Chapter 15

Basic Instincts, Violence and Sex-Driven Creatures: New Argentine Masculinity or Old 'Macho' Culture?

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Introduction

Many studies have shown violence to be a persistent problem in intergender relations in Latin America (Polk 1994, Messerschmidt 1993, 2000). In Argentina, as in many Western societies, violence remains a recurrent theme in popular culture: in the news media, but also in literature, cinema, music and television and radio production. According to an Amnesty International report, an average of one woman every three days throughout 2008 was killed in Argentina in an instance of domestic violence (Molina 2009: 7). This data was gathered through the systematic monitoring of reports, published in print and Internet media throughout that year, of violence against women. The results appear to coincide with an earlier survey by Cisneros, Chejter & Kohan (2005: 7–23) regarding femicides committed in the province of Buenos Aires between 1997 and 2003, where it was found that in every year of the study an average of 180 women were killed in that territory alone.[1] More troubling still, recent surveys have revealed that this situation worsened in 2011. In its first semester, Argentina saw 151 women killed in domestic violence, equating to an increase of 20% in relation to the first semester of 2010 and suggesting that, on average, one woman is killed every 30 hours in Argentina (Iglesias 2011, Caruso 2011).[2]

Gender is not the only key to understanding violence. In effect, violence can have multiple causes and varies socially across nations and over time (Connell 1995: 258). However, what is of particular interest to us in the present chapter is the notion that the way in which the media broadcast these issues often results in the perpetuation of prejudice and of certain social attitudes and ideologies, despite the social and political differences of their audiences (Silverstone 2004, van Dijk 1996, 1997, 1998, 2003). In much of the most recent popular culture production in Argentina, a particular male gaze can be seen to generate provocative content that either subtly or overtly maintains an ideology of masculinity that is both aggressive and conservative. This is an outlook that still insists on 'placing women in a subordinate position to the wishes and demands of men' while advancing a deep male longing for a life with meaning and impact (Silba & Spataro 2008: 95).[3]

Bearing in mind that the discursive field comprises gender representations and social identities, making it apt for analyzing questions and tensions over dominant stereotypes (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999, Talbot 2003), in this chapter and the next one we are interested in exploring how men position themselves through discursive practices. Our analysis is informed by our understanding, as per Connell, that '[g]ender is always

relational, and patterns of masculinity are socially defined in contradistinction from some model (whether real or imaginary) of femininity' (2005: 848). We follow a semiotic-cultural approach, starting with an examination of specific cases of investigative journalism into gender violence against women, before proceeding with an exploration of how this particular form of gender violence, rooted in hegemonic masculinities, was developed, 'sustained and enacted not only by individuals but also by groups and institutions' (Connell 1998: 5)—in particular by the media. In fact, we are aware, along with Malin (2005: 5), that vested interests in preserving and circulating certain images of masculinity can be seen in various instances of media concentration, and we will discuss the extent to which this may have been the case under the Kirchner Presidency in contrast to previous administrations. Finally, we look at how these practices came to infiltrate the production of Argentine popular culture in the areas of literature and television dramas.[4]

Men in Power and Powerful Men

Maristella Svampa (2005: 180) has observed that Argentina entered the new century against the backdrop of two overlapping scenarios: on the one hand, women in the early 2000s were increasingly likely to participate in the social and political arenas; on the other, mired in the dramatic financial crisis of 2001, Argentina's battered labor market was beginning to open up to the participation of women, who were as a result perceived as adversaries competing with men for a place in the workforce. As the male universe disintegrated around them, the resulting sense of alienation was especially acute for men of the lower and middle classes, whose identities were articulated through the ability to work and provide for one's family. Thus the fragmentation of traditional working-class masculinity ended at the hands of what Connell calls 'impersonal forces' (1993: 618). From this perspective, the 2001 financial crisis was a calamity for this traditional form of Argentine masculinity in the sense that it rendered traditional male roles untenable for many.

In this sense, men were forced to respond in different ways to the practical consequences of the changes made available to traditional female roles. Connell has noted more recently that

> [gender] hierarchies are also affected by new configurations of women's identity and practice, especially among younger women—which are increasingly acknowledged by younger men. We consider that research on hegemonic masculinity now needs to give much closer attention to the practices of women and to the historical interplay of femininities and masculinities. (2005: 848)

Responding to Connell's call, therefore, and following on from Alabarces et al. (2008), we would suggest that any discursive violence against women generated in Argentina at this time could be read as a male offensive seeking to restore and maintain the values of a

traditional patriarchal model that found itself under attack from the social and political changes of a critical—and critically gendered—moment.

Curiously, the trend seems to also coincide with two particular hyperbolized notions of masculinity, both of which stem from the top of the power structure, represented respectively by two presidential figures that also had an impact on the country's cultural production. In fact, between 1989 and 2010, there was a precise shift from the vain, hedonistic behavior of Dr. Carlos Menem (1989–1999) to a more confrontational, aggressive masculinity under Dr. Néstor Kirchner's administration (2003–2007). It is instructive here to recall Sarlo's observation that '[in] a country with a strong presidency like Argentina, the head of state plays a decisive role in setting the tone of public life' (1994: 34). 'Soy un transgresor' ['I am a transgressor'], President Menem proudly repeated in every interview, while the serious and very tangible implications of this statement escaped popular analysis. As Vázquez acknowledges, the 'transgressor' concept was used in this way throughout the 1990s and helped to define the moral and ideological nature of his presidency (2000: 78). It also contributed to the construction of a type: here was a new male role model, a timely and accessible paradigm that Connell has called 'the transnational business masculinity' (1998: 16), and which he describes as characterized by 'increasing egocentrism, very conditional loyalties (even to the corporation), and a declining sense of responsibility for others (except for purposes of image making)' (Connell 1993: 614). As Connell adds,

> Here gender imagery, institutional change, and political strategy intersect.[...] The credibility of the new policies rested on the image of a generation of entrepreneurs whose wealth-creating energies were waiting to be unleashed. That this stratum was masculine is culturally unquestionable. Among other things, their management jargon is full of lurid gender terminology: thrusting entrepreneurs, opening up virgin territory, aggressive lending, etc.

Artificial gestures and poses certainly became one of the elements that helped Dr. Menem maintain a media presence, amounting to a co-optation of the visual for political ends (Sarlo 1994). Indeed, there was a perceptible shift of the political discourse throughout this process, where reasoning and argument were moved to the fringes to allow for the rise of an exacerbated male image that, interestingly, crossed the metrosexual with the heterosexual macho. The 'pleasures of style, looks and appearance' were at the center of a practice that, besides inflated entrepreneurism, also resulted in the construction of a male consumer subject.[5]

Menem was hyperbolically depicted as a fine example of a new Argentine man that never made a secret of his taste for the high life, sports, fast cars and beautiful women. However, he was not afraid of displaying his private life in public, even making a show of it. The exhibition of the most intimate points of his life was almost obscene: his aesthetic touches and cosmetic surgery; the histrionics of his divorce, which saw him locking his wife out of the presidential residence in 1990 after she dared to criticize his decisions; his multiple love

affairs, real or reputed; and later, his glamorous Chilean bride. Such public demonstrations of this particular brand of 'masculinity' were promoted by the media in each of Menem's public appearances and became a hallmark of the times.

Later on the office would see a return to a more restrained understanding of 'private life.' President Néstor Kirchner's public style was more confrontational, though radically plebeian and markedly casual, keeping its distance from all aesthetic convention and artifice (Borón 2005: 188). The key element in Kirchner's seduction was, according to Borón, his level of informality and his direct contact with his constituents. He intensely disliked any mediation or protocol that might form a barrier between him and the Argentine people. At the beginning of his administration, this attitude and his unadorned style generated a strong current of sympathy for him (considering Menem's excesses), yet he was not a consensus-builder. Rather, his audacity positioned him well to turn events to his favor, and he made the most of any opportunity to increase his popularity. His style soon evolved to a mode of permanent confrontation and the rejection of alternative points of view, as part of a discursive practice that Sarlo (2011: 138) describes as built around the rhetorical form of the *indignatio*, which aims to arouse vitriol and a sense of indignant offence.[6]

Moreover, Kirchner's style during the first years of his presidency projected a 'hard' masculinity, while his wife, a senator in the National Parliament, resorted to a more rationalist discourse. As recently noted by Sarlo (2011: 148), the rhetoric of reason and the rhetoric of passion switched their traditional gender alignment under the Kirchners: while his wife debated logically, Néstor exhibited his anger, anxiety and passion, combining the concept of 'what it means to be man' with the perceived 'will of the people' and 'national interest' in a time of crisis (Hanke 1992: 191). Thus, Menem's captivating sexual seduction and transgressionism gave way under the new administration to what at first seemed to be irrational and impassioned verbal violence but, as we will see, soon showed itself to be political audacity and, perhaps, opportunism.

The concept Connell (1993) proposes with the term 'hegemonic masculinities' is particularly relevant in this context. As social and historical constructions, these masculinities function in part as 'models of admired masculine conduct' (Connell 2005: 838). They will differ between societies, and between historical moments within the one cultural group; transform over a person's lifetime; and vary for different groups of men in terms of social class, race or ethnicity. In addition, these models cannot be isolated from their institutional context and tend, importantly, to dominate over alternative versions and representations of masculinity.

As such, hegemonic masculinities will be symbolized at a regional level through the interaction of masculine practices with specific and specifically local meanings, and will find expression in public figures such as actors, professional sportsmen, or, as per the present case, politicians:

> [W]e cannot begin to talk intelligibly about 'masculinity and power' without addressing the institutionalized masculinization of state elites, the gender differentiation of parts of the state apparatus [and] the history of state strategies for the control of populations. [...] It is not

too strong to say that masculinity is an aspect of institutions, and is produced in institutional life, as much as it is an aspect of personality or produced in interpersonal transactions. (Connell 2005: 849)

To the extent therefore that gender relations are weighed in favor of men, masculinity will continue to be a political matter, since its implication in the institutional infrastructure renders it a determining factor in 'the struggle for scarce resources, the mobilization of power and the pursuit of tactics on behalf of a particular interest' (Connell 1993: 603).

In this context, hegemony is not necessarily a synonym of violence, although it can become so if supported by force. In order to achieve hegemony, the masculinity in question must pass through a process of ascendancy, propelled by 'culture, institutions, and persuasion' (Connell 2005: 832). Undoubtedly, the process of hegemony works through a dynamic of exclusion and inclusion that supports and maintains a gender hierarchy among men, which in turn legitimizes male domination (Hanke 1992: 197). This is because, as Connell suggests, the 'justifying ideology for the patriarchal core complex and the overall subordination of women requires the creation of a gender-based hierarchy among men' (1987: 110).

In what way, then, did the social and political context of the Kirchner period influence the discursive construction of individual and collective identities? What kinds of exemplars of masculinity were created from the top of the power structure and how did they affect the most recent popular cultural production? At first glance, the narratives produced in the country since the 2001 crisis seem to have exacerbated the development of very particular cultural fictions characterized by hyperinflationary discourses revolving around discord. Taking a look at these popular discourses is the aim to which we now turn our attention.

Repetition and Hyperbole around Discord

Several studies have already shown that people pay more attention and more accurately recall news information when it is presented in a personal, emotional or dramatic way, and that this is because the narratives accompanying these news 'stories' encourage an identification between the receiver of the message and the subject they represent as the story's victim (van Dijk 1996, Martini 2007, Rincón 2009). As a result, consuming reportage on violent crime against women in many cases seems to have the potential to (1) forge an individual's understanding of dangers inherent to their environment, (2) foster speculation about and a fear of potential victimization and/or (3) create a generalized mistrust in others. Obviously, this phenomenon has the potential to contribute to the deterioration of social networks organized around interpersonal trust—an occurance described by García Beaudoux and D'Adamo (2007: 179) and van Dijk (1996: 227).

Specifically in the network of Argentine gender relations, such news narratives constitute a patriarchal definition of femininity that, in their turn, amount to, in Connell's phrasing, 'a cultural disarmament that may be [of] quite a physical kind' (Connell 1995: 83). Connell has also noted

that two configurations of violence against women may ensue from this situation: violence as a means of sustaining male dominance and violence understood as a way of claiming or asserting masculinity—two patterns that are closely related and may operate in tandem (1995: 83).

During the last two decades in Argentina, two particular rhetorical figures have accompanied the political phenomena of the times and saturated the discursive realm: repetition and hyperbole. The rhetorical hyperinflation brought about through these figures of speech was instrumental, we would argue, in validating the hegemony of a particular male gaze, while working at the same time to mask fiscal and political uncertainty and distinctive patterns of consumption in a time of profound crisis.[7]

The Argentine media of the period we discuss here was awash with repetition. Spence has noted that repetition in the form of anaphora was in ancient times a form of 'superficial decoration,' a stylistic element added for emphasis (2007: 19). However, in our current cultural sign systems, she adds, repetition has evolved into a figure of thought. By the end of Dr. Menem's administration and during the transition period of President de la Rúa, reports on crimes against women became more prevalent in the leading national newspapers. A 'sinister thread' appeared in the print media that then cascaded into the arenas of radio and television (Martini 2007: 46–47). A serialized focus in the mass media on specific cases of violence constructed an index of conflict that described the national landscape as an altered, tense and deeply violent space where women were easily targeted by male rage.

It is striking that crime reportage became a form of entertainment in Argentina at the beginning of the new century (Tcherkaski 2005: 50–51). The topic contaminated areas as diverse as literature, cinema, radio and television melodrama and music. Undoubtedly, during the 1990s the configuration of the few and powerful corporations that controlled the domain of communications in Argentina had already begun to provoke a transformation in the quality of information, subverting its perceived good character (Martini & Lucchesi 2004). This situation promoted the impression that for these groups maximizing profits and business strongly prevailed over any other principle or priority.

Monopoly ownership of mass media facilitates business practices that seek to increase sales at the expense of the free flow of ideas and diversified public attention, attitude and opinion (Cooper 2005: 124). It does this always within a controlled framework of synergistic strategies and convergence culture (Malin 2005, Jenkins 2008). Within this framework, violence and conflict were adopted as constant topics across the conglomerates' various mastheads—their repetition proved to be an efficient and economical way to attract a wide audience and promote media consumption, at a time when consumption in all its forms was in decline (Hortiguera 2005, 2010a, 2010b; Martini 2007; Rincón 2005).

If repetition worked to saturate the community with a message of permanent and gendered conflict, hyperbole facilitated its internalization. Indeed, exaggeration in the narration of events and data contributed to the dissemination of the specter of male displacement and powerlessness that provoked Argentine men's increasing fear about women's roles in times of political and social crisis. A further symptom of this fear during this period was the treatment given to women in films, music production and literature, which repeatedly

included representations of women betraying men, and of the murder and rape of women (Lipovetsky 1986: 69). It was the beginning of an 'echo effect' in media production, which unleashed a proliferating narrative of conflict and intergender violence. Such forms of popular culture were produced in an environment supportive of their themes of embattlement, saturated as it was by the emphatic rhetoric of the national Argentine news service. On the one hand, the narrative of intergender violence spoke to a certain sector of the male population in a language with which they could identify; on the other, it illustrated the incompetence of state institutions in bringing this conflict under control and the resulting vulnerability of a society affected by an insurmountable crisis (Rincón & Rey 2008: 39).

Concentrated media ownership such as this—including the hyperbole and repetition of content that its business strategies encourage—can surely be found at other latitudes, and in other Latin American regions especially. However, what is most significant about the Argentine press from the period is that its persistent tone of violence paralleled chronologically the 2001 financial crisis; its response, we would argue, worked to repackage stereotyped gender violence as popular entertainment, in an attempt, conscious or otherwise, to effectively reassert a dominance-based masculinity.

Killer Women and Women Killed

The 2002 murder of María Marta García Belsunce is an instructive case, as it initiated a 'woman mysteriously killed' narrative series. Its appearance in the news media was followed by a spate of crime stories carrying a narrative tone so similar that some headlines were almost exact repetitions of those on García Belsunce (see the Nora Dalmasso case in November 2006, and those of Rosana Galliano and Andrea Pajón in 2008 for clear examples of this phenomenon).[8] The Belsunce case has been extensively detailed elsewhere (Hortiguera 2005), but we would like to highlight here the rise, at the peak of the 2001 crisis, of inflationary narratives characterized by an uncanny merging of what was read, heard and seen of actual violent crimes with their fictionalized counterparts. News reports on the Belsunce and subsequent cases increasingly resembled the storylines of classic Agatha Christie crime novels, while popular arts and culture newspaper supplements presented studies on the crime fiction genre (a trend which would also be followed in the Dalmasso case). A *retombée* designed and determined the lens through which the public perceived these crimes.

In fact, a story 'template' is discernible in news coverage of the times related to the violent deaths of women; one could be reading of the same death over and over again with minor differences: (1) a woman is described as murdered in a mysterious way at home, (2) there is no signs of a robbery, (3) her husband is included among several other suspects and (4) the woman is noted to have behaved suspiciously. The implication of this template's normalizing discourse seems to be that women who act beyond the bounds of the traditional maternal or spousal role and/or challenge their husband's views attract the violence that befalls them.

Note, for example, how the rumors of a *crime passionnel* that cast doubt on Belsunce's sexuality and faithfulness, and that were circulated in the press after her death, were used to reinforce an authoritative masculinity and a model of desirable female sexual comportment. Similarly, the narrative used to frame the Nora Dalmasso case seemed to address a fear that social disintegration would reach the middle class and destabilize the traditional nuclear family. The victim was depicted in provocative poses, her sexual peccadillos were aired (including reference to various lovers and a speculated incestuous relationship with her son, outed in the press as gay), her financial independence was discussed as though it were a scandal, and she was in general spoken about very condescendingly. Meanwhile, the reporting on the cases of Galliano and Pajón, who were portrayed as having deviated from patriarchal norms in defying their husbands, was similarly interpretable as issuing a wake-up call to men, relegitimizing and reinforcing viewpoints that privilege the traditional gender hierarchy (Meyers 1997: 24).

In fact, the attention granted by the press to alleged sexual activity in all the above cases is significant. Lesbianism, bisexuality, sexual abandon, multiple lovers and fetishes were all part of a journalistic repertoire of scandal that sought to discredit the murdered women's status as victims (Hortiguera 2005). The public discussion opened by the circulation of such rumors furnished a space within which male chauvinism could both flourish and appear unquestionable: here, Galliano's husband could proclaim himself to be 'the greatest Argentine cuckold' and Dalmasso's husband could publically forgive her 'for her infidelities.' It was as though perceived sexual deviance transferred victimhood to the deceased women's male partners and retrospectively justified a male right to kill (Szeta, Caruso & Etchevés 2009: 142–155, Anonymous 2006). This form of masculinity depicts men as a 'storehouse of toughened warrior energy ready to be unleashed on any transgressive character' (Malin 2005: 26).

Beyond sex-role stereotyping, the victims' husbands' assertions also illustrate a male anxiety circulating throughout a broad sector of Argentine society at this time about men's roles. At the root of many of these representations are rigid patriarchal notions of masculinity and a lack of trust in women—prejudices that were reinforced through a variety of popular-culture media of the period.[9]

In addition, several pseudo-sociological essays written by journalists followed on the heels of the popular interest in crime journalism, reproducing in book form the details of some of these cases and the endless speculations around them. Maricarmen Almada, journalist for *Página 12* and *Revista Veintitrés*, produced *El crimen de la dama de Pilar. La verdadera trama del asesinato de María Marta García Belsunce* (2007); publishing house Editorial Planeta have published the series '*Policiales reales*,' or 'Real crime stories,' since 2007 (with, for example, *El caso Belsunce* and *El caso Barreda*, both coauthored by Ricardo Canaletti and Rolando Barbano); and journalists Liliana Caruso, Florence Etchevés and Mauro Szeta (of *Channel 13*, *Diario Popular* and *Clarín*) released the anthologies *No somos ángeles. Historias secretas al borde de la ley* (2007) and *Mía o de la tumba fría. Mujeres asesinadas* (2009). This practice also reached radio programs, such as 'Secretos argentinos,'

a radio play broadcast by *Radio Nacional* in May 2010 that was advertised by the station as 'based on recent newspaper cases' (Petti 2010).

Man Murderer or Murdered Man

Meanwhile, television did not escape this logic. This is important since, as Hanke, citing Bennett and Woollacott, maintains,

> television works hegemonically, not only by imposing dominant (masculinist) ideology but also by 'articulating the relations between a series of ideologies (subordinate as well as dominant), overlapping them onto one another, so as to bring about certain movements and reformations of subjectivity'. (1992: 195–196)

As corporations took over hitherto public television broadcasting, production and consumption of this kind of story increased. The concentration of media companies also resulted, as we shall see, in a further narrowing of the ways in which gender was depicted. Sensing the enormous interest aroused by the televised conjunction of women and crime, television stations began to promote the development of various soap operas (or *telenovelas*) and series based on real cases. In some of these, women appeared as victimizers, redoubling male anxieties and reinforcing fears about women's hidden intentions—an inclusion that, paradoxically, attracted a broader male audience, traditionally resistant to the genre. The commodification of crime in stories that commonly involved violence against women became a trend.

The series *Mujeres asesinas* [killer women] is perhaps a good example of what we are describing here. The original text on which it was based is a collection of notorious, though recent, criminal cases in which Argentine women were the perpetrators, and about which the national press had reported extensively at the time of their occurrence. Written by journalist Marisa Grinstein and published in 2000 by Norma Editorial in Buenos Aires, it had achieved modest success. Between 2004 and 2008, the book was adapted into a television format with more melodramatic ingredients at the request of Pol-ka, a television production company associated with Channel 13 (a company belonging, in turn, to the powerful media conglomerate Grupo Clarín). The high ratings of the weekly series resulted in a reprint of the original book and two spin-off sequels that became best-sellers. This success also made possible the sale of the entire television series on DVD, and forged a new business opportunity for the conglomerate: the exportation of the series' structure to television production companies in Colombia and Mexico, where in 2007 and 2008 respectively, adapted local versions were screened.

Superficially locating women as active aggressors, in a more profound sense these series showed women occupying a subordinate position in relation to men since, after all, it was their state of dependency in one way or another that led them to crime. In interviews (Nicolini 2007), Grinstein explains that her intention with the original text was to explore not the crimes themselves but the reasons the women involved had considered murder the

nly viable option for justice. Yet, paradoxically, Grinstein's text in effect stresses the position f women as victims rather than victimizers, given that the protagonists of each story find hemselves forced to defend themselves where state institutions had failed to protect them Mosello 2007: 10). In this sense, these women found themselves outside of the state and were nade to enforce 'justice' at a time when a significant fracture in the social order was becoming pparent. What an absent state could not resolve was resolved instead by 'ruthless' female haracters, about whom—the narratives seem to warn—men had always to be cautious.

This series had a profound effect on television programming. For the 2009 season, some lassic *telenovelas* began introducing 'killer women' into their narratives, and they became recurring theme. Most frequently, they depicted a woman obsessed with a man who did ıot return her love, and who she would then callously kidnap, abuse and/or kill. These plots poke to the anxieties of their male audience, and at the same time emphasized a central male ole around which women revolved like dangerous satellites ready to strike. Thus, female illains with the ability to metaphorically and literally kill their partners circumscribed he dramatic action of the *telenovelas Valientes* (Channel 13, 2009) and *Herencia de amor* Telefé, 2009), *Malparida* (Channel 13, 2010), *Herederos de una venganza* (Channel 13, 011). Narrated indubitably from a male perspective, these popular stories illustrate typical nasculine anxieties around the fragility of their place in society, apparently generated by he challenge of increasingly more active social roles for women (note that these changes in hese narratives coincide with Cristina Fernández de Kirchner's presidency).

Thus, the period saw a curious leveling of gender differences through the counterbalancing f male violence in actuality with female violence in fiction. From newspaper crime reports, o books and then to television, the relationship between gender and crime executed a erfectly circuitous motion, inspiring new media formats and the exportation of ideas. Iere, popular literature, newspaper reports and Argentina's recent history converged, omplementing the various subsidiaries of media conglomerates. To paraphrase Steimberg 1998: 16), transposition became a substantial part of cultural production at this time: ertain elements were cyclically repeated, always in sync with what was seen and read in ther media, always revolving around the gender–violence axis, and metamorphosing news ıto fiction. Written texts adapted to television and film collaborated in the generation of ultural capital for their producers (McNair 2007: 92), while exacerbating male anxieties. he result was the expansion of the conservative dimension of the public imagination, /hich forecast the dangerous consequences of female dominance after the demise of ıale authority.

rovisional Conclusion

: is evident that concentrated media holdings across the fields of cinema, radio and news nd print media construct a field in which similar 'production factors [are used] to create ifferent goods' (Ford 2002: 106, Jenkins 2008). Amidst the financial crisis of turn-of-the-

century Argentina, the media landscape, conservative in nature, saw intergender violence operate efficiently and economically as an organizing axis of cultural production, helping to expand its audience. The threat of this violence was staged across media platforms and directed at the perceived precariousness of the role and authority of the Argentine male. The increasing presence of—indeed, reliance on—women in the public and economic spheres in a period of profound social and political change furnished the media sector with an opportunity to feed into and profit from male anxieties. The influence of the 'echo effect' produced by the media's repetitive and hyperbolic discourse perhaps even extends to the inducement of the documented increase of gender violence during recent years. While this claim exceeds the scope of this chapter, it's a possibility that merits further research. But one thing is certain: some popular musical expressions of this period, as the *cumbia villera*, were also influenced by these factors, as we will see in our next chapter.

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