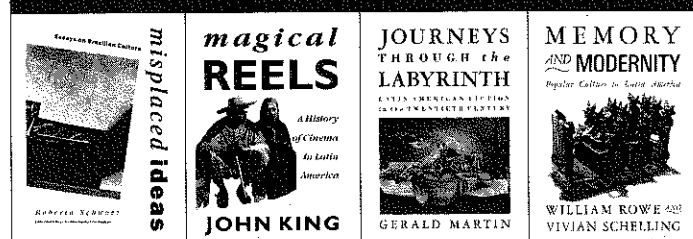


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HERE COME THE PUNK CHAVAS

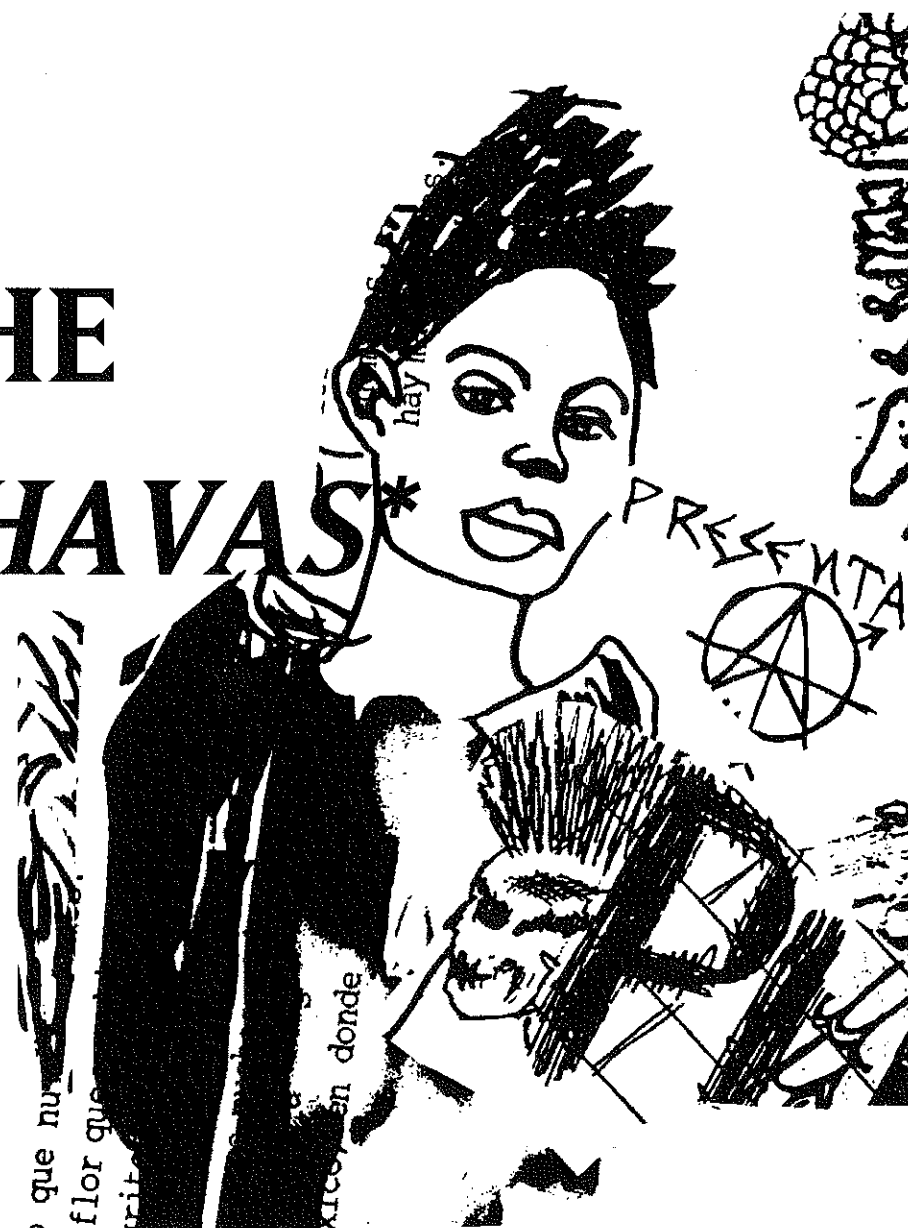
by **Susana Quiroz**
trans. **Dean Brown**

* Translator's note: chavas does not easily translate to chicks, girls or female teenagers. In this case it best stands as is, implying young women with street smarts.

Here in the streets of the *Insurgentes* district the shop windows gleam with beautiful prostitutes. People at taco stands are shocked by the sight of a homosexual, who first stopped to buy a condom from the pharmacy in front of Sears, walking along after being fucked. Every Saturday, the drivers on the "100" bus put up with gangs of youth scrambling aboard at the plaza without paying. "I'll make myself respected, I give a shit about the society that watches me. I'll be a delinquent, a killer, and the worst that people want to add to that. I'm only a PUNK!"

In the Metro, chavas and chavos mingle, passing on addresses, telling of the latest fuck-up or clearing the air of bullshit. Rebellion in *Tianguis del Chopo* (*El Chopo* Marketplace): exchanges of friendships, betrayals, loves, suffering, ideas. They live lives full of repression, yet nobody gives in. Not one is willing to put up with the depressions of an *agachado* (trans: a person prostrated by the system).

Here in the city one breathes more lead than anything else. I love Mexico City, where there are more dogs than in other cities; here one still dreams and drinks poison in nightmares.



ARTICLES

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Here in the city one breathes more lead than anything else. I love Mexico City where there are more dogs than in other cities; here one still dreams and drinks poison in nightmares.

When will humankind become conscious of the violent growth of the world's population in this century? This human concentration is focussed, above all, in Mexico City. The crisis goes far beyond any historical balance; it is impossible to find equilibrium, and who knows if measures taken will leave anything for future generations. It's idiotic to duplicate campaigns that nobody pays any attention to anyway, those who want papa government to do it all, and who like nothing more than SHITTING ON THE SYSTEM.

In the punk movement, Mexican punk *chavas* find a place to express and share their ideas against the system, urban repression and oppression. These women with beautifully coloured hair or shaved heads invent surrealistic coiffures. They hold on to jobs because they have to survive, and they persist in studying not as a social obligation but because they need to defend their voices. They hold on to truth, justice and to the movement. They value simplicity and authenticity, but sometimes they also turn to drugs... they're not saints. Only a few allow themselves to be swallowed by the system or to become baby-making machines. Some work the streets selling their bodies to feed the children some irresponsible guy didn't want to acknowledge or support.

"He ripped off my clothes with uncontrollable lust. I looked at him, helpless with the pain of his cruelty and blows... He dug deeply into my body with his nails, fiercely bit my lips and slid his disgusting tongue over my skin. His saliva was acid that seeped to my bones. He then penetrated me so strongly that it still feel his rhythm pounding inside of me. His savage male rhythm... He sweated with satisfaction, I sweated with terror."

Many screams lingered and then died in the silence of pure anarchism. The punk *chavas* savagely stopped being girls. Now they are women who shout, even if it hurts, because their bodies have been wounded by street violence, cowardly rapists, pollution, hypocrisy, marginalization, authority and the coldness of death. They hide tenderness behind aggressiveness. In the Metro and on the buses they demand respect from all. They are young now and they don't regret their mistakes. In the *barrios* they have many friends and enemies, and in the *barrios* there are always more parties.

In the lost cities there is no other way - you have to take the risk and you won't always lose your life. Cascades of sewage, garbage, rats and cockroaches. The poor wait for the garbage truck to bring rotten vegetables to choose the best for themselves. In the surrealism of a pigsty, of misery, the *chavas* race in to choose the rags that fit them best. They forget all that when they meet with friends at the *Tianguis del Chopo*, on the streets or in houses. People make fun of them, attack them, insult them, flee from them, fear them, respect them: here come the punk *chavas*!

They create their own heaven and hell; the earth doesn't exist anymore. They lie on asphalt and their hell is part of their unreality. They flee because in asphalt one cannot plant flowers; they are slaves of their own schizophrenia. They are owners of their death, judges of the inquisition, who upon seeing themselves in a mirror are witches sentenced to the evil of their unconscious power.

The *chavas* love to shout, to adorn their chests with chains, and their breasts with coloured tattoos. Their eyes fill with love for men, eyes lined in blue and black pencil. These women resist domination and now have no fear: "We're against violence against women, against rape, the violation of HUMAN RIGHTS..."

Nostalgic artists create a wardrobe of scraps that defy fashion and danger, between sighs and sorrows, and take FOR THEMSELVES THEIR OWN DESTINY.

They are companions and friends overcoming difficulty and enemies of apathy, routine and boredom; they do not keep quiet. They invent poetry and theater, and they shape their realities to the rhythm of music. It is a rude noise full of energy; in their heads they hold the Zen of creativity, revealing daily their courage in the streets, avenues, dead-ends and alleyways. With their heads up they flaunt their valour and nonconformity, and defend their dignity. They discover the attraction of struggle, continuing to seek liberty, not tiring in the search.

In the well-off suburbs, nobody can explain anything to the *chavas*. Nobody cares to know why injustice is always committed by the powerful - who reek of expensive lotion to mask the stench of their corruption. These mutations conform to what the system gives them; they are the powerful who have buried their conscience with no autopsy. On the outskirts of the city, the *chavas* debate and discuss the next gathering of punks, where they can enjoy organization and disorganization while unleashing their energy in the slam.

The *chavas* spit on prejudices and false taboos around sexuality; they were very attentive in sex education classes. Now they know of infections, AIDS, abortions, pregnancies. In the theaters, at parties and in the streets, they understand that the world is phallicentric. They have elected to reject the condition of sexual object, to take the reins of their own sexuality, and to let the imagination run free with their nude bodies, free from slavery, fear and fallacies. They keep their distance with their looks; their faces which express hostility against everything unjust and established are the shells which protect them.

"In the collective we never said 'no men.' It was simply a necessity for us. It was they who said 'why only women?' and then took on this idea that we were anti-men. Some *chavas* even left because of that, but we only separated in order to organize ourselves.

Radical or fickle, good or bad, everybody takes it up the ass; nobody's perfect. Alcohol is like the devil; drugs are like mother. They suckle her, they don't want to leave her, they can't leave her. Their Oedipal destruction in the midst of the high prevents them from abandoning mother drug. In the *barrios* of San Felipe and the north there are always parties, raids, confrontations and death.

The *chavas* love, hate, laugh, get drunk, work, study, and fight. The city plays with them among buildings, streets, houses, avenues, cars, people, dogs, rats, lunatics, drunks, drug addicts, peasants and servants. The *chavas* know that death is everywhere, and, when the reaper gestures, the good and evil spirits take you with them. Death is in our bones, hidden only by our flesh which waits for the coffin to shed itself like a suit and be eaten by worms. Then the reaper reincarnates in our skeletons to leave our souls in peace. In the end, no matter who you are, death is always with you.

Why is there death when there is no war?
There is death because there is AIDS
There is death because evil exists
There is death because somebody chose to throw life away
There is death because it's not convenient for you to struggle for liberty
There is death because you refuse to be manipulated
There is death because you acted wrong
There is death because you didn't notice the truck coming
There is death because you were carrying a lot of money
There is death because you wouldn't allow

yourself to be raped
There is death because you are in a *chavo-chava* gang

Teenagers, *señoritas*, girls, chicks, adolescent *chavas*, punks, rockers, thrashers, metalheads, hardcores, musicians, snotty Yuppies, intellectuals, workers, secretaries and professionals, all enter the streets daily and leave the slavery that stays on the avenue in their footsteps, in the pot-holes and in the particles of lead. By the light of the moon, daring *chavas* paint words of truth and anarchy onto walls. The zombies don't pause to look at them in the morning, because it gives them shivers - their mediocrity increases their conformity and they endure the purest repression.

The *chavas* cry, pained by a reality that confuses emotion. They don't know what meaning their lives have and so they cross forbidden territory. In the night they breathe their own air, in the darkness they invent and tell their own truth, tired of the repression in the family, at work, in the city, in school and in the streets. Illusions are only remembered, while this shitty world reminds them that they will only continue to rot.

**WHAT PEACE? WHAT SOLIDARITY?
WHAT JUSTICE? WHAT HUMAN RIGHTS?
WHAT CONSCIOUSNESS ABOUT
POLLUTION, POVERTY AND INJUSTICE?**

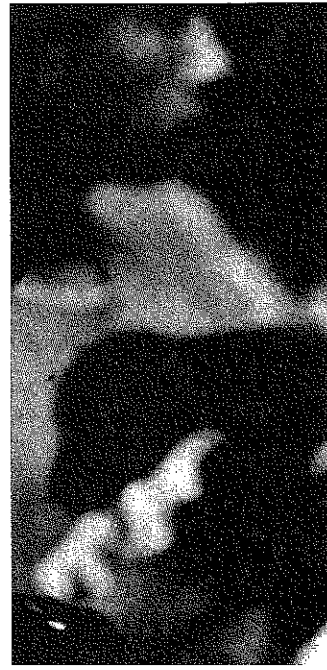
What can you do if some are born in silk diapers? Privilege, money, power, education, knowledge, travel, influence, ambition, avarice, egoism, machismo, misery, hunger, malnutrition, vagrancy, part-time studies, the work of labourers. Drug addiction, alcoholism, rebellion, talent, victory and corruption.

The *chavas* fly like vampires that, upon turning into women, clutch a miniature paradise in their black gloves. You will see them in the city, but, whether you walk alone or accompanied, nobody will bother you. In the night the worst companions - let us say the only ones - are the street dogs: bathed, perfumed, wearing a sweater, police dogs, narco-dogs, killer dogs, nouveau riche dogs, political dogs that pass the choicest bones amongst themselves.

Popular songs in the garages and in rotten fruit markets. How delicious the shellfish and head cheese tacos are in Mixcoac, close to the funeral homes that sell caskets at modest prices and elegant boxes that will cost you a handful. The parks of Tacubaya. Love between servants and labourers in the Metro every Sunday. This riot of colour, people who never before questioned their roots, corrupted by the city and bothered by the name "Indian." Being an Indian is not a shame; on the contrary, it's something to be proud of. Who do these people, ashamed of being dark, think they are? Spaniards? Foreigners?

San Angel, Polanco, Lomas de Chapultepec, San Cosme, Santa María la Rivera, Insurgentes Norte, the south of Mexico City - these are the most fucked-up neighbourhoods, without drainage or pavement, where one admires a scenery of garbage and sewage and where shacks give way to mud slides. In Perisur, the rich buy, while the middle class look and the poor feel uncomfortable. In Tepisur you can trust the





black market goods. Theaters, bars, *cantinas* and discotheques where the rich think they are such hot shit. The poor beg a few beers, and in the brewery past the *Tianguis del Chopo* they sometimes pay for a few, sometimes scoff a few. They rip off those with healthier hobbies, guilty or innocent, for walking the straight line and following the system.

There are those who write the cultured lies, who present truths that are not so, because the vanity of their fame blocks out the talents and desires of the rest. They see themselves as perfect artists, as the only ones with any culture. Yet wait a minute! In these classes there is hypocrisy and a lot of shit in disguise. Indifference towards those thought to have no culture: urban, indigenous and subterranean cultures, street cultures.

The punk *chavas* are always searching for freedom, and while they live they will continue to protest. They are not fashion punks, nor pretenders. They drink their beer and move to their own rhythm, and those that doubt will fall behind. The *chavas* dance for animal liberation. My friend, if you were born fucked up, you'll remain so all your life. *Amiga*, you have to fight against marginality in order to surface and protest against your environment and your society. If

you resign yourself to it, nothing awaits you but frustration, vice, drugs, mediocrity and hopelessness.

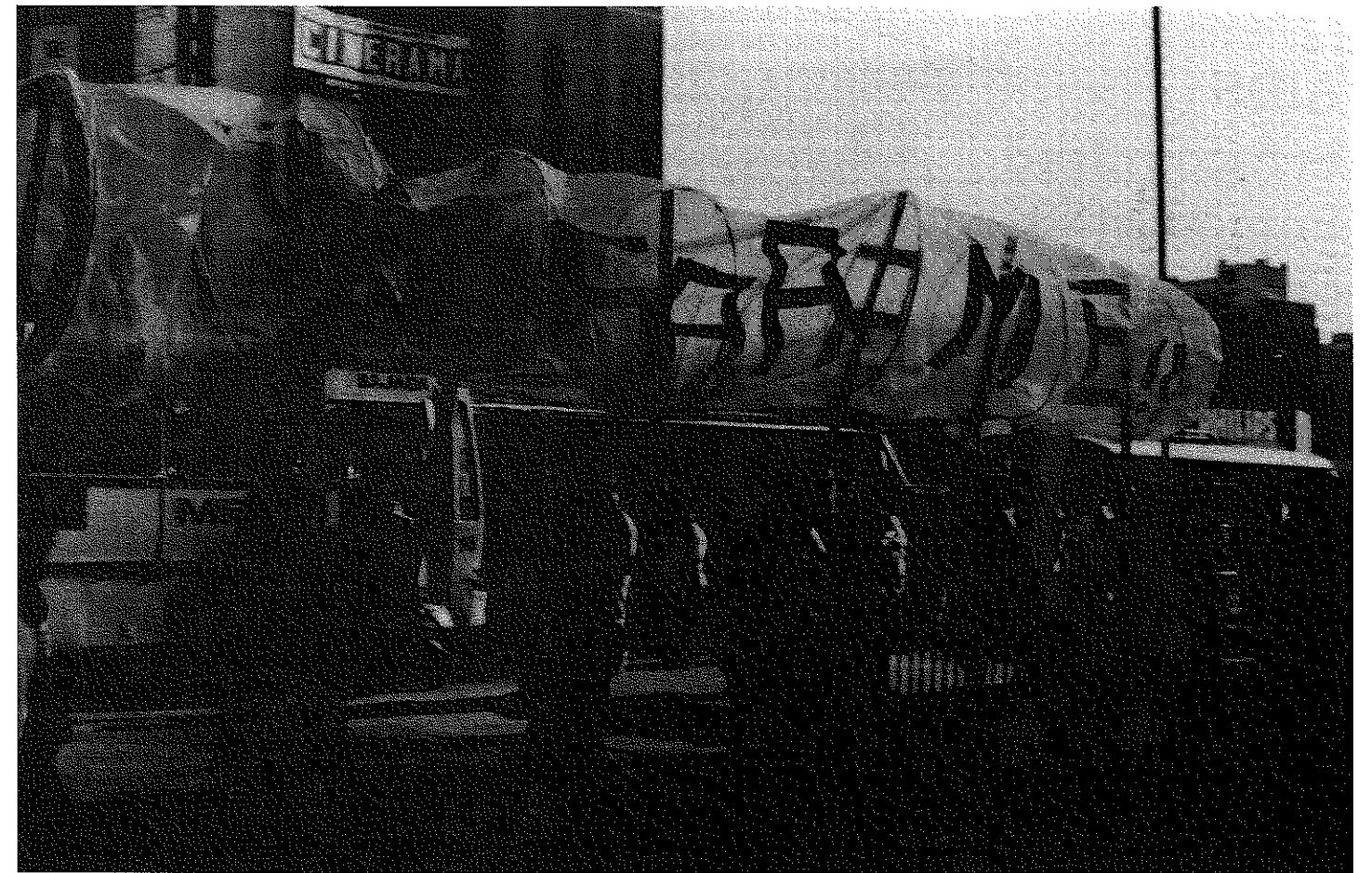
Everyday the *chavas* spit, vomit, shit, bleed, sweat, cry with rage; they wear scars or tattoos of anarchy on their bodies so as not to forget that sensibility or that consciousness. The Day of the Dead fills them with peace, not fear. They lament the loss of human beings - animals, children, women, *chavas*, *chavos* - a monumental and archeological heritage left unprotected in the filthy air and mutilated by the shameless who loot ancient cultures and sell them to the highest bidder. Destruction on all sides. Lost people who cry for the gods and goddesses in Paradise, for the robbery of ancient headdresses, jewels in gold and silver, plumages, such marvellous things. And we let it go on, so we condemn ourselves for caring so little for our city. The history of pre-history chills the future. We must escape. In Sanborns, VIPS, Dennys, Burger Boys and McDonalds, presumptuous, money-eyed people elbow each other in a rush of waste and gluttony, wolfing down rat meat, third grade chicken and beef bone. But these are exclusive places, so nobody questions what they eat and they pay good money for their fill. With their scraps of foreign and sophisticated meals, everyone is so contented to be in a multinational place.

Taco stands on the street, single ears of corn - squeeze on a little lemon to kill the amoebas and you still have something left over for a cup of hibiscus tea. You don't have to show off to anyone, and nobody does the same to you because they know where you are coming from. If you're on the same wavelength, well, give the fellow a tip!

The city lives, sleeps, dies, revives, reincarnates, survives. The girls, humans, women, punk *chavas* keep on going. They understand that they are slowly losing the hours of the watch. Punctual with their future and bleeding their past, they suck on the present like an apple. While they contradict themselves in terror, they are stopping to cry and on the streets they sing a sensual schizophrenia. The *chavas* don't accept wars or repression because they've stopped living the lies!

Susana Quiroz Martinez lives in Mexico City and writes plays and film scripts.

Dean Brown is a Vancouver translator currently planning a trip to Chile.



It is not WHAT you do, but HOW you do it: Cultural risks and HIV/AIDS in Chile

by Francisco Ibañez

When five of us from La Corporación Chilena de Prevención del SIDA [Chilean Corporation for AIDS Prevention] CChPS - unfolded that huge condom made of clear plastic with big red letters that said "Use me" and held it for dear life marching along el Paseo Ahumada, the main boulevard of Santiago, shouting "El ministro cartuchón no se atreve a usar condón" [the prudish Minister of Health does not dare to use a condom] with a hundred others, I knew we were making history, the real one. Like small chat and gossip, this was one of those moments in which the stuff of life -- the collectively shared codes and cultural themes -- is transferred, transformed, re-interpreted and re-thematized. This is how we celebrated the World AIDS Day's motto "Sharing the Challenge" on December 1, 1991.

Moments before starting the march, a *Gringo* who had been a teacher of mine at the Universidad de Santiago came up to me and told me that this demonstration was colonization at its worst, that the World AIDS Day was nothing but a North American orchestration. I told him to fuck off, deep inside I had to recognize the ambiguities in what we were doing. But isn't that what cultures are all about, hybridization of themes and forms? Later, when I was visiting Antofagasta in the North of Chile, I read in a local newspaper that the archbishop of Santiago was scandalized and had said that "multitudinous demonstrations" in downtown Santiago weren't leading to anything good. I was joyous; this was the greatest favour that the Catholic church could do to us. It was better than having a bunch of *apolillados* [moth-eaten leftists] trying to perk up their discourse to include queers and other specimens that they had been ignoring (or attacking) a year before. Archbishop Carlos Oviedo's sustained stream of attacks and the media-quaking that it provoked was more effective than the disempowered voices of many "pobladores" [poor urban dwellers] who have organized themselves, but have not been heard seriously since 1973.