture showed a marked dynamism, becoming a mass phenomenon. The scholars who have studied rock nacional's first decade—approximately 1966 through 1976—have aimed at unpacking its specificities. In a pioneering work, sociologist Pablo Vila has shown that, musically speaking, rock nacional blended rock's beat and harmony with other forms of popular music, notably tango and "folklore." The classification of a song as rock depended on the relative position of singers within the rock movement, which, in turn, relied on their compliance with claims of authenticity. In contrast to the Anglo-Saxon rock context, authenticity worked aesthetically *and* ideologically: in rock nacional, Vila argued, between being a star and an artist, rockers always picked the second term.<sup>3</sup> Sociologist Pablo Alabarces has also pointed out the importance of authenticity claims in defining rock nacional over time, as an embodiment of youth culture centered on notions of rebellion.<sup>4</sup> More recently, literary critic Claudio Díaz has incisively noted that the "rebel I" was the most persistent trope in the poetics of rock nacional.<sup>5</sup> Rock nacional, thus, is not to be defined solely in sonic and linguistic terms—even though it is not irrelevant that Argentine musicians and poets, as did their Chilean and Colombian counterparts, produced songs that were written and performed in Spanish. As a form of cultural politics, in any case, rock gained national credentials when musicians, poets, and fans—until the 1970s, almost invariably young men—appropriated practices and styles from a transnational repertoire and used them to cope with the dynamics of cultural change and authoritarianism that permeated Argentine life.

2. On the multiple meanings of the notion of "liberation" in Latin America, see Diana Sorensen, *A Turbulent Decade Remembered: Scenes from the Latin American Sixties* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2007), pp. 2–3.

3. Pablo Vila, "Rock Nacional: The Struggle for Meaning," *Latin American Music Review* 10:1 (1989), pp. 1–28. For the meanings of "authenticity" in rock cultures at large, see Roger Beebe, Denise Fulbrook, and Ben Saunders, *Rock over the Edge: Transformations in Popular Music* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2002), pp. 1–23.

4. Pablo Alabarces, *Entre gatos y violadores: el rock nacional en la cultura argentina* (Buenos Aires: Colihue, 1995).

5. Claudio Díaz, *Libro de viajes y extravíos: un recorrido por el rock argentino (1965–1985)* (Urquillo, Córdoba: Editorial Narvaja, 2005).

The study of rock culture and the attention to its gendered dimensions help us to revise the narrative of modernization in the Argentine sixties. In the era that began with the military coup that overthrew Juan Domingo Perón's first governments (1946–1955), civilian and military governments alternated while the majority force, Peronism, was proscribed. Thus, political volatility was intermixed with attempts to accelerate Argentina's economic growth through development-oriented policies.<sup>6</sup> Focusing on the dynamics of social modernization, historians have thus far tended to construct an interpretation that shows societal forces pushing for cultural change and the liberalization of customs that faced top-down "traditionalist blockades," such as the 1966 coup led by General Juan Carlos Onganía—a prime example of an authoritarian-bureaucratic regime that simultaneously closed the space for political action and aimed to infuse a moralistic ethos into the "Christian nation" to defend it from communism.<sup>7</sup> While Onganía's regime (1966–1970) famously reinforced political repression and censorship, a study of the reactions that rockers provoked when they emerged in the public milieu shows that authoritarianism and cultural conservatism were not exclusive to the state. Rather, they were spread among a broad spectrum of actors—from socialist politicians to "progressive" psychologists—and found common salient expression in the anxieties related to the gendered rules governing "manners and morals."

By focusing on what historians of Argentine rock label the "pioneering years"—the period coincidental with Onganía's regime—this article shows that rockers created a "fraternity of long-haired boys" based on a common taste for rock music and the deployment of bodily styles that challenged the gendered rules of "manners and morals" on a practical level.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, the visibility of that fraternity incited not only police repression but also a wide-ranging homophobic reaction, which set in motion an enduring discussion about the "crisis of the Argentine man" and the fading of patriarchal authority in the face of transformations of gender relations and sexual mores—a phenomenon that so

6. Catalina Smulovitz, "En búsqueda de la fórmula perdida: Argentina, 1955–1966," *Desarrollo Económico* 31:121 (April–June, 1991), pp. 113–124; Carlos Altamirano, *Bajo el signo de las masas (1943–1973)*, (Buenos Aires: Ariel, 2001), pp. 62–102.

7. The classic study of Onganía's regime is Guillermo O'Donnell, *Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism: Argentina 1966–1973 in Comparative Perspective* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988). See also the notion of "traditionalist blockade" in Oscar Terán, *Nuestros años sesenta: la formación de una izquierda intelectual en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Puntosur, 1991), esp. chapt. 6. This notion has been crucial in other general studies on the 1960s: see Sergio Pujol, *La década rebelde: los sesenta en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 2000).

8. Among the most important histories of Argentine rock are those written by rock journalists Miguel Grinberg, *La música progresiva en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Convergencia, 1977); Osvaldo Marzullo and Pancho Muñoz, *Rock en la Argentina: la historia y sus protagonistas* (Buenos Aires: Galerna, 1985); Marcelo Fernández Bitar, *Historia del rock en la Argentina: una investigación cronológica* (Buenos Aires: Distal, 1987); and Juan Carlos Kreimer and Carlos Polimeni, eds., *Ayer no más* (Buenos Aires: Musimundo, 2006).

far has been analyzed only by looking young women's changing experiences. The study of rock culture thus offers a lens through which to view the ways in which these young men confronted the values of sobriety and respectability that premised the hegemonic constructions of masculinity. They did so as part of a cultural politics that privileged the pursuit of hedonism, individual freedom, and expression. This was a politics in tune with a transnational youth countercultural movement, yet at odds with the conservatism that cut across the larger society, and it thus showed the limits of the modernizing projects in 1960s and early-1970s Argentina.

In the early 1970s, rock represented one strand of a culture of contestation encompassing broad segments of youth, most of who engaged en masse with student, party, and guerilla groups that they themselves helped to create. How did rock, as cultural politics, interact with revolutionary politics? This question has guided other scholars of the Latin American sixties, who have studied countercultural practices related to rock music or "libertarian" ideas in Mexico, Brazil, and Chile and showed that the politically structured left generally conceived of those practices as nonpolitical, and some even saw it as evidence of an "imperialist" cultural penetration that interpellated youth in ways that obstructed the chances of building revolutionary projects.<sup>9</sup> Bearing in mind these often tense relationships, historian Eric Zolov has proposed to broaden the concept of "New Left," which in its common Latin American usage refers to groups that split with the Communist and Socialist Parties during the 1960s, usually embracing armed struggle and the "heroic guerrilla" as the means and subject for shaping a revolutionary path. The definition as broadened would encompass also non-armed aspects of the "challenges to political and social norms." This re-crafted definition of "New Left," Zolov has argued, would allow us to view the "heroic guerrilla" and "rockers" not in opposition but as "twin facets of diverse and intersecting movements that confronted state power, on one hand, and patriarchal norms, on the other."<sup>10</sup> While I share the commitment to study these "intersecting movements," I prefer not to use the term "New Left," first because it has its own story in Argentina (related not only to the embracement of armed struggle but also to the reinterpretations of Peronism), and second because in the early 1970s—unlike their Chilean and Uruguayan counterparts—many rockers explicitly rejected any ideological con-

9. Eric Zolov, *Refried Elvis: The Rise of a Mexican Counterculture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 177–178; Christopher Dunn, *Brutality Garden: Tropicalia and the Emergence of a Brazilian Counterculture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), pp. 112–113; Patrick Barr-Melej, "Siloiismo and the Left in Allende's Chile: Youth, 'Total Revolution,' and the Roots of the Humanist Movement," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 86:4 (November 2006), pp. 747–784.

10. Eric Zolov, "Expanding our Conceptual Horizons: The Shift from an Old to a New Left in Latin America," *A Contracorriente* 5:2 (Winter 2008), pp. 47–73, p. 51.

nection with “the left.”<sup>11</sup> Even in Zolov’s redefinition, which associates it to a new sensibility, the term “New Left” involves an ineludible ideological dimension. Instead of ideology, I stress a generational shift to analyze the making of a youth culture of contestation that, as historian Alejandro Cattaruzza has noted, was articulated through the notion of “liberation” in both its collective and personal inflections and based on the belief that “the system” was basically unjust and could not be challenged from its center, but only from its margins.<sup>12</sup>

Rock’s fundamental contribution to that youth culture of contestation was to sensitize young people, and especially young men—since young women were subject to a much more varied and more aggressively imposed range of restrictions—to various forms of authoritarianism. However, in the early 1970s, at a juncture of growing politicization and radicalization, many evaluated that contribution as insufficient. Unlike what happened in Mexico and Chile, the political left largely ignored arguments related to “cultural imperialism” in its interpretation of Argentina’s rock culture, a movement that had gained a degree of respectability along with national credentials. That respectful attitude towards rock nacional, understood as a legitimate form of popular music and as a potential venue for protest, did not, however, imply that the revolutionary left endorsed rock as a form of cultural politics. While there was room for the interaction of political activists and rockers—specifically where young men participated within both constellations of discourse and practice—intellectuals and militants requested that rockers abandon the domain of sensibility and its association with ideas of personal liberation and rebellion, and enter the domain of ideology linked to collective liberation and revolutionary politics. The story of encounters and tensions between these two strands of a youth culture of contestation ended rather abruptly. By 1974, when the Peronist right-wing sectors had unquestionably gained power positions, they spread a perception that linked youth to drug abuse, subversion, and deviancy—they were instrumental in reshaping “youth” into a suspicious category. New legislation on narcotics, and a decree sanctioning what was in effect a state of siege, overlapped with

11. Luis Alberto Spinetta, for example, argued that he and his group were “neither for the left nor for the right, but for rock and truth.” See “Una charla con Invisible,” *Chaupinela* 20, September 1975, n.p. In regard to the use of “New Left” in Argentina, one of its first appearances in public discussions occurred before the echoes of the Cuban Revolution had spread, in a book of interviews with intellectuals and militants who attempted to consider how to integrate leftist principles and action with the apparent persistence—and radicalization—of a Peronist identity among the working classes. See Carlos Strasser, *Las izquierdas en el proceso político argentino* (Buenos Aires: Pallestra, 1959). For recent historiographical uses of the concept, again with reference to the transformation of the political left through re-readings of Peronism and the embracing of armed struggle, see Claudia Hilb and Daniel Lutzky, *La nueva izquierda argentina, 1960–1980* (Buenos Aires: Centro Editorial de América Latina, 1984); and María Cristina Tortti, *El viejo Partido Socialista y los orígenes de la Nueva Izquierda* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2010).

12. Alejandro Cattaruzza, “El mundo por hacer: una propuesta para el análisis de la cultura juvenil en la Argentina de los años setenta,” *Lucha armada en la Argentina* 10 (2008), pp. 18–41.

police and para-police violence to create the atmosphere of a nation at war in which both rockers and political militants suffered. Before the military imposed the most dramatic dictatorship in March of 1976, the youth culture of contestation had begun to back away.

### A FRATERNITY OF LONG-HAIRED BOYS

Led by General Juan Carlos Onganía, the "Revolución Argentina" imposed in 1966 aimed at putting an end to the political instability initiated by the overthrow of Perón. The Revolución Argentina epitomized what political scientist Guillermo O'Donnell termed an authoritarian bureaucratic regime. Committed to a massive project of socioeconomic planning and strong anticommunism, the regime announced its goals, but not the specific timeframes to accomplish them. Aligned with U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara's precepts of national security, its first objective was to "economically develop" the country. To that end, the regime argued for deactivating popular mobilization and for stifling politics; it started off by suppressing Congress, outlawing all political parties, and setting limits to the functioning of the unions.<sup>13</sup> As he had already posited in his 1964 speech before the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, Onganía insisted on redrafting the role of the armed forces, which were called upon, he said, to "preserve the moral and spiritual values of Western and Christian civilization."<sup>14</sup> Those ultramontane ideological tenets and a strong commitment to defending the principle of "authority" in both its social and cultural dimensions served as an organizing principle for the policies that the Argentine revolution tried to enforce.

A month after its imposition, Onganía's regime carried out two initiatives that touched directly on young people's lives. On July 29, 1966, the military intervened in the nation's autonomous universities, which they believed to be loci of Communist activity. Federal police entered three schools at the University of Buenos Aires and beat and arrested 300 students and professors. The "night of the long sticks," as it was called, showed that the military would use violence to safeguard "order"; for good measure, they also banned the student federations.<sup>15</sup> During the same weeks, the mayor of Buenos Aires launched a "morality campaign," which consisted of raids on nightclubs where youth met,

13. O'Donnell, *Bureaucratic Authoritarianism*, pp. 15–83.

14. Alain Rouquié, *Poder militar y sociedad política en la Argentina, 1943–1973* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1982), vol. 2, pp. 231, 259–260; Paul H. Lewis, "The Right and Military Rule, 1955–1983," in *The Argentine Right: Its History and Intellectual Origins, 1910 to the Present*, Sandra McGee Deutsch and Ronald H. Dolkart, eds. (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1993), pp. 155–156.

15. Sergio Morero, Guido Lichtman, and Ariel Eidelman, *La noche de los bastones largos* (Buenos Aires: Grupo Editorial Latinoamericano, 1999).

including one raid that involved the rock trio Los Beatniks. The trio had recorded a single with the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), but because the company was not interested in promoting the band's work, Los Beatniks organized a promotional party that ended with everyone half naked at a public fountain. In tune with the moralizing efforts, the press reproduced scandalous reports after the trio was held for three days in a police station.<sup>16</sup>

However, while the military intervention outlawed student politics, it unintentionally accelerated their radicalization: in the late 1960s, a myriad of students merged with post-Vatican Second Council Catholic groups and mingled with left-leaning Peronists; eventually, they constituted the rank-and-file of many New Left groups. Nor did the morality campaign prevent rock culture from emerging. By 1967, a plethora of long-haired boys attracted to rock music had cropped up, contesting the rules governing "manners and morals" while posing practical challenges to patriarchal arrangements. The rockers' fraternity incited both verbal and physical aggression, from police and civilian forces alike, evidencing the pervasiveness of societal authoritarianism. Rock became the core of an anti-authoritarian politics, related to other projects of cultural revolt that appropriated strands of a transnational counterculture.

Beginning in the early 1960s, young poets, writers, and artists pointed to the construction of a cultural space for rebellious youth, halfway between the "commercialized" and the "politicized." In this vein, the poet Miguel Grinberg had a pioneering role. Grinberg was one of the first to introduce and read the Beatnik poets in Argentina and frequently corresponded with Allen Ginsberg and Lawrence Ferlinghetti. Grinberg created the magazine *Eco Contemporáneo*, which from limited beginnings attracted an expanding readership.<sup>17</sup> The magazine sought to produce a *generación mufada*—in Argentine slang, "exasperated generation." The *mufados* would be youth who, unlike those involved in party politics, would "psychically revolutionize their own territory."<sup>18</sup> Likewise, the *mufados* would differ from the youth attracted to "commercialized" cultures. Grinberg reacted especially to the "new wave," a short-lived yet highly successful cohort of young singers promoted by the Radio Corporation of America (RCA) and known as El Club del Clan. As happened

16. "Detúvose a integrantes de un trío musical," *La Prensa*, August 1, 1966, p. 7. For a reconstruction of that campaign, see Valeria Manzano, "Sexualizing Youth: Morality Campaigns and Representations of Youth in Early-1960s Buenos Aires," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 14:3 (2005), pp. 433–461.

17. Author's interview with Miguel Grinberg (b. 1937), Buenos Aires, September 11, 2007. To protect my interviewees' privacy, I use their first names and the initial of their last names unless they were public figures like Grinberg.

18. Miguel Grinberg, "Cartas a la Beat Generation," *Eco Contemporáneo* 4 (December 1962), p. 14; "Mufa y revolución," *Eco Contemporáneo* 5 (1963), p. 9.

with the Brazilian *Jovem Guarda*, *El Club del Clan* began as a television program, broadcast in 1962 and 1963, in which a dozen youths—overwhelmingly young men and purportedly representing a microcosm of Argentina's youth—sang and danced to the rhythms of rock, the twist, and other musical styles. *El Club del Clan* and, especially, some of its soloists—notably Palito Ortega and Violeta Rivas—juvenilized mass culture almost completely. Through their lyrics, body language, and construction of onstage and offstage personas, they delivered remarkably conservative mandates to their young audience. *El Club del Clan* reinforced traditional imagery surrounding gender roles and family life; celebrated romantic love (while concealing any reference to sexuality); sidestepped the connection between youth and “rebellion”; and made sure not to question any hierarchy or convention.<sup>19</sup> The experience of *El Club del Clan* was exhausted by the mid 1960s, when not only Grinberg but most youth engaged with rock music realized that it had been a movement “favoring the system,” one that any “authentic” rock culture would oppose.<sup>20</sup>

In the mid 1960s a series of cultural spaces and practices emerged in relation to the Instituto Di Tella (IDT), an art center in Buenos Aires that praised novelty and youth as values in their own right. The IDT came to be publicly related to cultural “happenings.” Rather than signaling works centered on instantaneity, the term “happening” functioned as a broad adjective to qualify works or practices deemed scandalous.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, in the public culture of mid-1960s Argentina, most of what “happened” within the IDT and its surrounding area was conceived of as scandalous. Often compared with “swinging London,” although likely more similar to the Zona Rosa in Mexico City, the *manzana loca*, or crazy block—the streets adjacent to the IDT—comprised a cosmopolitan enclave in which the unconventional prevailed, chiefly in the areas of fashion and music. There the first miniskirts were sold and worn, and stores imported the first records by Jefferson Airplane and Jimi Hendrix.<sup>22</sup> The area exerted a pull on artists such as Sergio Mulet, the director of the literary magazine *Opium*, whose slogan was Ezra Pound's verse “Let's chant to leisure

19. Miguel Grinberg, “Anatomía del desorden,” *Eco Contemporáneo* 8/9 (1965), p. 14. For analysis of *El Club del Clan*, see Víctor Pesce, “El discreto encanto de *El Club del Clan*,” *Cuadernos de la Comuna* 23 (1989), pp. 12–28; Alabarces, *Entre gatos y violadores*, pp. 38–41; Pujol, *La década rebelde*, pp. 247–254; Mirta Varela, *La televisión criolla: de sus inicios a la llegada del hombre a la luna (1951–1969)* (Buenos Aires: Edhasa, 2005), pp. 143–152; and Valeria Manzano, “Ha llegado la nueva ola: música, consumo y juventud en la Argentina, 1956–1966,” in *Los 60 de otra manera: vida cotidiana, género y sexualidad en la Argentina*, Isabella Cosse, Karina Felitti, and Valeria Manzano, eds. (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2010), pp. 19–59.

20. “A la sombra de Los Beatles se cosecha dinero y fama,” *La Nación*, February 1, 1966, p. 22.

21. John King, *El Di Tella y el desarrollo cultural argentino en la década del sesenta* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones de Arte Gaglianone, 1985), p. 138.

22. A description of the *manzana loca* is in Laura Podalsky, *Specular City: Transforming Culture, Consumption, and Space in Buenos Aires (1955–1973)* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Temple University Press, 2004), pp. 138–147. For the Zona Rosa, see Zolov, *Refried Elvis*, pp. 135–137.

and love, nothing else matters,” and who proclaimed that he and his fellows were “apolitical revolutionaries, tired of alienating jobs.”<sup>23</sup>

The rhetoric centered on the unconventional, the iconoclastic mood in some enclaves, and the will to build a cultural space between the commercialized and the politicized youth; all of these elements reverberated in the nascent rock culture, which initially comprised a tiny fraternity of bohemian young men. As has often been recounted in stories of Argentina’s rock history, everything began at La Cueva, a pub in Barrio Norte where young men gathered to listen to jazz and then to play, informally, rock music. La Cueva was a site for the would-be pioneers of Argentina’s rock to interact; they included Moris, the leader of the trio Los Beatniks; Litto Nebbia and other members of the quartet Los Gatos; Tanguito; Javier Martínez; and the poet Pipo Lernoud. Most of these young men had detached themselves from their families. Los Gatos, for example, had migrated to Buenos Aires from Rosario with a contract to play music at social clubs organized by an entertainment company. As Nebbia recalls, they barely made a living and could afford to rent rooms only in rundown hotels, where they mingled with Moris, Martínez, and Lernoud.<sup>24</sup> The latter were middle-class young men from Buenos Aires; for them, moving to the hotels entailed creating lifestyles very different from those to which they were supposed to be destined in the realms of petit-bourgeois families and white-collar jobs. Although they were familiar with The Beatles and Rolling Stones, these aspiring musicians did not have formal musical training but learned their art in a rather autodidactic fashion in the bars La Cueva and La Perla; it is in the latter where Nebbia and Tanguito allegedly composed “La Balsa” (The Raft).<sup>25</sup> “La Balsa” called for youth to drop out, build an imaginary raft, and *naufregar* (shipwreck). In June of 1967, Los Gatos recorded a single of “La Balsa” for RCA. The song achieved instant success—the single sold 250,000 copies in six months—and consecrated Spanish as the language of Argentina’s rock. It went on to become the theme song of the young men it helped identify as *náufragos*.

While “La Balsa” was climbing the charts, some *náufragos* organized an event that positioned them as bearers of a cultural politics centered on unconventional and anti-authoritarian sentiments and practices. The poet Lernoud and some companions sent out a call to all young men “wearing long hair” to gather on September 21, 1967, to celebrate the coming of the spring season in Plaza San Martín, near the manzana loca, and requested that they “dress as

23. “Con la violencia de un cross a la mandíbula,” *Confirmado* 51, June 9, 1966, p. 59.

24. Litto Nebbia, *Una mirada: reflexiones y anécdotas de vida* (Buenos Aires: Catálogos, 2004), pp. 22–24.

25. For a description of La Perla and the hotels, see the testimonies in Grinberg, *Cómo vino la mano*, pp. 34–37.

[they] would dress if [they] lived in a free country." To the organizers' surprise, about 300 long-haired young men wearing wildly colorful clothes showed up.<sup>26</sup> The "we" that these early rockers articulated was anchored in a common taste for rock music and a distinctive personal style consisting of that unconventional clothing, but especially of long hair. The young participants did more than "reinvent oneself by oneself for oneself," to use anthropologist Greg McCracken's phrase from his analysis of the uses and effects of hair in modern societies. Hair had become for these young men, as for others worldwide, "transformational" for both individual and collective identities.<sup>27</sup> For example, Tony—who did not attend the event at the Plaza San Martín—recalls that in his working-class neighborhood in late 1967, only he and two other boys wore long hair. "We were not friends," he says, "but we began first to say hello, then to listen music, and finally to play together."<sup>28</sup> For these boys, long hair acted as a conduit for building fraternal bonds and for conveying shared unconventional attitudes that would be further cemented through rock music. Coming out of late-1960s Argentina, these bodily styles, attitudes, and ways of sociability involved contesting cultural and political authoritarianism in quite practical ways.

In the spring and summer of 1967-68, droves of long-haired boys in Buenos Aires and other major cities went to public places to *naufragar*. In Córdoba and Mendoza, for example, they congregated in the main plazas. Alvin, the "leader of the Córdoba beatniks," as a journalist baptized him, stated that he and his group of 20 young men wanted to transform the "image and sounds" of a city ruled by "priests and military bureaucrats"—a reference to the main ideological and political alliance represented in Onganía's regime and also to Córdoba's fame as a redoubt of clericalism and militarism.<sup>29</sup> In Buenos Aires, the Plaza Francia became the náufragos' new gathering point (see Figure 1). The náufragos there attracted a small group of young women, such as Silvia, who told the reporters that she had run away from her home in Mendoza, tired of her "father's tyranny," and found a "new family" in the Plaza Francia.<sup>30</sup> Silvia's story offers a glimpse into the difficulty that young women had in negotiating permissions in their homes: unless they dared overt confrontation with their families, they had little chance of participating in the street-based

26. "Así llegó a Buenos Aires la primavera," *Siete Días* 20, September 26, 1967, pp. 12–14.

27. Grant McCracken, *Big Hair: A Journey into the Transformation of Self* (New York: Overlook, 1995), pp. 3, 61.

28. Author's interview with Tony C. (b. 1950 in the Valentín Alsina-Lanús section of Buenos Aires), September 10, 2007.

29. "Córdoba tiene sus beatniks," *Siete Días* 9, July 11, 1967, pp. 29–31; Graciela Cousinet et al., *Extramuros: Historia del rock mendocino* (Mendoza, Argentina: Universidad Nacional de Cuyo, 2001), pp. 44–46.

30. "La marabunta en Buenos Aires," *La Razón*, November 11, 1967, p. 7.

FIGURE 1  
*Náufragos in Buenos Aires*



Source: *Atlántida*, December 1967.

sociability of the early rockers. Young women, in any case, comprised a tiny minority of the 300 “hippies” that, according to a press report, gathered in Plaza Francia or Plaza San Martín every day.<sup>31</sup> What did they do there? In one of the few on-site reports on the *náufragos* at Plaza Francia, a journalist commented that the “eccentric youths,” besides sharing cigarettes and food, chatted all night long about “the most diverse topics,” read poetry, and “played rock music” until they “fell asleep under the trees.”<sup>32</sup>

The *náufragos*’ sociability and their concomitant bodily styles also marked them as targets of harassment and repression, as it did similar groups in other countries in the late 1960s, Italy and Mexico, for example.<sup>33</sup> On November 30, *La Razón*

31. “Hippies de utilería,” *Siete Días*, December 12, 1967, pp. 32–33.

32. José de Zer, “48 horas con los hippies,” *Atlántida* 1209 (December 1967), pp. 42–46.

33. Diego Giachetti, *Anni sessanta comincia la danza: giovani, capelloni, studenti ed estremisti negli anni della contestazione* (Pisa: BFS, 2002), pp. 128–137; Zolov, *Refried Elvis*, pp. 141–146. In Argentina, federal police had devised a way to apply three different legal weapons in combination in their raids: first, there were old police edicts, for the most part unknown to the public, regulating issues of vagrancy, disorder, or simply etiquette; second, presidential decree 333, passed in 1958, authorizing the police to detain people “to check penal antecedents”; and, third, Memorandum 40, a secret disposition passed in 1965 by which federal police attributed to themselves the right to detain people—including those underage—for up to one month without

of Buenos Aires informed its readers that a "group of 21 enthusiastic and loud hippies" had been detained at Plaza San Martín, allegedly after neighbors protested their "scandalous songs and behavior."<sup>34</sup> In the first weeks of January, at least 120 youth were detained, not only in the "hippie enclaves" of downtown Buenos Aires but also in many lower-middle-class neighborhoods.<sup>35</sup> Some náufragos from Plaza Francia reported that several young men whom they dubbed the "Pompeya group" because they lived in that working-class *porteño* neighborhood often came out to beat them.<sup>36</sup> In Mar del Plata, when 20 youths organized a "rock happening," at least "one hundred short-haired boys armed with sticks and stones" launched their attack against them.<sup>37</sup> In the same period, the tiny yet visible Federación de Entidades Anti-Comunistas de la Argentina (FAEDA) held a street rally where they proclaimed that the "hippies" were related to the "international network of Castroite guerrillas," and accused former Socialist deputy Juan Carlos Coral of helping to free them from police stations. Coral countered that he would "never help the hippies" because they were "well-to-do, effeminate."<sup>38</sup> While Coral stressed the hippies' alleged class as the reason that he rejected them, he drew on a different reason and a prevalent belief: the federal police, the "Pompeya group," the "one hundred short-haired boys," and FAEDA all employed homophobia to ostracize the náufragos.

The reaction against the náufragos or hippies or rockers—interchangeable terms in late-1960s Argentina—was premised on homophobic sentiments. Over the months of intense police and "civilian" raids, the lifestyle magazine *Siete Días* published 52 letters from readers addressing the "hippie" issue. One man initiated the series of letters when he wrote to complain that the "long-haired hippies" represented a threat to "Argentine society" because "they are all homosexual." Responding to this letter, two young men, signing as "Adam Dylan" and "Oswald Lennon," claimed that the "hippies and rock lovers" were the "true representatives of Argentine youth" because they carried the "message of peace and love" that the country needed.<sup>39</sup> Readers were split:

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notifying the judges. See Policía Federal Argentina, *Edictos Policiales y Reglamento de Procedimientos Contravencionales*, 1970, pp. 1–7; and Poder Ejecutivo Nacional, "Decreto 333/58," *Boletín Oficial*, March 3, 1958, p. 2. On Memorandum 40, see Ricardo Canaletti, "Las mil y una formas de 'ir en cana,'" *Clarín*, June 9, 2005, p. 32.

34. "Hippies en Buenos Aires," *La Razón*, November 30, 1967, p. 13.

35. "Hippies al calabozo," *La Razón*, January 10, 1968, p. 8; "La guerra anti-hippies," *La Razón*, January 23, 1968, p. 6.

36. See Pipo Lernoud's testimony in Víctor Pintos, *Tanguito* (Buenos Aires: Planeta, 1992), p. 127.

37. "Tumultos en la misa negra," *Siete Días* 36, January 16, 1968, p. 15; "Descomunal desorden entre hippies y anti-hippies en Mar del Plata," *La Razón*, January 11, 1968, p. 8.

38. "¿Será posible?," *La Razón*, January 12, 1968, p. 7; and "Hippies," January 24, 1968, p. 6. Several people wrote to back Coral: "Correo," *Primera Plana* 265, January 23, 1968, p. 4; *Siete Días* 37, January 23, 1968, p. 15.

39. "Correo de lectores," *Siete Días* 18, September 12, 1967, p. 5; October 3, 1967, p. 7.

while eight backed “Dylan and Lennon,” 43 engaged with the homosexual-menace case, including many youths. Omar, for instance, argued that rockers could not be “good Argentines” by “smoking marijuana and being homosexuals,” an argument with which Juan, age 17, “totally agreed.” Carlos, age 19, argued even more heatedly that “if the hippies want to help the fatherland, they should be courageous men and abandon their music and stupid clothes.”<sup>40</sup> Ironically, Dr. Eva Giberti, a psychologist and columnist who since the late 1950s had advocated for democratizing intergenerational relations, expressed similar sentiments. Commenting on a concert by Los Gatos, she cautioned her readers about how dangerous the “little cross-dressing games” were for young men, since they would “heighten even more the natural sexual confusion of their age.”<sup>41</sup>

The homophobic reaction the rockers incited when they first erupted into the public milieu was framed within broader anxieties over the embattled transformations in gender relations taking place in 1960s Argentina. Those changes entailed a practical questioning of the ideal of domesticity, an ideal that had taken strong hold among the middle class in the first half of the twentieth century and among the working classes during the Peronist governments. That ideal relied on the enforcement of clear-cut gender roles in which the probity of men depended chiefly on their bread-winning capability—with its attendant values of responsibility and sobriety—and the probity of women relied on their abilities to fulfill the role of dutiful housekeeper and caring mother.<sup>42</sup> As the 1960s went on, young women from the middle and working classes, in a practical rather than a self-conscious fashion, marked the limits of the domestic ideal by remaining longer in the education system, fully participating in the labor market, helping to produce leisure activities in which only young people participated, daring to experiment with new courtship conventions and to accept publicly that they engaged in premarital sex, and marrying older than before.<sup>43</sup> As I show elsewhere, young women occupied a paradoxical space:

40. “Correo de lectores,” *Siete Días* 31, December 12, 1967, p. 7; January 16, 1968, p. 6; and March 12, 1968, p. 5.

41. “Hippies en Buenos Aires: ¿al paredón o tolerancia?,” *Gente* 116, October 12, 1967, p. 37. On the work of Eva Giberti, see Mariano Plotkin, *Freud in the Pampas: Origins and Development of a Psychoanalytical Culture in Argentina* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2001), pp. 108–114; and Isabella Cosse, “Argentine Mothers and Fathers and the New Psychological Paradigm of Child-Rearing (1958–1973),” *Journal of Family History* 35:2 (2010), pp. 180–202.

42. Eduardo Míguez, “Familias de clase media: la formación de un modelo,” in *Historia de la vida privada en la Argentina*, Vol. 2, Fernando Devoto and Marta Madero, dirs. (Buenos Aires: Taurus, 1999), pp. 21–45; Marcela Nari, *Políticas de maternidad y maternalismo político: Buenos Aires, 1890–1940* (Buenos Aires: Biblos, 2004); Isabella Cosse, *Pareja, sexualidad y familia en los años sesenta: una revolución discreta en Buenos Aires* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2010).

43. See among others María del Carmen Feijoo and Marcela Nari, “Women in Argentina during the 1960s,” *Latin American Perspectives* 23:1 (Winter 1996), pp. 7–26; Karina Felitti, “El placer de elegir: anti-concepción y liberación sexual en la década del sesenta,” in *Historia de las mujeres en la Argentina*, Vol. 2,

while their pursuit of renewed educational, labor, and cultural expectations transpired a collective yearning for change, the clashes they faced in their family realms showed clearly how embattled any such changes were. More directly, young women's new practices destabilized deep-seated forms of patriarchal authority: their choices of vocations, their leisure preferences, and their courtship practices turned into arenas of confrontation in many families and became issues of public concern and debate.<sup>44</sup> Up to the mid 1960s it was young Argentine women's experiences and expectations that differed most sharply from those of their mothers' generation; it was only in the second half of the 1960s that many of their male counterparts went through a similar process, carving out a "generation gap."

Rock culture offered an iconoclastic framework through which some young men challenged accepted routes for making "men" out of boys; those routes involved two key institutions, the secondary schools and the military service. In 1969, 58 percent of boys between 15 and 19 years old were enrolled in secondary schools, where regimentation was significantly increasing. For example, after the imposition of military rule in 1966, national educational authorities asked school principals to have male students aged 16 or older practice shooting firearms.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, in 1969, educational authorities mandated that boys' hair should be cut to eight centimeters above their shoulders; they would otherwise be unable to enroll.<sup>46</sup> For many boys who wore long hair, or wanted to, this prohibition epitomized the schools' arbitrariness and thus stood at the center of myriad battles. In 1971, the administrators of a school in Buenos Aires expelled an 18-year-old boy because he did not wear "appropriate clothing," and had his "hair too long." The boy's fellows protested in solidarity, and 25 of them were expelled as well.<sup>47</sup> The school became fertile terrain for discontent with authoritarianism, and rock served to address the ubiquitous dissatisfaction. It was not coincidental that the band that helped make of local rock a "mass phenomenon," the duo Sui Géneris, who were Charly García and Nito Mestre, appealed to a student audience by deploying school metaphors

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Fernanda Gil Lozano, Valeria Pita, and María Gabriela Ini, eds. (Buenos Aires: Taurus, 2000), pp. 155–170; Dora Barrancos, *Mujeres en la sociedad argentina: una historia de cinco siglos* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2007), pp. 224–235; Isabella Cosse, "Probando la libertad: cambios y continuidades en el cortejo y el noviazgo entre los jóvenes porteños (1950–1970)," *Entrepasados* 39 (2008), pp. 31–47.

44. Valeria Manzano, *The Age of Youth in Argentina: Culture, Politics, and Sexuality from Perón to Videla* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, forthcoming 2014), chapt. 4.

45. Ministerio de Educación y Cultura, *Estadística Educativa* (Buenos Aires: Departamento de Estadística Educativa: 1970), pp. 68–71; Dirección de Enseñanza Secundaria, Circular No. 37/969, June 4, 1969; Administración Nacional de Educación Media, Nota D-015/971, May 18, 1971, Instituto Superior del Profesorado Joaquín V. González Archive.

46. "Melenudos del mundo, uníos," *Panorama* 101, April 1, 1969, pp. 10–11.

47. "Incidentes en el Colegio Mariano Acosta," *La Opinión*, August 18, 1971, p. 18. For a similar episode, see "La ropa que vos usáis," *Primera Plana* 478, March 28, 1972, p. 31

and language. It did a parallel job on mandatory military service, the second dynamic of the “boys-will-be-men” ideal. In one of the few memoirs by a rock fan who was also a poet and musician, Miguel Cantilo commented that for his group of *náufragos* conscription represented a “death trap” set by the military and the “accomplice families,” who believed it was useful to instill discipline and obedience and thus “make a man out of you.”<sup>48</sup>

In stimulating social connections and values centered on hedonism, companionship, and a leisured life, rockers posed practical arguments to the notions of discipline, responsibility, and sobriety that were the premises of the hegemonic constructions of masculinity in 1960s Argentina.<sup>49</sup> As literary scholar Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has pointed out, in a male-dominated society faced with a “sense of break” in regard to the ways of transmitting patriarchal power, the reaction can “take the form of ideological homophobia.”<sup>50</sup> Old and young men—and some women—made a “homosexual menace” out of rockers, who they believed jeopardized the generational continuity of patriarchal power. Although hardly alone among Latin Americans in their negative reactions to the youth counterculture, Argentines showed themselves in this aspect to be less “modern” than the usual narratives of their sixties reveal. As Eric Zolov has shown for Mexico, and Patrick Barr-Melej for Chile, the media representations of *jipitecas* and *siloístas*, respectively, were framed in sexual terms and revolved around the menace of their “unisex fashion” for the gender order or, in a heightened way for the Chilean *siloístas*, their supposed sexual deviancy.<sup>51</sup>

The broad homophobic reaction of Argentine “civilians” to the early rockers went unnoticed by the country’s historians. The void derives from the ways in which scholars have thus far conceptualized the Argentine sixties, that is, by focusing on the clashes between a “modern” society—one that purportedly valued the relaxation of customs and the liberalization of sex mores—and an authoritarian state that, from above, set obstacles to cultural modernization. However, the sexed and gendered reaction rockers incited was organized around the upholding of order, patriarchal hierarchies, and “manners and morals,” and cut across a broad spectrum of actors, including some apparent “progressives.” These hostile responses, in conjunction with the threat of police repression, politicized rock culture and its attendant bodily practices,

48. Miguel Cantilo, *Chau Loco ... los hippies en la Argentina de los setenta* (Buenos Aires: Galerna, 2000), pp. 19–20.

49. On the notion of hegemonic masculinity, see R. W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Cambridge, Mass.: Polity Press, 2005), pp. 39–40.

50. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosexual Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p. 25.

51. Zolov, *Refried Elvis*, pp. 102–105, 133–134; Barr-Melej, “Siloísmo and the Left,” pp. 764–778.

helping to shape the ideological and gendered dynamics of the rapidly growing movement.<sup>52</sup>

Between 1968 and 1970, countless groups of young men set out to play rock. The first evidence of the rapid extension of rock music playing was an impressive increase in the sales of certain musical instruments; a business report showed that between 1967 and 1970 the sales of electric guitars increased by 260 percent, basses by 180 percent, and drums by 120 percent. In early 1970, a journalist suggested that in Buenos Aires alone there was a rock band every four blocks and compared the fervor with that incited by the tango orchestras of the 1940s.<sup>53</sup> The explosion of music playing came as a boon to the recording industry. In fact, after the success of Los Gatos’ recording of “La Balsa,” industry entrepreneurs embarked on a search for bands who could emulate their success. In mid 1968, for example, a producer for RCA visited rehearsals throughout the city, even seeking out a group called Almendra whose members had just finished secondary school.<sup>54</sup> Meanwhile, a new label, Mandioca, was formed out of the collaboration of four náufragos at the Plaza Francia and the publisher Jorge Álvarez. Álvarez claimed that “unlike other companies, Mandioca will not interfere in the artistic process,” by which he meant that musicians and poets would work without complying with “commercial” rules.<sup>55</sup> Unable to attract Almendra, the label produced, among others, the trio Manal, and was influential in organizing concerts. Mushrooming in number, Buenos Aires rock concerts became venues for further shaping the fraternity of rockers. Just as were the náufragos’ other spaces of social interaction, concerts were subject to police harassment and repression, which became crucial in solidifying anti-authoritarianism as the most significant ideological component of rock culture.

The pervasiveness of police repression also helps explain partially why the rock social dynamic excluded young women. Although it did create a venue for challenging hegemonic notions of masculinity, the fraternity of long-haired boys did not welcome women, and the predominance of young men was apparent on and off the stage. The three women who appeared onstage in the concerts of the early 1970s—Gabriela, Carola, and María Rosa Yorío—were all

52. Deborah Paccini Hernández, Héctor Fernández L’Hoeste, and Eric Zolov have pointed out the “criminalization of rock and the harassment of rockers” as a Latin American singularity, see “Mapping Rock Cultures across the Americas,” in *Rockin’ Las Americas: The Global Politics of Rock in Latin/o America*, Deborah Paccini Hernández, Héctor Fernández L’Hoeste, and Eric Zolov, eds. (Pittsburgh, Pa.: Pittsburgh University Press, 2004), pp. 7–9.

53. “La multiplicación de los instrumentos,” *Mercado* 95, May 5, 1971, p. 40; Jorge Andrés, “Los jóvenes fuertes,” *Análisis* No. 464, February 2, 1970, p. 48.

54. Eduardo Berti, *Spinetta: Crónicas e iluminaciones* (Buenos Aires: Editora 12, 1988), p. 15.

55. “La vida es como un long play,” *Análisis* 402, November 27, 1968, p. 52.

married to prominent male rockers, and did not achieve major success. “Rockers are *machistas*,” Gabriela explained.<sup>56</sup> Most important, the initial places of sociability—the plazas and streets, and later, concert spaces—did not provide room for many young women, even among the audience, as Silvia’s case showed. Hilda, a young middle-class woman at the time, recalls that it was hard for girls to go to rock concerts: “We were afraid of the police, but our parents were more afraid.”<sup>57</sup> Even when they wanted to attend, young women found it hard to negotiate permission with their parents: concerts were—rightly—associated with disorder, not suitable for girls. However, a number of girls did have a chance to attend some concerts, like the shows organized by a radio program to celebrate the end of the 1969 school year, where bands like Manal played.<sup>58</sup> In the view of musicians and “true” fans, these shows represented chances for “money-making,” not for “playing.” To the extent that young women did participate in rock social scenes, they did so in contexts that male rockers deprecated. One telling example is related to the rock band with which young women engaged the most: Sui Géneris. The duo, which at first played acoustically, sold almost 200,000 copies of its first LP in early 1972. It was reportedly the first LP that boys and girls alike purchased, and it spoke of adolescent themes—privileging, for example, the narration of romanticized stories of first sexual encounters. At a time when many rockers praised electric sounds and music virtuosos, Sui Géneris, according to their own producer and La Pesada’s leader, Billy Bond, “played like and for girls [*nenas*].”<sup>59</sup> Playing *like* *nenas* was as insulting as playing *for* *nenas*: rock was supposed to bind together a fraternity of boys.

In addition to revealing a strong machista sentiment, the rampant anti-female attitude also comprised one way through which some rockers tried to counter the homophobic claims against them. As scholars have noted for other contexts, the rockers, by expelling “the feminine,” helped to shape their own sense of masculinity, and it was the case amidst the homophobic reactions they faced in 1960s Argentina.<sup>60</sup> Those attitudes did little to attract young women to rock culture. The slander of the feminine also informed a feud in the rockers’ fraternity during the pioneering years: the opposition between the rock bands Almendra and Manal. Luis Alberto Spinetta’s leadership provided Almendra with poetically sophisticated lyrics depicting dream-like worlds, as well as

56. “La supremacía masculina es notoria en el ámbito de la música moderna,” *La Opinión*, January 26, 1972, p. 18.

57. Author’s interview with Hilda L. (b. 1950 in the city of Buenos Aires), August 22, 2007.

58. “Adiós al secundario,” *La Bella Gente* 3, February 1970, p. 78.

59. Fernández Bitar, *El rock en la Argentina*, p. 52.

60. See Norma Coates, “(R)Evolution Now? Rock and the Political Potential of Gender,” in *Sexing the Groove: Popular Music and Gender*, Sheila Whiteley, ed. (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 54–57.

exquisite music that overtly drew on fusion, notably with tango. Manal localized blues and relied on Martínez's poetry, which focused on narrations of rude, mostly working-class landscapes.<sup>61</sup> Scholars have assessed that opposition in class terms: Manal would have aimed at connecting to a working-class audience, while denying Almendra the right of belonging to rock culture based on claims that its members were mere "middle-class boys."<sup>62</sup> Yet the members of both bands came from a middle-class background and as Manal's manager Mario Rabey recalls, both attracted a cross-class male audience to their concerts: "But Almendra was softer," he argues, "to the point that even girls liked it, while Manal was a boys' thing."<sup>63</sup> In Rabey's memories and in the opinions of some of Manal's fans, the trio represented "true rock" because they sounded "more macho."<sup>64</sup>

In 1970, Manal, Almendra, and Los Gatos disbanded to pursue riskier, more "authentic" endeavors. In splitting at the height of their popularity, they sidestepped the opportunity to become stars; but in doing so, as Vila has argued, these bands upheld the authenticity claims that had accrued to rock nacional over time.<sup>65</sup> In 1970, also, the first rock—as opposed to "youth"—magazine appeared in Argentina. Aligned with initiatives such as *Rolling Stone* in the United States and its sister publication *Piedra Rodante* in Mexico, *Pelo* aimed at distinguishing "what is authentic from what is mere commercial merchandise" in Argentina's rock culture.<sup>66</sup> To that end, *Pelo* popularized a dichotomy opposing *complacientes* (the complacent) to *progresivos* (the progressives). The *complacientes* were the bands whose creative decisions depended on the record business. The *progresivos* were the ones engaged in a movement toward more sophisticated musical and poetical forms, which allegedly would make little noise within the record business. Using these categories, *Pelo* provided its readers with information on the 53 bands that had recorded by 1970: the so-called "beat bands" such as Los Naufragos and La Joven Guardia were indisputably *complacientes* while Manal, Los Gatos, and Almendra ranked high among the *progresivos*.<sup>67</sup> As happened with the opposition between pop and rock globally in the 1970s, the *Pelo* categories were also coded with gen-

61. As examples of how those poetics and music styles functioned, listen to Luis Alberto Spinetta, "Hoy todo el hielo en la ciudad," on *Almendra*, 1970, RCA (now Sony-BMG); Javier Martínez and Claudio Gabis, "Avellaneda's Blues," in *Manal*, Manal, 1970, Mandioca (now Sony-BMG).

62. Vila, "Rock Nacional," pp. 12–13; Alabarces, *Entre gatos y violadores*, p. 49.

63. Author's interview with Mario Rabey (b. 1949 in the city of Buenos Aires), July 22, 2008.

64. "El contestador," *La Bella Gente* 8, September 1970, p. 85.

65. Vila, "Rock nacional," p. 8.

66. "Editorial: Bueno/Malo," *Pelo* 3, April 1970, p. 4. According to *Pelo*'s former director, the magazine sold 150,000 copies monthly in Argentina and was exported to other Latin American countries as well. Author's interview with Daniel Ripoll (b. 1944 in city of Buenos Aires), June 27, 2007.

67. "Música pop argentina," *Pelo* 1, February 1970, p. 3; "Los conjuntos de la música pop argentinos," *Pelo*, April 1970, pp. xvii–xxiv.

dered terms. The complacentes were endowed with attributes that, as cultural critic Andreas Huyssen has noted, intellectuals have attached to commercial culture and the feminine since the nineteenth century: superficiality, weakness, and passivity.<sup>68</sup> The progresivos, meanwhile, occupied the male/high side of the relation: active, forward-driving, and creative. In endorsing progresivos as superior, *Pelo* upheld the perceived male values, binding together an enlarged fraternity of boys; it also offered them sites where they could gather to exercise those values, namely the Buenos Aires Rock festivals (BAROCK).

Beginning in 1970, *Pelo* organized three successive annual BAROCK festivals, which demonstrated that the rockers' fraternity had enlarged from the days of "La Balsa," while preserving the core of its anti-authoritarian cultural politics. The organizers estimated that 6,000 people attended each of the five afternoons of the 1970 festival, a figure that tripled in the year that followed.<sup>69</sup> Reporting on the 1971 festival, a journalist signaled that it had been "musically poor" but striking in terms of attendance: "nothing is left from the 'old days' of the manzana loca and the Flower-Power attitude," he argued, while noting that the audience was made of "working- and middle-class young men."<sup>70</sup> Commenting on rockers' gender and class background, another journalist hypothesized that "some may be Anarchist, some Peronist, and many politically indifferent," and that their commonalities were "a taste for rock music" and their "strong anti-authoritarian feelings."<sup>71</sup> The participation in rock social interaction and its attendant bodily styles created a venue through which young men challenged the prevalent patriarchal arrangements and confronted authoritarianism in both its state-led and societal forms (see Figure 2). While allowing these young men to carve out a symbolic space for imagining and enacting fraternal, horizontal bonds, rock culture also sensitized them to the multiple expressions of authoritarianism that cut across the Argentine "sixties"; perhaps this was its key contribution to the making of a youth culture of contestation that flourished around the notion of liberation.

68. See Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 50–53. For the way in which the dichotomy between pop and rock was crafted in the Anglo-Saxon context, see Angela McRobbie and Simon Frith, "Rock and Sexuality [1978]," in *On Record: Rock, Pop, and the Written Word*, Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin, eds. (New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 371–389; and for more recent discussions, Ian Biddle and Freya Jarman-Ivens, "Oh, Boy! Making Masculinity in Popular Music," in *Oh, Boy! Masculinities and Popular Music*, Freya Jarman Ivens, ed. (New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 1–17; and Gillian Frank, "Discophobia: Antigay Prejudice and the 1979 Backlash against Disco," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 16:2, May 2007, pp. 276–306.

69. "El festival para sacar cabeza," *Pelo* 10, November 1970, p. 52; author's interview with Daniel Ripoll, June 27, 2007.

70. "BAROCK II: al fin y al cabo, nació para ser salvaje," *Panorama* 238, November 16, 1971, pp. 46–47.

71. "Beat, un estilo de vida," *Clarín, Revista de los Jueves*, December 2, 1971, n.p.

FIGURE 2  
*Rock fans, Buenos Aires Rock Festival, 1971*



Source: Courtesy Archivo Diario Clarín.

### SEARCHING FOR DEFINITIONS

In May of 1969, a series of popular rebellions erupted in several Argentine cities—Corrientes, Rosario, and especially Córdoba—and marked the beginning of the political finale of Onganía’s regime. However, it was only in June of 1970, after the Peronist guerrilla Montoneros kidnapped and executed former president General Pedro Aramburu, that Onganía finally resigned. The surfacing of guerrilla activities coupled with a broad and ever more radical societal politicization. In that process, rising numbers of young people engaged with revolutionary projects aimed at forging a socialist future, either in its classless Marxist version or in its nationalist-Peronist one, the movement reaching its peak between 1972 and 1974. The military negotiated the transition to public elections with the exiled former president Juan Perón, resulting in the victory of Perón’s delegate, Héctor Cámpora, in March of 1973. Soon after that triumph, Perón came back to Argentina, and in October 1973, became president until his death.<sup>72</sup>

72. The literature on this process of political radicalization is abundant. For general overviews, see Alfredo Pucciarelli, ed. *La primacía de la política: Lanusse, Perón y la Nueva Izquierda en tiempos del GAN* (Buenos Aires: EUdeBA, 1999); and Liliana de Riz, *La política en suspenso, 1966–1976* (Buenos Aires: Paidós,

How did rock culture interact with the politicization of rising segments of youth across the society? Although the two constellations of discourse and practice that made the youth culture of contestation, rock culture and the political groups, developed their own respective and often internally contradictory ideals, there were conditions for overlapping. Along the porous lines, it was the “definition” of the unaffiliated rockers that was at stake. Leftist intellectuals and militants requested a definition from rockers, asking them to clarify their ideology and abandon their particular sensibility.

As in other Latin American countries where revolutionary projects were tied to guerrilla movements, the ideal political subject in Argentina was also built on male standards that centered on courage and resistance, sometimes depicted as a process of overcoming obstacles related to petit-bourgeois social backgrounds and ideological “weakness”—Che Guevara was its epitome.<sup>73</sup> Revolutionary groups produced tacit or written rules for modeling their ideal militants, which included the regulation of their behaviors in areas such as sex, eating, and drug consumption. One of the few such sets of rules preserved in writing is an often-quoted document titled *Moral y proletarización*, crafted in 1972 by the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores-Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo (PRT-ERP) and aimed at constructing what it called proletarian morality: an anti-individualistic, anti-bourgeois consciousness that would produce a new subject in the passage to socialism. It endorsed the monogamous heterosexual couple as the only venue for rejecting the “false sexual revolution” and encouraged frugality in all areas of life, from eating to dressing.<sup>74</sup> The PRT-ERP militants were not alone in laying out rigid disciplinary terms. Writing in a pan-leftist journal, a former militant portrayed two of his fellow militants with the Fuerzas Armadas Peronistas (FAP) who were killed by the police in a way that illustrates this group’s unwritten rules. The portrayal commented on how these youths used to enjoy “plentiful meals” and “beautiful women,” and on how hard it was for them to learn to shoot a gun properly. They had overcome the “obstacles”: they had learned not only how to shoot but also how to “control their appetites”—referring to both eating and

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2000). For the development of the most important guerrilla groups, see Richard Gillespie, *Soldiers of Perón: Argentina's Montoneros* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1982); and Pablo Pozzi, *Por las sendas argentinas: el PRT-ERP, la guerrilla marxista* (Buenos Aires: EUdeBA, 2001).

73. For the reverberations of this figure throughout Latin America, see especially María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo, *The Revolutionary Imagination in the Americas in the Age of Development* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003), pp. 67–77; Sorensen, *A Turbulent Decade Remembered*, pp. 14–41; and Zolov, “Expanding our Conceptual Horizons,” pp. 67–69.

74. Luis Ortolani [signing as Julio Parra], “Moral y proletarización,” *Políticas de la Memoria* 5 (2004–2005), pp. 99–100. It first appeared in a clandestine publication of the PRT-ERP militants who, like Ortolani, were imprisoned in Rawson (Chubut), in 1972. It was reprinted in 1974, and its reading was mandatory for incoming PRT-ERP militants.

sexual activity—to prepare “for action.”<sup>75</sup> The prospects of getting into “action” literally fueled the keenness to keep one’s self-control, and, along with the concerns for avoiding police attention, helps explain the condemnation of drug consumption among the revolutionary groups—a position shared not only by most leftist groups in Latin America but as the 1970s went on, also by the former counterculturally oriented left in Germany and Italy.<sup>76</sup> Several memoirs indicate both the difficulties in complying with that rule and the zeal to do so. A former militant with the secondary-school students affiliated with the Juventud Peronista (JP) recalls that they expelled a boy who was reputed to have smoked marijuana because he was not “conscious enough” and he put “all of us in jeopardy because of his vices.”<sup>77</sup>

However, as some memoirs allow us to infer, there was a zone of intersection in which some youths articulated their political activism through their involvement in countercultural projects and practices, and vice versa. For example, the journalist Martín Granovsky recalls that one of his best friends, Pablo, was a militant with the PRT-ERP at the same time that he was a rock guitar player. Trying to reconstruct his friend’s life before the latter was kidnapped by the military, Granovsky found that Pablo, while hiding from increasing state repression, spent nights at a “hippie house” where he found not only a refuge but access to a creative musical life.<sup>78</sup> It bears noting that the PRT-ERP leadership and many of its militants were particularly harsh in their judgments of “hippie” lifestyles and rock altogether: as some former members recalled, they were sanctioned as “petit bourgeois and escapist” if they went to rock concerts, which did not exclude the fact that many, like Pablo, were nonetheless attracted.<sup>79</sup> The historian Alejandro Cattaruzza recalls also an experiment of communal living in Santa Fe, wherein a dozen youths participated in artistic endeavors while engaging with the JP or the Communist Youth.<sup>80</sup> The line between political activism and countercultural projects was crossed in the other direction as well. In 1973 the “hippie artisans” who had poured into Buenos

75. “Carta de un compañero a Manuel Belloni y Diego Frondizi,” *Nuevo Hombre* 21, December 8, 1971, pp. 8–9.

76. Klaus Weinbauer, “The End of Certainties: Drug Consumption and Youth Delinquency in West Germany,” in *Between Marx and Coca Cola: Youth Cultures in Changing European Societies, 1960–1980*, Alex Schildt and Detlef Siegfried, eds. (New York: Bergham Books, 2006), pp. 376–397; Giachetti, *Anni sessanta*, pp. 320–321.

77. Adriana Robles, *Perejiles: los otros Montoneros* (Buenos Aires: Colihue, 2004), p. 40. A similar story unfolds in the testimony of a PRT-ERP female militant, “Lili,” in Marta Diana, *Mujeres guerrilleras: la militancia de los setenta en el testimonio de sus protagonistas femeninas* (Buenos Aires: Planeta, 1997), pp. 108–109.

78. Martín Granovsky, “El tema de ‘Pablut,’” in *La otra juvenilia: militancia y represión en el Colegio Nacional de Buenos Aires, 1971–1986*, Santiago Garaño and Werner Pertot, eds. (Buenos Aires: Biblos, 2002), pp. 191–194.

79. Pablo Pozzi, *Por las sendas argentinas*, p. 146.

80. Alejandro Cattaruzza, “El mundo por hacer,” p. 18.

Aires plazas organized a union affiliated with the JP. They discussed the “hippie stereotypes” which they recognized as ubiquitous among Peronists, and argued that rather than being “peace-and-love hippies,” they were “creative-worker hippies” wishing to create a circuit of production apart from the “imperialist one.”<sup>81</sup>

Yet, even broader than the encounter between hardcore countercultural projects and political militancy—at least for a time—was the zone of intersection between rock culture and political activism. In their memories, some former young militants created a life narrative characterized by a passage from “rebellion” to “revolution” in which rock had an important role. Thus, Carlos recalls that in the late 1960s he crafted his “rebellion” through wearing long hair, playing in a rock band, and attending “Manal concerts,” where he “learned to hate the police” because he “ended up in jail several times.” He was already “a rebel,” Carlos recalls, when he found his path to “sophisticated revolutionary thinking” and became affiliated with a Trotskyist group: he continued to attend rock concerts, but he quit playing and had his hair cut “for security reasons,” he notes.<sup>82</sup> Other former political activists shaped different memories of how they lived out the relationship of rock and politics. Luis Salinas, for example, recalls the early 1970s with a certain irony: “I wanted to be exactly what I was: a blend of guerrilla and Rolling Stone.” For Luis, there was not an “evolution” from rock-rebellion to politics-revolution: as a former member of Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias (FAR) and a “fan of *música progresiva*,” Luis believes he embodied both. However, Luis is self-reflective regarding the limits of the zone of intersection he inhabited. He comments that, on the one hand, the FAR’s leaders were “very strict with discipline,” especially as related to the prohibition of drug use. On the other hand, Luis asserts that *el circo* (“the circus”)—as the bulk of unaffiliated rockers was known—was “very hermetic, and very skeptical about political militancy.”<sup>83</sup>

These stories illustrate the possibilities *and* the limits of the encounters between rock culture and political activism. As the 1970s went on, security concerns, party discipline, and especially self-discipline increasingly conditioned the involvement of young militants with rock culture. In a context in which the revolution seemed close at hand, revolutionary militants were practically required to “define” themselves by privileging their allegiance to one of the “intersecting movements” that made up the youth culture of contestation.

81. “Una nueva feria de artesanos persigue claros objetivos políticos,” *La Opinión*, August 15, 1973, p. 16.

82. Author’s interview with Carlos T. (b. 1951 in Valentín Alsina-Lanús), September 13, 2007.

83. Interview with Luis Salinas (b. 1954 in Buenos Aires), Memoria Abierta Archive, File 0260.

By the same token, revolutionary leftists insisted on a "definition" from those who engaged with the "circus."

The "circus," the term that the media and rockers themselves now used to identify rock nacional, did not fit easily into the ways in which the political was conceptualized in early 1970s Argentina. For some left-wing intellectuals, the fact that rising numbers of male youth were attracted to "the circus" was a challenge they encapsulated in the dichotomy that opposed emotions or sensibility to ideology or politics. In fact, it was Miguel Grinberg who insisted most fervently in labeling rock as "more than musical cadence: it is, here and now, a new sensibility."<sup>84</sup> Grinberg and the journalist Juan Carlos Kreimer came back to this definition when publishing the first testimonial anthology of Argentina's rock in 1970.<sup>85</sup> Commenting on that anthology, the left-wing intellectual Germán García found that, by appealing to the notion of rock as sensibility, rockers avoided ideology, which they conceived of as "vulgar, unauthentic." García pointed out that rockers' testimonies were flush with metaphors related to politics, like "we live in a dictatorship of hypocrisy" and "we throw shells into the established order." Yet, García noted, the metaphors emptied the meaning from the political language they deployed.<sup>86</sup> Possibly representing the dominant view of Argentina's rock culture among the left, García did not question the circus in terms of the "cultural imperialism" thesis. Ironically, while rockers still debated on whether to categorize their movement as *música progresiva* or rock, the popular and political media, with García, was already speaking of rock nacional. Rock culture had gained "national" credentials, in contrast to the ways in which the revolutionary left in other Latin American countries thought of rock and rockers. Yet the main concern that leftist intellectuals and militants posed revolved around how rock nacional created a de-ideologized space or sensibility in which many young men interacted. It was that sensibility and that space that set them apart from "true" political and thus ideologized projects.

At stake in the dichotomy opposing sensibility to ideology was a symbolic battle over the unaffiliated rockers, tied to a consistent effort to provide rock nacional with political and ideological components. In his music columns for the influential daily *La Opinión*, for example, Jorge Andrés constructed a schema for analyzing records in which he evaluated them primarily according to the degree of "ideological definition." Thus, he plainly rejected the work of

84. "Beat Buenos Aires: canta la ciudad," *Panorama* 121, August 19, 1969, p. 52.

85. Juan Carlos Kreimer, *Agárrate!!! Testimonios de la música joven argentina* (Buenos Aires, Galerna, 1970).

86. Germán García, "Música beat: los jóvenes frente al espejo," *Los Libros* 18, April 1971, pp. 26–28.

the band Arco Iris, whose music he thought of as dream-like and characterized by “ideological emptiness.”<sup>87</sup> In contrast, he praised the projects showing an “evolution towards ideological clarification,” which included soloist Raúl Porchetto and the duo Pedro y Pablo’s reinterpretations of Jesus’s message through the lens of what he called social commitment.<sup>88</sup> Andrés thought that rockers should “clarify” their positions, which meant removing themselves from the domain of dreamy sensibility to enter into a domain of ideology. Definitions attached to musicians and poets were important to Andrés, because he saw the massive constituency rock attracted. In October of 1972, for example, a festival convened several thousand people; at one point a widespread ruckus erupted, followed by a street brawl between rockers and the police. The sensationalist press spoke of “rockers’ violence,” but Andrés preferred another reading, identifying the audience as “exponents of humanist delirium and liberation from all conventionalism.” Yet rockers had “marginalized themselves from the political process” and in doing so, Andrés concluded, they limited “the scope of their liberationist attitude.”<sup>89</sup>

Rock musicians and poets’ responses to the request for “ideologizing” their practices were diverse. In fact, some had long participated in a so-called “protest” trend within rock music. That was the case with the duo Pedro y Pablo, who in early 1971 recorded on RCA “La marcha de la bronca” (The Hatred March), in which they denounced police and military authoritarianism and violence, cultural censorship, and “social exploiters” alike. The single recording of “La marcha de la bronca” was a hit, selling 80,000 copies in three months; *Pelo* stated that the song had replaced “La Balsa” as the anthem for rockers.<sup>90</sup> Moreover, the filmmaker Raymundo Gleyzer, affiliated with the PRT-ERP, chose the song as the soundtrack for the sequences related to the 1969 popular rebellions in his documentary *Los traidores* (1972), one of the prime examples of militant cinema. As the 1970s went on, other rockers “ideologized” their practices as well, usually through making political references in the song lyrics. In this respect, the jazz-rock band Alma y Vida dedicated a song to Che Guevara; soloist Roque Narvaja, ironically the former leader of the beat band La Joven Guardia, also wrote a song to Guevara and Camilo Cienfuegos, and another one to Luis Pujals, a leader of the PRT-ERP killed in

87. See “El grupo Arco Iris detenido en el formalismo y el vacío ideológico,” *La Opinión*, December 24, 1971, p. 22; and “Pretensión formal y vaguedad son los síntomas del actual rock argentino,” *La Opinión*, February 2, 1973, p. 21.

88. “Paráfrasis beat sobre el Padre Nuestro con visibles acentuaciones políticas,” *La Opinión*, December 18, 1971, p. 23; “Una obra con música de rock crítica la deformación del lenguaje de Jesús,” September 8, 1972, p. 18.

89. “Desórdenes en el Luna Park frustraron un recital de rock,” *La Opinión*, October 22, 1972, p. 11. For a sensationalist chronicle, see “Perdón, muchachos, ¿esto es rock?,” *Gente* 379, October 26, 1972, p. 4.

90. “La marcha de Pedro hacia la bronca,” *Pelo* 12, January 1971, pp. 14–17.

1971.<sup>91</sup> Meanwhile, guitar player Claudio Gabis called on his peers to cast "commercialism aside" and assume a "commitment to the people" through their music.<sup>92</sup> Perhaps it was after viewing this incipient political commitment that producer Jorge Álvarez decided to organize the "Festival of Liberation" in March 1973. As mentioned earlier in this article, that festival signaled the difficulties of and willingness to create a common space for youth, one that could articulate rock's explicitly political potential with the most massive expression of youth political militancy, that is, the JP.

Intellectuals and journalists with the Montoneros-oriented JP combined a respectful attitude toward rock nacional and its male constituency with insistent requests for its "ideological definition." Although further study is needed, the Montoneros—as did most of the revolutionary left in Latin America—endorsed a cultural politics centered on the vindication of the aesthetics and struggles of "the people," which in musical terms entailed the appreciation of both folkloric traditions and the politically committed "New Latin American Song" movement.<sup>93</sup> In this vein, and soon after Cámpora won the elections, some Montoneros leaders participated in the writing of lyrics to songs that narrated their short history through a series of vignettes that recounted their guerrilla activities and paid homage to their dead *compañeros*. Recorded by the folkloric group Huerque Mapu, the LP titled *Montoneros* was presented at a festival organized by the JP to celebrate the end of 1973; it also included the performance of a folkloric ballet.<sup>94</sup> These political and aesthetic preferences did not preclude that the journalists who wrote for the Montoneros daily *Noticias* valued rock nacional. Commenting on a recital by group Aquelarre, a journalist wrote that the band "represented the best of our rock," pointed out the quality of their music, and praised the "boys [*muchachones*] in the audience," who were "attentive and demanded quality." However, he criticized both Aquelarre and Arco Iris because their lyrics were "irrational" and "esoteric."<sup>95</sup> Perhaps less than confident about the rockers' chances of "overcoming ideological weaknesses," but at the same recognizing that rock music was the best medium for reaching adolescents, intellectuals linked to Montoneros were themselves

91. Alma y Vida, "Hoy te queremos cantar," on *Alma y Vida*, Vol. 2, RCA (now Sony-BMG), 1972; Roque Narvaja, "Camilo y Ernesto" and "Balada para Luis" on *Octubre (mes de cambios)*, Talent, 1972.

92. "Jazz y rock: balance final de una encuesta," *Primera Plana* 492, July 4, 1972, p. 52.

93. For a pioneering work on New Latin American Song, see Fernando Reyes Matta, "The 'New Song' and Its Confrontation in Latin America," in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, eds. (Chicago: The University of Illinois Press, 1988), pp. 447–461. For its repercussions in Mexico, see Zolov, *Refrined Elvis*, pp. 225–233.

94. "Diez canciones montoneras," *El Descamisado* 31, December 10, 1973, pp. 20–21; "Fervor político en un Festival de la JP," *Noticias*, December 30, 1973, p. 19.

95. "Buen recital de rock," *Noticias*, December 28, 1973, p. 17; "Nuevo disco de Arco Iris," January 28, 1974, p. 22.

in charge of producing a two-song record geared to secondary-school students. One of its rock songs called on them to “use their youth to struggle against social and economic dependence” and to engage with the “process of our country’s liberation.”<sup>96</sup>

While perhaps not “ideologized” in ways that leftist intellectuals and militants wished, many rockers did try to define for themselves the concepts of liberation and revolution. In this respect, in the days when President Cámpora came into office and the promises of a national and popular liberation seemed close to fulfillment, rockers were called on to give their opinions. Luis Alberto Spinetta stated that rock had enabled many youths, as it had enabled him, to begin a process towards liberation, albeit from “the patriarchal and social process of edu-castration in which we were raised.”<sup>97</sup> Spinetta thus appropriated the notion of “liberation” but used it to express what he thought of as an ineludible personal and eventually generational reaction against deep-seated and repressive “castrations.” An editorialist for *Pelo*, meanwhile, stated that the Argentine rockers would stand for a revolution that would not be “a change at the level of production (although rockers wouldn’t oppose it), nor a mere political change whereby one class takes power from the other.” The revolution that rockers would pursue “would be a total reorganization of the world: a Psychic Revolution, a Revolution of mores, of values.”<sup>98</sup> This proposal for a “total revolution” received the support of many readers: some of them stated that the new political juncture could be a good “starting point”—the police would not “harass youth anymore,” and there could be enhancements of “social justice”—yet it would not be enough.<sup>99</sup> The circus remained faithful to the search for authenticity and to the anti-authoritarian ethos that had fueled rock culture. Their pervading anti-authoritarianism, the vague but certain pacifism, and the commitment to carve out individual forms of liberation may have prevented many young men who formed the core of rock culture from engaging with the guerrilla-oriented revolutionary left.

In turn, the revolutionary left in Argentina largely refused to consider seriously the demands for individual liberation, as well as other social and political forms that would tend to erase patriarchal (or other forms) of “castration,” as Spinetta put it. Scholars have shown with regard to the emergent feminist and gay-rights movement that while the revolutionary left in Argentina—as did its

96. “Discos para la liberación,” *Noticias*, January 26, 1974, p. 15. The record was distributed by the Ministry of Education at schools in the metropolitan areas of Buenos Aires.

97. Zully Pinto, “Rock nacional: en busca de una definición,” *Panorama* 317, May 24, 1973, pp. 51–52.

98. Hugo Tabachnik, “Rock y revolución,” *Pelo* 37, March 1973, pp. 40–41.

99. “Correo,” *Pelo* 38, April 1973, pp. 82–83; *Pelo* 39, May 1973, pp. 88–89.

counterparts in other Latin American countries—advocated for an abstract notion of equality, it downplayed gender and sexual politics as legitimate sites for organizing, belonging, and constructing “liberation.”<sup>100</sup> The explicit positions of the revolutionary left in regard to rock culture worked similarly, that is, by not recognizing the legitimacy of those anti-authoritarian claims that gave an individually and culturally inflected meaning to the notion of liberation. In contrast to what happened in Mexico and Chile, however, the Argentine revolutionary left—especially the sectors of Peronist origins—did not forcefully accuse rock culture of representing an aggressive cultural imperialism among youth. This partially speaks of the success that rock musicians, fans, and journalists had in associating rock music to other forms of popular music. Most fundamentally perhaps, the intellectuals and militants within the revolutionary left did envision rock nacional as a cross-class mass phenomenon. While acknowledging its “national” credentials and its potential for articulating protest, intellectuals and militants nevertheless denigrated rock itself as a form of cultural politics. In this, their push to ideologize rockers’ practices was coupled with their belittling of the sensibility that such a direction would entail.

However, there were gaps between the explicit mandates and rules set by the revolutionary left and the practices of many young people. Many youths participated, with different degrees of commitment, in both revolutionary politics and rock culture, the cornerstones of the youth culture of contestation in Argentina. That dual commitment helps to illustrate the subjective quandary between “self-discipline” and “indiscipline” that, as Eric Zolov has aptly put it, constituted a central dynamic of the sixties.<sup>101</sup> Yet the zones of overlap, and even the very possibility of forging a youth culture of contestation, decreased as a rightist backlash put an end to the promises of “liberation.”

### “WHAT DO YOU HAVE, A BOMB OR DRUGS?”

The promises of social and political liberation and revolution lasted only a short time. On June 20, 1973, Perón returned to Argentina. In what was the largest

100. On the relations between the emergent feminist groups and the revolutionary left, see Marcela Nari, “Abrir los ojos, abrir la cabeza: el feminismo en la Argentina de los años 70,” *Feminaria* 9: 18/19, 1996, pp. 15–21; Alejandra Vasallo, “Movilización, política y orígenes del feminismo argentino en los 70,” in *Historia, género y política en los años 70*, Andrea Andujar, ed. (Buenos Aires: Feminaria, 2005), pp. 61–88. On the emergence of a gay-rights movement, and especially on the tense relationships between the Frente de Liberación Homosexual and the Montoneros, see Favio Rapisardi and Alejandro Modarelli, *Fiestas, baños y exilios: los gays porteños durante la última dictadura* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2001), pp. 159–163. For other Latin American experiences, see Ileana Rodríguez, *Women, Guerrillas, and Love: Understanding War in Central America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), esp. pp. 93–113; and James N. Green, “A luta pela igualdade: desejos, homossexualidade e a esquerda na América Latina,” *Cadernos Edgard Leuenroth, Homossexualidade: Sociedade, Movimentos e Lutas*, 18/19, 2003, pp. 13–39.

101. Zolov, “Expanding our Conceptual Horizons,” p. 63.

mobilization of the nation's twentieth century, more than a million people went to the airport in Ezeiza, in the suburbs of Buenos Aires, to receive him. The welcoming celebration turned violent when warring Peronist factions with long-standing conflicts clashed. Right-wing Peronists fired on their left-wing opponents, killing at least eight members of the JP and injuring another 300. To commemorate the first-month anniversary of the Ezeiza events, a right-wing Peronist group issued a page-long communiqué to the press: in all capital letters, it accused the Montoneros of having "infiltrated the Peronist movement" with their "hordes of drug addicts and homosexuals," two keywords that had stood for rockers since the late 1960s.<sup>102</sup> Through police-like rhetoric, these rightists built up a perception that linked political "subversion" to drug abuse and "sexual deviancy," an articulation common in both the media and the rightist responses to radical political activism (in other Latin American countries as well).<sup>103</sup> In Argentina, left-wing Peronists tried to counter their opponents with homophobic rhetoric: in most street rallies, they chanted "No somos putos/no somos faloperos/somos soldados/de FAR y Montoneros" (We are neither fags nor drug addicts/We are soldiers/of FAR and Montoneros).

Following Juan Perón's assumption of the presidency in October 1973, right-wing Peronists rapidly gained positions of power within the regime. From that point on, the death squad Triple A (Argentine Anticommunist Alliance), which combined police and para-police forces and had its base at the Ministry of Social Welfare, began to threaten and assassinate political militants and social organizers. At the same time, regular police forces reinitiated persecution of rockers and "suspicious youth" at large. In early 1974, for example, Jorge Andrés commented sadly that, "as in those months of 1969, the police reappeared in rock concerts."<sup>104</sup> At the same time, the few radio programs that broadcast and discussed rock nacional became targets of cultural censorship, as did similar television programs; most were discontinued.<sup>105</sup> Those developments confirmed some rockers in their perception of the timeless endurance of authoritarianism and in their beliefs about the limits of any political process of liberation that abandoned or denigrated "internal liberation." Seeing into this, Miguel Grinberg wrote that

102. "Solicitada: 20 de Junio-Ezeiza-20 de Julio," *Clarín*, July 20, 1973, p. 5.

103. See Ben A. Cowan, "Sex and the Security State: Gender, Sexuality, and 'Subversion' at Brazil's Escola Superior de Guerra, 1964-1985," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 16:3 (July 2007), pp. 459-481; and Victoria Langland, "Birth Control Pills and Molotov Cocktails: Reading Sex and Revolution in 1968 Brazil," in *In from the Cold: Latin America's New Encounters with the Cold War*, Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniela Spenser, eds. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2009), pp. 308-349.

104. "El contrabajista y cantante Alejandro Medina ratificó su originalidad," *La Opinión*, March 26, 1974, p. 18.

105. Among those withdrawn was Daniel Ripoll's program at Radio Antártida. Ripoll recalls that he had first received some pressure from left-leaning Peronists, who wanted more "commitment," and then from right-wing Peronists, who finally censored the program, Author's interview with Daniel Ripoll, June 27, 2007.

“the promoted (but not real) liberation means, first, the abolition of repressions, but now we are repressed in the same ways than we were before Perón came to office. The pretext changed, but repression is the same.”<sup>106</sup>

At the prospect of continuing repression—in very literal terms—and the climate of cultural shutdown, some rockers began to migrate or emigrate.<sup>107</sup> Claudio Gabis went abroad to acquire professional training and create a new band, a path followed in 1975 by Moris, Pappo, and Billy Bond as well. Others opted to remain in Argentina but move far from Buenos Aires. Miguel Cantilo along with other musicians and poets carried out a brief communal experience in Patagonia. They sought to materialize the utopian dreams of hippie countercultures worldwide: to create a community from the ground up, endowed with rules and values separated as much as possible from those of the “mainstream society.” Cantilo and his group experienced a dose of free love and varied methods of drug use, but their personal conflicts and complications with securing enough food conspired against them. In addition, they found out that they could not escape from either individual or external forms of repression. In this last regard, the commune awoke suspicions among its neighbors and the police: they could be drug dealers, “terrorists,” or, some said, both. After several raids by the local police, Cantilo and others decided to abandon the commune. On the road to Buenos Aires, a police patrol stopped Cantilo, looked at his backpack, and asked him: “What do you have, a bomb or drugs?” Since Cantilo had depleted his supply of marijuana, he possessed neither.<sup>108</sup>

In September of 1974, the executive power sent a message to the congress. Signed by the ultra-rightist minister of social welfare José López Rega and then-president Isabel Martínez, Perón’s widow, it urged the congress to pass a new law to “stop the wave of drug addiction.” Although the revolutionary left took little notice of the passing of Law 20,771, that piece of legislation was crucial in defining a “drug problem” and had intense political resonances. By focusing on the age of the presumed addicts, the message went on to claim that the “future of the fatherland” was in jeopardy and reminded the representatives that “each drug addict is a potential trafficker, a delinquent.” The representatives responded positively. Besides increasing penalties for the production and distribution of all “narcotics and psychotropic drugs”—defined as those which are habit-forming—the new law included three fundamental novelties. First, it mandated that all

106. Miguel Grinberg, “Rock y liberación,” *Rolanroc* 1, March 1974, pp.1–3.

107. At the same time that some Argentine rockers began to leave, some Chilean rock bands, for example Los Jaivas, fled to Argentina to get away from General Augusto Pinochet’s dictatorship, established in September of 1973. Los Jaivas remained in Buenos Aires until the imposition of the military coup in March of 1976.

108. Cantilo, *Chau Loco*, p. 109.

drug-related offenders would be subjected to federal justice, that is, to the highest judicial system in the country. Second, it stipulated that the possession of drugs, “even if it is for personal consumption,” was to be penalized by one to six years in prison. Finally, the law specified that all offenders, if proved that they had “physical or psychical addition to drugs,” might be referred to undergo mandatory rehabilitation while complying with their penalties.<sup>109</sup>

Law 20,771 created meaningful connections among drugs, subversion, and delinquency. To begin with, it promoted the “drug problem” as one of national security. In the months that followed the passing of the law, the most hotly debated issue among lawyers and judges was the subjection of drug-related offenses to federal justice.<sup>110</sup> One of the defendants of that particular aspect of the law explained its rationale, noting that “guerrillas were reported to act under the effects of drugs” and, most vitally, that guerrilla groups made use of “drug trade to finance the purchase of their weapons.” Although not even police officers, when asked, subscribed to that belief, the media referred to it again and again, thus drawing a circle connecting drugs to “subversion.”<sup>111</sup> Most importantly, in making all consumption illegal and overtly endorsing a reinforcement of police monitoring over sites of youth interaction, the new law criminalized everyday youth social interchange. One example shows the effects: in the summer of 1975, the association of owners of entertainment locales such as concert stadiums and night clubs wrote letters to the minister of interior and the presidents of both chambers of congress to complain about the visits of the Narcotics Division to their establishments. They pointed out that the policemen deployed heavy weapons when checking IDs and “frisked men and women alike” while they presumably searched for drugs. As a result, the businessmen concluded, their young clientele refrained from going out at night.<sup>112</sup> Throughout 1975, scores of reports told of police raids

109. *Diario de Sesiones de la Cámara de Diputados*, Vol. 2, September 19, 1974, pp. 2856–2868. The law was passed as part of a set of agreements between the Argentine and U.S. governments. Under the agreements, the U.S. government committed itself to provide training, equipment, and other resources to back the federal police in a “war on drugs.” Argentina served as a showcase for this type of agreement, which was favored by the Nixon and Ford administrations as a way to build influence in Latin American and Asian nations. See Paul Gootenberg, *Andean Cocaine: The Making of a Global Drug* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008), pp. 308–310; and Pil Ho Kim and Hyunjoon Shin, “The Birth of ‘Rok’: Cultural Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Glocalization of Rock Music in South Korea, 1964–1975,” *positions: east asian cultures critique* 18:1 (Spring 2010), esp. pp. 220–222.

110. See for instance Jorge Moras Mom, *Toxicomanía y delito* (Buenos Aires: Abeledo-Perrot, 1975), pp. 149–158.

111. “Drogas, ¿qué pasa en la Argentina?” *Gente* 503, March 12, 1975, pp. 64–67; “Editorial: Drogas y subversión,” *Clarín*, May 12, 1975, p. 12.

112. Cámara de Empresarios de Locales de Expansión Nocturna to the Jefe de la Cámara de Diputados and the Jefe de la Cámara de Senadores, File 16386, Box 27; letter from the Cámara de Empresarios to the Ministro del Interior, and letter from the Ministro del Interior to the Cámara de Empresarios, Files 16610 and 16204, Box 15, Expediented Generales, Archivo General de la Nación (AGN).

at schools, plazas, and street corners.<sup>113</sup> A final aspect of the law mandated a referral to rehabilitation for drug users: the law created a strategy for medical surveillance, and attendant imprisonment, of the “addict.” In 1975, the only active center reported that in a mere six months it had received “1,425 youths, most of them boys between 16 and 21.”<sup>114</sup>

By 1974, the state strategies of youth surveillance, and the surrounding media reverberations, had made young people a locus of suspicion. In late 1974, after the Montoneros decided to go clandestine and resume armed struggle against a government they viewed as “neither popular nor national,” the executive power decreed a state of siege—that would last until 1983—to contain the spread of “subversive attacks.” The state-of-siege mentality along with the drug-related measures overlapped to generate a climate of “nation at war,” which had young people as its targets. It was not coincidental that a group of “neighbors from Villa Crespo” in Buenos Aires and another from distant Comodoro Rivadavia wrote letters to the minister of the interior in 1975 to ask for “more safety” in their communities, which were “threatened,” they both said, by young individuals identified as either “subversives or drug addicts.”<sup>115</sup> Meanwhile, revolutionary militants, whether young or not, were being subjected to increasing and ever more dreadful repression. In 1975 alone, reports estimated that the army, the police forces, and the Triple A had killed 860 people, 50 percent of them associated with the JP and Montoneros.<sup>116</sup> The pervading political violence conjoined with the escalating and increasingly political drug “war” to make public spaces inhospitable meeting places for youth.

Even in that unfriendly context, a rock band could still attract rockers, expand the rock audience to include young women, and eventually touch upon the subjectivities of the already dispersed young militants. The duo Sui Géneris, indeed, found enthusiastic support among male and female youth; some testimonies point out that their lyrics were enjoyed by young militants in high schools in Buenos Aires. Sui Géneris targeted “traditional” rockers and attracted the attention of new ones, acting as a bridge to the articulation of a youth identity in times of peril and turmoil.<sup>117</sup> In serving that articulation, the duo radicalized the anti-authoritarianism embedded into rock cul-

113. See for example “Redadas en Plaza Irlanda,” *Clarín*, March 15, 1975, p. 22. For an overview of the year 1975, see “Drogas, los tentáculos de la corrupción,” *Siete Días* 445, December 12, 1975, pp. 90–95.

114. “Adolescencia y drogas,” *Actualidad Psicológica* 4 (July 1975), pp. 1–3.

115. Adriana Sesto and others to the Ministro del Interior, File No. 160785, Box 26; Marina Santos and others, Villa Crespo, to the Ministro del Interior,” File No. 172222, Box 13, Expedientes Generales, AGN.

116. Gillespie, *Soldiers of Perón*, pp. 215–216.

117. Garaño and Pertot, *La otra juvenilia*, pp. 99–105.

ture; this was especially apparent after they recorded their third and final LP, *Pequeñas anécdotas sobre las instituciones*, perhaps the most censored record in the history of Argentina's rock. For this LP, Sui Géneris not only abandoned their acoustic roots but also intensified their criticism of all societal institutions, from the judicial system and the military service to marriage and the family. As Almendra, Manal, and Los Gatos had done in 1970, Sui Géneris disbanded at the height of its popularity. In September of 1975 they offered two farewell concerts at the Luna Park stadium in Buenos Aires, and 36,000 people attended.<sup>118</sup> In fact, Sui Géneris' concert was the last mass gathering of any kind before the military again imposed dictatorship in March 1976. Like the dictatorial regimes established in Chile and Uruguay in 1973, the Argentine military junta aimed at imposing "order" onto what they hyperbolically depicted as a chaotic society. That "order" was in fact based on the institution of state terrorism, which in Argentina entailed the systematic practices of kidnapping, "disappearing," and assassination. According to the 1984 report *Nunca Más* (Never Again), 69 percent of the people that the military made "disappear" were between 16 and 30 years old at the time they were kidnapped.<sup>119</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Between 1976 and 1983, as scholars have shown, rock nacional would turn into a privileged zone for young people—male and female—to build up everyday forms of resisting both state terrorism and the disciplinary project the military was attempting to impose upon society at large. Rock nacional served to articulate a new generational consciousness, which updated the anti-authoritarianism of the previous decade.<sup>120</sup> Even militants who went into exile recalled how they discovered, or rediscovered, rock nacional. Luis Salinas, the former member of the FAR who depicted himself as a blend of "guerrilla and Rolling Stone," recalls that he abandoned rock social contact altogether as he immersed himself more and more in clandestine life after 1974. However, when preparing his luggage to leave for Mexico, he packed Manal's records first and listened to them "time after time for years" while he was there. Similarly, Eduardo Blaustein, who left Argentina when he was just 17 years old, recalls that rock nacional ended up constituting the "soundtrack" of his life as an exile in Barcelona. Arriving there with a "square, disciplined mindset," he

118. "Sui Géneris y 36.000 personas demostraron que el rock es lo más grande en la Argentina," *Pelo* 69, October 1975, p. 3.

119. Argentina's National Commission on Disappeared People, *Nunca Más* (Never Again) (London: Faber and Faber, 1986 [1984]), p. 285.

120. Pablo Vila, "Rock Nacional and Dictatorship in Argentina," *Popular Music* 6:2, May 1987, pp. 129–148; Sergio Pujol, *Rock y dictadura* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 2004).

learned “to enjoy freedom” while engaging with “hippies, drugs, feminists, gays and all that was ‘counter’” in the exhilarating post-Franco *movida*.<sup>121</sup> Thousands of kilometers away, these two former militants shared with many young men—and now women—in Argentina a taste for rock nacional and, possibly, for what its practices and memories awoke in terms of the emergence of individual freedom and anti-authoritarianism.

Rock culture’s basic contribution to the making of a youth culture of contestation in late-1960s and early-1970s Argentina was in the ways it gave expression to young people’s discontent with authoritarianism at the same that it offered them a symbolic space for shaping fraternal bonds, challenging patriarchal arrangements, and enacting alternative forms of “being a man.” The fraternity of long-haired boys appropriated strands from transnational, music-based countercultural practices and bodily styles and created forms of social interaction centered on leisure and enjoyment and thus at odds with the cultural conservatism that crossed their lives in the Argentina of the sixties and the values that premised the hegemonic arrangements of masculinity. Rockers confronted the rules governing “manners and morals,” the keystones for preserving a hierarchical and patriarchal order that the state and broad segments of the population—even “progressives”—attempted to uphold. As cultural critic Lawrence Grossberg has pointed out for the United States, there is nothing intrinsically political in rock: “Rock’s politicization resulted not from its own activities but from the attacks it elicited: rock was politicized behind its back.”<sup>122</sup> Rock in Argentina became the site of a cultural politics that privileged the pursuit of hedonism, individual liberation, and expression, facing at the same time a pervasive societal and state-led authoritarianism and repression. Within those dynamics, music playing expanded and diversified. Rockers—whether journalists, fans, musicians, or poets—created gendered hierarchies to categorize their movement: rock culture attracted a vast and cross-class constituency and gained national credentials.

“In my collection, I had Almendra’s and Viglietti’s records and on my bookshelf I treasured Artaud and Perón: it was such a mix, wasn’t it?” A former member of the JP, Emilio, rhetorically asks the question as he recalls “all these images that we had around us.”<sup>123</sup> Emilio’s “we” refers to his fellow secondary-school militants within the JP. Like many other youths, Emilio and his fel-

121. Interview with Eduardo Blaustein, Memoria Abierta Archive, File 0251. There is a similar story in *Los chicos del exilio: Argentina (1975-1984)*, Diana Guelar, Vera Jarach, and Beatriz Ruiz, eds. (Buenos Aires: Ediciones El País de Nomeolvides, 2002), p. 116.

122. Lawrence Grossberg, *We Gotta Get out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 147–148.

123. Author’s interview with Emilio C. (b. 1955 in Valentín Alsina-Lanús), August 12, 2007.

lows participated, with differing degrees of commitment, in both the sensibilities encapsulated in rock nacional and the practices and groups that made up the revolutionary left. They may have felt the tensions between disciplining oneself to accomplish a collective project of social liberation and the desires of carving out forms of “liberating oneself, one’s Eros, one’s mind,” as Luis Alberto Spinetta argued, further commenting that this liberation had no “ideological sign whatsoever.”<sup>124</sup> Respecting rock nacional and its constituencies, militants and intellectuals within the revolutionary left at the same time strove to “ideologize” its practices. Although they witnessed its potential for articulating social protest and giving expression to young people’s anti-authoritarianism, they belittled what rock nacional represented as cultural politics. Meanwhile, many rockers in the circus would not hesitate to deem authoritarian—or decidedly militaristic—the practices and values that the revolutionary left endorsed, especially when after mid-1974 the PRT-ERP and Montoneros resumed armed struggle. By that time, though, a broad and dreadful rightist backlash had been unleashed: it targeted young militants and rockers alike as supposed links in a chain that included, in the perception of rightists and many other Argentines, drug consumption, subversion, and deviancy. Youth had become the locus of potential danger for the national body, that which the military in 1976 had proclaimed its duty to heal.

*Universidad de San Martín*  
*Buenos Aires, Argentina*

VALERIA MANZANO

124. “Reportaje a Luis Alberto Spinetta,” *Grito Joven* 3, September 1974, n.p.