laughter) many times "lived" or seen in the streets of their barrio. Whether looking at new or at old rhythms the same central element can be seen, the musical sound is an empowering element. Music identifies their differences, and provides a way of classifying their spaces.

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Four different groups were at the tables. After having spent some time gastando acera [wearing down the sidewalk] they came there for a drink. At one table was Adonai, a black male leader of the gallada of deportistas with his friends. The passion for soccer held by Adonai's gallada is equalled by its passion for Salsa music. When Adonai and his friends stand in a corner with a tape recorder, the rumba starts right there.

Salsa rhythms are the best company for intense rumba nights and esquina evenings. Its dancing requires a masterful combination of fast paced feet (back and forward) with the slow waving of the hips. Shoulders mark the beat while arms go up and down, and the dancing partner is taken to swing around. Salsa is combined with clapping and singing and with non-stop dancing journeys through songs that all of them know: songs about love, friendship, the barrio, the street, mother, friends, and prisons.

One block ahead was the communal room and the mini-soccer and basketball court. The court is surrounded by the communal room, by a wall of the public school and by the main road. On the red-brick front walls of the communal room we could read graffiti written in English: "Punk Rock not Death." Beside that phrase was the word "Conde" -some-body's nickname- and below that the initials J.R. Over the side wall we could see more graffiti with large big red letters in English: Heavi Metal, Anarchy (the symbol), Alex and Rock.

Over the whitewash of the back wall, there was graffiti written in a very careful, large style: "Mi Timidez no me permite hablarte/ pero si escribirte/ Marta Yo te Amo, atentamente yo" [My shyness does not let me talk to you but I can write to you, Marta, I love you, sincerely, I]. The bleachers around the court were painted with all kinds of graffiti, especially political slogans:

Por la vida hasta la vida misma, (of life and to life, itself), Por un Primero de Mayo combativo y unitario [For a combative and unitary first of May], social statements: Problemas son de Todos [problems belong to everybody], names, short phrases: "Merry Christmas", "love", "peace" "kiss" and more sarcastic graffiti: Tú piensas en mí, yo pienso en tí, quién piensa en los dos? [You think of me, I think of you, who thinks of us both?].

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A few names, words and drawings on the walls cannot define a youth culture. However, what calls my attention is the exploratory and different character 80's graffiti shows from what was the graffiti pattern of a few years ago. During the 80's a depolitization of graffiti occurred. New social actors have taken over. These are informal groups or just individuals painting a spontaneous and intimate world on the walls.

A popular youth language speaks through these walls. They have completed a circle of space appropriations: the street, the corner and now the walls. It is a language built upon a particular use of space and time. In the creation and marking of their own time and spaces lies the heart/core of youths' difference.

The noises were left behind us. At night, the empty and noiseless court becomes a transient space either to have a joint, make a dangerous deal, or to find intimacy. It was 10:30, the streets were vacant, the crowd of people walking on the road had dispersed. Now they were in tiendas, billiard rooms, corners, or houses. The smell of liquor and smoke, the noise of music and voices had decreased. All have gone inside. The night was young and could still offer many things. The rumba was there, as was the excitement and uncertainty of the streets.

And without permission the rumba took another course and we for ever moved away from the bar because like a song each place has a special site in your life, in my barrio's heart that loves so many things and in this surprising box that amazes us every day. (From "Celia, Celia Rumba")

From the corner of the final block we looked towards a large dark area on our right: the swamp, better known as the matadero [slaughterhouse]. We could not see what was going on in the darkness; but out there around swamps, dark trails, corners, or empty land plots there exists a noiseless street world ruled by violence. Illicit affairs, fights, gun shots, revenge and drugs set up a code of violence that is known by every inhabitant of these barrios. It is the other half of the barrio night that for me, as an outsider, was veiled. In the words of Palomo, "out there you are fast, you are sharp or you die. There is not something like a quiet night." The street, as the salsa singer Willie Colon put it, is a "desert of surprises," a mysterious and dangerous world.

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# we haven't had time to be guilty: Youth Culture In Argentina

by Silvia Delfino

translated by Michael Hoechsmann

# "WE HAVEN'T HAD TIME TO BE GUILTY."

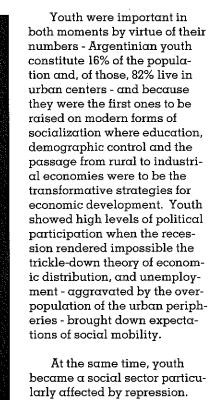
- SECUESTRO (KIDNAP)

Three years after the recuperation of democracy in Argentina, this graffiti slogan was painted on the walls of Buenos Aires by the rock group Secuestro. In synthetic and eloquent prose, graffiti condenses various key elements of 1980s youth culture in Argentina, which - despite its delimitation by age group - is lived as a site of languages, images and modes of participation which cut across all social practices. In the Latin American context, graffiti not only permits an analysis of youth culture in its use and appropriation of the media and of urban consumption practices, but also as a strategic site of survival and political action during the dictatorships. Thus, for example, the signature -SECUESTRO-

resignifies the denunciation of repression in the public space of a Buenos Aires street by superimposing upon it the rock concert, a recognized site of youth culture during the periods of greatest police vigilance.

## Latin American Youth: From Modernization to Revolt

Latin American youth were protagonists in two major historical 'moments': the attempted social modernization implicit in the development model of the 1950s, and the economic crisis of the 1970s and `80s which showed the deficiencies of this project.



At the same time, youth became a social sector particularly affected by repression. Through long years of political instability, civil governments alternated with dictatorships which legitimated themselves, on the one hand, by the call to order and authority by conservative and liberal sectors and, on the other, by the elimination

of democratic mechanisms of popular participation. Between 1976 and 1982, young Argentinians lived the systematic violence taking place in public spaces (streets, plazas, soccer stadiums, clubs, concert halls), while other sites of socialization were withdrawn. The violence directed towards youth was a constant feature of everyday life from the end of 1960s through to the 1980s (67% of the disappeared were between the ages of 18-30). For example, there were the armed interventions into schools and universities which resulted in violence towards students followed by kidnappings and disappearances (35% of the disappeared between 14-25 were students), and later there was the Guerra de Malvinas





[Falkands War] of 1982 where youth were the principal protagonists.

The dictatorial model not only concentrates power and economic wealth, but it focuses the mechanisms of vigilance upon youth through a culture of fear to ensure the closure of instances of popular mobilization and solidarity cooperation. This, in turn, fulfills the dictates of international finance capi tal by restricting public expenditure, especially in health, education and cultural programs, and by eliminating all

research that does not have immediate uses for the multinational development of technology. The dysfunctional educational system not only fails to train the majority of youth, but further adds to the justification of youth vigilance by creating an image of youth as suspicious and violent which then supports paternalistic and authoritarian politics.

In this context, it is interesting to analyze the ways in which the production of meaning in practices of everyday life "survive" to create alternative moments of participation and recognition. This process is condensed in two moments: the forms of acting and accessing information during the dictatorship, and the recuperation of political discourse in the transition to democracy. In both moments, youth culture offers a fruitful site especially in rock music, graffiti and places of gathering - for the analysis of the uses of the new

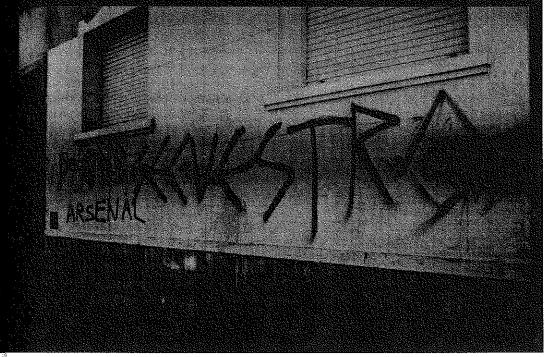
technologies which began to play a role in Argentinian culture from the 1970s on (VCR, colour t.v., access to satellite communication, extension of FM radios, etc.). Rather than simply symbolizing the submission to a set of multinational strategies, media culture can be considered as a challenge to the certainties which organize modes of knowledge and conceptions of authority, order and common welfare. This is especially important in youth culture where audiovisual codes are resignified with no respect for the divisions between genres or artistic materials, and where links are made through cultures which problematize definitions of the national and the local.

# For mother's day, give her a white handkerchief (Secuestro)

Painted by Secuestro in 1986, this grafitti slogan acknowledges and pays homage to the movement which played an indispensable role during the dictatorship, by occupying the public sphere in defense of human rights. Having gone in vain from offices, to barracks, to commissaries in search of information on their kidnapped offspring, a group of mothers began to march around the Plaza de Mayo wearing handkerchiefs on their heads, embroidered with the names of their

missing loved ones. Visible every Thursday at the historic site which has been the center of collective demonstrations since the Argentinian independence of 1810, this practice transformed the relationship between information and resistance in a way which was impossible for the largely clandestine political groups. Joined later by the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo to demonstrate for the kidnapped children - or those born in captivity - the language of the human rights organizations thus acquired a visible consistency. The visual element is strengthened by the images, drawings and silhou-





with a cultural interchange based on certain publications and magazines. While the publications on the commercial meeting places of youth in the rhythm of everyday life under circuit enjoy high circulation rates, an artesanal genre [or the dictatorship, not only because the time of the party could "zine" culture] also emerges in this period with homemade not be capitalized, but also because it stood outside of the magazines featuring poems, stories, and news of rock groups. silence and false information occasioned by the dictator-These "zines" - often printed by mimeograph or photocopy ships. In the face of a rearticulation of life where the social circulate through the entire country in parks and artesanal participation of individuals is reduced to the necessities of fairs. Through their reports, information and "fan mail," these survival and consumption, this practice concretizes codes. publications - both commercial and artesanal alike - create a gestures and signs which define their public through interacsite for the acknowledgement and contestation of the deter-

> "... we would go to see ourselves. marginalized by the media and confused by other generations. Our applause was also directed inwards, towards ourselves."

The rock show thus emerged as one of the principal

By producing paths of recognition, a memory is constructed that mobilizes figures of counterhegemonic legitimation.

Given the lack of confidence of young people in the institutions of the state and the family, the building of a sense of identity and language is left to the media, and, in particular, to song lyrics. This code of counter-signs and double meanings indicates the formation of counter-figures, or "survivors," as Charly Garcia's song of the same name describes:

ettes of the disappeared which were painted in the plaza and on the walls of all of the cities in the country. This representation of an absence puts the visual on the primary plane over the simple refrain ("Alive they were taken, alive we want them back" or "Appearance alive"). It is also a visual symbol of the limitations for possible political action (the mothers and grandmothers walk alone in the plaza, rather than with their partners, because they hope that alone the police do not dare to repress them).

This "visual turn" signals the design of a language of resistance which indicates the ways of acting and accessing information in the determinate public spaces where the practices of everyday life can acquire their maximal political potential. In this context, several cultural practices of youth especially rock - mark the reordering of the city and the resignification of language by addressing questions which have been expelled from public discourse.

Since the mid-1960s, the so-called "Rock Nacional Argentino" has designated a movement of convergence and participation which has joined new forms of sociality (the creation of recognizable spaces such as the show or concert)

minate problems which have been expelled from public discourse. Despite the apparent homogeneity of youth culture, the different publications differ in how they resignify the traditional values of family, neighbourhood, school and work, as well as the images and language with which the media portrays youth.

While the magazine offers a space for the interchange. where values and practical norms can be debated, a fundamental ritual is added in this period: the 'show' becomes a site for deliberate practice. Though this is not a homogenous site in terms of genres or social sectors, it nonetheless creates a sense of shared place to account for the dispersion of the student movement and political youth organizations. Between 1975 and 1977, the rock concert emerges to respond to a city under control, where almost all public social life has been eliminated. At this time, various sites emerge - such as theaters, cinemas, clubs and pubs - which offer a place of meeting and refuge. As Ricardo, one of the protagonists, told Pablo Vila:

"... to go to a show was a necessity. We didn't miss a single one. There was a great need to be together... to participate in something, while feeling safe."

# "Los Sobrevivientes" (1979)

We are blind of seeing tired of so much walking we are fed up with fleeing in the city We will never have roots we will never have a home and nonetheless, you see, we're from here.  $(\ldots)$ 

I have always carried you beneath my blue scarf through the streets as Christ carried the cross.

In addition to the criticism in the lyrics, there is an intention to produce meanings for existence itself. These meanings are expressed in a fusion of symbolic practices which indicate not only a rejection of hegemonic discourse but also the construction of meanings to keep on living. Rock evolves to construct an image of the survivor who will summon democracy. In 1978, Charly sang Eiti-Leda:



Border/Lines 27

I want to see you naked the day they parade the bodies which have been saved, babe, on some highway which has infinite barracks that won't tell a thing. And I really want you to laugh and to tell me that it is only a game or else kill me this afternoon babe.  $(\ldots)$ This winter was bad, and I think that I forgot my shadow in a basement And your legs that keep getting longer know that they cannot turn back, the city pisses on us with laughter, babe.

The trajectory from the neighbourhood to the downtown theater or club involves a journey where the rock band - and the band of friends - enters into a critique of media culture by taking emblems and gestures and transforming them. On the basis of selective consumption, youth gather to listen to music in one house in the neighbourhood, the privileged site for the development of youth culture. It is the everyday practices of the neighbourhood - the zone of group recognition and integration through ties of family, friendship and love - that have been used to construct the image of the dangerous youth since the time of the dictatorships. In this regard, it is important to underscore that the category of youth culture is more than just an age-based identification of consumption and leisure practices. Rather, it signals a fundamental a convergence of social relations constructed in terms of race, class and gender, located in various sites such as the home, school, work and the areas of control and security.

In these sites, it is possible to read of the tension between the design of images or forms of "identity" attributed to youth and the other modes of subjectivity in an historical moment. Thus, when the military had to recuperate the image of youth as protagonists during the Malvinas war of 1982, the public space which was opened in the media could not count on the support of rock bands. Instead, a "Festival of Latin American Solidarity" was organized by the rock bands in the stadium where they held many of their concerts. The anti-military discourse of the rock bands was bolstered by an explicitly pacifist message which, because of its relation to other youth cultural practices, represented the principal victims of the war and completed the image of the survivor. Peyronel-Pappo sang the following:

I'm checking out what's left after the big noise in a world with very few sounds
I stop to look at silent machines and an image stands out on the hood of a Bel-Air
Ah, Ah, Ah! what I see now is happening in a near future the image warns me of situations and I don't know who is giving me their hand.
Today I am just another survivor and I run with an advantage over the present

Today I am just another survivor
Today I am just another survivor
Oh, Oh, Oh! this sounds better to me
I see a bold girl who survived
is there room for a new emotion?
And be reborn from the ashes with imagination.
Today I am just another survivor
Today I am just another survivor.

# But the dinosaurs will disappear

With these words Charly Garcia finished a concert near the end of 1982, after a mass demonstration by all political parties had demanded elections from the dying military dictatorship which was still reeling from the Malvinas disaster. This is what the song said:

It is Saturday night and a friend is in jail [cana] imagine the dinosaurs who are in bed [cama]...
Our friends in the neighbourhood might disappear
Those who are on the radio might disappear but the dinosaurs will disappear.

As a site for practical deliberation, the concert reproduces the multiplicity of voices and languages in the streets demanding the return to democracy. Mercedes Sosa, folk singer, accompanies the youth at a rock concert singing, "Yesterday I dreamt of the hungry, the mad, those who are gone, those who are in prison." Fito Paez, rock star, responds: "Who said that all was lost, I come to offer my heart, so much blood was washed away in the river, I come to offer my heart." To this, the stadium chants: "Se va a acabar, se va a acabar, la dictadura militar..." [It will end, it will end, the military dictatorship...].

The demand for democracy involved a revision of the modes of interpellation, of the access to information and of the disciplining by fear of the link between knowledge and action. Thus, youth do not look upon themselves as a local subculture or as a group subordinated to the bounds of the neighbourhood, but as protagonists on a broad public scale; youth transcend familiar institutions (home and school) to address national ones. The "return to politics" of youth complements the modes of interpellation of the concert with the mobilization on the street. In 1982, Charly Garcia sang the song "Superheroes":

I am looking for directions in cookbooks you are mixing sugar with salt you are getting information from boxes made of metal, you are buying the world at a bazaar. Looking at superheroes, superstars, you feel super crazy, super bad.

They are cleaning up the ashes from our brief carnival we're already on our way to another city. You see, we're neither tourists nor artists wearing tuxedos and smiles we are part of your reality, That is why we are here, trying to get these feet moving, under the lights, playing until dawn. Don't stay at home because the dance is about to start I want to see you, see you again, see you again.

The occupation of the streets transforms practices of the everyday. Public words and scenes are rewritten on the walls where graffiti produces a space of recognition and identification. At first, graffiti appears on monuments and public buildings, painted under the cover of the mass demonstrations through the city. Later, graffiti appears as a countersign on the walls of the neighbourhood, simultaneously cryptic and exhibitionist.

In the culture of Buenos Aires, the climax of this practice has a precise date, the transition to democracy. The recently recuperated street is converted into a privileged zone to read a heterogeneity of voices, many of which are outside of the structures of political parties. A struggle ensues for the control of this space to ensure the best placement of the signature (THE NOBODY BAND, POLITICAL PUNK, KADAVERS NN) or picture, even if this means modifying the writing of others.

While a fugitive practice, graffiti modifies and denaturalizes the neighbourhood or the block with signs that, while only understood by some, occupy a sight of maximal visibility in the same area which is controlled by the police. In an interview, Secuestro link graffiti with the rock concert and the occupation of the city: "We would go to see a band. As they always played in different neighbourhoods, we would bring our aerosol cans so we could paint. At a later date, we were more organized. . . we would diagram the streets (which is what the police do, but we do it for painting), we would choose a neighbourhood, a street, an avenue, then we would go to a show with aerosol cans and hit it on the way."

In graffiti, it is possible to read the resignification of the values and places attributed to youth. This is the site where the ambivalence is played out for youth between, on the one hand, increased urbanization, hopes of modernization and social dynamism, and, on the other hand, the image of danger portrayed by clothes and customs. This ambivalence is condensed in the myth of the "loaf about" youth caused by unemployment. The coexistence of distinct modes of socialization between parents and youth - particularly in the case of urban migrants - further exacerbates the generation gap.

The use of the school and the neighbourhood for the prac-

CHARLY GARCIA

tice of graffiti superimposes the desire for visibility on the secretive nature of the gang. Like all mechanisms of recognition and integration, this functions both inwardly and outwardly. The school teaches youth what society thinks of them, to look at themselves, their families and their very existence as problematic. Nonetheless, the use of the school as a meeting place marks the boundaries of territorialization and deterritorialization of the neighbourhood, signifying the limits of the group and investing the space with the values of a local culture.

While graffiti marks territory, it also marks an appropriation of meaning which fuses word and image in a style which links simultaneity and fragment, a combination which parallels the style of the videoclip. In the final years of the dicta-

torship, as Argentina was being incorporated into a global media culture, graffiti reveals the appropriation of audiovisual technologies and urban consumption practices into the modes of survival and action of youth culture. Rock groups are even named in English (WASTED YOUTH or PUNK NOT DEAD), and jokes and political satire is invented: "Watch out fascists, Maradona is a leftie" or "In my apartment I have posters of all of you: Che Guevara." On the walls of the streets, hospitals, stations and schools, this burlesque effect of language is at once personalized (the ego assumes singularization) and public: "the church is such a good busi-

ness that there is a branch in every neighbourhood," or "the school is an institution of Secuestro." During the debate over the creation of the "Law of Due Obedience," which in 1987 exempted from guilt all human rights violators who had supposedly followed orders, graffiti covered the walls of Buenos Aires: "Rob, kill, torture and find someone who will order you to do it," and "Military terrorism, police torture. There were no changes. SECUESTRO."

# You voted: wait two years and do it again (SECUESTRO)

In conclusion, these final three graffiti slogans signal another aspect of modes of symbolic production in youth culture. The symbolic strategies of youth design spaces which acknowledge heterogeneity within education, social class, gender and even age, and which can name forms of control under democracy. Thus, the politics of the everyday enters onto the microscope of the neighbourhood wall. These three graffiti slogans mark the difficulties experienced by the democracy in allowing for the full participation of those sectors which were mobilized to ensure its recuperation. The initial demand for institutional transparency is set back by the inability to encounter mechanisms which will enable the courts to bring those responsible for crimes of human rights abuse to justice. At the same time, the new democracies in Latin America are stuck with the economic conditions fostered by the dictatorships.

In the context of political settlement, the incorporation of youth into education and employment has not been facilitated, and youth have rejected social mobilization as an avenue to new forms of social and political organization. Thus, the tensions of everyday life between work, school and the neighbourhood are translated into a rejection by youth of the authoritarianism of institutions, while nonetheless accepting the role of education in allotting social standing. Aspirations of recognition and social mobility are not reduced to individual history in relation to parents or provincial origins, but rather are invested in the spaces where the everyday practices of the production and interchange of meaning take place. To analyze youth culture of the 1990s it is necessary to look at rock videos, video games and their sites of interaction in order to see how youth have organized themselves to transcend both the image of themselves defined by the crisis and the authoritarian barriers to association. Perhaps the answer was insinuated in 1987 by the rock group "Los redonditos de ricotα" ["The little rounds of ricottα"], who would perform in the costume of the creole circus and encourage the audience to dress up and to come on stage. The "redonditos" came to be the most broadly disseminated counter-symbol in the cities of Argentina. The following is "Come on, bands" by Skay Beilinson and Indio Solari:

> And what's the use of sleeping under guard living cynically and wearing golden buttons and what's the use of being the new band and going around climbing military radars Come on, bands let's boot it

come on, bands And what's the use of your stomach in knots and your nostrils trembling from fear and what's the use of checking everything if sleep comes so hard that it condemns you Come on, bands let's boot it come on, bands And what's the use of your made-up eyes and meditating with perfumed ether and what's the use of being the new band and going around climbing military radars Come on, bands let's boot it

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come on, bands.

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Although the crisis in Latin America is linked more to the debt - and thus to the contradictions of the modernization designed by business people and politicians than to the doubt over modernity suffered by intellectuals, philosophers and social sciencrises are intertwined and their discourses are mutually complementary. In some form the reemergence of the modernizing project in and our "external debt" is part of their "internal doubt," just as their development is part of our dependence. Taking charge of the crisis of modernity is thus an indispensible condition in order to conceive of a project in our countries where economic and technological modernization does not disable or supplant cultural modernity.

A strategic site

modernity.

for the debate

Located in the center of the philosophical, aesthetic and sociological reflections on the crisis of reason and modern society, the project of communication now transcends the boundaries and paradigms of our studies and research. The field of communication can no longer be neatly delimited by academic demarcations. Whether we like it with other concerns - now take part in it. We must accept this explosion and redesign the map of questions and the lines of engagement.

At the same time, the economic crisis and political unrest in our countries make the temptation to regress inward stronger than ever. Nonetheless, the return to theoretical certainties, neoconservative positions and to the defence of the most legitimattists in Europe and the United States, the ed and legitimating professional ideologies is masked by a convergence of two discourses. On the one hand is the discourse of political possibility, which - while presuming itour countries is the other face of their crisis, self to be lucid about what is happening plays its cards on the expansion of the market and its "presentation" as the only dynamic site in society. On the other hand is the discourse of technological knowledge which presumes that the motor of the class struggle has broken down and that history will encounter its revitalization in the events of communication; in the future, to transform society will require changing the modes of the production and circulation of information.

How should we confront this new and redoubled reduction? How can we recognize the social and perspectival depths of new communication technologies, their crosscutting modes of presence in the everyday, from work to play and from science to polior not, others - from other disciplines and tics? How can we accept them not as facts that confirm the deceptive centrality of technological development in which social inequality and power is resolved and dis-

