Soon, the media highlighted suggestive errors of the family, doctors and funeral directors, who 'chose to ignore' the deceased's head contained five bullets. The case sparked a media frenzy that lasted several months, especially considering the big names involved, the family connections of the deceased, and the relatives' attempts to conceal the murder. On the other hand, on 27 November 2006, Nora Dalmasso, a businesswoman and the wife of a famous doctor from Córdoba, was found murdered in her daughter's bedroom, while her family was away. The body showed clear signs that the woman had had sex the night before, which led the press to speculate about a sex game with a lover as a possible cause of her death. For months, the case kept the public enticed by revelations of the victim's double life. The case remains unsolved and led in a sordid tale, crossed by numerous suspicions of infidelity and incest. For more details about the Dalmasso case, see Diario sobre diarios, 'Río Cuarto.' For Rosana Galliano's death (16 January 2008) and that of Andrea Pajón (27 August 2008), both murdered by unknown assailants at the door of their houses, see Szeta, Caruso & Etchevés (2009).

Unfortunately, due to space constraints, we cannot include a deeper analysis of some of the most popular film narratives of this period here. However, as an example, it is worth mentioning the depiction of Gloria's betrayal in La señala (2007), directed by Ricardo Darín and Martín Hodara; the assaults of Carla's jealous husband in Las vidas de los jueves (2009, based on the book by Claudia Piñeiro), and the suggested lesbianism of Teresa and Carla in the same; and in Carancho (2010), the beating of Luis. Many of these fictional storylines seem to corroborate the emotional insecurities and gender-based distrust in which men live. On the other hand, Juan José Campanella's award-winning El secreto de sus ojos (2009, based on Eduardo Sacheri's novel La pregunta de sus ojos) deserves a special mention. Opening with a brutal rape sequence, the film depicts the rapist Isidoro Gómez behaving in a hypersexualized, violent way throughout, in defiance of his physical smallness. Silenced through a lack of confidence and a fear of rejection by Liliana Colotto (a behavior shared by Benjamin, the main male character, who in turn also feels tormented by fears of being rejected by Irene). Isidoro defiantly exposes himself—literally and figuratively—on several occasions during the film: a gesture symbolic of the sense of powerlessness and failures of men before women. For an extended analysis of this film, see Hortiguera (2010c).
receive press attention. The real figures, therefore, are perhaps much higher than these surveys reflect.

2. To statistics of this kind should be added cases of femicidio vinculado, or linked femicide; that is, the killing of children with the aim of psychologically punishing or destroying their mother. Between January 2011 and the time of writing (November 2011), 17 children had been killed by their fathers (Anonymous 2011).

For the concept of 'male gaze,' we understand, along with Mulvey (1989: 62), a ' scopophilic instinct' that perceives women's appearance 'coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness.'

4. We are aware of the relationships between the texts themselves (in its broader sense) and the variety of cultural institutions that are in action in any historical period. In these two consecutive chapters, we are not interested in studying a text alone, but rather in the analysis of the particular relationship and mutual exchange established among texts and the groups involved in cultural production, politics and economy. Due to space constraints here, we will deal with music in another chapter of this book, paying especial attention to so-called 'cumbia villera.'

For a detailed explanation of this process, see Vázquez (2000).

6. An example of this type of confrontational discourse can be observed in a public speech directed to the national army: 'As the president of this country, I want this to be made clear: I am not scared, I am not afraid of you.' An excerpt can be accessed here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SY4B-RVvYyw&feature=related.

7. As is well known, Argentina experienced an economic and political collapse at the turn of the new century, which severely affected daily-to-day life. Recall that by the end of 2001, the government of Fernando de la Rúa, who had succeeded Menem in 1999, found itself unable to repay loans made by the IMF and other international lending organizations. De la Rúa was forced to resign, amid a violent chaos of unprecedented proportions. Five provisional presidents later and the serious financial crisis began to show signs of slight improvement. By 2003, Dr. Néstor Kirchner, a then-unknown Peronist governor from the southern province of Santa Cruz, was elected president for the period 2003–2007. During his first year in office, Kirchner negotiated a difficult rescheduling of a portion of the country's debt over three years and the country embarked on a remarkable recovery that would redefine the political landscape. After four years of economic growth, improved living and consumption standards, and a significant reduction of the unemployment rate (from 20% in 2002 to 9% in 2007), the country was back to its pre-crisis level of national income (for a detailed but succinct description of this period, see Levitsky and Murillo 2008). In 2007, Kirchner's wife, Dr. Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, became Argentina's first elected woman president. Despite the fact that Néstor Kirchner did not have any public position in his wife's administration, he remained highly influential in her government, with some allies acknowledging a kind of 'dual command,' until his death in October 2010.

On 27 October 2002, Maria Martha García Belusco was found dead in her house, located in a gated community on the outskirts of Buenos Aires. Accepting the theory of a home accident released by the husband, the family buried her immediately. However, 45 days later, due to an anonymous tip, authorities exhumed the body and discovered she had been murdered.
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8. On 27 October 2002, Marta Marta García Belunce was found dead in her house, located in a
gated community on the outskirts of Buenos Aires. Accepting the theory of a home accident
released by the husband, the family buried her immediately. However, 45 days later, due to
an anonymous tip, authorities exhumed the body and discovered she had been murdered.

Notes
1. We should consider two important points alongside these data. First, it is extremely
difficult to compare such figures against police reports, for Argentina has no centralized
national statistics agency that would provide reliable statistical data. Second, not all cases

276

277
A new market for Argentine music had opened up in Buenos Aires by the end of the military dictatorship in 1983, which saw the flourishing of *rock nacional* (Favoreto 2010) and then the *bailarinas*, a kind of dance hall for *tropical* music (Míguez 2008, Barragán Sandi 2004). A subgenre that originated in marginal sectors of the city of Buenos Aires, in areas known as ‘villas’—slums or shantytowns—*cumbia villera* was a transculturation of the form and style of Colombian *cumbia*, imported to Argentina as early as the mid-1950s. Argentine *cumbia* evolved into distinct regional varieties, mainly in the northern provinces and in Santa Fe, reaching popular status in Buenos Aires in the 1970s—also a period of important political change in the country (Massone & De Filippis 2006: 25). *Cumbia villera*’s popularity peaked just as a raft of neoliberal policies was implemented in the 1990s, and lyrics in these early stages tended to thematicize the social devastation of this politico-economic project. More often than not, these were stories of marginalization, told by means of a pure naturalism and radical realism: they featured poverty, drug and alcohol abuse, and crime as a way of life. All these elements demarcated the style’s thematic territory, as well as, notably, a hyperbolized sexuality featuring marked machismo, homophobia, and misogyny (Alabarcas et al. 2008: 48–49).

For Carrigan, Connell and Lee, “hegemonic masculinity is a question of how particular men inhabit positions of power and wealth and how they legitimate and reproduce social relationships that generate dominance” (1987: 179). Indeed, the type of masculinity displayed by those in power within a hierarchical structure has a strong influence on gender construction in that society. In the case of Argentina, in order to explore the associations, ideologies and behavioral norms that circulate around masculinity and power, popular music is a good place to start. In particular, this chapter analyzes the so-called *cumbia villera*, a genre that reached high levels of popularity and was later used by some sectors of the government for political purposes.

**Masculinity in Cumbia Villera**

As mentioned before, four stages can be identified in the development of the musical genre known as *cumbia* in Argentina. In general terms, after the initial period of transplantation from Colombia, around the mid-1950s, *cumbia* became popular in the 1960s, with groups
que como tu mujer me la estoy comiendo yo
Policía, policía, qué amargado se te ve
cuando v'ol estás patrullando,
me la como a tu mujer

Another clear example can be observed in Damas Gratis's live shows, during which the audience is provoked to view the police force as a common enemy. Frontman Pablo Lescano (the so-called father of cumbia villera) will often declare 'el que no salta es policía' [anyone who doesn't jump is a cop], a sentiment echoed in song lyrics as well (Favoretto & Wilson 2010: 56). In another example, in a song by band Supermerk2, as a way to challenge the police force, their masculinity is defined in homophobic terms:

| Que sos policía, que en la semana laburás de inspector
| Se comenta por ahí que sos un poco raro
| Y que en tu patrullero andás arrodillado
| You are a cop, you work as an inspector
during the week
| They say you are a bit weird
| That you go around kneeling down in the police car
| Se comenta por ahí que sos un refugiado
| Y que en la comisaría enfias tu comisario
| You are a refugee
| And that you have sex with the sheriff
| Mulo raro, mulo raro
| Supermerk2, 'El policía raro,' 2004
| Mulo raro, mulo raro
| Weird guy, weird guy

Besides forming a common front against a shared enemy, masculinity is constructed in terms of 'villero pride' through the valorization of crime and 'heroic deeds':

| Aunque no os quieran somos delincuentes
| vamos de caño con antecedentes
| robamos blindados, locutorios y mercados
| no nos cabe una, estamos re jugados.
| Vendemos sustancia y autos nos chueosamos
| hacemos de primeras salidas en los bancos
| somos estafadores, piratas del asalto
| todos nos conocen por 'los reyes del afano'
| (Pibes Chorros, 'Llegamos los pibes chorros,' 2002)
| Even though they don't like us
| We are crims
| We carry weapons and records
| We steal money trucks, phone cabins and markets
| There's no way out, we are in the game
| We sell drugs and cars
| We rob banks
| We commit fraud
| We are highway robbers
| They call us 'the kings of robbery'
ucha as El Cuarteto Imperial or Los Wawancó, which followed a more classic trend. From its moment on, cumbia was split into three regional subgenres: Northern cumbia, influenced by rhythms from the Puna; the Santa Fe cumbia, more romantic and melodic; and Córdoba cumbia, with its cuartetos (Miguez 2008: 201). By the 1970s cumbia was undergoing a process of urbanization in the main cities and in the second part of 1980s and beginning of 1990s it became widely popular, thanks to the influence of TV and radio programs such as Pasión de Ibado, Ritmo fantástico or Siempre sábado. It is from this last stage that cumbia villera emerged in the mid-1990s.

In Miguez's words this new type of cumbia soon included, as we shall see, a more explicit sexual nature, while leaving behind the typical 'double entendre' that marked its production: with the early 1990s (2008: 202), Cumbia villera poetics in its beginnings were characterized by reflexion of women, displays of overt linguistic aggression and predatory sexuality. While cumbia villera undoubtedly performed language and identity transgressively it did not propose a new identity per se, but rather revitalized an old form of patriarchal identity (Pennycook 2007: 76). Cumbia villera furnished Argentines with an environment in which the mechanisms of gender-role determination, countercultural sentiment, male dominance, and reappropriation of conservative symbols could find expression, and it did so at a time when a crisis of masculinity and heterosexist anxiety were widespread. Though may be the case, as some critics contend, that the subgenre's rupture from traditional cumbia was stylistically innovative (Micieli 2005: 19), conservative male perspectives on male sexual practices nonetheless dominate cumbia villera lyrics—meaning, too, given he prevalence of the subgenre, that a male gaze dominated discourses of female sexuality and the public arena.

In cumbia villera there are numerous examples in which masculinity is constructed by men of women, though equally disturbing are the claims to macho power made by way of displays of aggression. Javier Ayero explains that in the early 1990s, due to increasing crime rates, the government of Buenos Aires provided the police with a great amount of orth material and financial resources and an important degree of freedom of action—i.e., accountability (2007: 39). This decision contributed to a series of gatillo fácil cases and an ongoing battle between the police forces and some villa gangs. Therefore, cumbia villera lyrics portray the police as a shared enemy, to be ridiculed and defined in many ways. More disturbing still is the fact that women are sometimes used as the 'weapon' or instrument of attack on this common enemy. One example of this is the song 'Poliguanampú' y Pibes Chorros (2001), in which the singer claims to have taken revenge on a office officer through sex: 'cuando vos estás patrullando yo me como a tu mujer' [while you are patrolling I'm eating up your wife]. A similar example is 'Policía policía' by Pala Ancha (2008):

| Todas las noches está patrullando en la ciudad |
| Haciendo uso de tu chupa policial |
| ¡Pero no sabes, lo guampado que sos! |

Todo el día estas patrullando la ciudad
Haciendo abuso de tu chupa policial
¡Pero no sabes, lo guampado que sos! All day you are patrolling town
Overusing your badge
But you don't know what a cuckold you are

Another clear example can be observed in Damas Gratís's live shows, during which the audience is provoked to view the police force as a common enemy. Front man Pablo Lescano (the so-called father of cumbia villera) will often declare 'el que no salta es policía' [anyone who doesn't jump is a cop], a sentiment echoed in song lyrics as well (Favaretto & Wilson 2010: 56). In another example, in a song by band Supermerk2, as a way to challenge the police force, their masculinity is defined in homophbic terms:

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| Robamos blindados, locutorios y mercados |
| No nos cabe una, estamos re jugados. |

Even though they don't like us
We are criminals
We carry weapons and records
We steal money trucks, phone cabins and markets
There's no way out, we are in the game
We sell drugs and cars
We rob banks
We commit fraud
We are highway robbers
They call us 'the kings of robbery'
la villera culture, there are innumerable stories about hardship, marginalization, crime; the only way out of poverty, and even local heroes who act as the Robin Hoods of the ums. For example, a villero known as Frente Vital (who later died in a shootout with olice) became famous for stealing a truck loaded with dairy products which he shared with the kids in his villa. Therefore, the 'hero' is a confrontational villero who would go out of his way to help his people, even if that means acting outside the law.

This kind of 'heroic' behavior is portrayed by many cumbia villera bands, who tell similar kinds of stories in their songs. Such is the case, to mention just one, Pala Ancha, a band that, out of solidarity, dedicates most of its songs to those who are in prison. Similarly, many cumbia villera songs always narrate stories of injustices and portray the road of male crime as the only feasible option to survive. One example is the following song by Pibes Chorros:

Hoy mi viejo se marchó
y sola se quedó mi
madre sin trabajo
yo y mi hermanito Juan
quisimos ayudar
tomando el mal camino
en la densa oscuridad
de aquella terminal
(Pibes Chorros, ’El pibito ladrón’, 2002)

My old man left today
And my mother stayed alone and
unemployed
Me and my brother Juan
wanted to help
We took the wrong path
In the darkness
Of that bus station
(Pibes Chorros, ’La jechera’, 2002)

The message of many of these lyrics seems to be that sexual pleasure is a male dominion, to which women are unwillingly complicit in this exploitative dynamic. See, for instance, how the female character is situated in the narrative of the song ’Pamela’ (Pibes Chorros 2004): ’she can’t help sucking it, very eagerly she sucks [...] if I take it away from her, she cries and pleads, ’give it to me.’ In the music video, a young girl with dyed-blonde hair suggestively sucks a popsicle, as she is surrounded and followed by the band members, all males. Let’s see some further examples:

Andá a enjuagarte bien la boca,
me diste un beso y casi me matás
de la barranda a leche que largás
(Pibes Chorros, ’La jechera’, 2002)

Go rinse out your mouth,
you kissed me and nearly killed me
with the stench of cum on your breath

Mirala, ahí la tenés,
la que en el cole se saca 10
la que en casa hace buena letra
ahí la tenés prendida a la bragueta
(Yerba Brava, ’Fiestería’, 2002)

Look at her, there she is,
the one that gets the highest marks
at school,
the one that behaves well at home,
there she is, hanging from your fly

Eso que tienes tá quiero que sea para mí
Dame tu bomba así de onda.
Dame tu bombachita
Todos los pibes queremos ver
Debajo de esa mini qué es lo que
escondes...
Arrás un barbo cuando te ponés esa de
leopardo
Ponte a meñear y si está todo piola sécate
la bombacha
(Yerba Brava, ’La bombacha’, 2004)

That thing you have I want for myself
Give me your bomb
Give me your knickers
All the boys want to see
What you hide underneath that mini skirt...
You cause revolt when you wear the
leopard one
Start dancing and if it’s all fine, take your
knickers off

Men’s predatory sexuality depicted in these compositions is, furthermore, echoed by women’s performance in the bailantas, or dance halls—both onstage and in the audience. Female bailanta attendees follow the example of the dancers onstage, their revealing clothing and lurid dance movements accompaniments to the songs’ explicit sexual references. It is interesting to note that the girls in the audience dance most emphatically to songs in which they themselves are most denigrated, evidencing a lack of female resistance to their portrayal as motivated by irrepressible, animal-like sexual drives (Favoretto & Wilson 2010: 19).
In the villero culture, there are innumerable stories about hardship, marginalization, crime as the only way out of poverty, and even local heroes who act as the Robin Hood of the slums. For example, a villero known as Frente Vital (who later died in a shootout with police) became famous for stealing a truck loaded with dairy products which he shared with the kids in his villa. Therefore, the 'hero' is a confrontational villero who would go out of his way to help his people, even if that means acting outside the law.

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yo y mi hermanito Juan
quisimos ayudar
tomando el mal camino
en la densa oscuridad
de aquella terminal!

(Pibes Chorros, 'El pibito ladrón,' 2002)

### A Turning Point: Crime vs. Misogyny

Curiously, the period 2001 to 2003 was a turning point for cumbia villera. In July 2001, right before the Argentine default, the federal broadcasting organization, Comité Federal de Radiodifusión (COMPER), released regulatory guidelines on the subgenre's broadcast (Miguez 2008: 297). While this document deemed any reference to drugs, alcohol and crime objectionable, it was silent on the lyrics' deep misogyny. This constituted a clear example of an embedded code of masculinity that prevented the state from acting against cumbia villera's grotesque sexist lexicon and its explicitly derogatory portrayal of women. Even Alberto Fernández, the government chief of staff, criticized the television show Pasión de sábado, which presented cumbia villera bands during its five-hour broadcast, for the genre's connection with crime and drugs, without making any reference to its misogynistic content. That same year, according to Argentine sociologist Carolina Spataro, the media undertook to connect the musical genre to increasing rates of violent crime and social insecurity, invoking public criticism of cumbia villera's crime-related lyrics (2008: 136–137). One effect of this outcry was the obfuscation of violence-centered lyrics, while lyrics of an explicitly homophobic, sexual, and misogynist nature were simultaneously encouraged to escalate after the failure to regulate them consistently.

### Popular Music and Gender Representation

The message of many of these lyrics seems to be that sexual pleasure is a male dominion and that essential to it is female subordination; that, in fact, women are willingly complicit in this exploitive dynamic. See, for instance, how the female character is situated in the narrative of the song 'Pamela' (Pibes Chorros 2004): 'she can't help sucking it, very eagerly she sucks and sucks [...] if I take it away from her, she cries and pleads, 'give it to me.' In the music video, a young girl with dyed-blonde hair suggestively sucks a popsicle, as she is surrounded and followed by the band members, all males. Let's see some further examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Spanish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andá a enjuagarte bien la boca, you kissed me and nearly killed me</td>
<td>Me díste un beso y casi me matás</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with the stench of cum on your breath</td>
<td>de la baranda a leche que largás</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Pibes Chorros, 'La lechera,' 2002)</td>
<td>(Pibes Chorros, 'La lechera,' 2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go rinse out your mouth,</td>
<td>Go rinse out your mouth,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look at her, there she is,</td>
<td>Look at her, there she is,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the one that gets the highest marks</td>
<td>the one that gets the highest marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at school, the one that behaves well at home, her she is,</td>
<td>at school, the one that behaves well at home, her she is,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hanging from your fly</td>
<td>hanging from your fly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Eso que tienes tú quieres que sea para mí                              | That thing you have I want for myself                               |
| Dame tu bomba así de onda,                                            | Give me your bomb                                                   |
| Dame tu bombachita                                                    | Give me your knickers                                               |
| Todos los pibes queremos ver                                          | All the boys want to see                                            |
| Debajo de esa mini qui es lo que escondes ...                         | What you hide underneath that mini skirt ...                        |
| Arma un bordo cuando te ponés esa de leopardo                         | You cause revolt when you wear the leopard one                     |
| Ponte a menear y si está todo piola sácate la bombacha                | Start dancing and if it's all fine, take your knickers off          |


Men's predatory sexuality depicted in these compositions is, furthermore, echoed by women's performance in the bailantas, or dance halls—both onstage and in the audience. Female bailanta attendees follow the example of the dancers onstage, their revealing clothing and lurid dance movements accompaniments to the songs' explicit sexual references. It is interesting to note that the girls in the audience dance most emphatically to songs in which they themselves are most denigrated, evidencing a lack of female resistance to their portrayal as motivated by irrepressible, animal-like sexual drives (Favoretto & Wilson 2010: 19).
en Cumbia Villera Became a Political Opportunity

Thus, transculturation remade the typically 'romantic' male character of traditional *cumbia* into the confrontational protagonist of aggressively sexual song lines, constructed for the auspices of a deeply misogynistic gaze. That women in Argentina at this time held to accept their positioning in the resulting imaginary indicates that this conservative sclerotic, which would see female ontology limited to a body whose main function is pleasure, had by this time assumed hegemony among those groups that participated in *cumbia villera* culture. Constructed among socially marginalized men in local, working-class ings, the processes of masculine hegemony described here are undoubtedly an example of Messerschmidt’s understanding of the dynamics of hegemonic masculinity as ‘springing the agency of subordinated groups as much as the power of dominant groups and mutual conditioning of gender dynamics and other social dynamics’ (2005: 848). That scenario seems to have influenced the shift toward a confrontational, violent, ‘macho’ structure from the top of the power structure is a point we seek to demonstrate below.

en Cumbia Villera Became a Political Opportunity

is analysis about the relationship between power and ideology, Therborn explains that

Marginalization seems often to be accompanied by a cynically critical view of the rulers. When the rulers are obeyed because they are seen as ruling on behalf of the ruled, and because this situation is seen as good, then we may talk of obedience based on a sense of presentation. (1980: 96)

aspects of Argentina’s Kirchnerism provide a very good example of Therborn’s theory he representativeness of the dominant. For him,

the representativeness of the rulers may be based on a perception of likeness or belonging, such that the rulers and the ruled are seen as belonging to the same universe, however confined. But it may also be based on its opposite, if the rulers are seen as possessing extraordinary qualities of understanding and as really defending the needs of the ruled. His is charismatic representation, by anyone from ‘the man with a mission’ to the flashy ‘V’ personality. (1980: 96–97)

...and the popularity of *cumbia villera* among a vast number of potential voters attracted attention of some in the political sector, who approached the trend as an opportunity not a missed. The concept of identification is associated with imitation, empathy, or the try to assess someone as identical to oneself (Gilbert 1996: 176). President Kirchner, in icular, appropriated the idiom of those groups and took the opportunity to identify self with the subgenre, not only by constructing a political persona that shared its ities (male toughness, strength, and antagonism), but also by declaring his and his son’s

enjoyment of the music (Colonna 2004). Seeing the impact of comments and reactions against the genre, Kirchner went on to state that ‘yo banco la cumbia villera’ [I support cumbia villera] (Colonna 2004). Interestingly, at this point the president chose to mention the other male member of his family and not his wife or daughter, thus reaffirming that cumbia villera ‘is a male thing.’ Such expressions of favoritism toward this genre would help him come close to social classes that would identify with him and, in turn, it would raise this music to a higher position in society, so that it ceased to be just the music of the villas and became the music of the people.

Such personal endorsement from a high office endowed cumbia villera with credibility for certain sectors of society while also granting Kirchner respect from those sectors where the subgenre was already admired. After all, Edelman has observed that identification with chauvinist uses of power is common and officials and aspirants to power are therefore encouraged to adopt it as a strategy (1988: 61). This expression of emotional closeness allowed the president to expand his support base among marginalized groups. Considering he had won the presidential elections with just 22% of the vote, Kirchner’s strategy on this front was very successful in allowing him to conquer the wider electorate, in this case literally enacting the popular saying, ‘a political leader must give the public a tune they can hum.’

In fact, so successful was this move that under Kirchner’s presidency a new subgenre would emerge: the ‘cumbia kirchnerista.’ Groups such as Perucu and Classe K, whose music tended to include a social message, consistently emphasized their support of Kirchnerism. It portrayed Kircher as a messiah walking among the people, and as someone always keen to construct a new society based on the force of his personality. Néstor Kircher exploited his confrontational, even aggressive profile. He showed himself as a popular leader, often using colloquial expressions and adopting a highly confrontative approach. He found common ground with many cumbia villera followers, showing interest in their language, their issues, and even their music.

The political youth group La Cámara, founded by Máximo Kirchner, the president’s son, decided to support the band Classe K, which had originally comprised a group of youngsters from a community organization. On their current Facebook page, Classe K define themselves as a ‘cumbia social’ band, reflecting in [their] lyrics the social reality of [their] country. It is important to note at this point that the music genre is now called ‘social’ instead of the former ‘villera.’ This is a re-categorization that relocated the genre on a higher strata than its origins and made it more palatable to middle-class audiences that did not identify themselves with ‘villero’ culture. The leader of La Cámara, Andrés ‘Cuervo’ Larrue, told the story of the origins of Classe K and its relationship with the government in one of his public speeches:

About five years ago, El Gato (Esteban Ramos, the band’s manager) told me: ‘we have to form a cumbia social band because everybody talks about Pibes Chorros’ and he added ‘we like cumbia but we are not criminals’ and they wanted to create, through cumbia, a way of expression. (Blanco 2012, author’s emphasis)
Thus, transculturation remade the typically 'romantic' male character of traditional *villera* into the confrontational protagonist of aggressively sexual song lines, constructed for the auspices of a deeply misogynistic gaze. That women in Argentina at this time needed to accept their positioning in the resulting imaginary indicates that this conservative scullinity, which would see female ontology limited to a body whose main function is pleasure, had by this time assumed hegemony among those groups that participated in *villera* culture. Constructed among socially marginalized men in local, working-class settings, the processes of masculine hegemony described here are undoubtedly an example of onnell and Messerschmidt’s understanding of the dynamics of hegemonic masculinity as 'spraying the agency of subordinate groups as much as the power of dominant groups and mutual conditioning of gender dynamics and other social dynamics’ (2005: 848). That scenario seems to have influenced the shift toward a confrontational, violent, 'macho' stricture from the top of the power structure is a point we seek to demonstrate below.

**en Cumbia Villera Became a Political Opportunity**

In his analysis about the relationship between power and ideology, Therborn explains that marginalization seems often to be accompanied by a cynically critical view of the rulers. When the rulers are obeyed because they are seen as ruling on behalf of the ruled, and because this situation is seen as good, then we may talk of obedience based on a sense of representation. (1980: 96)

The structural aspects of Argentina's Kirchnerism provide a very good example of Therborn's theory of the representativeness of the dominant. For him, the representativeness of the rulers may be based on a perception of likeness or belonging, such that the rulers and the ruled are seen as belonging to the same universe, however defined. But it may also be based on its opposite, if the rulers are seen as possessing extraordinary qualities of understanding and as really defending the needs of the ruled. His is charismatic representation, by anyone from 'the man with a mission' to the flashy 'V' personality. (1980: 96–97)

The popularity of *cumbia villera* among a vast number of potential voters attracted attention of some in the political sector, who approached the trend as an opportunity not to be missed. The concept of identification is associated with imitation, empathy, or the desire to assess oneself as identical to oneself (Gilbert 1996: 176). President Kirchner, in particular, appropriated the idiom of those groups and took the opportunity to identify himself with the subgenre, not only by constructing a political persona that shared its virtues (male toughness, strength, and antagonism), but also by declaring his and his son's enjoyment of the music (Colonna 2004). Seeing the impact of comments and reactions against the genre, Kirchner went on to state that 'yo banco la cumbia villera' [I support *cumbia villera*] (Colonna 2004). Interestingly, at this point the president chose to mention the other male member of his family and not his wife or daughter, thus reaffirming that *cumbia villera* is a male thing. Such expressions of favoritism toward this genre would help him come close to social classes that would identify with him and, in turn, it would raise the music to a higher position in society, so that it ceased to be just the music of the *villas* and became the music of the people.

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K is not the only band that plays cumbia social (which is, in fact, cumbia kirchnerista). Perucu appeared in the public arena in 2009. The cover of their first album Kumbias al no del pueblo shows a caricature of Néstor Kirchner and the now widespread adoption of letter K as a symbol for Kirchnerism. This album, which became very popular during Kirchner’s presidential campaign, sings to the president with love and devotion: ‘Y Néstorempre es Néstor/lo dice todo el pueblo/que sabe lo que quiere su corazón’ [Néstor will stay be Néstor/everybody says he knows/what his heart wishes for] (Piqué 2009).

The lyrics of the songs included in that album thematize explicit support of policies under Kirchner’s government, criticism of their opponents and unconditional support for Néstor:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spanish Text</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Se creen que no pensamos pero cuando votamos votamos con el corazón Y no nos damos vuelta más que nos debajan la vida del mejor color. El sol, el sol jamás se apagó Y sigue ardiendo en la gran razón del pueblo que conoce el alma de quien es mejor Y Néstor siempre es Néstor. (Piqué 2009)</td>
<td>They think we don’t think But when we vote We vote with our hearts and we don’t change our minds even if they paint a more colorful life. The sun, the sun never went out It keeps burning in the mind Of the people that is best The soul of who is best And Néstor is always Néstor.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

The more recent cumbia kirchneristas display continued devotion to the ‘K style’ of the mer president and loyalty to his widow, the current president popularly known as Cristina, or her own cumbia song as well (Clase K 2011).²

Undoubtedly, the song still presents the key elements of a cumbia villera song: the common enemy (‘hormigueros de traidores’) and the heroic presence of Kirchner even after his death (‘sueño de Néstor’ in ‘los ojos’ of Cristina). The title of the song reveals temporality: ‘recién empieza’ alludes to a long period that has just started, a transformation process that thematizes ‘liberación,’ a messianic and revolutionary message. At the beginning, the song talks about Néstor Kirchner with a very familiar tone (‘Tío Néstor’) and states clearly that change will take place under his command (‘junto a Néstor conducción’). This way, even though the presidency is in Cristina’s hands, voters are assured that she will be acting under the continuous vigilance of her deceased husband, in keeping with traditional and patriarchal values in which the female role is always subordinated to her husband’s.³

The lyrics of these current songs continue to acknowledge her husband’s leadership, a clear example of the force of Kirchner’s influence. Despite the fact that a woman governs the country, her discourse is still based on Néstor Kirchner’s political ideas and style of governance. His image and quotes still dominate the discourse of his widow’s theatrical public appearances to the extent that, remarkably, during the swearing-in ceremony for her second consecutive period in December 2011, she took her oath ‘by God, the country and him’. Her power is built on his attentive watch, and is represented as a continuation of his power, subordinated to it even after his death.

That omnipotent ‘him’ is a perfect example of what the cumbia ‘El cambio recién empieza’ [Change Has Just Begun] states. Indeed, these ‘models of admired masculine conduct’ emerging from the lower social strata seem to have taken over the scene; even though the head of state is a woman, her political discourse and her attitudes are based on her husband’s ideas and aggressive reactions. His quotes are never absent in her speeches and his photo is always predominantly visible in her public appearances on television. After all, as Edelman has noted, sexism and chauvinism are implicated in
| People in the neighborhood and things going on | We don't have the right information, but it seems that neighborhood and community events are occurring, and the public is going about their daily lives.

| Néstor is always present in the community, and the people are familiar with him. | Néstor is a significant figure in the community, and the people are accustomed to seeing him around. | Néstor is always present in the community, and the people are familiar with him. | The community is familiar with Néstor and his presence is felt in the daily activities of the neighborhood. |

| They find it hard to travel, and if they do travel, they don't want to leave their home. | Néstor and his family are often seen traveling, and the people are proud of his accomplishments. | The people are proud of Néstor's travels and are happy to see him return. | Néstor and his family are often seen traveling, and the people are proud of his accomplishments. |

| Unfortunatley, the song still presents the key elements of a cumbia villera song, the common family (Néstor's family). The song reads as if it were a love letter to Néstor. | The song presents the key elements of a cumbia villera song, the common family (Néstor's family). The song reads as if it were a love letter to Néstor. |

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It is as if women can prove their fitness for high office only by demonstrating their
allegiance to patriarchal norms. In their actions and their talk, political leaders are prone
to stress the values of authority, hierarchy, toughness, and dominance over compassion,
equality, or the welfare of the powerless, and there is evidence that the public has been
socialized to display the same priorities when choosing among aspirants for high office.
(1988: 61)

Indeed, chauvinist leadership helps establish a bond between leaders and a substantial part
of the population. This strategy keeps proving successful for kirchnerismo, as Cristina
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We would add, furthermore, that in the case of Argentina the form served
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We would add, furthermore, that in the case of Argentina the form served political purposes, having provided President Kirchner with opportunity to strengthen his relationship with the higher spheres of power and the marginalized classes, through the experience of cumbia villera as a culturally binding practice. Kirchner’s figure of aggressive power emulated the confrontational, ‘macho’ style of cumbia villera until a usually influential loop developed across the power pyramid, from top to bottom and back, in a scenario that permitted masculine rhetoric to act as a conduit between Kirchner and the popular sectors on which his success depended. Just as the male aggression of many cumbia villera narratives offered a way to restate their characters amid the contemporary crisis, Kirchner would seek throughout his term—and perhaps beyond it—ways to better nurture himself in the political arena, reinforcing a vision of traditional masculinity that demonstrated his own strength at every opportunity.

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It has been asserted that ‘working-class masculinities are no more set in concrete than are ruling-class masculinities’ (Connell 1993: 619). The interaction between different levels of the power structure in constructing the particular social imaginary we have been discussing here is reflective of that idea, since in no way was the model of masculinity that rose to hegemonic status in Argentina at that time imposed from the top down, or vice versa. Rather, it was the product of a process of reciprocity: it originated with and was defined by the marginalized groups who found themselves excluded from social participation by neoliberal policies, before finding ready support from higher spheres of power whose wielders were driven by the goal, either political or economic, to have this backing reciprocated.

Dependant as it has been on positioning women as in need of restraint by a dominant male, the aggressive affirmation of the continued availability of a certain type of masculinity demonstrates that the ‘changes’ brought about through the 2001 financial crisis were, on this front, less novel than reactionary in nature. Rather than the dynamism of the social scenario culminating in new series of models for male behavior, the discourse surrounding gendered roles at the turn of the century served to reaffirm and consolidate patriarchy, misogynyny, and sexism. Marked by physical and linguistic violence, the discourse driven by the political arena and across media outlets serves as ample demonstration that conservative ideas of masculinity and patriarchy in Argentina remain far from being adequately challenged.

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Notes

1 The influence of locally produced music on its audience is particularly striking. For instance, and disturbingly enough, domestic violence statistics show that shortly after the drummer of rock band Callejeros, Eduardo Vázquez, killed his wife by burning in 2010, there was an increase in similar episodes. Other spurs to unusual reports of violence can be found in this music; at the time of writing, one of the most popular songs in Argentina asserts ‘ella quiere latigo’ [she wants to be whipped] (Wachituros, Tira me un paso; Tira me un paso, 2011).

2 Frente Vital's story was narrated in 2003 in a bestseller by Cristian Alarcón titled Cuando me muera quiero que me toquen cumbia [When I Die I Want Cumbia to Be Played]. The book portrays Frente as both a mythical figure and a symbol of the neglected segments of Argentine society, which by then included not only the working class and poor but also the unemployed and lower middle class.

3 Onstage dancers on television and in live performances can be seen in the following example, recorded from the TV show Pasión de sábado: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y9oPiRi51wU.

4 Note that we are not suggesting that Kirchner attained broader popular support only due to his identification with cumbia villera. To assert this would be disingenuous. He clearly understood the cultural tastes that were relevant to his voters and he identified with them. In a few words, he recreated himself accordingly, by taking large parts of his social constituency's emotions, articulating them, and making them his own. In all this "process of adjustment," it is obvious that he also changed, by reshaping some of his own principles. [W]ithout a sensitivity to the "tastes and tendencies" within popular culture, national-popular projects will fail" (Jones 2006: 38).

5 This can be accessed by visiting: http://es-la.facebook.com/people/Clase-K-Cumbia/100000716622740.

6 Cristina Fernández de Kirchner was re-elected in October 2011 by 52% of the votes, the highest percentage since 1983 (Fraga 2012). To hear the song on line, visit: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1SISfTVnNqQ&feature=related.

7 It is worth mentioning that 'Tío' has other political connotations. Héctor Cámpora, a left-wing Peronist president of Argentina for a short period during 1973, was also known as 'Tío.' In this way, the ideological continuity is set clearly from Peronism to Kirchnerism. Besides, the political youth group that supports Clase K is called La Cámara.


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