

NEW CULTURAL IDENTITIES THROUGH LITERATURE AND ROCK MUSIC IN LATIN
AMERICA (MEXICO, COLOMBIA, ARGENTINA, BRAZIL)

by

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Abstract

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New Cultural Identities Through Literature and Rock Music In Latin America (Mexico, Colombia, Argentina, Brazil)

Thesis directed by Associate Professor Leila G. Gómez

The emergence of rock music in the middle of the 1950s was a key milestone for popular, mass media culture in the 20th Century. Its impact was felt immediately by the culture industry as there was suddenly a fresh, untapped market—the youth market—toward which it could direct its attention. With rock came new aesthetic realms not only in music, but also in fashion and graphic design. Its impact on literature was less palpable, though its influence ran deep among several young writers from Latin America, opened up a new realm with which to identify, and was a key component in the formation of the Tropicália movement in Brazil. By the 1960s, rock had become the soundtrack for the newly liberated youth. With millions of fans, musicians such as Bob Dylan, the Beatles, Jimi Hendrix and the Rolling Stones, transcended their role as performers to become icons of the counterculture.

My study focuses on the work of José Agustín, Parménides García Saldaña (Mexico), Andrés Caicedo (Colombia), Marcelo Cohen (Argentina) and Ignácio de Loyola Brandão (Brazil). The analyses are directly related to rock culture and, in Brazil, the Tropicália movement and the influence of rock on new cultural identities, considering its ripple effects that link it aesthetically, socially, historically and politically to the works. Part of the ripple effect is the significant consequence on some writers whose influence was not felt until decades later in the case of Agustín and Caicedo. My intention to reflect the diversity of rock and its varied modes of influence as a concept and social/aesthetic phenomenon is borne out by bringing in different critical approaches that nonetheless link it to overall continuum of literary and cultural history, manifested uniquely in each context to reflect the cultural and historical realities from which the works were created.

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Introduction

*I'm free, I'm free
And freedom tastes of reality,
I'm free, I'm free
If I told you what it takes
To reach the highest high,
You'd laugh and say 'nothing's that simple'
But you've been told many times before
Messiahs pointed to the door
And no one had the guts to leave the temple!
I'm free, I'm free
And I'm waiting for you to follow me.
The Who*

Rock: A Multifaceted Concept and Aesthetic Emerges

The emergence of rock music in the middle of the 1950s was a key milestone for popular, mass media culture in the 20th Century. Its impact was felt immediately by the culture industry as there was suddenly a fresh, untapped market—the youth market—toward which it could direct its attention. With rock came new aesthetic realms not only in music, but also in fashion and graphic design. Its impact on literature was less palpable, though, as we shall see in the chapters that follow, its influence ran deep among several young writers from Latin America, opened up a new realm with which to identify oneself for those feeling alienated within their own culture, and was a key component in the formation of the Tropicália movement in Brazil, among other effects on the broad concept of identity. From its inception, rock represented the emancipation of youth, the rebellion against cultural norms, institutions, and parents, among others. By the 1960s, rock had become the soundtrack for the newly liberated youth who had shed the constrictive social norms of previous generations. With millions of fans, some of the musicians themselves, notably Bob Dylan, the Beatles, Jimi Hendrix and the Rolling Stones, transcended their role as performers to become icons of the counterculture.

The new cultural icons, aided by the marketing machine of the mass media culture, presented a new alternative that for many individuals managed to change the way they saw themselves and the world. As spokespeople for youth, the new icons seemingly held the key to unlock a realm of freedom far

removed from the conservative button-down culture of the 1950s and many of the traditional cultural norms in Latin America. In a broad cultural sense, they helped create a new archetype for performers whose influence reached far further than in previous generations and whose influence was once reserved for the foremost thinkers and political figures in previous eras. In the case of Bob Dylan and John Lennon, it went so far as them being hailed as prophets for a new generation, but was not limited to them. For a period in the mid to late 1960s, the Beatles as a collective were perhaps unmatched as a cultural and media phenomenon, not only influencing the scope of rock music as an art form, but also bringing attention to other cultural and spiritual trends which would otherwise have never reached as broad an audience. Of course, there were others who were perhaps more influential in different, specific ways which appealed to different sensibilities among the era's youth. An example of this was Jimi Hendrix. He was a unique figure: an African-American superstar in the predominantly white realm of rock music, a self-styled "electric gypsy" in touch with both the earthiest blues and the most cosmic visions of the future; an individual who privately saw himself as a perpetual outsider, as his self-ascribed gypsy moniker suggests, while being a quintessential example of the era's *zeitgeist*, fusing a wide array of sonic elements to change the course of rock forever and establishing a bombastic public persona that belied his private misgivings. Another key example is the Rolling Stones who served the role of "bad boys." The Stones were *the* quintessential model of guilt-free excess and crude behavior that unapologetically challenged authority directly. They further cemented rock's status as rebellious music from the mid 1960s onward after rock's brief period of vapidness early in the decade. For better or for worse, the combination of what these, and many other stars, conveyed in turn aided the propagation of new paradigms for experiencing reality. These included indulgence in drugs, greater sexual freedoms, a disdain for authority and dogma, a re-evaluation of the values of previous generations (including racism, consumerism and imperialism) and a newfound openness towards non-Western spiritual traditions that (at least in the psychedelic 1960s) often included consumption of psychotropic drugs. As such, rock's presence in culture throughout the world also provided a significant new set of models for youth still in the process of developing their personal identity and defining themselves as individuals. Through the early mechanisms of globalization,

rock and rock culture affected and interacted with cultures throughout the world in unique and often unpredictable ways. Latin America was no exception: to which the early iconoclastic rumblings of the Onda movement in 1960s Mexico regarding high/low culture and national identity, as well as the role of rock as a key element in the Brazilian aesthetically revolutionary cultural/countercultural movement, Tropicália attest.

While I am making use of the terms rock and rock culture, it is key to note that when speaking of both, there is no single, overarching, monolithic definition of either and that both have developed and evolved through the years. Gustavo Verdesio poignantly explains in his article “Cultural Modalities and Cross-Cultural Connections: Rock across Class and Ethnic Identities” that:

[A] problem one faces when one talks about rock is not just a musical genre or a series of musical styles, but it is also a concept. This concept is a fluctuation notion and it has changed throughout the several decades (more than five now) rock has been with us. This situation is complicated, also, by the fact that, as Carlos Polimeni rightly points out, rock is not only a concept but also a *mise en scène* or a staging (2001:63). That is to say, rock cannot be understood or even conceived of without taking into account the attitude(s) of the musicians, their distinctive looks, the spectacle they offer, and the public(s) they create. Rock is today (as it probably was from its beginnings) as much a kind of music as an attitude, and a concept as well as how it is received. In other words, rock is a complex social, cultural and economic (and some would say political) phenomenon as well as an aesthetic one that does not lend itself to easy interpretations or understandings of it. (636)

It is with these points in mind that I intend to proceed. First of all, it is key to note that in researching rock as an influencing concept in its various manifestations in the works I have chosen, no single approach of interpretation (literary, cultural, political, sociological, aesthetic, or otherwise) suffices for the individual works and the unique aspects of individual and collective identity they address. Hence, there is a different approach drawing from distinct realms that I employ from chapter to chapter.

There are, of course, overarching concepts and themes that are addressed to varying degrees within. The first is the presence of the autobiographical component that speaks directly to the process of individual identity formation and membership in an international imaginary community that has embraced key aspects of the rock ethos. Derived from the iconoclastic, anti-dogmatic drive to break with tradition (sometimes at any cost, even their own perdition), this ethos seems to inevitably lead to a palpable nihilism among both the characters and some of the authors who give them life. The formation of identity by the artist and the character both involve the appropriation and incorporation of an enormous range of cultural references drawn from both high and low culture. This use of different types of sources re-assembled within the individual works allow us to draw clear parallels to the Pop Art movement and its own iconoclastic approach to culture, critiques of the very same mass-media constructed world from which it draws its material which furthermore directly puts the high/low culture dichotomy into question. In this process of breaking with traditional cultural (and literary) norms, lies the creation of a new vernacular within Latin American literature. Both the process and vernacular share echoes with the historical and then-contemporary avant-garde, as well as being notable as early manifestations of postmodernity. I do not wish to limit the use of the term vernacular here to one of artistic vocabulary and form as the innovative use of different jargons, including an abundance of rock lyrics (often in their original English language form), language from the street, plays on words, as well as the creative use of typography, among others, are key components to this emerging literary identity. Beyond this, all of the characters in the works find themselves at odds with the environments in which they live and rebel against their respective situations of status quo. Gustavo Verdesio, Eric Zolov and Carlos Rotondo, among other critics explain that rock was an urban phenomenon in Latin America which was at first only accessible to the upper and upper-middle class with the means of acquiring the products necessary for assuming, or attempting to assume, the identity of a rocker. With that, there is the notable absence of any strong parental figures worthy of respect and emulation in the eyes of the characters, when they are present at all. This relates to the critique of the consumerist bourgeois status quo being pushed by the mass media that is also present in these works. Implicit in all of these critiques are a question of national

identity and its evolution, questioning where it has emerged from and the inevitability of change brought about by the influence of mass media and the resulting hybridization, to use Néstor García Canclini's term, that it brings about.

In the end, of course, the ultimate unifying factor among all of these points and how they relate to the Mexican authors José Agustín (b. 1944) and Parménides García Saldaña (1944-1982), Colombian Andrés Caicedo (1951-1977), Argentinian Marcelo Cohen (b. 1951) and Brazilian author Ignácio de Loyola Brandão (b. 1936) is the multifaceted concept of rock and its culture. Agustín and García Saldaña are perhaps the closest manifestations to the rock ethos amongst these authors, adopting personal and artistic personas that draw freely from models from the rock world and blur the line between art and life. Agustín wished to manifest the freedoms of rock in his literary work as well as his well-publicized personal life. Though Agustín saw himself as an iconoclast, he, like many of his generation, saw the possibilities of a new art that drew both from the high and low culture (mainly rock and Hollywood), he also saw a niche for himself among literary figures in Mexico and I present an allegorical reading of his story "¿Cuál es la Onda?" (1968) to present such a case. Regarding the adoption of the rock ethos, nowhere is it more clear than in the first half of his autobiography *El rock de la cárcel* (1985), named after the Elvis Presley song. Neither García Saldaña in Mexico, nor Caicedo in Colombia, accepted their opportunities to find a niche in the literary community like Agustín—García Saldaña through his erratic, extreme and often violent behavior and Caicedo by committing suicide the very day his novel *¡Que viva la música!* was published. Both were essentially nihilistic figures that suffered problems with family issues, mental illness, substance abuse, issues of sexuality and an undying love for the Rolling Stones—all of which were factors that informed their highly autobiographical work. García Saldaña's *Pasto verde* (1968) is a *roman à clef* of the Onda generation, contrasting the iconoclastic, hedonistic freedoms of the times (in the form of being a Rolling Stone-type rock artist) with the ultimate frustrations imposed by his reality (not actually being a star, living in a society of questionable value to him). The suicidal nihilist Caicedo explores the different facets of identity formation through musical genres. His main character, an amalgam built from aspects of himself and an under-aged lover of his, ultimately drops out of society

altogether—a different form of suicide. With Cohen, an exile at the time he wrote his novel, *El país de la dama eléctrica* (1984), the role of rock as a stabilizing force for the identity of the itinerant exile with no true home or roots is the fundamental component. The figure of Jimi Hendrix leads the way in this novel whose title is taken from Hendrix's classic 1968 record *Electric Ladyland*. Lastly there is the unique case of Brazil, where I argue that Ignácio de Loyola Brandão's *Zero* (1969) can be read from a Tropicalist perspective as it utilizes numerous aesthetic principles used within the movement to present its dystopic vision of 1969 São Paulo. That chapter explains how the Tropicalist musicians develop their own identity drawing on rock and their own cultural pedigree. These ideas enter the cultural mainstream and are, I will argue, employed by Brandão in *Zero*. Interestingly, the concept of nihilism, which philosopher Martin Heidegger had affirmed was a new norm for post-World War II world, manifests itself in different forms and degrees in all of the works in this corpus and, as I mentioned before, in the way of seeing the world of some of the authors.

Because of the diverse concepts at work, we must break down the chapters both to clarify the critical approach to each. The first two chapters deal with Mexico and the movement known as “La Literatura de la Onda,” much to the chagrin of one of its primary exponents (and the subject of my first chapter) José Agustín. I cover two different works of Agustín's to expose rock's role in his identity as artist in the first and its role in his personal identity in the second. With García Saldaña, rock and nihilism are the fundamental factors from which his work is approached. The third chapter explores the work of the late Andrés Caicedo, whose work has traceable influences to José Agustín, with whom the young Colombian was familiar. Again the links with rock and nihilism are fundamental in approaching Caicedo's novel. Furthermore, there are parallels in Agustín's, García Saldaña's and Caicedo's approaches to identity as individuals and artists who draw directly from the rock ethos and rock culture. As such, there are numerous relevant points about the Onda that are useful in reading Caicedo as well. These will be explored in some detail in the section ahead.

Though there are a few points that are also applicable to the work of Marcelo Cohen, they apply more clearly to the creation of his main character in the novel analyzed here and there is no evidence of a

direct influence from the Onda like there is with Caicedo. Moreover, the context in which Cohen writes is quite different. Silvia Kurlat Ares points out that the entrance of this type of mass media influence (rock) in Argentine literature began to occur in the 1980s, some fifteen years after the emergence of the Onda and with the added weight of the *Guerra sucia* (Dirty War) years as an influencing factor. This accounts for the difference in context for the Argentine author, though the constant of rock being an important sign of identity is further accentuated here as well; specifically as one of the few, limited forms of dissent available to youth within under the military dictatorship. Cohen's condition as an exile is transposed into the nature of his characters, one of which is part of the rock tribe and whose identity would practically cease to exist without rock's presence in the social fabric. The other character, who also has some nihilistic tendencies, allows him to expound on the desolate conditions of Argentina's internal exiles who were alienated from their own culture during the *Guerra sucia*.

The case of Brazil is far different for two reasons. First, the author, Ignácio de Loyola Brandão, is not directly influenced in his own identity as an artist or individual by rock or its culture. While Brandão himself was not influenced by rock and rock culture, the most public faces of Tropicalism, the musicians Caetano Veloso, Gilberto Gil, and Tom Zé were indeed influenced by rock and it became a key component in the creation of their aesthetic. As such, I justify Brandão's inclusion herein with a Tropicalist reading of his seminal protest novel *Zero*, which, though it was written in 1969, was not published until 1974 (initially in translation in Italy, soon after in Brazil), was censored again in 1976, and did not see widespread distribution in Brazil until 1979. Removed from the original timeframe in which it was conceived, it has not been considered within the Tropicalist spectrum for this and other reasons, like the fact that it also clearly fits into the category of the violent, protest novel that became prevalent in Brazil in the following decades. This chapter, the lengthiest herein, has two parts. The first explains Tropicália as a movement with its influences, ties to Brazilian culture and previous cultural history including the avant garde, and as a unique Latin American manifestation of Pop Art. The second applies these cultural, aesthetic and political concepts in a detailed reading of *Zero* which link it to the Tropicalist movement.

Ahead, I will explain some of the key theoretical, historical and aesthetic concepts at work in the different chapters: first, the Onda and its context which, again, has many applicable points to Caicedo and other links to the works contained herein; second, the importance of mass media Pop Art and the application of some of its key precepts, particularly in the Onda, Tropicalism and Brandão.

For this group of young writers emerging in Mexico in the 1960s, the influence of foreign mass media culture came to be one of the defining qualities of their work. Growing up with the considerable influence of imported cultural commodities that occurred after World War II, Agustín and García Saldaña adopted essential elements of rock's ethos into their public and literary personas, as well as into their work. For both writers I treat here, their relationship with imported cultural commodities from the United States, and rock in particular, were aided by the strong presence of these products in Mexican movie theaters and radio. In his extensive study of rock in Mexico, *Refried Elvis*, Eric Zolov explains that the Mexican government imported and promoted these cultural products as vehicles of "modernity." In the case of Agustín, his father was an airline pilot who would foster his son's interest in the rock music by bringing back records for him to expand his palette of knowledge. For García Saldaña, as we shall see in further detail in the second chapter, it was his own experiences as an exchange student at Louisiana State University which aided in forming a bond with rock music which he would maintain until the end. Both of these writers would also employ elements of rock in developing their own iconoclastic aesthetic and poetics while strongly adopting its ethos. This is also the case of Colombian Andrés Caicedo, the third author I will be exploring in this dissertation. Though his case is slightly different in that he emerged later and already had a direct literary model, José Agustín, which served as an influence and laid out numerous affinities with the Onda literature. Though this latter point does not diminish the degree of importance rock music (and foreign films) had upon him, specifically upon the only novel of his published during his lifetime *¡Que viva la música!* (1977).

Beyond an adherence to a rock ethos, Agustín's has been approached from the perspective of presenting a poetics of rock. Mario Rojas made the case for this in his 1981 *Hispanamérica* article titled "José Agustín y el 'Rock' Como Poética". In the article, Rojas briefly covers some of the fundamental

factors that need to be considered when speaking of a poetics of rock in Agustín's work but that, to my view, are more suggestive of adopting an ethos that shapes a larger, more flexible poetics. Rojas also touches upon several points that are connected to other factors that enter into the larger concept of rock suggested by Verdesio. Some of these factors suggested by Rojas and fitting into the larger concept of rock culture in the 1960s include the interest in Eastern philosophies, the ancient Chinese oracle book of the *I Ching*, as well as the alternative lifestyles and subcultures that emerged. There are other factors, such as the interest expressed in Beat Generation writers Jack Kerouac and William S. Burroughs whose influence can be gleaned not only in Agustín but also García Saldaña, Caicedo and Marcelo Cohen. Also some innovations that Rojas attributes to the poetics of rock—such as creative uses of typography to accentuate the innovative use of language—are more exactly associated to innovations wholly unrelated to rock at all, though the desire to experiment and break from the norm certainly could have encouraged such explorations.¹ Rojas makes several salient points that will be expanded upon ahead such as rock being a backdrop and anchor point in the development of identity by Agustín's youthful characters; the innovative uses of language that draw upon the jargon of the youth and the lyrics of rock songs and its accompanying subculture; the expression of a new value system that frees itself from previous societal and cultural taboos and how they are expressed in a literary context; and the drug (and alcohol) experience as a way for the characters to see beyond or, on the other side, blind themselves from the immediate unsatisfactory social reality that surrounds them.

¹ These innovations, used in the creation of visual poetry, date back to the nineteenth century with Mallarmé, were further developed by the German Expressionists, Italian Futurists, Dadaists as well as notable Hispanic poets such as Spaniard Guillermo De Torre, Chilean Vicente Huidobro and Mexican Octavio Paz. The experimentation with different typography was most explored in Dada in the multiple journals published by the movement, the innovative poster design that emerged as well as the collages and collage poems. In "Narrativa joven de México" (1968) Margo Glantz notes: "La puntuación tradicional y el uso de mayúsculas, la división de los párrafos, la utilización de diagonales y paréntesis o de ciertos signos tipográficos forman parte también de este lenguaje [of the Onda writers]. No quiero decir aquí que estos recursos no se hayan utilizado antes en la literatura contemporánea, es evidente que existen y que hasta manidos son, pero la forma de incorporarlos es muy adecuada porque responde a las necesidades del *argot* ciudadano que estos autores han elaborado y catalizado (sobre todo Sainz y Agustín)" (81). As an influence to Agustín, perhaps it can more directly be attributed to Cuban author Guillermo Cabrera Infante's experiments with textual layout in a narrative context in *Tres Tristes Tigres* (1967).

Rock is, of course, the key element regarding the construction of identity in the texts I will be expounding: José Agustín's short story "¿Cuál es la Onda?" from *Inventando que sueño* (1968) and his autobiography *El rock de la cárcel* (1985) in which Agustín in part portrays himself as an individual not far removed from his fictional characters; García Saldaña's *Pasto verde* (1968), an autobiographically based text rooted in the *ethos* and songs of the Rolling Stones; Caicedo's *¡Que viva la música!* (1977), where the main character shares, despite being a young teenage girl, key traits with Caicedo himself and serves as a synecdoche for a whole generation. The themes that are in question in the texts from the first three chapters (and to a lesser extent the fourth) are: the character type of the often, though not exclusively, nihilistic youth adrift in a world without any clearly rooted values, who as a result challenges any and all possible values and can lead him or herself to self-destruction or emancipation; the author's relationship with the literary establishment and their particular way of confronting and engaging it; the development of a new type of *model reader*, to use Umberto Eco's term, able to understand the references from both the high brow culture, and the mass media culture.² Essentially this *model reader* is someone who, like the writers themselves, felt equally comfortable in both realms. There is a key role of auto-referentiality within the texts in displaying the writer's influences and ethos that in turn add semantic levels to be interpreted by the *model reader*.³ Perhaps the key point, and the Brazilian case I present also falls into this category, is the attempt made to establish a different set of paradigms for the creation of literature that was more attuned to the times, reflected new social and aesthetic values and that

² As Daniel Bell explains, the term highbrow, and its lowbrow counterpart, originated in the early 20th Century: "The terms "highbrow" and "lowbrow"—which had been coined in 1915 by Van Wyck Brooks, in his famous essay *America's Coming of Age*, to distinguish between the intellectual ("who...in his isolation was out of the stream") and the philistine businessman ("who knew nothing but acquisition")—were now resurrected, and in between the high and the low brow was added the new category "middlebrow". Cultural criticism had become a game, and the game caught on" (417).

³ Eco defines the Model Reader as follows in his work *The Role of the Reader* (1979): "To organize a text, its author has to rely upon a series of codes that assign given contents to the expressions he uses. To make his text communicative, the author has to assume that the ensemble of codes he relies upon is the same as that shared by his possible reader. The author has thus to foresee a model of the possible reader (hereafter Model Reader) supposedly able to deal interpretatively with the expressions in the same way as the author deals generatively with them." (7)

challenged, for better or for worse, the norms of literature that had preceded it and that were still championed by certain sectors of the intellectual elite. As such, these writers all have a unique relationship with intertextuality and the production of the text. Agustín had openly expressed aspirations of being respected by the literary establishment and finding a place within it, he was keenly aware of what his own virtues and innovations as a writer were. As an artist, he was confident that his innovations, like those being made in the rock world at the time, would open up new possibilities of expression in literature which would distance the new literature from its precedents and begin anew from a restructured paradigm able to flexibly address the social, aesthetic and political changes which were reshaping the times. The ever-growing cultural capital of mass-media culture with the relative decline of literature's cultural capital was not lost on these writers whose identities as individuals and artists were so significantly shaped by the influence of both high brow and low brow culture. The key being that, as with other emerging writers of 60s and 70s (like Manuel Puig in Argentina), high brow, low brow, and mass media culture were not mutually exclusive. Instead, it was in the creative application of their combinations that the new aesthetic, ethos and poetics would be constructed.

The Onda Literary Movement: Critiques, Contributions and Shifting Paradigms

Many writers associated with what is still called the Onda literary movement have been averse to accept the moniker as representative of their work. Nonetheless, the moniker has remained in use and serves to identify the literature of a very loose association of writers that were first published and gained notoriety in the latter half of the 1960s in Mexico. In Mexico, the term Onda was ubiquitous in the late 60s and has developed a plethora of associations beyond the literary movement associated with it and the counterculture from which it sprang. In *La contracultura en México*, Agustín lays out the multiple uses of the term in relationship to a definition from the dictionary that refers to electromagnetic waves, sound waves, and the different waves in light frequencies, among others. The description that follows highlights the plasticity and diversity of contexts in which the term could be, and was, employed. It also speaks to the direct links to the diverse, pliable concept of rock, its culture and its ethos:

...hay varias ondas, son las ondas dentro de la misma onda; algunas son materiales (“pásame esa onda”) pero otras son intangibles (la Onda); en todo caso para los chavos mexicanos de los años sesenta la onda fue energía intangible pero medible que funcionaba esencialmente como vía de comunicación, de interrelación que hermanaba. Por otra parte, una onda podía ser cualquier cosa, pero también un plan por realizar, un proyecto, una aventura, un estado de ánimo, una pose, un estilo, una manera de pensar incluso la concepción del mundo. Pero agarrar la onda era sintonizarse con la frecuencia adecuada en la manera de ser, de hablar, de vestir, de comportarse ante los demás: era viajar con hongos o LSD, fumar mota y tomar cervezas; era entender, captar bien la realidad, no sólo la apariencia, llegar al meollo de los asuntos y no quedarse en la superficie; era amar el amor, la paz y la naturaleza, rechazar los valores desgastados y la hipocresía del sistema, que se condensaba en lo “fresa”, la antítesis de la buena onda (84).⁴

According to Inke Gunia, the use of the term “onda” for the literary movement can be attributed to Mexican critic Margo Glantz in her opening essay to the compilation *Narrativa joven de México* (1968) and which is further broadened in her introductory essay to the expanded compilation titled *Onda y escritura en México: jóvenes de 20 a 33* (Mexico: Siglo XXI, 1970) (12). Both works compiled shorter works by Agustín, Gustavo Sainz (b. 1940), and García Saldaña, as well as numerous other writers of that generation such as Juan Tovar (b. 1941) and Agustín’s first wife, Margarita Dalton (b. 1944). Partially as a result of the essays circulating and becoming a reference for scholars, the loosely knit group came to be categorized as a movement, though as Gunia notes it has been debated both by critics and the movement’s authors as a fabricated framework which fails in gathering and naming key characteristics that can be related to the majority of the works in the movement and limits itself to narrative (12).

⁴ *Fresa* refers to the conservative, upper class teens of the 60s who maintained close ties to their families and traditions and did not imbibe like the *onderos*. Also, it should be noted that in most of the Onda texts themselves, these ideas became an essential part not only of what was represented within them, but also part of the generative process executed by the authors. As we shall see in Chapter 2, textually assailing *fresa* values is one of the fundamental components in García Saldaña’s *Pasto verde*.

Agustín has been among the writers who has refuted the characterization of the Onda as a movement in interviews and in his 2004 article “La onda que nunca existió”.⁵ In this article, he notes that although there are some thematic relationships and a generational *zeitgeist* that can be attributed to the young writers of the time, La Onda: “No se trataba de un movimiento literario articulado y coordinado” (14) like those of the historic avant-garde with their manifestos detailing their aesthetic and purpose.⁶ René Avilés Fabila, another writer who is associated with the Onda when it is mentioned as a movement explains that despite affinities amongst themselves, there was a lack of solidarity as a movement:

...nosotros éramos—guste o no—un grupo que veía las cosas de manera diferente de aquellos pretenciosos que todavía suponían que Europa era única e irrepetible. Parménides García Saldaña fue el punto extremo. Es verdad, éramos distintos a la generación anterior, pero hay algo peor: fuimos incapaces de ser tan amigos y solidarios como eran y son, por ejemplo [Carlos] Monsiváis y [José Emilio] Pacheco...fuimos incapaces de ser unidos.

Agustín also notes that many writers who Glantz associated with the movement were critical of being designated to the category of “literatura de la Onda”. Agustín notes the distinctions among the writers in *El rock de la cárcel* (1985) such as Sainz being more of an intellectual with technocratic tendencies who

⁵ Of course, Agustín, while questioning the notion of a *literatura de la Onda*, participated in the socio-cultural Onda movement that was separate from the literary movement the name. The Onda was a social phenomenon which encompassed instead a non-politicized youth, later the very political student movement of 1968 and the jipitecas (Mexican hippies: hippies plus toltecas/aztecas *La contracultura en México*, 76) of the era among other groups associated with the counterculture. He also expounds, as we have seen, on the various interpretations and contexts that can be made of the term itself. Agustín also notes how most of the writers avoided associating themselves with the student movement most closely associated with the social Onda and did not dress like nor participate strictly in the jipiteca lifestyle other than the drug use and free love that was pervasive during the era. Cabrera notes comments made by Carlos Monsiváis about the overall (not strictly literary) Onda movement, roughly equating it with the hippie (jipi) movement by: establishing a time period for its true existence (1966-1972); establishing parallels to the U. S. hippie counterculture in wanting to establish a nation within the nation; a language that used official language only as a launching point for its own language; and that it was ultimately a failure because it lacked coherent theoretical postulates which, in turn, relegated it to subculture status (200). García Saldaña explores these points made by Monsiváis in depth in his essay *En la ruta de la onda* (1972), detailing the reasons for the movement’s ultimate failures.

⁶ For more details on this specific point see: Cabrera, Patricia. “Contracultura, onda y literatura: 1995”. *La otredad: los discursos de la cultura hoy* 1997: 195-205.

was not even a fan of rock. In respect to the essay, other writers such as Avilés, Juan Tovar, and Gerardo de la Torre: “se pusieron furiosos, especialmente Juan, que protestó en varios tonos” (78), as Agustín did and has in various interviews and books since then. The exception to this was García Saldaña, who relished his association with the movement and the possibility of becoming a sort of scribe/sage/spokesperson who knew and expressed the movement’s most essential characteristics in his works. For the writers in disagreement with the moniker, the main complaint about being labeled existed because, to them, it erroneously oversimplified a complex phenomenon. However, Gunia notes that there are, in fact, unifying factors within the variety of styles and tendencies of the Onda writers: the innovative use of language and the rebellious stance towards the systems, social and literary, that is adopted by its unique use (13). Though he is careful to avoid naming or categorizing the writers under the Onda moniker, in *La contracultura en México* Agustín himself also recognizes the unifying factors, while taking issue with readers who in his mind (such as Glantz) misread the texts.⁷

In similar fashion to the contentions of the cultural establishment regarding the Onda, the appreciation of rock as an art form has met with considerable resistance and is summed up by Peter Wicke when noting the application of an absolute standard of criteria for musical appreciation that should apply to rock and classical music. Wicke states:

Measured against this [absolute standard for which Beethoven serves as a symbol], rock music would indeed be nothing but a meaningless noise, invented by a gigantic commercial enterprise to satisfy its profit requirements and made attractive to susceptible teenagers by an appealing

⁷ Though Agustín also engages the ideas of other critics of the Onda movement in this article, I am emphasizing his critique of Glantz specifically because of three reasons: Glantz was the first critic to undertake a study of the Onda writers as a movement and was instrumental in shaping the direction the criticism of the Onda took; the proximity in time between Glantz’s work and the initial publication of the Onda texts, along with her numerous comparative references to Mexican literary history as a whole, can be seen as a reflection of how the Onda works were received by critics in Mexico shortly after their inception and; the pejorative connotations that allude to a division and the polemic between high and low art which not only are relevant when speaking of the Onda movement, but also when considering rock as an art form; as well as how the Onda in its loose definition as a literary movement can be related to rock. Gunia also notes that the initial reaction of both critics and the reading public towards the Onda works was negative, accusing the writers of producing obscene, pornographic content with anti-literary language which, in turn, supposedly exposed the writers as true dilettantes (11).

exterior. However, this view can be countered by the fact that music is not defined by its means of expression—loud or soft, simple or extremely complex—but primarily by the effects which these achieve. The assumption that relevant and differentiated content, value and meaning can only be expressed by those musical means developed in the tradition of Beethoven and his successors not only contradicts the facts, but presents an equally ahistorical and mechanistic view of art. Artistic means of expression can never be considered separately from their cultural and functional context. (2)

In relationship to some of how the Onda and other mass media influenced literature can be viewed and valued critically—we can draw some important parallels from this lengthy quote. Perhaps the reason that critics of the Onda literature do not make the leap of fully considering it within the cultural and functional context where it was created is the fact that much of the literature produced in the Latin American Boom in the 60s was extolled in some cases precisely for its complexity and its dialogue with the history, literary and otherwise, that produced it. Through its intertextual practices, the Boom itself was in a very concrete sense redefining what the Latin American literary canon was, as defined by a cultural elite that had within its power the ability to delineate clear boundaries between erudite and popular culture and the degree to which popular culture could and should be adopted. Regarding this, Solotarewsky reminds us that literature is a: “polisistema—un sistema múltiple y dinámico—en el que cabe distinguir una literatura canonizada, apoyada por las elites y sujeta a los modelos culturales de éstas, en oposición a una literatura no canonizada” and that “la elite controla el centro del sistema semiótico cultural” (11). According to Gunia, in 1960s Mexico consisted of the writer submitting himself to the dominant realist aesthetic in which there was, theoretically, no place for the “pornography”, the “corruption of morals”, or the wide-open display of “the low level of culture of the newer generations” and that the writing should be carried out complying with the requirements of “correct grammatical use” and should never include any “taboo expressions” (148) —all things of which Agustín and others were accused. Gunia also emphasizes how the elite’s control of the semiotic system is particularly notable in the Mexico of the 1960s, as we shall see in Gunia’s analysis of the *Mafia*, the nickname for Mexico’s intellectual elites.

Furthermore, the Onda literature was a manifestation of an immediate present which could be easily dismissed as a type of *paraliterature*—detective novels, romance novels, spy novels, melodramas, etc.—geared at a specific youth audience. Solotorewsky defines *paraliterature* as: a text that fully satisfies the expectations of the reader, has a maximum degree of readability having a model reader in mind that is eminently passive and receptive (as opposed to the reader of literature who is capable of discovering the multiple semiotic layers of a given text); a metaphoric text correspondent to the melodramatic imagination that is in search of an allegorical sense with in the text or an overall central meaning; and a text for which one reading suffices—as opposed to a literary text in which multiple readings are the launching point for their study and comprehension at multiple levels (14). Clearly, the authors of the movement thought of themselves as more than writers of paraliterature and felt that readings that lead to their work being reduced to simply to sex, drugs and rock and roll fell short. Perhaps Agustín’s and other Onda texts are more clearly seen as an expression of the relationship between *paraliterature* and literature that is expressed by Solotorewsky: that paraliterature and literature mutually provoke each other, often belligerently; but in the process this conflict provides a vitality to both, and can lead to productive results such as avant-garde experimentation. Perhaps most importantly: “Al incorporarse modelos y procedimientos paraliterarios, se suscitan también intencionales efectos de ruptura” (12).

The influence of rock upon writers like Agustín, García Saldaña and Caicedo is also a key factor in the break with tradition that was taking place and an important reference point in the creation of their aesthetic—an aesthetic that has been considered one of the early manifestations of postmodernism in Latin America. With this in mind, it is important to note also how rock beyond being a reference that informs the postmodern aesthetic can be considered a manifestation of postmodernism itself. Look at rock as an art form that, though rooted (loosely) in a tradition (blues, jump blues, folk, and American country music), is also in a constant process of reinvention aesthetically. By the mid 1960s many groups, like the Velvet Underground among others, had abandoned any semblance of a relationship to rock’s roots, leaving behind whatever elements could be called traditional, to define its own difference, open to

gathering disparate components while in the process giving new meaning to those components and, in terms of how its various subgenres are perceived and the roles they play sociologically. As Wicke details: “It is the respective fans who...allocate precisely defined meanings to rock, and who set in motion a dialectical relationship between musical form and cultural usage which has continually spawned new playing styles” (73). It is key to emphasize that the meaning of rock as a sort of monolithic term is refuted by this notion. The meanings attributed by those who incorporate it into their way of life and attach their specific meaning to it will often differ completely from how it is viewed by a non-fan from the outside. To further problematize this idea, Wicke notes how fans of the same sub-genre of rock use the music for different purposes and in very different ways, also establishing differing guidelines for what is and is not rock (75). This concept has also found itself in constant flux with the different trends in rock and the social meaning attached to them that have emerged as time has passed. It can also be added that such arguments are common throughout literary history and the emergence of the Onda is no exception. The intentional effects employed to break with tradition, particularly the language used, are a key component that can lead to defining the Onda as a movement, gives rise to comparisons with the avant-garde and also can relate it to a movement that was historically contemporary to it and still developing, the Pop Art movement, as we shall see ahead.

Family, Parricide and the Generation Gap

The emergence of rock and the youth market also brought with it the Generation Gap. The topic itself is found in all of the works that I discuss in the chapters in varying forms. The lack of respectable parental or father figures within the works is an obvious starting point in the discussion of the characters’ identity development and the various directions that it takes without the home/nuclear family model that has been eschewed for a number of different reasons. It is also an important point when discussing the authors’ own development as artists who adopt a difference set of principles (cultural, aesthetic and political) from which to realize their work. We should note here that the lack of respected parental authority figures is pervasive throughout these works. In certain cases, such as Caicedo’s main character in *¡Que viva la música!*, the parent’s monetary support remains in the background and enables the main

character's forays into alternative identity development, while at the same time their values, way of life and forms of producing said financial support are rejected and abandoned. In the case of Cohen's main character in *El país de la dama eléctrica*, the parents have abandoned the young rocker practically to his own devices, leaving a vacuum in which he substitutes the parents for the figures of rock upon which he models himself and his direction in life. This rebellion and establishment of their own vision is also a reflection of the ideals of the 1960s *zeitgeist* from which rock was further reaffirmed as a cultural phenomenon. At the same time, there is also the underlying nihilism that inevitably creeps in when the ideals fail to make significant changes materialize. Beyond that, the notion of nation as family was employed by different regimes in Mexico, Brazil and Argentina to attempt to impose a sense of unity that was inherently lacking and re-affirm Christian family values and behavioral norms to stifle dissent. We shall see the examples of Brazil and Argentina in greater detail in the chapters ahead as they apply to their specific contexts. Given the importance of Mexico as an originator of the rock/youth literature, it is worth exploring some of the concepts here in some detail, many of which are also relevant for the Colombian context presented by Caicedo and certain aspects that are also present in Argentina and Brazil.

The aspect that refers to the nuclear family has even greater importance in Mexico, not simply because of the importance of the nuclear family as an institution in itself within the society, but also how, as Zolov writes, the PRI government sold itself to the public:

As the *official* party of the Revolution (capitalized to enhance its mythic status), the PRI became the "family home" in which postrevolutionary "squabbles" were resolved through rewards and punishment. At the head of this home stood, of course, the presidential father figure, to whom all disputes were directly or ultimately submitted... This metaphorical family was a reflection of and in turn served to reinforce an image of the stable family unit itself. The idealized family of the postrevolutionary order was one in which the father was stern in his benevolence, the mother saintly in her maternity, and the children loyal in their obedience. Faith in the father's ultimate commitment to the progress of the family—even when that father had been corrupted by temptation and error—excused his mistakes and pardoned his sins. Undergirding this sense of

pardon was the vision of the mother figure as saint and sufferer, whose moral superiority and spiritual strength acted as glue for the ultimate stability of the family—and by extension the nation (as did the Virgin of Guadalupe, Mexico's semiofficial patron saint) (4-5).

The younger generations, replete with discontent, did not fall into line with the rigid authoritarianism of the father figure the PRI represented or the other institutions, like the church, whose power continued to have a profound influence on how the changing, modernizing Mexico was being officially conceived. Within this family context, there was emphasis on maintaining *buenas costumbres*, which according to Zolov included but were certainly not limited to never cursing, dressing appropriately at all times, showing appropriate deference to elders and family members, respect for authority and established the hierarchical family dynamic in which the father was the ultimate authority (27-28). As such, both the metaphorical father and mother figures propounded by the official PRI discourse were figures to be rebelled against and resisted, as both represented institutions and ways of life whose relevance was questionable or antiquated in the eyes of the youth.

Eric Zolov explains that in Mexico, rock was initially marketed as another new rhythm to dance to like the Cuban mambo (also popular in Mexico in the 1950s) also had been, with marketing directed at the whole family and not exclusively to youth—though that soon began to change, as did the public opinion about its meaning. Rock, after being conceived of as an imported element of modernization for the country, the perception changed when it took hold as a means of rebellious expression among youth.⁸ Zolov writes: “In challenging the social rules contained in *buenas costumbres*, the irreverent, raucous spirit of the youth culture threatened to undermine the very patriarchal values of parental authority that permeated middle-class social values” (27). Though the practice would later change, in the case of rock in the 50s and 60s (even into the early 70s), the music is directed almost exclusively at youth. In the mid-1950s, there is a key confluence of mass media culture directed at teens, through rock and film.

⁸ Zolov makes an important point in reference to the marketing of rock and the films that were associated with it: “Many of these advertisements, for instance, underscored the notion that rock 'n' roll was an authentically modern movement sweeping the entire planet. Mexico, these advertisements explained, was caught up in a cosmopolitan wave that demanded the participation of all its citizenry” (29).

Grossman remarks that films such as *The Wild One* (1953, notably translated as *El Salvaje* into Spanish), *Blackboard Jungle* (1955), and *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955) and similar films of the era: “helped to shape the public conception of the teen-ager” (19) and created a model archetype for youth who perhaps had less propensity to rebel, and as Agustín and Gunia both note had a profound influence on Mexican youth of the time. Of James Dean in *Rebel Without A Cause*, Agustín notes that the actor⁹:

...logró patentizar la dignidad y la profunda insatisfacción de muchos, los chavos de clase media mexicana empezaron a establecer señas de identidad: cola de caballo, faldas amplias, crinolinas, calcetas blancas, copete, patillas, cola de pato, pantalones de mezclilla, el cuello de la camisa con la parte trasera alzada. Y rocanrol, que se bailaba a gran velocidad y a veces acrobáticamente, como el viejo jitterbug. Estos chavos idolizaron a James Dean porque el encarnó el arquetipo del héroe en un contexto contracultural...Dean tenía la firmeza y la pureza necesarias para sobrellevar a una familia infeliz, a una escuela insensible y a una sociedad cada vez más enferma; me comprenden parecía decir, pero soy fuerte y puedo con ellos sin perder mi naturaleza esencial, sin volverme cómplice. Su chava también era fuerte y agarraba la onda, y los dos *se volvían como hermanos mayores de su generación*. Así, a través de James Dean, muchos jóvenes empezaron a cuestionar el rigidísimo modelo autoritario de la familia de clase media mexicana...A estos chavos se les llamó “rebeldes sin causa”, por la película, naturalmente, pero también porque en verdad *el mundo adulto mexicano se creía tan perfecto que no le entraba la*

⁹Dean’s tragic death in an automobile accident at age 24 in 1955 immediately transformed him into a legendary figure. Also of note is that the legend of James Dean was molded with a body of work that is essentially three films: *East of Eden* and *Rebel Without A Cause* (both 1955) and *Giant* (released posthumously in 1956). He was but the first of many figures embraced by the counterculture to perish before age 30—among them some of the first generation of rock stars such as Buddy Holly (1936-1959) and Ritchie Valens (né Ricardo Valenzuela, 1941-1959) and later, from the 60s generation: Brian Jones of the Rolling Stones (1942-1969), Jimi Hendrix (1942-1970), Janis Joplin (1943-1970), and Jim Morrison of the Doors (1943-1971), among many, many others. The idealization of youth experienced by the 60s generation can be related in part to the deaths of these figures who were the heroes and role models to so many.

idea de que los jóvenes pudieran tener motivo para rebelarse. (La contracultura en México, 36-37; emphasis mine)

There are several fundamental points to be gleaned from this lengthy quote. First of all, we have the effect brought about by the foreign mass media culture on the Mexican youth that helped create the foundation for a counterculture that had not previously existed in any similar form rooted in anything from the native culture (and a society that was not even cognizant of the possibility of the emergence of a counterculture given the strength of the patriarchal values and its supporting societal power structure). We can also note the reference to clothing that demonstrates the point made by Bell about the outgrowth of an apparently superficial phenomenon developing into a signifier of a new way of being, one that brings into question previously assumed paradigms—among the first of many looks utilized by youth to affirm their independence and otherness from mainstream society. Also, referring back to Gunia, the presence of youths' disillusion with what mainstream society and its institutions had to offer, as well as a model for molding an identity to create a niche for themselves within that society. And ultimately, the importance of transcending the influence of the father's finding the voice of an *older brother*—more experienced in all the ways of the world, including sex and other transgressions of *buenas costumbres*—who offers access to those new experiences in a way that speaks directly to them through film and rock. The importance of rock as a means of freeing youth of conservative norms relative to sex established by the *buenas costumbres* cannot be underestimated. This liberating effect is applicable in general to all cultures affected by rock but causes a particular uproar in cultures with rigid cultural norms relative to the sexual behavior of youth, particularly young women.

Rock inherited much of its initial sexual imagery from the blues and later developed it even further as its own separate identity evolved as a genre. As Grossman points out: "Sex has always been an important part of rock music. Both in its lyric content and its style of presentation" (19). In 1955, Elvis Presley became a sex symbol immediately upon entering into the public eye. As Tobler and Frame explain:

Presley's appeal lay not only in his wild music but also in his totally uninhibited, sexually-oriented stage presence, which was considered disgusting by an older generation totally unused to the hip-swivelling, the snarling, the sexuality and the (to them) incomprehensible lyrics (14).

Presley's on-stage antics attached an imagery to rock that indelibly linked it to sex from that point on. Of course, as a white performer Elvis was breaking with many taboos for a white audience; taboos that had long been broken by many black rhythm and blues performers and some of the elaborate dancing routines that dated back to the 1920s. Also, because of his success, Presley was a threatening presence for the older guard of performers and critics—not to mention parents of the “proper conduct”-driven, conservative Eisenhower-era United States of the 1950s. As Tobler and Frame observe:

In a pattern to be repeated many times over the years, his [Presley's] immediate acceptance by the young was scorned by the older critics who called him ‘an unspeakably untalented and vulgar young entertainer’ and compared his movements, rather pathetically, to ‘an aborigine's mating dance’...Elvis walked all over them, however, as his success escalated furiously during the following weeks... (23)

Gunia remarks that Presley can be single-handedly credited with the creation of the generation gap (107) and that his accomplishments in the face of such criticism was a case in point that success could be had via the route of non-conformity: a message taken to heart by rock as a genre, though distorted in a plethora of ways as the music became a commodity. Nonetheless, the essence and importance of this point was not lost on admirers of the genre such as Agustín, who followed the rebellious route in carving his own niche in his multiple career as literary figure, screenwriter, journalist, filmmaker and intellectual, as well as the founding figures of the counterculture in Mexico. García Saldaña was also deeply influenced by the rebellious figure Presley represented before being drafted into the United States Army in 1959, going so far as to dub himself the nickname of “El Rey Criollo” after one of Presley's characters from the 1958 film of the same name (*King Creole*). Furthermore, as Zolov explicates, rock in general and Presley in particular attracted impassioned criticism from both the political right and left and “emerged as the central fixture in the struggle over the terms of Mexican modernity” (41).

To be sure, the importance of the link between rock and sex cannot be underestimated for the adolescent demographic who had chosen these new heroes that the mass media had offer, eschewing the more traditionally accepted conformist role models that existed within the confines of the *buenas costumbres*. As such, the role of rock as another *big brother* and role model for this generation of adolescents cannot be underestimated either. This point also goes hand in hand with the development of the Onda literary aesthetic and poetics developed by young writers like Agustín and García Saldaña in the 1960s, which, as we have seen previously in Gunia, was accused of being pornographic in nature. The process begun by being informed and educated by the tenets of mass culture was taken to a next logical step in the way the youth aesthetized their own experience, who to a great extent had felt itself liberated by adopting the models collected and assimilated from films and rock in forming their identity as individuals and as artists. In this way, rock no longer was just a backdrop or soundtrack for this way of life, but a lens through which the world was viewed, assimilated and experienced—in essence, an *ethos*. It was the cornerstone for a whole generation that in Mexico was the Onda generation.

The fact that all of the Onda writers were in their early to mid-20s when they emerged on the scene brings up the important question of youth. The reaction of the cultural elite that was being questioned by the youthful writers was pivotal in the stances taken by the Onda writers, the public personas they created and the excessive behavior that came to characterize them. Gunia explains the meaning of youth in the Onda's Mexico: "*Juventud* significaba desorientación, inmadurez intelectual y social y falta de adaptación o ajuste a las normas establecidas por la mayoría de la sociedad" (117). In reference to this point, it is curious to note some of Agustín's statements about rock in *La nueva música clásica* and how they can relate to the perception of the Onda writers and their work:

Pero cuando el rock estuvo en su apogeo, los jóvenes tuvieron intérpretes de su edad. Hasta entonces se rompió, en toda la línea, la creencia que se necesita edad para tener éxito y para lograr una obra. (8)

Earlier on, he states that: "Ya nadie negaría que el rock se ha convertido en una búsqueda digna, compleja y revolucionaria" (5), "...los versos de muchas canciones no dicen trivialidades sino que exponen un

punto de vista fresco e inconforme de la sociedad contemporánea” (6) and that: “Todos los caminos están abiertos y sabemos recorrerlos” (9). These statements can clearly refer us back to Juan Bruce Novoa’s statements about Agustín having the explicit goal of incorporating himself into the youth cult by writing *La nueva música clásica*. More importantly here, however, they can also be read as statements that are an affirmation of himself, his own poetic, and the *onderos* when facing the cultural elite that had criticized and rejected them on grounds of inexperience, triviality, superficiality, of being low brow literature, etc.

The self-affirmation and self-consciousness exercised by Agustín and other young writers can be seen to go hand in hand with the adoption of some of the notorious aspects of the rocker archetype that had been on display in films from the mid to late 50s—being rebellious, overconfident, dismissive of previous generations, and with a contempt for authority to boot—precisely the types of criticisms expressed by Glantz in her early essays on the Onda. It can also relate, however, to a key point made by Loyd Grossman in *A Social History of Rock* about how rock helped establish itself by having many songs that were about the subject of rock itself: “This self-consciousness indicates an awareness of rock and roll not just as a musical style but also as the cultural focus of a generation” (22). This idea of the cultural focus and self-affirmation are put forth explicitly in the Who’s “My Generation”, one of the iconic British group’s earliest successes (1965) which brashly states, “People try to put us down/ Just because we get around” (a double-entendre for the dynamism of youth as well as the sexual freedoms exercised by them) and later adds “Why don’t you just fff-fade away”—clearly an acceptable euphemism to put on the record instead of “fuck off”; as well as perhaps the most famous line in the song “I hope I die before I get old”.

¹⁰ As a result of these memorable lines, the song has become one of the most quoted from the 60s. The

¹⁰ The Who are one of the most important groups in the development of British rock and their influential role in the mid-60s, particularly among the rock subculture known as the Mods, cannot be overestimated. They went on to be international superstars beginning in the late 1960s, with numerous hits, the first recognized Rock Opera in *Tommy* in 1968 (though it is an erroneous claim, the British group The Pretty Things’ *S.F. Sorrow*, the first true rock opera was released in 1967, though it never garnered the same attention as the Who’s work nor was it ever staged or turned into a feature film like *Tommy*). Though they are not given the attention that other groups are given by Agustín in *La nueva música clásica*, he does say that: “El margen de experimentación y calidad de Who es ilimitado” while later making specific mention of the violence expressed in the song “My Generation” (59). Violence was an integral part of the

latter line is a key component of the nihilistic tendencies expressed by Caicedo in his diaries and published work, including *¡Que viva la música!* In writing texts that focused on their own generation, Agustín, García Saldaña and Caicedo are establishing themselves and their generation within the cultural landscape demanding a type of recognition that previous generations of youth, whether from the metropolis or from the margins, had not (and to a great extent could not) because of the lack of a medium to do so.

Of course, there are a plethora of songs from the rock repertory up to that time that served to express the sentiments of a generation that felt disaffected and wanted to affirm their presence within society by not functioning within the norms established for them by previous generations. As such, we can connect the parricidal accusations made of the Onda writers to one of rock and roll's earliest songs, Chuck Berry's 1956 hit "Roll Over Beethoven."¹¹ Tobler and Frame describe the song as: "an archetypal rebellion song requesting a D. J. to forget classical music and concentrate instead on rhythm 'n' blues" (16) with the memorable refrain "Roll over Beethoven, and tell Tchaikowsky the news". In this song, in one fell swoop, there is self-affirmation, self-aggrandizement, an unmistakable and irreverent call for attention, a provocative and challenging expression that seeks and, because of its success, achieves great status in its cultural relevance (Wicke, 3). Aside from the notion of striking a rebellious pose for self-

Who's stage show early on. In their early days, they would destroy all of their equipment on stage at the end of every show, smashing guitars, bass, drums, amplifiers into splinters. This attracted enough attention that they became famous practically overnight once they began doing so. Beyond the breaking with inhibitions and cathartic release that was expressed in the music itself, these outbursts of public violence also connected with the pent-up frustrations experienced by many of the youth in the audience. The smashing of instruments would resurface a generation later with the punk movement.

¹¹ Chuck Berry (b. 1926, St. Louis, Missouri), of course, is one of the originators of rock and roll. Berry's guitar style and showmanship (derived in great part from urban bluesmen such as Aaron "T-Bone" Walker) and string of self-penned hits in the mid 1950s helped define rock as a genre, while reaching a white audience with the basic tenets of rhythm and blues. It also made him an indelible influence on two generations of rockers including the Beatles, who recorded "Roll Over Beethoven" in 1963, and the Rolling Stones, among many, many others. As Grossman explains: "With his simple but tough guitar style and his wryly trenchant comments on the problems and paradoxes of modern life, Berry was the first performer to demonstrate that rock and roll could be artistically and philosophically worthwhile as well as good to dance to" (23). It should be noted as well that rhythm and blues, or jump blues, are the fundamental launching point for what became rock and roll in the 1950s: upbeat blues numbers with often humorous lyrics charged with double-entendres which were the inspiration for artists such as Elvis Presley, among others.

affirmation, these young writers felt alienated, similar to how the youth felt alienated by the official national discourse, by the cultural elite and the aesthetic of writers from previous generations. Cabrera proposes that literature in Mexico in the 1960s was also in a state of crisis, noting that the discourses that had stimulated Mexican literature in previous decades did not, by the mid 1960s, have a clear direction for the future, whether it be ideological frameworks drawn from the Mexican Revolution, the Left, or narrative models drawn from realism, indigenism or *costumbrismo* which had been key elements in the formation of Mexican literary archetypes (196). For Caicedo, who emerged in the 70s, there is the undeniably towering figure of Gabriel García Márquez, the very personification of the Boom in Colombia and with whom the contrast of styles and focus could not be more stark.

To be sure, Agustín does not deny the parricidal nature of some of the rhetoric put forth by the Onda writers in *El rock de la cárcel*, noting that publicly: “Habíamos despotricado, él [Gustavo Sainz] *just for the sake of it* y yo por ardido, en contra del Centro Mexicano de Escritores, especialmente en contra de Juan Rulfo y (horror parricida) de Juan José Arreola” (10). The disparaging of Arreola is particularly notable because it was he who aided Agustín in pulling together all the loose ends and eventually publishing the first Onda novel, *La tumba*, in 1964 and who had been instrumental in Agustín’s development as a young writer. Agustín also had public run-ins with Carlos Fuentes, including a 1969 article in *La Vida Literaria* deprecating Fuentes’ latest novel of the moment, *Cumpleaños*. In hindsight, Agustín shares that:

A Fuentes no le gustó nada, pero, lo que es peor, a mí tampoco: condensaba mis más nefastas proyecciones, era confuso y pretendía ser inteligente, ingenioso; pura mala leche...Para colmo cometí la pendejada de añadir que sólo a retrasados mentales o lambiscones de tiempo completo les podía parecer un buen libro (*Rock de la cárcel*, 75-76).

These frank words from Agustín help paint part of the picture as to why the Onda writers furthered the difficulty they who sought it (Agustín and Sainz in particular) had faced in finding acceptance among the Mexican intellectual elite, even after having been successfully published in the 60s. It also demonstrates how the adoption of the rocker-type stance could be detrimental once taken a step too far—the excess so

often associated not only with the era of the 60s but as one of defining characteristics of rock itself as a social phenomenon.

Beyond that, however, there was a variety of reasons for the animosity between generations, not the least of which was the existence of the self-proclaimed *Mafia* of the intelligentsia. The intellectually elite *Mafia* in Mexico, according to Gunia, revolved around the *Revista Mexicana de Literatura*, founded in 1955 by Carlos Fuentes (b. 1928) and Emmanuel Carballo (b. 1929) which propounded a hyper-intellectual aesthetic that attempted to bring together three fundamental elements: auto-referentiality, a view towards international literary trends, and an intense intellectual aestheticism which rejected socially-oriented narratives, preferring instead in championing the work of European authors who were mostly unknown in Mexico at the time (141). It is also important to note that several public academic institutions were also part of the *Mafia*, including two which had great influence in determining what works did and did not get published: La Oficina de Difusión Cultural at the UNAM and the Centro Mexicano de Escritores. Gunia proposes that the difficulty was directly related to the authors' youth and the fact that they were clearly not members of the *Mafia*, which included "los gurus supremos" Octavio Paz and Carlos Fuentes and a young Carlos Monsiváis (140). Though not a member of the *Mafia* itself, it should be noted that Glantz approaches her critiques of the Onda texts through the precepts that were acceptable by the *Mafia*. It is ironic that Emmanuel Carballo was García Saldaña's literary mentor—particularly when noting that García Saldaña was the most anti-establishment character and writer within the Onda scene.

A Product of the Times: The Influence of Mass Media Culture

In Mexico a decade after pop's emergence in Britain and the U. S., the pop aspect of the Onda literature was not simply a response to the ubiquity of popular culture, but instead a concrete manifestation of how such a culture was internalized, put to use aesthetically and, to a great extent, becomes part of the identity of a whole generation of youth. To an important extent, this is also present when considering the direction of Brazilian culture in the late 1960s and its role in the formation of the

Tropicalist aesthetic and ethos adding a further element not present in the Onda or Caicedo and only somewhat present in Cohen: the importance of this inclusion of mass media culture in relationship with Brazil's previous cultural history. As Gunia notes in Mexico, the generation of youth felt marginalized by the official cultural discourse put forth by the government and other national institutions which ignored the social transformations of the time, the clash in values that was caused by the accelerated and uneven industrialization and modernization of the country and that progressively lost its credibility among the newer generation. In Brazil and Argentina, the role of the hard line right wing military dictatorships in the 1960s and 1970s not only alienated youth, but a whole sector of the population that saw itself practically exiled within its own borders, struggling in no uncertain terms to maintain its existence under the oppressive conditions. The specific distinctions are laid out in detail in the respective chapters, but it is key to note here that the wish for a clean break from the cultural continuum that is present to an important degree in Mexico and in the work of Caicedo regarding Colombia is not the same in Argentina or Brazil.

Gunia accentuates the point of how the mass media pop culture (and its products) had permeated the consciousness of the Mexican youth. In his 1962 essay "Modernity and Mass Society: On The Varieties of Cultural Experience," renowned American sociologist Daniel Bell (1919-2011) makes a key point that in a society lacking well-defined national institutions and an with an elite ruling class conscious of being such, the masses will tend to unite and relate to each other by means of mass media culture (14). Renato Ortiz makes a key point relating to this as well, noting the dynamic of globalization as a form of cultural imperialism. Ortiz explains how with globalization the nation state's power and control over the autochthonous culture begins to be questioned and that in the process, the boundaries defining the clear dichotomy between autochthonous and foreign elements that were previously easily discernible in a culture then become blurred (49). This last point is fundamental in understanding Tropicália and its recognition that there was really no turning back once the foreign cultural elements were assimilated. The Tropicalist viewpoint essentially recognized that a form of cultural hybridity, metaphorically manifested as *antropofagia* in Brazil, was inescapably the way the development of the national culture would progress. This is a process that is also discernible in texts by Agustín and other Onda writers in which the

incorporation and at times fusion of cultural elements drawn from Mexico and foreign influences becomes a standard operating procedure in expressing the reality experienced by the youth of the time. This is also true in Caicedo's representation of 1970s Cali where music, some of it foreign and in another language, becomes an essential social identifier. Ortiz's point is also fundamental when considering the world as it is constructed in Cohen's *El país de la dama eléctrica*, a world in which the main character has no discernible roots to tie him to a homeland and instead is defined as a sort of modern gypsy, whose mythical roots and way of being are instead defined by the imaginary of rock and the cultural archetypes with it. For the Tropicalists, it was a way of making use of the products brought by the cultural imperialism for their own aesthetic, cultural and political ends. In reviving Oswald de Andrade's concept of *antropofagia*, or cannibalism—products to be consumed and internalized, later being transformed through the autoctonous lens.

Though clearly Mexico nor any of the other countries dealt with herein were not lacking the well-defined national institutions, or a social and cultural elite, and also had a repressive, conservative government to make their views the norm of the national discourse, the disconnect between the institutions and the younger generations in the 60s and 70s effectively had the same result. As Zolov explains of Mexico:

The ruling party [PRI] spent countless sums erecting monuments, staging celebrations, and mouthing words in praise of Mexico's revolutionary heroes and accomplishments. In fact, such was its commitment to upholding Mexico's revolutionary heritage that the PRI positioned itself to be seen as synonymous not only with the Revolution but—in adopting the national colors as its own and underwriting all celebratory discourse of the nation—with national identity itself. Mexican cultural critic Carlos Monsiváis has identified this as "state control over the signification of [what it means] to be Mexican," a pronunciation that both is an overstatement and has the ring of truth to it. (7-8)

He later adds that by the late 1950s a backlash had begun towards the PRI's official nationalism among intellectuals, peasants, and the middle-class generation of youth (represented in the Onda texts) for whom

symbols of the revolution such as Benito Juárez or Emiliano Zapata “were more ossified heroes of the official party than living emblems of liberation” (8) and that: “Mexico’s nationalism, once heralded for its cosmopolitanism and vibrancy, was now being charged by critics as insular authoritarian and ‘dead’” (8). In Argentina, there was a similar dynamic at work during the years of the *Proceso de Reorganización Nacional* that was put in place by the military dictatorship from 1976-1983. It was a concerted effort to socially re-engineer the country’s present and future generations into the constrictive mold of which it approved, redefining *argentinidad*, and attempting to cut ties with aspect of the past—both distant and recent—that did not fit into their scheme of national identity. This was achieved by means of overt violence (30,000 would disappear during those years, an estimate of hundreds of thousands would become exiles), censorship at all levels and strict control of the educational curriculum, among other official mechanisms. A similar situation was at work in Brazil after the 1964 coup and particularly after the hardening of the regime in 1968. The repression at work and its underlying hypocrisies are sneeringly and mercilessly parodied in *Zero*.

The loss of credibility that Gunia alludes to results from the youth of the 60s in Mexico not seeing themselves within this official discourse of a national culture. It is a disconnect that, ironically, was fomented by the Mexican government’s encouragement of the importation of certain forms of mass media in the 1950s as a component of their modernizing agenda that went hand in hand with the foreign capital being invested in the country—foreign capital that was responsible for the so-called economic “Mexican miracle” of the 1950s and 1960s. A similar dynamic was at work in Argentina in the late 1970s both culturally and economically—though the latter led to disastrous results in the early 1980s. The fundamental difference being that the mass media products that entered and pushed were vapid in comparison to more rebellious-natured rock that had asserted itself a decade before. Also, in Brazil in the early years following the 1964 coup there was a proliferation imported mass media and mass media models adapted from foreign sources that were employed by the government as attempts to distract the key sectors of the public whose support they saw necessary. Of course, the economic results in Brazil at the time were far different from those in Mexico as economic and social disparities were exacerbated in

the process—another point that is documented in *Zero*. Despite being in a different political and social context, Caicedo also felt a similar disconnect to the roots of his national culture, though his reasons are of a far more intimate and personal nature. Nonetheless through the criticism that focuses on him as an individual, he has come to represent Cali's youth synecdochically.

Zolov explicates that, in Mexico, rock was also an important part of the process of entering the modernized 20th century capitalist world as: "...a mirror reflecting the aspirations and anxieties of societies in pursuit of an elusive sense of "first-worldism," whether in emulation of or competition with its standard bearer, the United States" (10). As a consequence of the loss of credibility and the youth's rejection of national institutions (which in turn, created a void), it followed that large portions of the generation felt drawn to the models expressed by the foreign mass media culture whose propagation proliferated after World War II. In Mexico's case, this occurred with a degree of blessing from the PRI. These foreign models were: rock music with its rebellious nature and way of being; and films and television that offered new models for ways of being, talking, dressing, and expression in general.

Bell had already noted a general trend that is directly related to this point, observing how the growing influence of mass culture on society made films, television and publicity the source for role models in a way that simply had not been available to previous generations. Bell held the belief that mass media played the key role in the transformation of customs, the participation of the masses within culture and the formation of youth within society (16), in the process echoing some of the key arguments put forth by Spanish philosopher and critic José Ortega y Gasset in *La revolución de las masas* (1930) which warned of the degradation of culture as a whole would be the result of the ruling elite losing control of what culture meant and its value as a whole.¹² Intellectual attitudes and preoccupations such as the ones

¹² The thought and writings of José Ortega y Gasset (1883-1955) were influential among the intellectual elite in Mexico and other Latin American countries after the Spanish Civil War thanks to the large number of exiled Spanish intellectuals who had been students of Ortega's and still championed his ideas. In Mexico, his influence can be strongly attributed to disciple José Gaos (1900-1969) who fled to Mexico in 1938 and later became head of the philosophy department at the UNAM in Mexico City. "La profecía en Ortega", the first section of Gaos' collection of essays, *Sobre Ortega y Gasset* (Mexico: Imprenta Universitaria, 1957), focuses on the myriad of predictions about the development of art, culture and

articulated by Bell, Ortega and, of course, more notable cultural critics such as Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin can also be attributed to the Mexican cultural elite—the self-proclaimed *Mafia*.

Bell notes that with the advent of mass media culture the very way culture is conceived shifts, making room for new paradigms that dispense with many precepts that constituted previous notions of culture. Explaining that culture had once been the exclusive property of the elite, he shows that by the 1950s it had become public domain. In a mass society, claiming a place within the culture and society once reserved for the elites means not only an opportunity to enjoy the benefits of that society, but also implies having the right and opportunity to choose, to have the right to express judgments in all sectors of social life, from politics to art (15). These were precisely the fears expressed by Ortega in *La revolución de las masas* (1930) and *España invertebrada* (1922). Bell, who later in the essay cites Ortega, also presents other key points that are similar to those put forth by Ortega and, of course, Adorno in their distaste for the metamorphosis of art into a commodity in industrialized society. These concepts were further updated and developed by Bell for the emergence of mass media culture in the 1950s stating that access to culture by the masses would inevitably lead to a decline in its quality thanks to the formulation of new criteria of quality to correspond with the tastes of the masses. He adds that new trends guided by new arbiters and artifices of taste that start out as superficial influences (such as fashion styles) in time lead to a deeper transformation affecting morality, the dynamic of the nuclear family, and the relationship with authority and other institutions formerly controlled by an elite economic, political or intellectual class.

Pop Art, The Onda and Tropicália

society made by Ortega in his work. Gaos explains Ortega's general predictions related to specific topics by meticulously extracting quotes from a variety of the texts. Gaos observes the salience of the concerns laid out in *La rebelión de las masas* relative to how society had evolved in the quarter century since its writing and observes: "El sentido aristocrático de la vida halla su supremo ideal dentro del dominio del arte en un arte de éste" (55). Gaos reiterates Ortega's warning of the dire consequences of "la abolición del reinado de la intelectualidad en general dentro del cuerpo "de las masas" (55).¹² Though all of these thinkers and their writings originate in different eras, they all address the conception of the hierarchical nature of culture and the inherent value in maintaining that structure—precisely what is being challenged to varying degrees in all of these novels.

The emergence of Pop Art in the 1950s was a key development in the post-war art world which helped reshape its aesthetic landscape, challenged long held notions of art, and brought the art world its most lasting and debated contribution: the transposition of aspects of the “art” of mass media into fine art. Though this had occurred to varying degrees already in the emergence of the avant-garde in the 1920s, the explosion of commercialization following the Second World War gave commercial, mass media art the permanent and pervasive presence which it still has to this day. As Michael Compton explains in *Pop Art*:

When [the term Pop Art] was first used among a group of artists and their friends who met as the Independents’ Group at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in 1957, it referred to the commercial, mass circulation arts—photo-advertising, automobile styling, Hollywood films and science fiction—arts which had the same relation to painting, sculpture, theatre and literature that pop music had to the music of the concert hall...The people who used the term valued these urban arts and wanted to relate them to fine art. (12)

He goes on to explain that the term Pop Art is used: “to refer to what functions as fine art (and is found in art galleries etc.) while making use of commercial-art images, styles and/or techniques” (12). By the mid 1960s, Pop was the predominant artistic phenomenon that was ubiquitous, to some degree influencing every facet of design and truly blurring previously clear divisions between high and low brow culture. Both the Onda and Tropicália have important connections to the Pop Art movement and the precepts that inform it.

In her article “La Onda diez años después: ¿Epitafio o revalorización?”, critic Margot Glantz notes the connection between Pop Art and the Onda : “En México, la onda tiene relación con el fenómeno del *pop art*, pero no se asoma por casualidad a lo popular, en todo caso es un resultado de un proceso efectuado a nivel mundial que repercute” (129)—the direct result of what García Canclini has referred to as the “norteamericanización” of national cultures through the processes of globalization, and it was a process that occurred simultaneously throughout the world.

There are parallels between the Onda, Tropicália and both the British and American Pop movements that demonstrate a coherence of aesthetic purpose and the inherent rebelliousness among all of them. The origins of Pop are traceable to the Independents Group in London in 1954. Like the Onda and Tropicália, Pop was, from the beginning, considered an art of protest, whose aim, as Compton points out, was: “generally to use popular culture to cut high-brow culture down to size” (45). Canclini notes that pop: “rompe con la estética idealizada, que representaba espiritualizadamente los objetos sociales, y tratan de dar cuenta de otro modo de lo que está sucediendo en la sociedad” (*Cursos y conferencias*, 33). The latter point by Canclini is one of the most applicable statements that link Tropicália and Brandão’s specific use of Pop precepts, and the expansion of the paradigm of *brasilidade* that the Tropicalists understood to be ever evolving, an idea of culture that was never again to be insular. Both points bring up aspects that positive criticism of the Onda literature has also pointed out—particularly in regards to their relationship with the Mexican cultural elite, known as the *Mafia*. Also, as Richard Goldstein observes in an interview with Robert Powers: “[Pop] was a very complex philosophical statement” and that although pop artists were older than the rebellious 60s generation and began their work beforehand:

they had the same spirit that they were going to overthrow things, overthrow the rigidity of the ‘50s and do away with the distinctions that ‘50s critics like Dwight Macdonald made between highbrow, middlebrow and lowbrow. There was only one “brow” in terms of pop art (544).

Pop Art also simultaneously recognized the ubiquity of the American mass culture products and imagery, their bizarre and, at times, monstrous qualities. In doing so, pop art critically approached the objects’ reflection of corrupt values—unbridled greed and consumerism, a complete disregard for any traditional aesthetic among them—while using an artistic vernacular that made use of its original models while resemanticizing and recontextualizing them. The critique of corrupt societal values is a unifying thread in the works of Agustín, García Saldaña, and especially Brandão who goes after a wider range of targets in *Zero*. With García Saldaña, a former communist by the time of his writing of *Pasto verde*, the critique of conservative upper-class (*fresa*) consumerism is particularly present and decidedly caustic.

The launching of the Pop Art movement caused reactions akin to Marcel Duchamp's readymades some forty years before in reanimating the question of what was, could or should be considered to be "art", though Compton points out that the Independents Group's first major group exhibit was not conceived as a direct confrontation with fine art, though that was how it was perceived in certain circles at the time. The Onda, in no uncertain terms, did the same with the institution of Mexican literature as well as notions of national identity. While the Independent's group acknowledged the changes of the role of art and the artist in the Cold War era in response to the ubiquity of objects of popular culture, the Onda writers, the Brazilian concrete poets who began working in the 1950s and the Tropicalists who they influenced all acknowledged the new cultural reality that could no longer be ignored. Also, according to Compton, to the artists of the British Pop Art movement: "...it no longer seemed necessary for an artist to support a simple brushstroke with a cosmology and a determination to change society" (46). In relation to the parallels to the Onda movement it should also be added that the artists of the Pop Art movement began to take shape independent of the established art scene (like the Onda writers who operated outside of the elite literary circles in Mexico) and that:

Because of their youth and style of life, they felt no need for any weighty social and aesthetic ideas to justify their art. They formulated no dogma and published no manifesto. But the group was for a while sufficiently cohesive to be regarded as a 'movement' in a real sense. (52)

Interestingly, the general consensus amongst Onda writers, most notably Agustín, is that the Onda was not a movement—though it has been historically and critically viewed as such, though there is no "Onda manifesto" or anything of the sort. The situation with the Tropicalists is a bit different, though the wider scope of other arts to which the moniker "Tropicalism" has been applied grew after the initial success had by musicians such as Gilberto Gil and Caetano Veloso.¹³ Though there is no Tropicalist manifesto *per*

¹³ It should be noted here that though there is no Pop Art manifesto or dogma, some art historians trace the beginnings of a pop aesthetic to British artist Richard Hamilton's 1956 collage piece "Just What Is It That Makes Today's Homes So Different, So Appealing?". The imagery includes modern items such as a television and reel to reel recorder, a film poster, a canned ham, a comic book cover, and the modern idealized beefcake and cheesecake images of a man and a woman. These different aspects became part

se, the themes and aesthetic vision with all their social and cultural repercussions are present in the 1968 concept record titled *Tropicália: Panis et Circensis*. The record was a collaborative effort executed by the group of musicians that would come to define the Tropicália movement: Caetano Veloso, Gilberto Gil, Tom Zé, Gal Costa, and Os Mutantes, among others. As we shall see in Chapter 5, a considerable number of the themes laid out in this record can also be seen transposed into Brandão's *Zero*.

There are, of course, some key critical reflections on Pop Art that make this incorporation of the Pop vernacular clearer. Art critic Max Kozloff (b. 1933), one of Pop's harshest critics, was the first critic to specify the concerns, principles, and problems shared by the artists, many of which are echoed by the Onda writers and are also fundamental in understanding Tropicália. Some of these points we have already alluded to in passing. Among these we can find: "the ironic use of transposed materials," "the investigation of creativity, perception and subject/object relationship," and "the theme of social implications" (Mahsun, 5). Further connections between Pop Art and both the Onda and Tropicália can be gleaned from critic Allan Kaprow's assessment of the Pop mode: " 'pop' *subject matter*, such as imagery found in newspapers, magazines, TV, billboards, and movies" and that "The defining characteristic of a pop work is the immediate reference to its source" (Mahsun 12)—in the Onda's case Hollywood films and most often, rock music; in Tropicália's case a wide range of pop music and rock as well as aesthetic concerns with the commercial arts. Furthermore, we can add critic Henry Geldzahler's assessment that: "is seen to draw upon ordinary objects and images which are isolated from their everyday context, typified and intensified. It conveys a heightened awareness of both the object and the original context, our own environment" (Mahsun 13). The object and original context of much Onda literature is the upper-middle and elite social classes that were shaped in no uncertain terms by the imported culture of consumerism with the Mexican government selling the idea of the "American Dream" as an equivalent to "modernity" to upper-middle and upper class Mexican society.

and parcel of the Pop Art vernacular years later in the work of such notable American Pop artists Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, and Mel Ramos, among others. Of course there are other variants to Pop and it cannot, nor should it, be reduced to one piece. Nonetheless, the clearly definable reference points that repeat themselves in later years cannot be denied in Hamilton's piece.

In Tropicália there is also a critique of the superficiality of consumerist society in certain songs as there are explicit parodies of such in Brandão's *Zero*. There is also a key distinction to be made between Pop Art and the critiques of consumer culture of the Tropicalists and Brandão: in Brazil the Pop tendencies were not ever consciously involved in the legitimation of the ideology of consumption. A clear example is Caetano Veloso's 1967 song "Baby," which appears in different versions on both the *Panis et Circensis* LP as well as the first Os Mutantes (one of the seminal Tropicália bands, as we shall see) record. The song, in the 6/8 time signature unusual for a 1960s pop song, echoes the sounds of a lullaby, gently informing the listener what s/he needs to know about and to have ("Você precisa"): margarine, gasoline, an ice cream at the luncheonette, hearing a Roberto Carlos¹⁴ song, and learning English.¹⁵ These, of course, are among the many other things that are available now "na melhor cidade/da América do Sul" and are essential to being part of "andar com a gente," in essence to be part of the group/tribe/gang. Of course, the irony is that the singer/narrator does not know what is really needed, advising the listener to simply read the slogan on the t-shirt, which is the catchy refrain to the song.

That such concerns would blossom also went hand in hand with the regime's intent on fostering the mass media and consumer culture for the upper social classes whose support was pivotal to the regime's longevity. The stage was set for the expansion of a consumer culture with the entrance of foreign capital and products and by the conditions that make the advancement of consumer culture possible. As Christin Mamiya explains in *Pop Art and Consumer Culture*:

Rapid urbanization and advancements in technology in the twentieth century were major factors in the development of consumer culture. Increased bureaucratization, growth of the national

¹⁴ Roberto Carlos (b. 1941) has been one of the most successful pop stars in Brazil since the mid-1960s. He was one of the initiators of the Brazilian rock movement known as the Jovem Guarda or *iê-iê-iê*. I shall discuss this movement in greater detail ahead.

¹⁵ Malcolm Silverman notes that in Brandão's 1968 novel *Bebel que a Cidade Comeu*, the main character, a beautiful girl dreaming of success in the movies after appearing in a soap advertisement, is mocked by the writer character for wanting to learn English—telling her she is going to learn the language of the "owner." This is a direct critique of the U. S. military support in Brazil helping prop up and legitimize the regime internationally after the 1964 coup (223). The irony and critique is not lost in "Baby," in which learning English is yet another "necessary" product to be hip and modern.

market, and the expansion of advertising also contributed to the maturation of a consumer mentality. (2)

The relationship between the regime and the market was not unlike certain initiatives that had been at work in the United States in the previous decade:

The government saw the growing interest in self-fulfillment through consumption as something to be nurtured, and it worked to increase consumption in the American home...persuading citizens that consumption was a national imperative, thereby equating consumptive practices with patriotism. (Mamiya, 114)

This was a dynamic present as well in Mexico in the 1950s and 1960s. Furthermore, Caetano Veloso explains that the Tropicalist awareness of all of these factors also cultivated an interest among the group towards consumer packaging and advertising—aspects that can be seen clearly in the cover to Tom Zé's first LP titled *Grande Liquidação* (1968) and in songs on the album. Of course, as we have seen, Veloso's own "Baby" is another example of this, as are other songs by him—including the breakthrough hit song for Tropicália, "Alegria, Alegria," which we shall see in the chapter. The writers of the Onda, particularly García Saldaña, as well as Brandão in Brazil, mock the marketing language of commercial products repeatedly in their work. García Saldaña makes use of mocking the commercial vernacular and the commercialized, in presenting the upper-class young women who shape themselves into being "desirable products" for prospective husbands. The problem in doing so, of course, is that they remove key human qualities in the process of becoming such products. In this critical vein, the following example from *Zero* uses Pop technique in displaying one of Tropicalism's main concerns in expressing Brazilian reality: the contrast of the pre-modern with the ultra-modern.

The Tropicalists' awareness and adoption of parts of the consumerist vernacular were a mechanism of engaging in criticism of mass culture by means of itself. It also antagonized purveyors of erudite cultural production as well as the intellectual values that defined certain circles of the French-influenced Brazilian Leftist cultural elite. Though perhaps not as fully developed conceptually, the Onda echoes some of the same criticisms directed at the same elite intellectual model in Mexico, although with

fewer politically motivated considerations. Mahsun explains that the advent of Pop in Britain was a switch from French high cultural influence to the American influence and that the movement had different ramifications in the United States. The parallels with the use of Pop in the U. S. and Tropicália and Brazil are evident in considering Mahsun's point that:

[For the British] In addition to being a fresh resource upon which to draw, the American culture carried the exotic overtones of the "primitive," making materials from popular culture much more amenable to an inclusion within fine art. Furthermore, much of the radical and vulgar character of such material was lost when extracted from a foreign culture. Within the United States, however, such inclusions had greater shock value. The sense of protest and the political ramifications were more intensely felt. The use of materials drawn from its own culture served to critique that culture from within and granted the pop movement in the United States avant-garde status. Thus, the protest contained a sociological dimension not comparable to the more theoretical formulations of the earlier British phenomena. (7)

With this in mind, Tropicália's particular form of expression is very much in the pop vernacular from both the British (foreign material) and Brazilian perspective of using autoctonous cultural concepts as the object of criticism—all the while creating a new product *for consumption*. From its practice, a new term that encompassed the Tropicalists' work was formed. As Caetano Veloso explains, it was: "The mass experimentalism that the avant-garde poet Décio Pignatari called "*produssumo*" (produsumption)—production and consumption merged in a single word" (63).

The Tropicalist *praxis* also falls very much into Umberto Eco's evaluation of Pop's mechanisms: "The Pop operation consists in taking a particular aspect of this civilization of signs, objects and images and *transposing* it" (Mahsun, 18, emphasis in original). Among the important elements of Eco's idea of transposition, we have one of Tropicália's most important mechanisms: the retranslation of an object conceptually into another medium which involve alterations to its form or consistency (Mahsun, 20). This furthers the idea of Pop Art, like Tropicália, being an art of impurity—the transposition of source material

into other realms of consumption and contemplation along with the inclusion of other clashing elements in the final product.

One final, crucial point from Mahsun is the use of paradox in Pop—again, a concept that is also applicable to Tropicalism. It also recalls Schwarz’s critical assessment of *Tropicália* in 1970, which he declared shined the spotlight of ultra-modernity on the archaic and traditional “backwardness” to the point of self-mockery and absurdity. As Mahsun explicates, the use of paradox deals directly in contradiction, either logical self-contradiction or commonly held notions, possibly appearing to be false, unbelievable, absurd, actually true or “both true and false—false in a limited sense while being true in a wider sense” (50). According to Mahsun, paradox, with its potentially startling shock value:

has been traditionally used as a critical and speculative tool to explore areas thought to be thought to be thoroughly understood or exhausted, to investigate the problem of unity or multiplicity, truth or reality, and appearance or illusion. It has been used to symbolize an ultimate reality that is beyond reason and can only be realized in terms of imaginative contrast...It allows the viewer to gain new insight, to rise above and transcend old perceptions, to gain a higher perspective or—to express transcendence another way—to penetrate the issues, to gain deeper understanding of the matter presented...[It] functions in a twofold manner, to criticize and to symbolize by pointing beyond itself to a reality that defies reason, logic, and comprehension (50-51).

This latter point illustrates *Tropicália*’s postmodern affinities by calling attention to the difficulties of treating the state of Brazilian culture in the late 1960s with purist, categorical concepts that do not account for the its inherent, ever-evolving, hybrid and syncretic quality.

New Cultural Identities

The first chapter, as I have noted, deals with two different works by José Agustín. The first is the short story “¿Cuál es la Onda?” I propose as an allegorical reading of the coming together of two different cultural worlds: the Onda world of rock and the traditional Mexican cultural establishment—in essence Agustín’s own aspirations to become part of the literary scene. The story a young couple’s wanderings through the city in search of a hotel room for a one night stand. The characters, Oliveira the rock

drummer and Requelle the young girl from a down on its luck upper middle class family, each represent a different cultural world. The story displays Agustín's use of cultural references from high and mass media culture whose employment, I will argue are part of his adoption of the rock ethos. Influenced by Boom writers Julio Cortázar and Guillermo Cabrera Infante, Agustín does as so many rock bands did in the era: he covers the material of other more renowned artists highlighting his own virtues and artistic vision. I bear this out in some detail by expanding upon Gabriel Solis' theory on rock covers. Ultimately, the couple does not consummate their one night stand in the story, instead deciding to marry after that one night and despite all of the obstacles presented along the way. The second half of the first chapter delves into Agustín's second autobiography *El rock de la cárcel*. In the chapter, I cover only the first half of the biography that details Agustín's "rock star" years before his incarceration in the infamous Lecumberri prison in 1971. The second half of the work fits into the category of prison literature and does not enter the scope of this investigation. In the first half of the autobiography, Agustín presents himself as a variation of one of his own fictional characters. As such, I discuss a number of key points laid out by critic Darío Villanueva who draws upon the most important theorists of the autobiographical genre: Philippe Lejeune, Elizabeth Bruss and Jacques Lacan among others. I also show in detail the ideas laid out by Mario Rojas in "José Agustín y el 'Rock' Como Poética." Though several points are mentioned without much elaboration by Rojas, among them are the use of the Chinese oracle the *I Ching* and psychotropic drugs as fundamental tools for identity development.

The second and third chapters again autobiographical in nature and also revolve around the influence of what was once called "The Greatest Rock Band In The World": The Rolling Stones. Parménides García Saldaña's autobiographical novel *Pasto verde* is a *roman à clef* of the Onda generation with Agustín himself among others making appearances. García Saldaña's love for the Stones, their disdain for authority and their unfiltered authenticity drive the text, as do certain Rolling Stones songs such as "Under My Thumb" and "Paint It Black." The text puts on display the Stones' infamous misogynistic tendencies and highlights the fact that though the Onda wanted to break with certain long-standing cultural traditions, *machismo* was not yet ready to be abandoned. It also brings into play several

Pop Art techniques for critiquing upper class, conservative Mexican society—the *fresas*. No other writer contained herein lives by the rock ethos to the degree of García Saldaña—sadly, to his own detriment. His own nihilistic tendencies, which also relate to the Stones' disdain for all things referring to authority, are on display in the main character who echoes many of his own characteristics.

Nihilism is the driving factor in Andrés Caicedo's *¡Que viva la música!* Though not an autobiographical text *per se*, the main character shares numerous aspects with the young writer and others that are drawn from an under-aged lover of his. This chapter focuses on music as key factor in identity formation using the research of renowned rock sociologist Simon Frith. I also make use of the many posthumously published personal papers of Caicedo's to show his own identity development as an artist drawing upon the mass media, rock and literary influences, including José Agustín. As such, there are numerous links between the fictional text and the personal papers (which Caicedo refused to call diaries). Similar to the first chapter, we see identity on the meta-fictional level of the author's influences and autoreferentiality as well as the identity development by the characters in the text. This chapter furthers research trends about Caicedo which tend to focus on the author as much as, if not more than, his written output. Hence, the vast body of work which centers around the personal papers, the psychological studies and the general perception of Caicedo as a precursor for literary trends in the 1990s and 2000s such as the McOndo movement.

The fourth chapter is on Marcelo Cohen's *El país de la dama eléctrica*. Written while he was in exile, the novel tells two parallel stories in different locales. Both center around the life of Martín Gomel, a young rocker in search of his disappeared girlfriend. The novel's structure lends itself to superficial comparisons with Cortázar's *Rayuela*, as it alternates locations and storylines with each chapter, opening itself up to different modes of reading. By making use of the two locales, Cohen is able to focus on two different types of exiles: the itinerant wandering rocker without any solid roots in family or nation and the internal, psychological exile who remains in Argentina during the years of the *Proceso de Reorganización Nacional*. As a former librarian and intellectual, the latter character's identity has been practically erased by the *Proceso* and he is an exile in his own nation, unable to exercise being the individual he had once

been. On the other hand, the young rocker is exiled in the imaginary, drawing upon the icons of rock to edify his own identity and destiny. Though there are a number of figures that the character draws from, the most important is the late Jimi Hendrix, from whose album *Electric Ladyland*, the novel draws its title. By focusing on the role of rock in Argentina during the years of the dictatorship (1976-1983), we can note a synergy in Cohen's work drawn from his own culture and the rock imaginary which served as a source for identity formation for many disaffected youth during the period. Like the work of Agustín, Cohen employs a plethora of rock lyrics within the text, both from the U. S. and Britain as well as the strong rock culture that developed in Argentina.

The final chapter on Brazil is the lengthiest. This is for two reasons. As I have iterated several times, Brandão was not directly informed by the culture or ethos of rock. Nonetheless, the cultural identity of Tropicália is very much so. As such, we can see that the process of the Tropicalists' identity formation, though it draws upon other cultural trends and national culture, also involves a process of assimilating influences from rock music and rock culture. Understanding the process of forming the Tropicalist identity, aesthetic and philosophy involves a deeper understanding of the political and historical context as well as a comprehension of important Brazilian cultural movements which strongly influence Tropicalism, such as the aforementioned concrete poets of São Paulo, the Modernist avant-garde of the 1920s spearheaded by Oswald de Andrade, the Cinema Novo movement and the 60s avant-garde. Tropicalism is a unique Latin American expression of Pop Art as we have seen and it is important to keep in mind the points I have made here in this introduction while reading this chapter. With the overall scheme of Tropicália in place, I go on to argue for a potential Tropicalist reading of Brandão's *Zero* that, in spite of never having been classified as a Tropicalist work, shares many of the concerns, techniques, and questions posited by the movement. This is not possible without an understanding of the development of Tropicalist identity within this framework.

As we have seen, each chapter deals with different aspects of identity emerge through culture—in this case rock culture. I have laid out these guidelines in some detail here in the introduction to

underscore the various relationships that are established with the emergence of a new cultural paradigm such as rock and rock culture when they enter into a new realm.

Chapter One

José Agustín and the Ethos of Rock

Cada canción de este tipo es un cartucho de dinamita para los convencionalismos y las sagradas costumbres de los sistemas sociales que padecemos. Se puede generalizar un poco y decir que el buen rock, en sus letras, se manifiesta contra la hipocresía, la mezquindad, el egoísmo, la mojigatería, el fanatismo, el puritanismo, el patriotismo, la guerra, la explotación, la miseria social e intelectual; y lucha por la paz, el amor, la creatividad y el cambio de todo lo obsoleto.

José Agustín in *La nueva música clásica*

José Agustín: Rock and Literature—A Meeting of Worlds

Few, if any, Latin American writers can boast the ties to rock music that José Agustín (b. José Agustín Ramírez, Guadalajara, 1944) can. As one of the original writers associated with what is loosely called the Onda movement in the 1960s, Agustín incorporated elements of what I will argue is a *poetics of rock* early on into his work. Starting in 1967, he also became Mexico's first rock critic with regular columns on rock in various cultural publications like *Claudia de México*, in the newspapers *El Heraldo* and *El Día* and later on in publications including *Piedra rodante* (the Mexican magazine modeled after the iconic American *Rolling Stone* magazine) and more recently *La Mosca*.¹⁶ He also produced an anthology of translated rock lyrics with fellow writer Juan Tovar, and befriended numerous musicians in

¹⁶ It should be noted that Agustín can be considered a pioneer rock critic in general, and not only in Mexico. Devon Powers notes in "Rock Criticism's Public Intellectuals" that there were no rock critics before 1965 and they operated mostly in publications with limited circulation before entering into more mainstream and widely distributed publications starting in late 1966. This first generation of rock critics such as Richard Goldstein (credited by some as being truly the first rock critic as writer of the "Pop Eye" column in New York's *Village Voice*), Greil Marcus and Richard Meltzer, among others, had been in different renowned graduate programs around the U. S. before focusing their attention on rock as a meaningful cultural expression. Powers remarks that: "Indeed, rock critics developed particular postures toward rock music—ways of studying it that highlighted its complex character—and schools of thinking that assembled around certain publications to address particular kinds of questions. These postures were based on the assumption that the audiences that would form around serious, intelligent consideration of this music would do so not only because they believed in the intrinsic worth of rock music, but also for their own erudition, entertainment, and awareness. Rock criticism thus elevated rock as worthy of intellectual scrutiny, and its adamant use of non-scholarly channels to do so promised readers beyond the university would be exposed to its musings" (540). As a consequence, the advent of the rock critic and the growth of the field within journalism and, later, cultural studies can be seen as a sign of the new cultural and social reality which had to be acknowledged as a matter of course because of its reach and influence.

the Mexican rock scene of the time. As a recognized figure of the Mexican film industry of the late 60s, Agustín lived what has come to be called “the rock and roll lifestyle” replete with sex, drugs and rock and roll.¹⁷ Of note as well is the fact he wrote the first history of rock music in Spanish titled *La nueva música clásica* in 1968, as well as a history of the Mexican counterculture titled *La contracultura en México* (1996) many years later,¹⁸ among his many publications relating to the subjects. The latter book included significant sections on rock and its influence on the emergence of a Mexican counterculture in the 1960s, the Avándaro festival (the 1971 Mexican equivalent to Woodstock), portraits of important countercultural figures like fellow *ondero* Parménides García Saldaña, and the role of the literary movement in question. Roberto Avant-Mier cites Agustín’s own *Contra la Corriente* (1990) in noting that Agustín had been a fan of rock since childhood, following different artists, their records, taking meticulous notes on the music and making lists of artists and recordings for personal reference—tools that would be invaluable to him in the future (119). Juan Bruce Novoa notes: “Agustín’s essay on the history of rock music, *La nueva música clásica*, was a deliberate effort both to locate himself within the context of the universal youth cult of the times and to appropriate its rhetoric as his own—in effect, to become a Rock Star” (*José Agustín, Onda and Beyond*, 41) and further strengthened his position as Mexico’s premier rock critic. Also, according to Schaffer (134), Agustín began learning the English language through memorizing lyrics to rock songs. Of course, rock song lyrics would also become an important source material for wordplay and reference in Agustín’s narrative and dramatic work.

The extraliterary elements mentioned by Novoa aside, in *La nueva música clásica* Agustín repeatedly praises rock musicians and rock as a genre precisely for breaking the rules, drawing upon and

¹⁷ Beginning in 1967 with *Cinco de chocolate y uno de fresa*, Agustín has also made a career in the film industry, having contributed screenplays to various films including his own *Ya sé quién eres/Te he estado observando* (1970) and the cinematic adaptation of José Revueltas’ Lecumberri prison novel *El apando* (1976), among others. *Cinco de chocolate y uno de fresa* is also notable for including the seminal Mexican rock band Los Dug Dug’s in the film.

¹⁸ In his autobiographical text, *El rock de la cárcel*, Agustín recalls that René Avilés, another writer associated with the Onda movement, asked him to write the book for the Cuaderno de la Juventud series that he directed (43).

appropriating the most diverse elements to achieve their aesthetic goals and define themselves as artists. As such, the text alludes to a rock ethos, which despite being somewhat rooted in a tradition (mainly blues and folk music, as he correctly describes), is open to exploring the multiple possibilities with which bands were experimenting at the time (the addition of elements of ethnic music and instruments, classical music, avant-garde experimentation such as tape manipulation and electronics, among others). This consequently engenders a poetics that is perhaps more defined by its freedoms than it is by any guidelines that it may offer. As such, the poetics for how to make records, write songs, and take the art of rock to different levels of consciousness was left up to the artists, who, in many cases during that period, were allowed creative liberties by their record companies that would be unheard of today.¹⁹ The elevation of rock to different realms of consciousness is particularly true regarding the “cosmic” sounds of the psychedelic era in which Agustín is writing,²⁰ but it is also the case with attempts to parlay a political stance and resistance to imposed social norms and usher them into new realms which create new experiences in art. Also, as we have noted in the introduction in reference to Frith and Wicke, rock was a phenomenon adopted and utilized by the listeners that aided their defining their own identities and all the subsequent effects that process entails. Nonetheless, we can see the evident freedoms allowed within

¹⁹ The exception today is the massive amount of self-produced music that circulates in cyberspace and private pressings. These artists may gain an underground cult following, but the likelihood of their being recognized on a large scale is miniscule.

²⁰ As Agustín notes in his description of the Rolling Stones “2000 Light Years From Home” from *Their Satanic Majesties Request* (1967): “Todo: voces, coros, efectos, moog, electrónica y órgano, confiere la sensación del verdadero viaje astral, el que deja atrás la música acid y que se adentra en el espacio. Ésta, más que ninguna otra, es la música del futuro” (*La nueva música clásica*, 31). Of course, there is another very divergent side to this way of listening to (and making) rock which is brought up by Bannister, that for some bands, particularly the decidedly anti-hippie Velvet Underground from New York: “Feedback, distortion, and multimedia are not to be regarded as means to a higher truth [as can be gleaned from some of Agustín’s descriptions in *La nueva música clásica* and was espoused by other musicians of the era]—they are material technological practices that can be used strategically to create effects and interventions which will differ according to how they are employed, who employs them, and what the cultural context is. The Velvets’ method was that of pop art, and here Andy Warhol is the key influence. For Warhol, there really is only “material” (what Emile de Antonio describes as preoccupation with “the thingness of things” (“Andy Warhol”)), in the sense of both commodity and resistance to “deep interpretation,” the insistence that the surface reveals more than any in-depth examination or excavation of meaning from the text (“Andy Warhol”). This materialist insistence, that rock and roll is only “stuff” to be reshaped as the artist sees fit, presents a clear challenge to Hegelian narratives of rock as *Zeitgeist*” (166).

rock's ethos and how they are intertwined with its poetics as loosely rooted in a tradition to have a launching point, an openness regarding the use and appropriation of new sounds, instruments and vernaculars to expand the palette of expression, and to establish a personal set of flexible core guidelines which need not conform to other's aesthetically or politically. These flexible core guidelines, in turn, define a band's or artist's identity and image. Of course, we can argue that the ethos, poetics and meaning of rock and its diverse subgenres²¹ have evolved over the years in different social and political contexts. Nonetheless, the points enumerated above were the most salient for the time period in question, the late 1960s. Agustín also adopts the ethos and poetics explained above, as we shall see more clearly ahead.

Of the many examples in *La nueva música clásica*, the detailed song by song descriptions of the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Heart's Club Band* (1967) and *Magical Mystery Tour* (1967) and the Rolling Stones' *Their Satanic Majesties Request* (1967) emphasize the apparently disparate elements that are brought together and appropriated to create the sonic collage that give each song its unique effect. The idea of a poetics of rock as seen by Agustín can be gleaned from comments like the one in reference to the lengthiest song on *Satanic Majesties*, "Sing This All Together (See What Happens)". After listing a plethora of the instruments used in creating the sound collage, including Indian sitar, marimbas, flutes, bells, percussion, etc. —some of which were never used in rock prior to 1967 but became commonplace with records like *Sgt. Pepper's* and *Satanic Majesties*—he adds: "A todo lo largo hay un concienzudo trabajo de ingeniería para introducir efectos. Sólo hay letra al final y la música fue improvisada, después de que al abrir el disco se pidió la colaboración del escucha" (30). The use of the word "ingeniería" can allude not only to the (obvious) use of electronic effects that color the tones of the diverse gamut of instruments, but also to the overall conception of the record as something composed of diverse elements,

²¹ This was already the case in the 1960s as there were radically different followers, meanings and political agendas related to rock groups of different types. For example, surf or biker rock bands were not associated in with the peace and love hippie movement and were often regarded as square or passé: the products of a more conservative era appealing to a more conservative crowd. As such, the mention of surf bands, despite their being big sellers in the early to mid 1960s is practically non-existent in *La nueva música clásica*, as they do not represent the emancipating, non-conformist ideas which Agustín sees as quintessential to rock.

each of which has a unique function which complements another and creates a final product whose density in layers reveals different elements in different listens. Again, the collaborative effort of the listener is emphasized to bring this about, but there is also an emphasis in pointing out the cues that will guide the experience—elements reserved for the acute listener, or in the case of the literature, for the astute or trained reader. Of course, in the case of the Onda and Agustín, the astute reader could access to the differing layers of culture to complement and perhaps deepen (though that seemed not to be a requirement) their reading of the work and surpass the initial superficiality that the “hip” language could suggest to some.

As far as this being part of a poetic approach can be understood, the apparent contradiction that the music was improvised while at the same time everything was consciously engineered to introduce effects is correspondent to how Agustín himself recounted years later the approach he took to writing *De perfil* in *El rock de la cárcel*: “había estado produciendo a través de lo que más o menos venía a ser escritura automática que después corregía, limpiaba y reordenaba” (13). The improvisatory nature of automatic writing can, of course, be related to the improvisational music *par excellence* that is jazz; and the relationship is deepened by the emergence of both in the 20s.²² However, it is important to not forget that improvisation is also present in rock, and its potential was beginning to be explored more fully around the time of *La nueva música clásica*.²³ It was a fundamental element of the live performance though not necessarily an essential element of the studio version of the song. Andrew Kania reminds us

²² Much like the original concept behind automatic writing was to let the product be, without editing or revision, almost all recordings prior to the advent of magnetic tape after World War II (save for those done on magnetic wire, a method that was not common in the record industry) were not editable because of how they were done: cut directly onto a zinc master that would later be pressed onto shellac. As such, the performance in that era was of greater importance than it came to be in the era of tape when edits, re-takes, and multi-tracking all could potentially serve a role in altering the initial performance and, of course, often did in the process of becoming the norm.

²³ In *La nueva música clásica*, Agustín never misses an opportunity to praise the great rock improvisers of the era, some of which have become synonymous with rock (like guitarists Jimi Hendrix and Eric Clapton) or others who were no less skillful or innovative, but whose names have been slowly forgotten over time (like guitarists Mike Bloomfield of The Butterfield Blues Band and The Electric Flag or Robbie Krieger of The Doors).

that: “The work of art in rock is a track constructed in the studio” (412) and that the songs “are studio constructions: thick works that *manifest* thin songs without being *performances* of them”(405).²⁴ In recording rock, hours of tape could and often would be recorded then pieced together to form a final product. This process allowed rock to develop as an artform, transcending the limits imposed by a single, allowed artists to develop concepts more fully from their initial source ideas and, in what became common practice by the late 60s, disregard any concerns regarding taste, length, or excessiveness. The process is also akin to the pages and pages of automatic writing that could later be corrected and reorganized to form part of a polished, finished literary work of fine art.

La nueva música clásica, with its plentiful reiterations about the importance of the then-new music overtly elevates its status as an art rhetorically, with bold declarations like the Beatles’ *A Day in the Life* being: “quizá la obra maestra de la música moderna (con *2000 Light Years From Home*, de los Stones), la más inquietante, angustiante y poderosa” (21).²⁵ As his comments in numerous interviews and personal statements about writing reveal, Agustín was never one to shy away from his own potential in times of confidence. And as Kirk (*José Agustín, Onda and Beyond*), Novoa and Agustín himself (*El Rock de la cárcel*, other interviews) as well as others have noted, there was a time that Agustín could boast of having a “rock star” status among cultural circles in Mexico—something that clearly was a challenge to the established Mexican cultural elite, or *Mafia* as Gunia explains, of the era. The bold declarations elevating rock to a form of high art was something that as Wicke explains “would doubtless have seemed sacrilegious” at the time that rock was emerging and that: “Even today [1990 when Wicke published *Rock*

²⁴ To be clear, we can understand *thin songs* to be simple frameworks upon which layers of production (recording techniques, multi-track recordings, electronic effects, editing, among other things), added instrumentation to the basic band format (exotic elements or electronic effects like those mentioned by Agustín in his descriptions of the Beatles or Rolling Stones songs), and arrangements to turn them into *thick works*. The final product of the song can therefore be analyzed beyond its basic melodic or harmonic structure to include a variety of factors, both technical and musical. A perfect contrast is evident when comparing original studio versions of songs with those recorded live and “unplugged”—those which can truly be defined as a *performance*.

²⁵ Wicke notes that statements such as these by rock’s champions (musicians, journalists like Agustín, and publicists) do a disservice to the study of rock as an art form because of their application of “aesthetic criteria and musical models that are completely alien to its cultural origins” (2).

Music: Culture, Aesthetics, Sociology, but which is also applicable to this day in 2011] the claim that rock music is an art form still provokes heated discussion and intense resistance” (1).

Agustín’s praise for the rock aesthetic was not limited to the music itself and his colorful aestheticized descriptions of it—which were later developed and incorporated into works of a more literary nature. As can be gleaned from interviews and his own autobiographical declarations, there is also the practice of the freedoms exercised by the relatively new social archetype of the rocker. More concretely, in *La nueva música clásica*, he also gives detailed accounts emphasizing the collage elements utilized in creating the covers to *Sgt. Pepper’s* and the interior gatefold of *Satanic Majesties*.²⁶ As we have seen with the musical descriptions, the music described also takes the form of collage (something that was indeed being explored by rock musicians as well as avant-garde composers in the 1960s). As I noted in the introduction, collage was an essential component of the Pop Art aesthetic and also an aesthetic concept incorporated by Onda writers in the creation of their texts. It is also important to note that Margo Glantz praises the Onda writers’ use of collage in developing their writing:

...los escritores de la onda manejan el *collage*, donde se insertan comarcas diversas de diversos territorios literarios. La parodia, la caricatura, la alusión a las obras capitales de la vanguardia, a sus métodos, la imposición de juegos de variaciones temáticas que hacen repercutir el ritmo de la música actual en la escritura, así como la utilización de efectos que determinan los nuevos recursos electrónicos respecto a como se oye el lenguaje, la cinetización de la mente, tanto en su relación con los cambios ópticos que el cine ha impuesto—el montaje, el travelling, el close up— como en la perspectiva distinta de espacialidad y de temporalidad, permiten una recreación de la realidad. (127)

²⁶ The iconic sleeve to the Beatles’ *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Heart’s Club Band* was designed by noted British Pop artist Peter Blake (b. 1932) who entered the London Pop Art scene after its inception and was photographed by Michael Cooper (1941-1973), who designed the cover to the Rolling Stones’ *Their Satanic Majesties’ Request*. It should be noted that the latter record is considered by many rock critics to be the Stones’ “answer” to *Sgt. Pepper* for its expanded use of the studio, larger arrangements, effects and the fact that it was released three months after *Sgt. Pepper*, in September of 1967.

There are also, again, evident parallels to be drawn from this quote between the Onda and the historical avant-garde, given that both made use of the most modern elements of culture occurring at the time and developed ideas drawn from other media. In the 1920s, film and jazz while in the Onda works, film and rock. As we shall see, the collage element of bringing disparate elements together is fundamental in Agustín's literary work.

Also, Agustín, perhaps because of his own eye for art (his first artistic outlet before writing was painting) and the influence of his brother Augusto, an accomplished fine and commercial artist in his own right, understood that the presentation and marketing of what was inside was almost of equal importance to how the product itself would be perceived and was key in how he approached the publication of his early novels, *La tumba* (1964) and *De perfil* (1966). If *La nueva música clásica* is, as Novoa notes, a deliberate effort to appeal to a certain group, the emerging counterculture in Mexico, then the presentation of his early novels was a deliberate effort to earn a place within the Mexican literary culture of the time. As a result, when presented with the possibility of publishing *La tumba* in a paperback series geared towards young readers, Agustín rejected the opportunity. Agustín recounts:

Sabía que publicar allí era quedar inscrito, forever, en la subliteratura. Yo quería que mi libro se vendiera mucho, pero no que la accesibilidad y amenidad se malinterpretaran como facilismo. Aspiraba al reoncimiento del medio artístico-intelectual y también al éxito entre el gran público. (*El rock de la cárcel*, 11)

Agustín understood his work and his poetics differently, as he explains: “Era una proposición distinta: como en el rock, se trataba de fundir alta cultura y cultura popular, legitimar de una vez por todas el lenguaje coloquial. Pero a muchos les parecía pura incoherencia” (*El rock de la cárcel*, 18). The fusion of high and low brow culture and its subsequent conversion to “no brow” culture is also notable in that, beginning with the Beatles’ more ambitious experimentation starting in 1966, or the sophistication found in Bob Dylan’s lyrics once he began to perform his own songs exclusively, rock also began to create its own cultural niche—one that had not existed before in popular music.

In terms of literary history, Carlos Fuentes, his disagreements with Agustín notwithstanding, recognized both Agustín's and Sainz's contribution to linguistic innovation in *La nueva novela hispanoamericana* (1969) while linking them as a variant of certain innovations already put forth by Guillermo Cabrera Infante, who he credits for creating his own Spanish language that “castiga al castellano con todas las extrañezas en las que puede renovarse, reconocerse y contaminarse; pero al mismo tiempo destruye la fatal univocidad de nuestra prosa” (31). Cabrera Infante is an influence on Agustín that manifests itself overtly in “¿Cuál es la Onda?” as we shall see further ahead.

Also, given Agustín's manifest ties to rock and his incorporation of his ethos and establishing a poetics related to rock into his own work, the following words from Fuentes ring true in reference to the aesthetic goals shared by Agustín as well as many put forth by the rock movement—its constant search for new sounds, the establishment of a new musical language, the affront to previous cultural and aesthetic norms—particularly from the mid 1960s on. Fuentes observes that: “La nueva novela hispanoamericana se presenta como una nueva fundación del lenguaje contra los prolongamientos calificados de nuestra falsa y feudal fundación de origen y su lenguaje igualmente falso y anacrónico” (31) and goes on to add that the new Latin American literature of the 1960s was revolutionary in that:

...en cuanto le niega al orden establecido el léxico que éste quisiera y le opone el lenguaje de la alarma, la renovación, el desorden y el humor. El lenguaje, en suma, de la ambigüedad: de la pluralidad de significados, de la constelación de alusiones: de la apertura. (32)

Though Fuentes' essay is ostensibly focused on the Boom, the mention of both Agustín and Sainz is significant. Once Agustín and Sainz in particular had entered the literary field, the scene changed, as Fuentes' comments make evident: a member of the *Mafia* not only recognizing, but praising the contributions of these writers. Like the establishment of rock within the social and cultural landscape, its impact could not be ignored. Though in the case of the Onda writers their relative obscurity has meant they continue to be ignored to some extent as a literary and cultural phenomenon, many of the stylistic elements created within the texts have been developed and assimilated into later Latin American literary

movements such as McOndo and, to a lesser extent, the *realismo sucio* of the 1990s.²⁷ Furthermore, in Agustín's case and, perhaps even more so, in that of García Saldaña's, there is a clear sense of autoreferentiality in their work via metafictional aspects, autobiographical references, as well as the ongoing expression of their poetics that are linked to the varied aspects of rock that have been enumerated above. Also, like many renowned artists, but particularly in the case of rock stars and movie stars, there is a conscious effort on both of their parts to create a public persona (that may or may not correspond with their private selves) seeps into and, to a certain extent, defines their artistic endeavors.

¿Cuál es la onda?

Los Gargajos del Rismo deberíamos llamarnos, aseguró Oliveira. Sabes quién es el amo, niñadespistada, agregó, pues nada menos que Bigotes Starr y también este muchacho Carlitos Watts y Keith Moon; te juro, yo quisiera tocar en un grupo de esa onda. Oliveira, main character of "¿Cuál es la onda?"

Taken from the 1968 collection of short stories *Inventando que sueño*, "¿Cuál es la onda?" is perhaps José Agustín's best-known and anthologized story. The story recounts the wanderings of a young couple through different parts of Mexico City in search of the right hotel room within which to consummate what has all the appearances of being a one-night stand. The couple, consisting of Oliveira

²⁷ The McOndo movement came into being as a movement at the instigation of two Chilean writers, Alberto Fuguet (b. 1964) and Sergio Gómez (b. 1962). The movement's main goal, as stated in the introduction to the story collection *McOndo*, was to free itself from the shackles imposed by the perception that equates Latin American literature with Magical Realism. Like the Onda there is a conscious effort to break with a perceived tradition and establish its own rules. The McOndo movement, also like the Onda, is an urban literature that makes full use of pop culture and high culture references as well as colloquial language in order to emphasize the vast diversity contained within postmodern Latin American culture--a constantly evolving culture which is not reflected either in the Magical Realism aesthetic nor in the well-known Boom novels. Several themes find themselves in both movements such as the disaffected youth's search for identity, the denouncement of hypocrisy, and the mocking of antiquated social norms, among others. The influence of Agustín and the Onda can be seen in particular in the work of Alberto Fuguet. There are striking similarities between Fuguet's not casually titled *Mala Onda* (1991) and Agustín's *La tumba* (1964) and *De perfil* (1966). Unlike la Onda, however, the McOndo group did publish a statement of purpose as a movement making their aesthetic goals clear. Dirty realism, or *realismo sucio* as it is called in Latin America, as a delimited genre has its origins in the work of American poet and novelist Charles Bukowski (1920-1994). In Latin America, its most well-known exponent is Cuban author Pedro Juan Gutiérrez (b. 1950). The crude representations of sexuality and the human condition can be found in the work of García Saldaña as well, though there is no historic link as there is between the work of Agustín and that of Fuguet.

(a rock drummer) and Requelle (a young girl from a formerly rich family with a renowned name), develops an unexpected bond along the way, engaging in ludic exchanges which touch upon a wide range of topics. The ancillary characters encountered along the way comment from the position of society's norms, disapproving of the couple's apparently promiscuous foray. Though the story is not a manifesto for the Onda as was at one time suggested by Glantz, it is notable for its display of characteristics that are strongly associated with the Onda and Agustín's work from the era, as well as the elements I suggest are related to a poetics of rock. These characteristics include a strong metafictional component employed by the author to assert his presence and self-awareness as part of his aesthetic, and to engage the reader and address his critics within the text itself. As is always the case with Agustín, there is a plethora of carefully chosen intertextual and extratextual references from high and low culture that function together in the creation of a new, postmodern aesthetic, rife with textual layers of parodic elements, humor, and inside jokes with other writers and like-minded *model readers*. The assemblage of references can be related to the autoreferentiality of the author, who, through their use, displays his cultural pedigree as an authenticating tool for himself as an artist and the intellectual/cultural company he wishes to be perceived to keep. The resistance to and mockery of societal norms are inescapable elements regarding any criticism of the Onda. Of course, there is a strong presence of the linguistic innovations acknowledged by Fuentes. These include the use of colloquial jargon (and the "bad grammar" used in reproducing it textually, an affront to many of the more academically inclined readers, as Gunia has noted), plays on words which involve references to high and low culture, and the use of rhythmic exchanges in the dialogues that mimicked what was then heard among the youth on the street and in schools—a language that had not found its way into Mexican literature up to that point.²⁸

The parodic element is of utmost importance in "¿Cuál es la onda?" and Glantz (1979), Novoa (1986) and Lange (2008) have all written at length about the importance of parody and satire in Agustín's

²⁸ For a detailed account of the linguistic innovations of the Onda as seen from the period in which it was produced, see footnote 15 in Kirk's "The Development of and *Ondero*" in *José Agustín: Onda and Beyond* which cites an article by Salvador Reyes Nevares titled "La nueva literatura" from the October 14, 1966 issue of the magazine *Novedades* (18).

work in general, including this story. According to Lange, in a point that she reiterates on several occasions, parody can be used as a way to express admiration in modern and postmodern contexts, which is the focus of her analysis of “¿Cuál es la onda?” Lange also explains how Agustín takes certain key elements of two Boom novels, Guillermo Cabrera Infante’s *Tres tristes tigres* (1967) and Julio Cortázar’s *Rayuela* (1963), intertwines them and re-employs them parodically in his telling of Oliveira and Requelle’s failed quest for a sexual encounter in several hotels of varying degrees of cleanliness and pulchritude (or lack thereof) in different neighborhoods of Mexico City. The reference to both authors and these specific works is evident from the beginning of the story, which utilizes an epigraph from *Tres tristes tigres* and whose main character, Oliveira, shares the same name with the main character from *Rayuela*. All three works have a strong relationship to music: *Tres tristes tigres* to Afro-cuban music, *Rayuela* to jazz, and, of course, “¿Cuál es la onda?” to rock. This is simply the point of departure for other important parallels that get re-worked by Agustín in the story, as we shall see further ahead. It is important to add that the second epigraph to the story is taken from The Doors’ “Alabama Song”, which in itself is a re-working of a tune from Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht’s 1930 opera, *Mahogany*.²⁹

To Lange’s premise of parody as flattery, I would add an important relationship to rock: the concept of the *cover version*. Gabriel Solis in his 2010 article “I Did It My Way: Rock and the Logic of Covers” defines rock covers as follows: “a cover is a new version of a song in which the original version is a recording, and for which musicians and listeners have a particular set of ideas about authenticity,

²⁹ Formed in late 1965, the Doors were one of the most successful and creative rock groups to emerge from Los Angeles in the late 1960s. Fronted by singer and lyricist Jim Morrison and musically guided by keyboardist Ray Manzarek, guitarist Robbie Krieger and drummer John Densmore, the Doors pushed numerous boundaries musically, lyrically and on stage as well as being a top-selling act. Agustín has nothing but high praise for the Doors in *La nueva música clásica*. In speaking of the Doors first LP, released in January, 1967, he mentions of it that: “...lo grande viene en la versión de la canción que Kurt Weill y Bertolt Brecht hicieron para *Mahogany: Alabama Song (whisky bar)* [sic]” (34-35). Along with success, the Doors were also a controversial group both on stage (Morrison had numerous well-publicized run-ins with law enforcement for his antics on stage) and off. Their *tour de force* track from *The Doors* was “The End” in whose climax the vocally improvising Morrison ominously states that he wants to kill his father and violently hints at raping the mother before unleashing a scream. In *La nueva música clásica*, Agustín translates the lyrics of the song without them losing their poetic virtues, allowing the non-English speaking readers of his text to appreciate Morrison’s skill as a poet and lyricist.

authorship, and the ontological status of both original and cover versions” (298). Solis goes on to paraphrase critic Michael Coyle about the function of covers in the 1960s:³⁰

When a popular musician in the 1960s did a cover—from the Beatles to the Rolling Stones to the Byrds—it was not a matter of rehashing a song that had done well for a musician operating in some small market, but rather of establishing the credibility and authenticity of the coverer through the established cultural capital of the original (the original now functioning as “invested” cultural capital) (147-148). The importance of this authenticating function of covers cannot be stressed too much. It may be counter-intuitive to think that covering someone else’s work could be a way to establish personal authenticity, but is nonetheless true. (300)

Covers, of course, do not have to be limited to within the artists’ own recognized style or genre for which he is renowned. In fact, reaching beyond what would be the commonplace musical spectrum for an artist allows for a diversification of how that artist is viewed and the cultural capital that said artist brings with them afterward. As Solis explains:

As musicians cover songs from outside their own style and genre, they effectively lay down increasingly broad links between themselves and others. Through this process individual musicians come to be connected to denser and denser networks where reference connects them to referenced music and musician, but also to others who reference similar music and so on (300).

Rock has always been a genre of music that is based on covers and versions of different songs. To this day, bands that are beginning draw on the vast array of available coverable material to aid themselves in establishing an identity musically and the reference points with which they wish to be associated. Solis explains through the points of critic Deena Weinstein that there were several stages that rock passed through in respect to the function of covers:

³⁰ Coyle’s original article is “Hijacked Hits and Antic Authenticity: Cover Songs, Race, and Postwar Marketing,” found in *Rock over the Edge*, Ed. Roger Beebe, Denise Fulbrook and Ben Saunders, published by Duke University Press in 2002.

...in the 1960s covers expressed authenticity through its references to “real” blues, while in the 1970s covers often erased the past or sowed the seeds (in punk) for a post-modern irony that would be fully mined in the 1980s and ‘90s, as rock’s past became an “[a]rchive for appropriation” (300).

In the 1960s, the search for authenticity could also be traced to the covering of other bands or individuals who had already reached iconic status, as the numerous covers of Beatles, Bob Dylan and Rolling Stones songs confirm.

Covering contemporary artists also served the important function of linking the coverers to the covered bands’ aesthetic and attitude. This link allowed for the establishment of connections that were overt for fans of the covered bands who understood the cult of personality (most prevalent when referring to the Rolling Stones, for example), political positions (an important point when assessing the influence of Bob Dylan on some artists), or creative openness willing to use production a certain way or draw from exotic or traditional sources (particularly in the case of the Beatles, who revolutionized the possibilities of what could be and actually was considered “rock”) of the original bands when comparing cover versions by a newer, almost inevitably less successful group, with that of the original. As a result, the choice of cover, aside from being a vehicle that could be particularly suitable for the band to put its own imprint upon, also made a statement about who and what the covering band was about within and outside the music and, in many cases, what model they were attempting to live up to. Attempting to live up to a given model (musical and otherwise) embodied by another group was more prevalent in the mid-1960s, before rock groups in general developed stronger individualized identities and aesthetics. As a result, these steps were fundamental in helping the bands develop their own credentials and authenticity while working within an established vernacular, the covered song(s).

Also, when presenting models that were being followed, as is the case with the more blues oriented groups of the 1960s, it opened the door for the original sources to be explored and established the network of references that the band wished to be associated with. As such, it mattered little if, for instance, the Rolling Stones’ version of a blues standard like Muddy Waters’ “I Just Want To Make Love

To You” (written by his bassist Willie Dixon) paled in comparison to the original version for purists because of the function that it carried out for its target audience.³¹ The recording of such a song could serve two crucial functions for the fan of the band who became aware of its status as a cover: 1) that of establishing a link to Muddy Waters, Willie Dixon, and the Chicago blues tradition that was fundamental in the creation of the group’s identity and what it originally aspired to be and; 2) allowing for the deeper fan to delve further into that tradition while still maintaining the original reference to them, the Rolling Stones, in mind—much like what can occur when the dedicated reader or scholar inquires further into references found in a text. Of course, in the case of casual fans, many times the song would, in a practical sense, become property of the coverer because of being unaware of its status as a cover. Those were the (many) listeners who were unconcerned with delving any deeper.

To this last point, it is important to add Solis’ observation about the proximity of covers to the original version:

Covers become meaningful, ironically, by their ability to appear as newly authored work. Rather than making the performers seem to give up their rugged, self-creating individualism, covers show strong rock musicians as artists with personal histories that connect them in time to other authentic artists and as musical thinkers with the ability to imbue someone else’s song with some measure of their own, new authorship and authority.

Of course, in literature there are countless re-workings of previously written material. Jorge Luis Borges was a master of imbuing older texts with his own aesthetic, imposing his authorship and authority upon the text to transform it into his own. Cabrera Infante’s own imitations of Cuba’s most renowned writers in *Tres tristes tigres*, display not only a virtuosic *performance* of his ability to imitate writing styles, but also

³¹ Singer and guitarist Muddy Waters (née McKinley Morganfield, 1915-1983) is one of the founding fathers of the electric Chicago blues style. Though he wrote relatively few songs, he was often the first, and always one of the main interpreters of songs written by bassist, arranger and producer Willie Dixon (1915-1992)—one of the most prolific figures in blues songwriting in the 1950s and 1960s. Their importance, along with that of the other Chicago blues musicians, cannot be stressed too much in the shaping of rock in the mid 1960s. This was true particularly in Britain, where there was more interest in blues than there was in the United States. Agustín recognizes the importance Waters in *La nueva música clásica*, though he offers few details.

aid in firmly establishing him within that tradition at a relatively early stage in his career. Given the importance of breaking with literary tradition that is often associated with the Onda writers and Agustín himself, it would seem antithetical that he would “cover” previous works on purely artistic grounds. The fact that both *Rayuela* and *Tres tristes tigres* were recent works that were recognized as groundbreaking and themselves breaking with tradition mitigates that argument while also emphasizing the freshness strived for by Agustín in his literature.

As we have already seen, Agustín felt a need to establish his credibility and authenticity within the literary field, a process that was not without its considerable obstacles. We have also already pointed out how Agustín wished to be considered a writer who belonged within the field of serious literature and infuse it with the contemporary cultural reference points that were fundamental in his formation as an artist. He did not want to be relegated to the status of a writer of paraliterature, or some other form of subliterate that was not geared (at least to some degree) to a literary audience. That literary audience would have the necessary encyclopedic references at their disposal to understand some of the references to high culture and literature. Though again, the references to rock and pop culture made the model reader of his texts someone with a unique knowledge of both. Neither aspect can be prescindied with when approaching the texts and is of utmost importance in reading “¿Cuál es la onda?”

Using the approach of covering further displays Agustín’s links to both rock’s ethos and poetics, particularly given their strong presence in Mexican rock in the 1960s. It is key to remember Zolov’s points on the function of covers and their importance in the emergence of rock within the Mexican context with the *refritos*: “...closely matched renditions of the original compositions and Spanish lyrics that often had little to do with the original” (72). *Refritos*, because the lyrics often strayed significantly from their original versions, lost the original song’s intentions and meaning. Zolov explains that the clean-cut image that was also associated with the Mexican *refritos* served as a way to attempt to mitigate its subversive, rebellious potential and make it more palatable as a modern product of consumption for a broader audience. The case of Agustín “covering” aspects of both Cortázar and Cabrera Infante does coincide in the aspect that it is naturalizing, to use Zolov’s term on Mexican rock, some of its concepts

and content to direct it more specifically towards his model readers who would not necessarily be familiar (or perhaps even interested) in the Boom novels or writers. Of course, Agustín's work and use of covering techniques is not concerned with any sense of palatability, though it is in search of a domestic, youth audience. Of greater concern is, as we have explained above, a way of establishing his authenticity as a writer who relates to both the high and popular mass media culture. In general terms, Agustín is closer to the other form of covering which came to dominate the Mexican rock scene later in the 60s: *fusiles* or *el arte de fusil*. Zolov explains the *arte de fusil*: "literally "the art of projection" (from the verb *fusilar*, "to take aim")" put greater emphasis on the original English versions of songs as the authentic versions that carried the full weight of rock's message (94). It was through the *fusil* versions by Mexican bands like Los Dug Dug's (friends of Agustín) which some of the original versions, in turn became popularized in Mexico. In other words, the Mexican bands served as a conduit for their audience to become familiar with the original artists. With these two points in mind, Agustín's covering Cortázar and Cabrera Infante and his use of the rock ethos in "¿Cuál es la Onda?" becomes all that much clearer.

On a theoretical level, the particular form of expression utilized by Agustín in "¿Cuál es la onda?" is explained by Carpenter as a challenge to the norms and constraints of the dominant cultural elite. This challenge is executed by rejecting the canonical high cultural framework and replacing it with a more flexible transcultural reference system (200). From 1965 onward, his transcultural reference system is also present in rock culture with its openness towards influences, sounds and frameworks that can be drawn from any number of sources, including the very high culture that is seen as being challenged. In Agustín's case, Carpenter links him to the concept of cultural hybridity. As she explains:

Cultural hybridity is closely linked with transculturation, bring about the issue of subalternity which indicates that high (or mainstream) culture is no longer the single driving force of society, and the relationship between high and low culture is not that of a clear-cut one-way dominance. Thus, a transcultural hybrid emerges which combines the two cultures without selecting either as dominant. (200)

Clearly, Agustín can be seen as a case in point of what Carpenter is conveying. Agustín's work exemplifies the difficulty in understanding the full extent of the work when utilizing the tripartite division of culture into: high culture, low (popular) culture, and mass media culture. Canclini explains in *Culturas híbridas* that:

Es necesario desconstruir esa división en tres pisos, esa concepción hojaldrada del mundo de la cultura, y averiguar si su *hibridación* puede leerse con las herramientas de las disciplinas que los estudian por separado: la historia del arte y la literatura, que se ocupan de lo "culto"; el folclor y la antropología, consagrados a lo popular; los trabajos sobre comunicación, especializados en la cultura masiva. Necesitamos ciencias sociales nómadas, capaces de circular por las escaleras que comunican esos pisos. O mejor: que rediseñen los planos y comuniquen horizontalmente los niveles. (36)

Agustín's work proposes the redesign of levels for horizontal connection: the coexistence and equality of the different cultural realms, each fulfilling a key function within a given work.³²

In "¿Cuál es la onda?", Agustín incorporates significant tropes and themes presented in both *Rayuela* and *Tres tristes tigres*, re-situates them in pre-Tlatelolco massacre Mexico City of 1968, and melds them with rock culture of the time to put his own culturally hybrid stamp of authorship upon them. But beyond their use as artistic source material that adds an important intertextual layer to the story, the reference to the Boom novels also functions to suggest connections to the innovative new literature emerging in Latin America at the time and solidify Agustín's credibility and authenticity as a writer of literature—the *escritura*, or artful writing, that to which Glantz compares the Onda texts unfavorably. With both of these factors, we can observe their relationship with the concept of the rock cover as providing material to be transformed into one's own, applying a set of techniques that can be gleaned

³² The cultural elite's resistance to the Onda is summed up succinctly by Canclini as well: "Existen resistencias a aceptar...formas de hibridación, porque generan inseguridad en las culturas y conspiran contra su autoestima etnocéntrica" (*Culturas híbridas*, 25). Though in the the case of the *Mafia*, it was more a case of what should be considered high culture and not be tainted by influences and references undeserving of a place within that realm.

from original versions, as well as the establishing a network of references that can be related to the artist.³³

With that in mind, it is important to note some key elements incorporated from Cortázar and Cabrera Infante. To begin with, there are multiple literary and extra-literary references found in *Rayuela*, spanning a wide gamut including poets (Baudelaire and Dylan Thomas, among others), painters (Rembrandt and Mondrian, among others), writers (Roberto Arlt and William Faulkner, among others), jazz musicians (Charlie Parker, Louis Armstrong, Thelonius Monk, among others), blues musicians (Big Bill Broonzy) as well as classical musicians (Erik Satie and Igor Stravinsky, among others).³⁴ The inclusion of Cortázar himself as a reference in “¿Cuál es la onda?”, makes it explicit to a reader with even casual knowledge of *Rayuela*. Agustín makes the explicit influence apparent on multiple levels in the text with: 1) the inclusion of the main character named Oliveira; 2) the play on words that transform the other main character’s name Requelle literally into “rayuela” and makes the link obvious: “Requeya, Reyuela, Rayuela, hijo de Cortázar” (80); and 3) the couple’s chance meeting, immediate connection, and seemingly random wandering through the city from one place to another in an aimless search offer parallels to be drawn with *Rayuela*. Furthermore, in *Rayuela*, Cortázar uses the figure of Morelli to communicate his ideas about and literature within the text. Agustín, I will argue, also communicates his ideas about literature and the Onda allegorically in “¿Cuál es la onda?” by using both characters, the bystanders they encounter along the way, as well as his own parenthetical metafictional interjections.

³³ Though obviously it is not developed theoretically in *La nueva música clásica*, Agustín acknowledges the importance of covers. Making a larger point about the importance of rock’s earliest influential performers, Agustín mentions covers by the Rolling Stones and the Beatles of Buddy Holly’s material and in referring to Chuck Berry and his songs, he observed that: “han sido obligadas para Beatles, Rolling Stones y los grupos de California” (14-15). It should also be noted that Berry’s flagging career was revived when groups like the Beatles and Rolling Stones began covering and re-popularizing his material in the 1960s. Among the many factors working against him, Berry had also fallen out of favor stemming from an incident involving a young girl being transported across state lines. The incident landed him in jail in 1962 and out of the spotlight.

³⁴ Though this system of drawing on multiple references is also at work in Agustín’s first novel, *La tumba*, I do not consider *Rayuela* to be an influence on that specific text because its writing (1961) pre-dates the publication of *Rayuela*, though in subsequent corrections, the implicit influence may have grown.

As we observed earlier, Carlos Fuentes noted the connection between Cabrera Infante's linguistic innovations and those brought about by both Agustín and Gustavo Sainz in *La nueva novela hispanoamericana*. Cabrera Infante opens *Tres tristes tigres* with a warning that states: "El libro está en cubano. Es decir, escrito en los diferentes dialectos del español que se hablan en Cuba y la escritura no es más que un intento de atrapar la voz humana al vuelo" and that "predomina como un acento el habla de los habaneros y en particular la jerga nocturna, que, como en todas las grandes ciudades, tiende a ser un idioma secreto" (8). This sets the stage for the display of numerous local colloquialisms, "bad grammar", phonetic spellings and plays on words that evoke a specific time and place, as well as the particular cast of characters that inhabited it. Agustín does not offer any such warning in his works, though the same *modus operandi* can be said to be at work: the secret, ultra-modern language of the young residents of Mexico City, steeped in the ever-evolving influences from the cinema and rock. The plays on words are a constant in the way the *tigres* communicate with each other and others. They do so in remembrance of their now deceased friend, Bustrófedon, whose inventiveness in linguistic transformation had become not only legendary among his friends, but had become part of their own expressive idiom. Furthermore, as Lange explicates in relation to "¿Cuál es la onda?":

...las típicas asociaciones fonéticas, el hecho de que los "tigres" se malentienden a propósito para experimentar con el lenguaje, la mezcla humorística de varias lenguas extranjeras o la musicalidad en *Tres tristes tigres* se dan de forma ininterrumpida y concentrada en el cuento de Agustín. (211)

Agustín's Oliveira and his foil, Requelle, also intersperse plays on words in Spanish, at other times sprinkle in and play with phrases drawn and transformed from French, English, and German, create compound words and neologisms (and use national idiomatic expressions in an ironic sense, among others). Some examples include the naming of one the cheap hotels visited by the couple: "Morgasmo" (71) the sarcastic reference to the Hotel Luna de Miel as "el Fucklton" (81), the neologisms "buenamodamod" to describe Requelle's coat (59) or "intelectonto" as Requelle at one point describes Oliveira himself (63). Some of the uses of foreign language phrases and quotes in the story, as Carpenter

observes, are incorrect. This recalls the faux-intellectualism contained in the long diatribes on any plethora of subjects espoused by the Cabrera Infante's *tigres*. They also serve the purpose, as Carpenter notes, to parody and mock the supposed infallibility of high culture (203). Carpenter goes on to note that the integration of incorrect, though apparently erudite, quotes creates a dividing line among the readers of the text: those who understand the joke and the dynamic at play and those who do not, for whom it will slip by and who will ultimately consider it correct. This playful dynamic engages the reader, the (inter)active *lector macho* suggested by Cortázar for *Rayuela*, who is apt to tap into this type of humor which is also present in Cortázar's own work. Carpenter also alludes to the other side of this argument which points out how the references to rock and rock lyrics, as is the case in "¿Cuál es la onda?", could be just as apt to present semantic obstacles for readers unfamiliar with the cultural references. This, in turn, leads to the establishment of another key dynamic at work in Onda texts, like the story at hand. As Carpenter explicates: "By placing English slang and popular song quotations within the realm of an elitist vocabulary, the Onda text reverses the cultural hegemony and places subculture in the position of dictating the norms of transcultural contextualization" (207). In the story, the use of a rock drummer as the main character along with the cultural capital that he brings, is utilized to this end.

The subtle employment of rock lyrics by Agustín in the story are also an example of this. Revisiting the reference to the Doors, Oliveira sings "Light My Fire", their second big hit from their first LP, while in the shower using that "trucoviejo" attempting to entice Requelle into bed (64). The reference is not mentioned explicitly, but would be obvious for any reader familiar with the Doors and Agustín already lays a foundation for the reference with the second epigraph to the story. Also, for readers familiar with the song, it can elicit a soundtrack to the scene which is, for the comedic and ironic purpose of its employment in the story, far less romantic than the heights of passion suggested by the song itself. For example the line, "Babe, we couldn't get much higher" is one telling example from the lyrics that contrasts with the awkward encounter that is playing itself out in the dirty, cheap hotel room. This further underscores the fact that the fire of passion fails to get lit in the story in respect to the expected sexual encounter which never occurs within the story. There are also references to the Beatles'

“Michelle” from their *Rubber Soul* LP (1965). Again the reference is not explicit, though Agustín seems to go out of his way to make sure the readers who are apt to catch it do so, while simultaneously throwing in his own play on words on the original lyrics. The original lyrics also include a phrase in French: “Michelle, my belle, these are words that go together well/ Michelle, my belle, sont des mots qui vont très bien ensemble”. In the text, Oliveira mentions says to Requelle, “...parece que te llamas Requelle la Belle,” adding later that, “...además son palabras que van muy bien juntas” (69).³⁵ Later, to emphasize the reference, Oliveira declares to himself directly to the readers:

Oh, Goshito, es *mi* Requelle;

Tantas mujeres he conocido y vine a parar con una Requelle Trèsbelle; así es la vida, hijos míos y lectores también.

En este moment Oliveira se

dirige a los lectores:

oigan, lectores, entiendan que es *mi* Requelle; no de ustedes, no crean que porque mi amor no nació en las formas habituales la amo menos. (71, italics and typography from original)

By addressing the readers directly, Agustín challenges them to become active participants in the text, encouraging a more perspicacious reading that leads to a richer understanding of it by means of discovering the allusions within. This sentiment recalls the participatory way of listening that Agustín suggests for fuller appreciation of the Rolling Stones’ *Their Satanic Majesties’ Request* in *La nueva música clásica*.

³⁵ The song originated from Paul McCartney doing comical imitations of French songs to amuse friends at parties. As Steve Turner explains, at first: “It remained a party piece with nothing more than Charles Aznavour-type Gallic groanings as accompaniment, until in 1965 John [Lennon] suggested that Paul should write proper words for and include it on the album” (94). Turner adds that after experimenting with different words and feels for the song, McCartney decided to incorporate the French feel and some French words. With the help of a friend’s wife, McCartney got his starting point, the name Michelle, (a French girl’s name with two syllables which is easy to rhyme) and the translation to “these are words that go together well”. There was no literary inspiration behind the song.

This quote also returns our attention once again to the role of the reader and the role of intertextuality—expanded in its scope by incorporating rock songs as texts—as well as the dynamic established by the role of the author. Harkening back to some of the most renowned critics on both matters, Lange cites Kristeva’s view that no text exists in isolation due to, using Bakhtin’s term, the inherent dialogism between literary texts.³⁶ In the analysis of Agustín’s work and its habitual use of intertextual references from all cultural realms, both of these theoretical foci (author vs. reader-based) are crucial to understand more specifically how the author placed himself within the realm of *escritura*, to use Glantz’s term (with focus on the author). It is also important to note how the use of the newer cultural references not only enriched the texts themselves, but also appealed to a newly developed audience more attuned to a “no-brow” cultural realm, where both high and low culture co-exist to create a fresh, for the time, artistic expression (with focus on the reader—the model reader). There are obvious parallels, of course, between intertextuality and the cover song—using known source material in a new artistic interpretation. Perhaps the main difference, and the one that concerns us most in the case of Agustín, is the role that covering plays in the authentication of the artist in relating him to his source material. In other words, the artist, when covering a song “well”, whether it be in the realm of homage or as a launching point for an innovative new interpretation, attempts to situate himself very directly within the cultural pedigree from which he is drawing.

In another reference worth noting, this time from the realm of high culture, Agustín employs one of his neologisms in a statement that suggests a contrast between his innovative use of colloquial language and how it had been employed by the Mexican literary establishment, namely Juan Rulfo. It

³⁶ Lange summarizes that: “...Kristeva se enfoca en el autor como lector de textos, Barthes y Rifaterre subrayan la participación activa del lector cuyo entendimiento de un texto se determinó por sus conocimientos previos de otros textos” (28-29). There are obvious parallels, of course, between intertextuality and the cover song. Perhaps the main difference, and the one that concerns us most in the case of Agustín is the role that covering plays in the authentication of the artist in relating him to his source material. In other words, the artist, when covering a song “well”, whether it be in the realm of homage or as a launching point for an innovative new interpretation, attempts to situate himself within the cultural pedigree from which he is drawing.

stems from the following exchange between Oliveira and Requelle, while she takes her turn in the shower:

...quieto en esa puerta Satanás; no te atrevas a entrar o llueve mole.

Requelle, perdóname pero el mole no llueve.

Olito, ésa es una expresión coloquial mediante la cual algunas personas se enteran de que la sangre brotará en cantidades donables.

Sí, y ese es un lugar común.

Aj, de *lugarcomala* a coloquial hay un abismo y yo permanezco en la orilla.

Ésa es una metáfora, y mala. (72, italics mine)

The final statement in this quote can be read as a metafictional interjection from Agustín himself asserting the self-awareness of his poetics and the *abismo* between his approach towards the use of colloquialisms and that of Rulfo's.³⁷ The distinction lies fundamentally in Agustín using colloquialisms from within the culture that employs them, utilizing them in his everyday vernacular. This is in contrast with the use of colloquialisms by a literary elite (to which Rulfo, of course, belonged in Mexico) that would employ them from the outside, as a rhetorical recourse to establish certain cultural *lugares comunes* via the means of commonplace expressions. These commonplace expressions would be lacking for Agustín. As is suggested from the text, one drawback would be from a lack of originality and another lacking applicability for the then-contemporary, urban context within which it was being expressed.

There are more metafictional interjections that Agustín makes in the story, most of which are separated by parentheses, employ unusual placement typographically on the page, and briefly interrupt the flow of the text. Some interjections comment on word choices—often offering alternatives to the one employed: “Caminaron por Vértiz y con pocos titubeos se metieron (se adentraron, por qué no) en la colonia de los Doctores” (71). Others comment on what words have already been utilized:

³⁷ Though it is perhaps controversial to place Rulfo among Mexico's intellectual elite at that point in time, he is undoubtedly a part of the establishment—which to an important extent would have been the same for writers like Agustín. The key point to keep in mind is the fact that Rulfo represents exactly the type of literature that from which Agustín is consciously straying and whose rules he is trying to break.

Y Oliveira acabó inquiriéndose (¿inquiriéndose?), viendo las preguntas en
sobreimposición sobre el rostro (¡rostro!) sonriente

(casi disonanta con el úl-

timo gerundio) (77, typography from original)

At times, the comments take on an irreverent tone directed at critics. For instance, while commenting on the use of italics in a previous sentence the parenthetical statement declares: “(Las cursivas indican énfasis; no es mero capricho, estúpidos)” (64). Another can be seen as jokingly alluding to the distinction between traditional/active readers made by Cortázar: “(frase para exclusivo solaz de lectores tradicionales)” (60). One other is directed at writer Juan Tovar. The metafictional component presents the reader with a potential glimpse of the process of the creation or, as it is in many cases, a parody of that process. Regardless of Agustín’s true intentions in this case, it does lead us back to being conscious about the engineering of the different components involved in the construction of a rock song, which the author refers to in *La nueva música clásica*. There is also the factor of self-awareness and autoreferentiality, which have also been discussed in other manifestations, such as the cover, thus far. Even more directly, however, the interjections can be seen as a parodic way of giving precise instructions about how to read specific parts of the text. Given the relationship already established with *Rayuela*, the interjections can be viewed as an inversion of Cortázar’s instructions to read novel as a whole. The interjections can be seen as perhaps more akin to the humorous set of instructions written by Cortázar in *Historias de cronopios y famas* (1962) which explore comical, jocular, absurd territory.

In addition, Agustín also makes use of typographical techniques similar to some that are scattered throughout *Tres tristes tigres* and develops them further. Agustín appropriates the original model and reshapes it for his own expanded, expressive purposes that further affect how the text is read. Agustín uses the unusual typographical techniques for a wide variety of ends: 1) to establish a visual representation of the rhythm being used by the speaker and the narrator (76, 77); 2) or the gathering of the pieces of thoughts which are formed and expressed by their inner voice (79); 3) to accentuate the awkwardness involved while expressing a certain statement (72); 4) as well as separating the thoughts of

the characters from the dialogue that predominates the story (79); 5) to highlight a detail from a specific scene or add sidebars to the scene (72, 73, 67, 64); 6) insert commentary from the narrator to comment on or confirm what was happening (73, 82); 7) to mark the passage of time (79, 83); 8) and as a segueway to cut cinematographically from the place where the characters are to descriptions of the outside scenery where they will soon be or where they are at the moment, using a minimum of words to re-set a scene (73, 80, 86). Agustín, by the time of the writing of “¿Cuál es la onda?” was already involved in writing plays as well as screenplays. This resource is evident in the sidebar interjections as the following quote from the text exemplifies:

Exterior. Calles lóbregas con
galanes incognitos de la co—
lonia Obrera. Noche. (Inte—
rior. Taxi. Noche.) [O back
projection.] (73, typography in original)

Though the influence of film can be gleaned in passages of *Tres Tristes Tigres*, there is no metafictional interjection of this type to emphasize it explicitly, as happens here.³⁸

There are other important aspects of *Tres tristes tigres* that are reworked by Agustín in the story as well, as Lange has explained in detail referring to the parodic aspects of “¿Cuál es la onda?”. As Lange perspicaciously observes, there are several parallels between Agustín’s story and the third section of Cabrera Infante’s novel, titled “Seseribó”. The “Seseribó” chapter recounts the relationship between Eribó, the drummer whose quote is utilized in the epigraph, and Vivian Corona-Smith, the upper-class teenager who has fallen for him watching him play. Eribó and Vivian’s relationship is complicated from

³⁸For more on Cabrera Infante’s relationship to film see his collected essays in the collection *Cine o sardina* (Alfaguara, 1997) and Kenneth Hall’s *Guillermo Cabrera Infante and the Cinema* (Newark, Delaware: Juan de la Cuesta, 1989). Notably, the first of Cabrera Infante’s screenplays made into film was for the psychedelic film *Wonderwall* (1968), which boasts its own direct connection to rock. Its soundtrack was done by the Beatles’ George Harrison, the first solo project done by any members of the group.

their differing age and social classes, but also, as Lange points out, because Eribó does not know where to take his girlfriend being that he assumes she will prefer a luxury hotel—a luxury he himself cannot afford. The other *tigres* joke that he should marry her, something that given the circumstances and the musician's promiscuous nature seems more impossible still. In the relationship, like in the relationship between Oliveira and la Maga in *Rayuela*, there is also the question of a lack of emotional connection: Vivian confesses her most intimate secret (how she lost her virginity) to an uninterested Eribó for whom sentimental issues of this type are alien. Lange notes that, of course, the opposite is true in Agustín's story in which there are plenty of opportunities and settings available for the couple to have sex, but frustrates all expectations by not doing so. Instead, in the process of not consummating what would be the all-too expected one-night stand, Agustín's couple develops a deeper bond and decides to get married in the end (209-210). Of course, this further frustrates expectations by choosing commitment over the free love that was so prevalent in the era—though it should also be noted that the marriage does not, in fact, take place in the story.

Like Eribó, Oliveira is also a drummer, though the passion he exhibits for his group is certainly seems to be at odds with the passion described by Eribó in the epigraph. This is key, as Oliveira abandons his group in the middle of the gig to begin his wanderings through the city with Requelle. This is unheard of for a musician to do and yet another parodic element, though it is one that is not explored by Lange. Like the situation with Vivian and Eribó, Requelle takes an immediate liking to Oliveira while watching him perform. The social status dynamic is also similar, as Requelle comes from a family with a "renowned name" whose fortune and has diminished and Oliveira comes from a middle-class home: "En la módér, soy un pinche clasemedia en el fondo" (79). It is important to note that the father is missing in both contexts, Requelle's having passed away (not soon enough to leave any significant inheritance), while there is no allusion to the fate of Oliveira's father. Each character can also be seen to represent the two aspects of the literary field, Oliveira, the Onda writer; while Requelle, literature itself. The following exchange can be seen as a synecdoche of the relationship between Onda and literature being expressed by Agustín in the story:

[Oliveira says to Requelle]...apuesto que eres una cochina intelectual.

Claro, dijo ella, no ves que digo puras estupideces.

Eso mero; digo, eso mero pensaba; pues chócala, Requilla, yo también soy intelectual, músico de la nueva bola y todo eso.

Intelectonto, Olivista: exageras diciendo estupideces.

Así es, pero no puedo evitarlo: soy intelectual de quore matto...(63)

Both insult each other in the exchange (Requelle being called a dirty intellectual, while Requelle uses a neologism that combines the Spanish words *intectual* and *tonto* (dumb) to describe Oliveira. They also accuse each other of saying stupid things, while Oliveira adds that he cannot help it because of the crazy type of intellectual that he is.

Oliveira as a character embodies key aspects of the Onda itself as he is a middle-class rock drummer who brings with him the cultural capital of the counterculture. His lack of a father shows the breaks with tradition in the literary sense, as well as with the patriarchal figure represented by the PRI that Zolov explained. Importantly, he has to leave his group behind to engage directly with literature, as the group that he belongs to is in a separate realm, the stage. Also, in a passage that recalls the descriptive enumerations from *La nueva música clásica*, Oliveira emphasizes that he is not *just* a drummer and tells Requelle:

Requeya, Reyuela, Rayuela, hijo de Cortázar; además de ser el amo con la batería, sé tocar guitarra Rickenbacker, piano, bajo eléctrico, órgano, moog synthesizer, manejo el gua, vibrador, assorted percussions, distortion booster y el fuzztone; sé pedir ecolejano para mis platillos en el feedback y medio le hago al clavecín digo, me encantaría tocar bien el clavecín y ser el amo con la viola eléctrica y con el melotrón; y además compongo, mi vida, mi boda, mi bodorria; te voy a componer sentidas canciones que causarán sensación.³⁹ (80)

³⁹ These instruments represent the diverse gamut of sounds used in the creation of sounds in rock. They each represent a nuanced sound with particular character. The Rickenbacker guitar, particularly the 12-string, was used and popularized by the Beatles and the Byrds in the mid-1960s. The moog synthesizer

The instruments display a wide palette for Oliveira to draw from to create an art that, to use an analogy from painting, is far from monochromatic or one-dimensional. Clearly, Oliveira aims to impress Requelle with the diversity of resources he has at his artistic disposal and to emphasize that he is not an artist who just makes noise by pounding on the drums. Of course, these are resources that he will use to create a sensation and elicit a reaction specifically in her.

Now, returning to the point of Oliveira leaving his band, los Gajos del Ritmo (the Branches of Rhythm), behind. Oliveira explains that he loves playing the drums but that there is not much that can be accomplished playing in the dreadful band to which he belongs. He continues by saying:

Los Gargajos del Rismo deberíamos llamarnos, aseguró Oliveira. Sabes quién es el amo, niñadespistada, agregó, pues nada menos que Bigotes Starr y también este muchacho Carlitos Watts y Keith Moon; te juro, yo quisiera tocar en un grupo de esa onda. (80)

He mocks the name of his band saying it should be called to what roughly translates to “the Gobs of Phlegm of Rismo”. The last play on words on ritmo is another neologism, in this case one without a clear meaning. Given the humorous, mocking tone being expressed by Oliveira, I can venture to say it is a combination of “risa” (laughter) and “ritmo” (rhythm)—given the band’s laughable skills according to Oliveira. The names that follow are those of the drummers of Britain’s three most well-known rock groups, all of which we have mentioned so far: Bigotes (referring to his distinctive moustache) Starr is Ringo Starr, drummer of the Beatles, Carlitos Watts is Charlie Watts, drummer of the Rolling Stones and Keith Moon was the drummer of the Who. Wishing to play in a band “de esa onda” (with that type of a vibe) supposes being associated with the best of the best and being an influential figure. This sentiment

came into use in the late 60s and has remained a tool for producing a plethora of synthetic and other worldly sounds. The “gua” refers to the wah-wah pedal, popularized by Jimi Hendrix as a tool to give the electric guitar a more voice-like quality. The “vibrador” is another device often used by Hendrix that simulates the effect of a spinning speaker and tremolo effect. The distortion and fuzztone were effects in virtually every lead guitarist’s at the time and since. “Ecolejano” can refer to any number of electronic devices that produced echo by recording a musical phrase, repeating it and superimposing on top of the phrases that followed. Feedback is the creation of a sustained electric sound through the superposition of signals—again, a device exploited by Hendrix in the creation of his personal electric guitar vernacular. Finally, the mellotron is a keyboard instrument that could emulate an orchestra or choir. Its use became more prevalent after the Beatles’ use of it on *Magical Mystery Tour* (1967) and the Stones’ *Her Satanic Majesties Request* (1967).

reminds us of Agustín's desire to be considered as a writer of literature, not relegated to a category of subliterature or paraliterature. Furthermore, his incorporation, or "covering" if you will, of tropes, techniques and themes from both Cortázar and Cabrera Infante display his own considerable skills, while attempting to associate himself among them as a writer of literature. The case becomes clearer upon analyzing Requelle's symbolic role as literature and its dynamic with Agustín and the Onda.

Requelle's role as literature serves as foil to Oliveira as the Onda. Her behavior and the way she is treated, opined upon and spoken about by the characters they run across in their urban journey further frames the dynamic between literature and Onda writing. Her own self-awareness and self-esteem are an interesting launching point: 1) she perceives herself to be ugly despite repeatedly being told of her beauty by Oliveira—to the point where she becomes violent with Oliveira upon his insistence;⁴⁰ 2) her feelings about not being left enough inheritance by her deceased father (from living too long) refers us to the re-assessment of the legacy left behind by previous generations of writers for the newer generations, not just the Onda, who, again referring back to Carlos Fuentes' *La nueva novela hispanoamericana*, were (successfully) attempting to renew Latin American literature and distance it from some of its own historic *lugares comunes*. At no point does the narrator clarify the distinction of whether Requelle is beautiful or not, which in this context we can take to be an allusion to the shifting aesthetic paradigms which can praise or discredit different works from distinct historical eras.

Requelle's attraction to Oliveira originates from afar and she abandons her friends to get closer and know him on a more intimate level—though the dynamics of the expected one-night stand would limit the depth of this knowledge, the ultimate result suggested by the story tells otherwise. Requelle's attraction to Oliveira is akin to one of Solotarewsky's key premises on Latin American literature: the renewal of literature occurs when literature looks to paraliterature for elements to incorporate.⁴¹

⁴⁰ The following exchange shows this dynamic at play: "Si me vuelves a decir la Belle te muerdo un tobillo, soy fea fea fea aunque nadie me lo crea" (69).

⁴¹ Solotarewsky writes about the incorporation of paraliterary elements by renowned Latin American and how paraliterature functions in changing the course of literature as a whole. She examines writers such as

Regarding her attraction and leaving so quickly and easily with Oliveira, Requelle alludes to a family history of “easy women” and says that her own perversion reaches an extreme within that realm. But the so-called perversion is not what it seems: “...el colmo de mi perversión es llegar a un hotel de a peso...estar junto a un hombre desnudo...y no hacer niente, rien, nichts, ni soca” (65). The flirtations of literature with realms of subliterate or paraliterature and its constitutive elements are taken to a certain point, yet never fully consummated. At that point, Oliveira’s response is to fall in love with her and suggest she leave the hotel because he cannot possibly offend her with his intentions—which she refuses to do, and the story goes on.

Later, in a humorous take on the “misreading” that Agustín accuses Glantz of as a representative member of the intellectual elite is the fact that Requelle wants to tell Oliveira his fortune, not by reading his palm, initially by reading only his fingers—an incomplete reading based on false premises. What she does indeed glean from the fingers appears nonsensical, but actually expresses certain views held by the intellectual elite towards Onda writers:

...tus dedos indican que tienes una alcantarilla en vez de boca y que eres la prueba irrefutable de las teorías de Darwin tal como fueron analizadas por el Tuerto Reyes en el Colegio de México y que deberías verte en un espejo para darte de patadas y que sería bueno que cavaras un foso para en, uf, terrarte y que harías bien ha, aj, aj, ciendo como que te callas y te callas y deveras y todo lo demás, es decir, o escir: etcétera. (62)

These sentiments of having a mouth like a sewer, that they should assess themselves to inflict pain upon themselves, bury themselves (in a *tumba*, perhaps?) and be quiet echoes the reception of the Onda texts that we have already seen recounted by Gunia (13). Of course, when she finally does resort to reading the palm, Requelle predicts Oliveira’s demise from leukemia. The choice of disease is not random, as it alludes to a blood disease: his ultimate demise will come from the lifeblood that runs within him becoming corrupted—a literal destruction from within that affects all of his vital organs. As we have seen

Borges and his reworking of the guidelines of the detective novel, Manuel Puig and his incorporation of film and melodrama into his work, as well as Vargas Llosa’s use of the soap opera and *novela rosa* romantic novel in *La tía Julia y el escribidor*.

earlier from in the representative comments by Glantz, Monsiváis, and those summarized by Gunia: in the view of the intellectual elite, a movement like the Onda could not survive as an intellectual movement. The movement's very lifeblood was tainted: its strong pop culture influences, its disdain for established cultural and intellectual norms, its supposed corruption and misuse of language, its occasionally pornographic nature, and its patricidal inclinations, among others.

Furthermore, during the couple's wanderings through the city, all of the individuals they run across have an opinion as to how Requelle should be comporting herself and the corruptive influence that is being exercised by Oliveira upon her. The police accusing Oliveira of bothering and harassing Requelle, the taxi driver's concern with her virginity and purity, and the hotel clerk's ironic concern with the couple's relationship and premarital sex all figure as comments not only about social norms, but as Requelle as representative of an institution—in our case, that of elite literature. Even the narrator reminds us that Requelle has certain social norms to live up to and *buenas costumbres* she should follow, both of which are being transgressed by her continuing flirtation with Oliveira: "Requelle, mide las consecuencias de los actos con los cuales estás infringiendo nuestras mejores y más sólidas tradiciones" (66). These critiques reflect the view of the cultural elite in respect to how literature itself, too, should comport itself and not allow itself to be corrupted by any sordid influence like the Onda, assuring that proper appearances be maintained. Literature as viewed by the cultural elite, being considered a fundamental national institution, can be considered an extension of the nation-as-woman metaphor suggested by Scott in "Imagined Bodies, Imagined Communities: Feminism, Nationalism, and Body Metaphors". Scott explains that: "The boundaries of the body of woman-as-nation are carefully demarcated and controlled" (2). Hence, the commentary on her behavior, particularly given the obvious direction which the couple is taking in going to a hotel, is the obvious, logical response to which the story is responding.

The conflicts that arise during the encounters in public all stem from Oliveira's behavior, and not exclusively his behavior towards Requelle. His resistive nature almost leads him to blows with the taxi driver and one hotel clerk, showing us the combative nature of the Onda when faced with the opinions stemming from the practitioners of the social norms. On the other hand, with Requelle there is an ironic

ambivalence that is demonstrated in the conversation regarding the radio program titled “la Hora nacional” which always has programming that talks about the PRI’s iconic institutions: la patria, la familia, as well as heartfelt poems (used undoubtedly in an ironic sense by Agustín). The taxi driver explains how he gets bored with the program, which is the only one that he can get on his broken radio:

...lo que pasa uno oye toda esa habladera de quel gobierno es lo máximo y quel progreso y le estabilidad y el peligro comunista en todas partes, porque a poco no es cierto que a uno lo cansan con toda esa habladera. En los periódicos y en el radio y en la tele y hasta en los excusados, perdone usted señorita, dicen eso. A veces como que late que no ha de ser tan cierto si tienen que repetirlo tanto.

Pues para mí *sí* hacen bien repitiéndolo, dijo Requelle, es necesario que todos los mexicanos seamos concientes de que vivimos en un país ejemplar (75).

Recalling comments by Zolov, Gunia, and García Saldaña, we are reminded of the agenda that alienated the youth from the official discourse of the PRI regime. The words do not stem from Oliveira, who would not tune in anyway, but from the taxi driver, an average citizen who the program would be directed towards. Requelle, for our purposes being a symbol of the literary institution, also reminds us of other links noted by Gunia: the reliance of the literary institution and the *Mafia* itself on public funding from the PRI for the realization of their activities (141). This also that meant distancing themselves too far from the official discourse was an impossibility as part of the state machinery that propagated the messaging to the public. Though irony can obviously be read into Requelle’s reaction, the official discourse to no small degree had to be maintained by the public intelligentsia within a repressive regime, or face varying consequences.

Towards the end of the story, the couple, which has developed a strong bond as the story has progressed, decides to eschew their quest for sex and instead decides to marry. This is something which yet another figure encountered, the judge who refuses to marry them, says is impossible for them to do in Mexico City. In a figurative sense, their marriage would be the union of the literary institution (associated with the Mexican state and its official discourse) with the Onda—like Agustín’s intent on

being perceived to be among writers of literature. This situation recalls the theoretical precepts behind Doris Sommer's *Foundational Fictions* in explaining 19th Century Latin American romances within which two lovers of different social class, race, or both, are typically kept apart by characteristically insurmountable social norms—norms within which such a union would be unacceptable. The dynamic of differing social classes between Oliveira and Requelle, as I noted, is explicitly established. Given what each character represents within the allegorical model I have proposed, the model established by Sommer works on a variety of levels. First, there is the constant commentary by the encountered bystanders I have alluded to about what Requelle should or should not do within the established social norms. Sommer observes that: "Tensions that inevitably exist and drive the story on are external to the couple: the counterproductive social constraints that underline the naturalness and the inevitability of the lovers' transgressive desire" (17-18). Despite the obstacles, like the couples in the foundational fictions, Oliveira and Requelle forge onward.

Most importantly within the symbolic dynamic my allegorical reading establishes, we have the unacceptability of the union between the Onda and literature for the Mexican literary establishment and cultural elite of the time. This issue relates directly to Sommer's point that: "For one thing, the writing elite was loathe to give up its hierarchical privilege to conciliatory projects" (51). In this case, the conciliatory project rethinks the boundaries of what is acceptable within the realm of high culture and proposes a vision more akin to Canclini's vision that levels the hierarchies between high, low and mass media culture. Requelle and Oliveira's marriage would symbolically overcome the imposed obstacles keeping them apart and integrate a marginalized group (the Onda) into the establishment which has, up to that point, disdained such an inclusion. On this point, Sommer explains that: "The marriage metaphor slips into, or out of, a metonymy of national consolidation if we stop to consider how marriages bridged regional, economic, and party differences during the years of national consolidation" (18). The youthful view expressed by the Onda regarding the future of Mexico includes a place within the accepted cultural framework that has largely shaped the nation's discourse.

Though the story ends on this positive note of apparent understanding and future prospects of marriage, nothing is consummated: no sex, no marriage, nothing beyond an intention. Regarding this, Sommer observes that the:

...erotico-political affairs [of foundational fictions] can be quite frustrating. And even when they end in satisfying marriage, the end of desire beyond which the narratives refuse to go, happiness reads like a wish-fulfilling projection of national consolidation and growth, a goal rendered visible. (6)

Furthermore, the intention to marry is one that may or may not see its fruition, given Requelle's self-described "perversion" and the fact that she has to resort to asking permission of a higher institution, her mother, before being able to see it through. With all of these points in mind, it becomes clearer that the story of Oliveira and Requelle serves to metaphorically express Agustín's views on literature. More specifically, it relates to the Onda's relationship to literature and the outside institutions that also impose themselves upon that relationship. After marriage the couple says they will seek an apartment which will be their own, with their own set of rules to live by, insulated from outside expectations and impositions; an example of Sommer's observation that within foundational fictions: "lovers must imagine their ideal relationship through an alternative society" (18). The wish-fulfilling projection in the story suggests an idealized vision of a changed, markedly more open world for the couple to exist in productively and transcend previously held notions of literature and its expression.

As we have seen, there are a variety of factors at work in "¿Cuál es la onda?" which link it to the logic of the rock cover and can lead us to express that the story is in itself a sort of cover of both Cortázar and Cabrera Infante. This logic stems from appropriating elements from the model texts such as tropes, themes, and techniques that can be reworked in an original way that still does not lose sight of the original version. Not losing sight of the original version, of course, necessitates a listener, or reader in our case, familiar with both. This individual must be able to discern the pertinent signs that link both works, which again brings us back to the *model reader* of these texts that I have alluded to. Beyond that, there is also a conscious effort by Agustín of situating himself within a specific literary realm with the explicit

references to Cortázar and Cabrera Infante. This, in turn, aids in the creation of a public persona that corresponds with the ethos as well as the poetics of the writer, a topic I will focus on in the following section about Agustín's autobiographical text, *El rock de la cárcel*.

El rock de la cárcel

*Realmente jamás me ilusioné ni con el rock
ni con las drogas de poder,
por tanto jamás llegué a
"desilusionarme" más tarde.*
José Agustín

Originally published in 1985, *El rock de la cárcel* was José Agustín's second autobiographical text. The first had been done in 1966, before Agustín turned 22 years old, as part of the "Nuevos Escritores Mexicanos del Siglo XX Presentados por sí mismos" series that also included other young writers, including Carlos Monsiváis, Sergio Pitol, Fernando del Paso and Gustavo Sainz, among others. The first autobiography, titled *Quién soy, dónde estoy, qué me dieron*, is, as can be expected of any autobiography of a 21 year-old, a brief text and is included as an appendix to *El rock de la cárcel*. *El rock de la cárcel* picks up where the first biography leaves off, at the beginning of 1966.⁴² The book takes its title from the 1957 Elvis Presley film, *Jailhouse Rock* and, in part, recounts Agustín's experience in the infamous Lecumberri prison in 1971 from an arrest for trafficking marijuana in December, 1970. Towards the end of the text, Agustín describes Lecumberri as "en verdad un sitio cargado con las peores vibraciones de México" (131). Agustín was one of several writers to have been incarcerated in the now defunct "Palacio Negro" who later wrote about the experience and created their own portrait of the life led within its confines.⁴³ The second part of the text serves the recognized function of many texts in the

⁴² Beyond these autobiographical texts, there are numerous published interviews with Agustín where he provides biographical information that coincides with the other texts and corresponds to the textual image he has constructed of himself within them.

⁴³ Other texts of note for their proximity to Agustín's stay in Lecumberri are *Diario de Lecumberri* (1960) by Colombian author Álvaro Mutis (b. 1923) and *El apando* (1969) by Mexican author José Revueltas (1914-1976). As has already been noted, Agustín later wrote the screenplay for the 1976 film adaptation of *El apando*.

prison genre which details the grotesque, illogical, arbitrary parallel world, experienced by the prisoners. Agustín frames his condemnations of his time in the prison and the meaning of his incarceration in a way that targets the inherent, endemic hypocrisy of Mexican society as a whole. As I have reiterated before, this is a unifying theme within many of Agustín's works.

The text, however, is not a prison narrative *per se*, as only the second section, which carries the title of the overall work, focuses on the prison experience and to the conclusions such experience leads Agustín. These conclusions add a level of depth to the discontent and resistance present in other texts of his, the rebellious attitude fostered by rock and the practices of the Onda movement as a whole (of which he never felt completely part) and towards the social norms within which so much hypocrisy proliferates. Though I will return to the section about the Lecumberri experience at the end, of more interest to us here is the entire first section which comprises the bulk of the text and is titled "Tienes que entrar para salir" which is divided into six chapters, whose significance we will explore later on, and progress chronologically to Agustín's arrest and seven-month stay in Lecumberri. These chapters relate Agustín's novelistic life during his late 1960s heyday as a writer, screenwriter, counterculture figure, and lover of many women—along with the many successes and missteps that occurred to him along the way. It also gives, as we have noted from having previously quoted the text, insights into the formation of Agustín's poetics, his opinions on other writers, and the influence rock had on him day to day. The constant influence of rock, its cultural capital, and the way of life with which it was associated in the late 1960s, particularly experimentation with drugs and, to a lesser extent, free love, are exposed in depth by Agustín in this text. Also, the candid self-awareness displayed in the textual construction of his own character provides us with a figure in many ways not dissimilar to what could be expected of one of his own fictional creations—displaying weaknesses and contradictions that could potentially be ignored, but instead are emphasized to elicit a greater effect. As such, several experiences and descriptions that are narrated in the text would fit right into Agustín's purely fictional work, and in relation to the music described in the text, *La nueva música clásica*.

Much criticism has focused on the construction of the autobiography as a genre and its constitutive elements. In his article, “Para una pragmática de la autobiografía,” Darío Villanueva has summarized the views of many of the most cited sources relating to the study of the genre, including Phillippe Lejeune, Elizabeth Bruss, Jacques Lacan and Carlos Castilla del Pino, among others.⁴⁴ I will add the comments of Mexican author René Avilés Fabila, a friend of Agustín’s and another member reluctant to be classified as part of the Onda generation, who contributes some salient points to the discussion in his article “La autobiografía como género de ficción”. Villanueva reproduces Lejeune’s own definition of the genre as a launching point: “Récit rétrospectif en prose qu’une personne réelle fait de sa propre existence, lorsqu’elle met l’accent sur sa vie individuelle, en particulier l’histoire de sa personnalité” (205). Villanueva acknowledges the main challenges in accurately recounting the history of one’s own life and personality lie in the problems presented by the passage of time, the discrepancies that this passage generates in establishing the identity of the enunciating self and how the past experience is subjectively filtered and embellished as much by what is remembered as what is forgotten (208). This is a fundamental point for Avilés who observes the following regarding the details that fade from memory: “Y aquí entra la imprecisión, los recuerdos pueden ser vagos, y desde luego la ficción que sustituye a una realidad borrosa”. The entrance of fictional component into the autobiographical text does not simply serve to fill the gaps in memory imposed by the passage of time. In the case of authors responsible for their own autobiographies, it allows for the implementation of other aspects of their own poetics into the text. The most important, of course, is the construction of the self as the main character and subjective lens through which the narrated reality is filtered and framed.

Drawing on the work of critic and psychiatrist Carlos Castilla del Pino, Villanueva explains that among the first intentions of an autobiographical text is “ponerse en orden uno mismo”. He adds: “Esto es, en cierto modo el propósito de *construirse*, trasladándose de la posición de sujeto a la de objeto no sólo para sí, sino sobre todo para los demás. Porque [quoting Castilla del Pino] “el objeto que se exhibe

⁴⁴ Of course, *El rock de la cárcel* does indeed fit within with the stipulations enumerated by the different critics cited by Villanueva. I will focus only on the most relevant to the analysis of the poetics of rock.

se ha construido en la escritura” (210, emphasis in original). This point is key in Villanueva’s own concept of autobiography as a literary genre:

...la autobiografía como género literario posee una virtualidad creativa, más que referencial. Virtualidad de *poesis* antes que de *mimesis*. Es, por ello, un instrumento fundamental no tanto para la reproducción cuanto para una verdadera *construcción* de la identidad del yo (212, emphasis in original).

There are other factors to take into account as well in considering this point. The previous suggestion of the poetic aspect being of equal, if not greater, importance than the mimetic component of the autobiography, of course, brings into question a fundamental point in the *autobiographical pact* originally postulated by Lejeune in 1975. This pact between author and reader assumes an inherent sincerity present in the enunciating subject who opens his words up to scrutiny and to the verification of whatever truth lies behind them. As Villanueva summarizes: “El *pacto autobiográfico* resulta ser, así, la confirmación en y por el texto de la identidad real del autor que es a la vez narrador y protagonista” (206). The Agustín has displayed a great degree of consistency when comparing the biographical information relayed in interviews and the autobiographical texts, including the misgivings he has about his own life and missteps along the way. For his article, “The Development of an *Ondero*”, which reads like a short biography of Agustín and his work, John Kirk draws greatly upon the autobiographical texts and the interviews in question, though he also makes use of other information that serves to objectively confirm what he recounts.

The inclusion of the misgivings and the remorseful tone with which they are treated lead us to another key point made by Villanueva:

La autobiografía necesita un *narratario*, entendiendo port al aquel destinatario que justifica la propia existencia del discurso como tal, frente a otra figura menos exigente como es la de un mero lector implícito representado al que el narrador hace referencias incidentales. (208)

As we shall see further ahead, Agustín frames his experience in both sections of the book as a transformative, spiritual journey. It can be gleaned from the multiple *mea culpas* found in the text that the

narratee who the text is addressing would already be somewhat familiar with some of the events that are represented within the text and the reputation that precedes Agustín. As Novoa explains of Agustín's public persona:

José Agustín cultivated the image of hip, pop artist in the mid-1960s. If he is remembered as somewhat frivolous at the start, he has himself to blame in part. This was the age of Beatlemania and the beginning of the counterculture movements. It was in fashion to appear frivolous—it had been *in* at least since Futurism and Dada. More specifically, Agustín was the heir of Hollywood's Rebel(s) Without a Cause and the heir of the irreverent Elvis of *Jailhouse Rock*. He was the peer of The Doors, rock music's translator of Celine, and eventually he became the peer of the equally directionless, but somehow more politically rebellious, Easy Riders. (41)

The text, of course, confirms these claims but adds the inner dimension, the complicated inner workings behind the public façade.

Also, despite not being referred to beyond the title within the text, the relationship with the film *Jailhouse Rock* is also present. The film, one of Presley's last before entering the military, tells the story of a young man convicted of manslaughter attempting to protect the honor of a woman in a bar fight he did not start. The incident can be said to occur because of being in the wrong place at the wrong time—the essence of what causes Agustín to be arrested and sent to Lecumberri for trafficking marijuana. In jail, Elvis' character develops into a rock singer who reaps great success after his release, to the point that his ego interferes with his relationships with individuals who had helped him achieve his success. He plans to abandon the individuals who had helped him along the way to go to a big label. This leads to an altercation with one of his closest friends and advisors in which he loses his voice. The experience transforms the Elvis character for the better, allowing him to value not only his successful career, but the importance of the relationships that had been essential in it happening. In the end, there is success and redemption due to this recognition of what is truly important. Though there are few, if any, specific parallels to Agustín's story that can be extracted from *Jailhouse Rock*, there is one key point that it shares: the self is in search of redemption in the eyes of certain narratees. Schaffer explains that: "By his own

claims, Agustín's incarceration in Lecumberri was one of the most critical moments in his life. The harsh realities of prison forced him to reevaluate previous notions he held about his relationship to the world, and the people around him" (136). As such, the construction of the text traces the evolution of who Agustín was before, during and, from the perspective that the text is narrated from, after the incarceration.

Regarding this, Villanueva observes how Lejeune's own theory evolved through the years, as this quote from Lejeune's *Moi aussi* (1986) shows: "...quelle illusion de croire qu'on peut dire la vérité, et de croire qu'on a une existence individuelle et autonome!...Comment peut-on penser que dans l'autobiographie c'est la vie vécue qui produit le texte, alors que c'est le texte qui produit la vie!..." (214). To this we can add Molloy's assertion: "La autobiografía no depende de los sucesos sino de la *articulación* de esos sucesos, almacenados en la memoria y reproducidos mediante el recuerdo y su verbalización" (16). The importance of the text framing the life as opposed to the other way around is the factor that enriches the autobiography as a genre and allows the author to bring other aspects of his own poetics into the recounting of this own life. Villanueva goes on to compare fictional discourse rooted in realism and the discourse of an autobiographical text. He says: "Y concluyo ahora que discursos tan acreditadamente auténticos como se consideraba a los autobiográficos no se diferencian en nada de los de pura ficción" (215). This point is not lost on Avilés in his own analysis of the autobiographical genre. Avilés, who because of his own experience as a writer also believes *all* fictional texts have an autobiographical component, adds that:

La autobiografía, pues al contrario de lo que aseveró [Michel] Tournier, no siempre parece estar distante de la ficción. Será una misión del historiador o del periodista desligar un testimonio, un documento de la literatura...Varias de las autobiografías escritas en México tienen alto valor literario, por la forma en que las edificaron y porque en más de una ocasión sus autores dejaron de ser historiadores de su vida para seguir siendo poetas y narradores al modificar hechos personales, al falsificar la realidad.

(reneavilesfabila.com.mx/obra/articulos_linea/autobiografia_genero_ficcion.html, no pagination)⁴⁵

Of course, I do not wish to imply that the events recounted in *El rock de la cárcel* are falsified, though it is evident that, particularly in the first section of the book, there is a greater consciousness of applying the aesthetic principles that Agustín had developed during the era he was writing about—his heyday as an *ondero*. Certain portions of the text are filtered through the subjective lens that such a poetics would necessitate: a reality whose subjectivity is framed by rock, its ethos and the poetics it engendered, as well as the lifestyle that is associated with it—the drugs and irreverence towards institutions and authorities as experienced by a young man who shares much in common with the very characters he creates. While in the second section, there is a different approach to the aesthetization when narrating the prison experience. As a textual device, this creates a contrast with the more matured, reflective, hardened and pragmatic identity (who has, to some extent, put himself in order as Castillo would suggest) that is also present throughout the text. This voice is further emphasized at the end following the transformative experience brought about by the time spent in Lecumberri. The act of the writer looking back on his experiences points us to Molloy's assertion that: "La evocación del pasado está condicionada por la autofiguración del sujeto en el presente: la imagen que el autobiógrafo tiene de sí, la que desea proyectar o la que el público exige" (19). Agustín satisfies all three points suggested by Molloy at different times in the text.

Two sides of the self are present in the first part of the text and are a key dynamic in its formation and evolution. We can classify the two sides, at times differentiated in the style and rhetoric that are employed, as that of: 1) the *ondero* whose voice exudes a confidence that often crosses into arrogance, displays irreverence and also aesthetically frames the experiences that are recounted and; 2) the humble, more reasonable voice that, with the benefit of hindsight, attempts to make sense of it all, admits mistakes, acknowledges shortcomings and frames the experience as a spiritual journey of self-discovery.

⁴⁵ Avilés Fabila refers to French author Michel Tournier (b. 1924), who categorizes the autobiography as a genre that is closer to history and journalism than it is to literature, in the process undervaluing the creative component that is also inherent in biographical texts.

The following quote exemplifies a bit of both sides. It also reminds us of how Agustín, as seen in previous quotes in this thesis, has consistently thought of himself as an outsider and uses the voice of reason to emphasize that role. Agustín declares of his successes and his position:

Era obvio que estaba muy bien dotado para la literature, pero que mi desarrollo apenas comenzaba. Todo había ocurrido sin que yo lo buscara, pero en realidad siempre había sido ambicioso, temerario y audaz. Traté de propiciar la buena fortuna que disfrutaba y nunca me encerré a cualquier cosa que promocionara mis libros sin traicionar, eso sí, una base de principios bien tangibles que en ese momento los sintetizaba la frase de Dylan: para vivir fuera de la ley hay que ser honesto. Me consideraba, y estaba, completamente dentro de la corriente y a la vez al margen, embarcado en un sueño solitario que, por suerte, muchas veces coincidía en lo más avanzado de la sociedad: artistas, intelectuales y gente de izquierda. Yo me sentía con derecho a criticar todo, empezando por lo que tenía más cerca y más me afectaba, fuesen amigos o enemigos; confusamente pensé que podía llevar a cabo una especie de militancia personal: participar en movimientos populares, apoyar causas que lo merecieran, opinar de política, criticar al gobierno y a la iniciativa privada. (21)

There is no mistaking the presence of the brash *ondero* who is ready to assert himself in any situation. This is juxtaposed with the interspersed, more mature voice of reason that subtly acknowledges actions perceivable as mistakes and creates a distance between selves, the then and now. There is also the telling phrase about being completely within the happenings of the time, juxtaposed with feeling to be at the margins living a solitary dream. This is one of several examples of Agustín painting himself as an outsider in search of an identity, a point I will explore later in this section.

Also of note is the fact that the thought that guides him through comes from Bob Dylan, whose words in song and in life were considered to be gospel to many of his contemporaries.⁴⁶ Among those

⁴⁶ Bob Dylan (née Robert Zimmerman, May, 24, 1941) is one of the most important figures to emerge in the 1960s as a singer, songwriter, poet, and counterculture figure. His influence in the 1960s cannot be underestimated as he brought a lyrical sophistication as of then unseen. Dylan drew on a vast number of

contemporaries, we can consider Agustín as well, who mostly speaks of Dylan in superlative terms. From Agustín's descriptions of him in *La nueva música clásica*, Dylan can also be considered an influence upon him, given that much of what he admires of Dylan also forms general a part of his own poetics. In *La nueva música clásica* Agustín writes of Dylan that:

Su virtuosismo manejando sílabas y rimas y juegos rítmicos no tiene precedente ...En su primera etapa, Dylan manifestaba un lenguaje de metáforas más o menos poco complicado con relación directa a su individualidad o a fenómenos sociales...Después pasó a *imágenes oníricas*, en veces sumamente agresivas y complicadas; en ellas podía encontrarse gran ternura, *dosis inconmesurables de humor corrosivo, sátira, reflexiones sobre efectos post-drogas y juegos con momentos muy actuales y con personajes literarios o de ficción* o de ambiente circense o de la Commedia dell'Arte, pero siempre con una imaginación desbordante, gran facilidad para inventar, para soñar o para transmitir la realidad a partir de lo no directo, lo habitual o los grandes problemas. (17, emphasis mine)

Though Agustín is extolling Dylan's poetic gifts, what he lauds also corresponds to devices he employs himself in his narratives including the plays on words and rhythm that are interspersed in the dialogues. In our previous analysis, we have also seen examples of all the highlighted points save for the oneiric imagery and the reflections about the aftereffects of drug use (though there are plenty of descriptions of hangovers from alcohol), which, Schaffer explains in detail in "The Drug Experience in José Agustín's Fiction", particularly when focusing on the novel Agustín wrote while incarcerated, *Se está siendo tarde*

sources from different American folk idioms to arrive at his influential sound. These influences included, among others, folk singers Woody Guthrie and Eric Von Schmidt and bluesmen Huddie "Leadbelly" Ledbetter and Muddy Waters. As I alluded to previously, in 1965, Dylan famously electrified his sound at the Newport Folk Festival, which, while it alienated many folk purists at the time, increased his popularity in general by putting him into the rock realm. Dylan's conversion to rock sounds also did much to bring a political awareness to the burgeoning rock movement, an aspect that would grow in the late 1960s among the myriad of artists he influenced. His repertory also began to be an integral part of the songs that were covered by up-and-coming groups from the 1960s onward. In *La nueva música clásica*, Agustín speaks of Dylan in generally glowing terms, calling him "El maestro Dylan o el jefe Bob o el genio Bob Dylan" (15).

(*final en laguna*), which was published in 1973. They are also present in the more aesthetized passages of *El rock de la cárcel*, as we shall see further on.

The mention of Dylan as a guiding force is but one of many mentions of influences that are present in the text. The text makes explicit who and what were having an influence upon Agustín in the creation of a poetic during his formative years as an artist, complementing the metafictional component present in his fictional work. The presence of rock as a backdrop and a cultural phenomenon from which to draw from poetically and personally is also, of course, essential. In this process, Agustín simultaneously follows and breaks with a key point Molloy explains regarding the Latin American autobiography. She states: “El autobiógrafo hispanoamericano a menudo recurre al archivo europeo en busca de fragmentos textuales con los que, consciente o inconscientemente, forja su imagen” (16). The textual fragments which Agustín draws from originate in Europe (British rock) but also the United States (American rock) as well as the Far East (*the I Ching*, as we shall see ahead). Again, the “texts” from which he forges his own image are quite different than those to which Molloy refers regarding Latin American autobiographies as a whole, again reflecting the sensibility as an outsider which he wishes to convey. As an example of the importance of rock in framing his experience, in recounting “la fase más feliz de mi sueño”, the happy moments early on in his affair with singer and actress Angélica María, the Beatles appear as the soundtrack and as an example of the artistic and spiritual affinity they shared:⁴⁷

...Angélica María y yo vivimos juntos el estreno mundial de, ¡oh sincronidad!, “Todo lo que se necesita es amor” [“All You Need Is Love”] (por ahí andaba Mick Jagger). También compartimos una de las primeras copias de *El sargento Pimienta* [*Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts*

⁴⁷ Angélica María (née Angélica María Hartman Ortiz, September 27, 1944) has been a star in Mexico since the mid-1950s having appeared in dozens of films, television programs and soap operas, while also having released dozens of records. Her affair with Agustín began during work in *Cinco de chocolate y una de fresa* (1967). Agustín lauds her virtues as an artist and as the “next big thing” in Mexican rock in *La nueva música clásica*.

Club Band]...Sin titubeos estuvimos de acuerdo en que se trataba de una obra genial, definitiva de los Beatles y del rock en general. (31)⁴⁸

In the text, Agustín expresses doubts about his affair and the negative effect it had on his marriage to Margarita Bermúdez (who he would soon divorce and eventually remarry years later). Again delving deeper into the words of the song at hand, the feelings of synchronicity felt by Agustín at the time are further emphasized by the line “There’s nowhere you can be that isn’t where you’re meant to be/ It’s easy” to mitigate whatever doubts or guilt he was feeling at the time, perhaps going as far as to justify the occurrences as fate. It is one of several examples that appear in the text where rock aesthetically marks the experience being described.

Another occurrence notes the presence of rock as a muse. At the insistence of Angélica María’s mother, film producer Angélica Ortiz, Agustín was attempting to write a story specifically for Angélica María. The following quote takes the reader one step beyond metafiction, in describing Agustín’s process for generating a text. Also, it in itself creates an anecdote that, were Agustín truly a rock star, would simply add to his legend like many of the anecdotes that are found in rock history about how and when famous songs came to be.⁴⁹ It goes as follows:

Una noche [Angélica Ortiz] me estuvo jode y jode para que le escribiera la Historia Perfecta, ¿qué no la quería? ¿No que su hija debía hacer cosas muy fregonas? Llegué a mi enanísimo depto y me

⁴⁸ The Beatles song “All You Need Is Love” was performed on the first live worldwide satellite broadcast on June 25, 1967. The reference to the Rolling Stones’ Mick Jagger stems from his presence among the studio audience which is clapping and singing along. To see the performance: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r4p8qxGbpOk> The song was released as a single shortly thereafter and later appeared on the *Magical Mystery Tour* LP later that year. The Beatles’ *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band* was released on June 1, 1967 and is widely acknowledged by rock critics, including Agustín, as being a landmark achievement in rock. It is also considered to be the main soundtrack to 1967’s Summer of Love. The record was extremely influential in expanding the palette of rock music and its influence was heard in countless groups all over the world for next several years. Agustín does a song by song description in *La nueva música clásica*.

⁴⁹ One such legendary anecdote from rock is the creation of the Rolling Stones’ iconic song, “Satisfaction”. The story goes that in May, 1965 Keith Richards recorded some of the opening riff and passed out, only later discovering what he had recorded the night before. “Satisfaction” went on to be an enormous hit for the Stones, one of their first self-penned compositions to make an impact. For the full anecdote, see: <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/quotesatisfactionquot-comes-to-keith-richards>

puse a escribir una Obra Maestra. Ataqué anécdotas, personajes, líneas y sublíneas argumentales, grupos de diálogos, diversas escenas, desdoblé metáforas, y todos mis recursos no me sirvieron de nada. A las ocho empecé a escribir y a las cuatro de la mañana tiré, furioso, la última cuartilla, y me fui a acostar. Pero dejé encendido el lastimero tocadiscos que tenía en esa época (y que madreó irreversiblemente varios Discos Insustituibles); estaba puesto el entonces recién aparecido primer album de los Doors, exactamente la rola de Brecht y Weil [sic], mis viejos ídolos, “Whisky bar”. Me levanté para apagar el aparato, pero cuando pasé junto a la máquina de escribir ésta textualmente me jaló. Metí una hoja y escribí la letra de la canción; inmediatamente después se me vino encima, torrencial, con todo y título, en un solo párrafo sin puntos y seguidos, la totalidad de “Cuál es la onda”. (34-35)

Though the requested story was not written, instead, thanks to a fortuitous coincidence, we have what has gone on to be, as we have already seen, a quintessential piece of Agustín’s body of work. Furthermore, it paints a performative display of Agustín’s own virtuosity as a writer, producing one of his most enduring works practically spontaneously. This incident also illustrates how the presence of rock is not simply something referential, it is incorporated and put to use as another creative tool in the formation of a fresh, new literature. Both this incident and the other referring to the beginning of Agustín’s affair with Angélica María remind us again of Wicke’s and Frith’s points about the integration of rock as medium of which its listeners make active use. We see here two very different examples of how that integration and use can take place, detailing the different degrees in which rock was an influence on Agustín, and textually further emphasizing the inextricable link that exists between rock and Agustín as an artist and as an individual.

The search for the identity of that individual and the evolving notions of self that are present in the text are more specifically what frames the text as a spiritual journey and is best exemplified from the following quote from the text:

Como ser humano, ¿cuál era la onda? Me parecía impostergable averiguar verdaderamente quién era, qué era, cómo era, hacia dónde me llevaba la vida, antes de seguir regando el tepache en

cuestiones cruciales. No me interesaba ni pedir consejos ni mucho menos acudir a psicoanalistas o a otros brujos. Yo debía de salir por mí mismo...(45)

In his search for his true self Agustín made use of a variety of means including psychotropic and hallucinogenic drugs, yoga, zen meditation, the active imagination of Jungian psychoanalysis, and the *I Ching*, among other things, to realize the quest. In an interview with Adela Salinas, explains that he does make use of the *I Ching* for writing: “[Para] literatura no. Lo he utilizado para títulos y epígrafes” (139), and that: “...me gusta pedirle mapas de mi alma” (140), both points which are relevant to the text at hand.

In an interview contained in *Dios y los escritores mexicanos*, Agustín explains to Salinas that the *I Ching*:

Para mí, ha sido fundamental. Me dice lo mismo que los sueños, pero con otro lenguaje. Me habla de dos formas: primero más abstracta y luego teórica. Dentro de los planteamientos taoístas que tiene el libro está la idea de la lucha de polaridades, del yin y el yang, y la necesidad, por lo tanto, de un camino central a esas polaridades para poder conducirte sin extremos por la vida.

También plantea toda una serie de normas de comportamiento ante todas las situaciones, porque este libro recopila las experiencias humanas en todos los campos; esto es, ante determinada situación arquetípica, hay un modo de comportamiento, hay una respuesta. El *I Ching* es un libro de sabiduría: te dice que va a pasar, pero sobre todo te dice qué hacer en determinado caso que va a ocurrir. (Salinas, 139)

The importance of the *I Ching*, the ancient Chinese oracular text, in relation to the first section of *El rock de la cárcel* is key.⁵⁰ Agustín shares that he makes use of the *I Ching* for writing: “[Para] literatura no.

⁵⁰ The *I Ching*, also known as the book of changes, is an ancient Chinese text whose specific origins are unknown. What is known is that it dates as far back as the 4th century B. C. and, like with many ancient texts, there are different versions and traceable evolutions of it, including interpretations by Confucius. Reading of the future is executed by referring to one of the 64 hexagrams and their individual mutations. The hexagram and the mutations are gleaned from tossing three coins, six times. Should all the coins turn up with the same side facing up, that constitutes a mutation which gives further insight into the question at hand, beyond the general description. Each mutation is rich in metaphoric language that allows for

Lo he utilizado para títulos y epígrafes” (139), and that: “...me gusta pedirle mapas de mi alma” (140), both points which are relevant to the text at hand.

Of particular note is the 42nd hexagram, called Yî, which corresponds with evolution, the underlying theme of the spiritual journey. The Cordiglia translation of the *I Ching* explains of the time in life represented by the 42nd hexagram:

A través de las difíciles experiencias de Kien [difficulty], Kieh [explanation], y Sun [loss] llegamos preparados al tiempo de la plenitud, de la conquista, de la consciencia y del conocimiento, o sea, el tiempo de Yî, momento de obrar feliz, cuando finalmente los hechos se convierten en el parangón de las palabras. (202)

In observing the hexagrams that lead up to Yî, we can note that each of the elements which corresponds to them is also a key component in how the text is framed: the difficulty in searching for an identity that balanced Agustín’s public persona and private concerns, the explanation of how and why certain things occurred the way they did and the acknowledged mistakes, and the loss felt following the missteps in the relationships with the most important women in Agustín’s life in the period, Angélica María and his wife Margarita Bermúdez. The culmination comes in the evolution within Yî, where the acts are converted into something that can perhaps be expressed to words—the result being the autobiographical text which attempts to make sense of the experience.

Agustín’s many early successes professionally and personally are detailed in the first two chapters and also supported by the words of the *I Ching* in the first two mutations.⁵¹ Not long afterwards,

more flexibility when being applied to a specific question. There are a myriad of translations of the *I Ching* into different languages. When comparing different translations even in the same language, the translation of certain phrases differs slightly, though the overall gist remains the same. The quotes I take are from a Spanish edition so as to be as close as possible to the *I Ching* text most likely read by Agustín himself, though it is not the same edition. Agustín explained to Salinas that he does make use of the *I Ching* for writing: “[Para] literatura no. Lo he utilizado para títulos y epígrafes” (139) and that: “...me gusta pedirle mapas de mi alma” (140).

⁵¹The opening statement reads as follows: “Ventajoso comprometerse en tareas importantes. Gran fortuna. Ningún error” and later adds that “Es pues, tiempo de grandes realizaciones, de fervor, de satisfacciones inimaginables, basta con tener el valor de probar aunque, como siempre, comporte un cierto riesgo y exija una buena dosis de coraje” (203). The second chapter, “Diez pares de tortugas no se

Agustín finds himself in a state of confusion regarding who he is and what his life had been up to that point: “En esos momentos me hallaba en los peores niveles de mi vida; una especie de abandono, desinterés, frivolidad, superficialidad, depresiones aplastantes; sentía un terrible complejo de culpa...y la coexistencia de estados de inferioridad y grandeza”, later adding, “Me repugnaba mi inmadurez. Hasta unos meses antes yo estaba completamente seguro de que conocía mis alcances y de que nada podía ponerme a temblar” (44). On a personal level he admits to not knowing himself and having lost the compass that had guided him through, though there was no insecurity in his professional worth: “Como artista no tenía dudas: la meta era desarrollarme sin prisas y sin pausas para ponerme al alcance de las grandes obras” (45). It is at this point, in the time of the first crisis in the story and in the mutations that the search for an identity begins in earnest. With each mutation and each corresponding chapter, Agustín recounts his own evolution which leads him closer to the final mutation which forebodes misfortune from not being able to sufficiently evolve. Of course, Agustín makes the case for himself as someone who was not evolving enough, stagnating within a carefree way of life that eventually leads him to be at the wrong place at the wrong time and ultimately to Lecumberri.

The search for identity had been a fundamental component of Agustín’s first novel, *La tumba*. The main character’s unsuccessful quest for identity, direction and purpose leads him to a hedonistic lifestyle that, in the end, fails to deliver the meaning he so desires—sentiments that are echoed in *El rock de la cárcel*. Furthermore, in the novel, this meaning is not provided by his artistic endeavors either (the main character is an aspiring writer)—a problem Agustín clearly does not have as we can glean from the previous quote. Nonetheless, it was not enough in the search for personal identity to overcome the

pueden oponer” continues with Agustín’s successes and emphasizes evolution and establishment of his initial public persona. The description of the second mutation begins by saying: “Es un momento de evolución. Diez pares de tortugas no tienen el poder de detenerla” later adding “La evolución no es fácil, precisamente las contrariedades las que maduran juicio, las que fortalecen carácter, las que dan el verdadero conocimiento de las cosas, por ello es justo cordar las experiencias negivas para evitar errores y gozar mejor de momento de la victoria” (203). The second portion of the statement can lead us to the perspective with hindsight that Agustín is sharing in the text as well as the stage in life that he was living at the time.

crushing depression and unstable state of mind that had taken hold of him at that point in 1967. Like many of his generation, the apparent answer seemed to lie in experimentation with mind-expanding drugs. Agustín's sister, Hilda, and her husband, Carlos, had already begun experimenting with psychedelic drugs and marijuana by this time. Agustín was apprehensive to try the drugs at first, describing the situation:

Cuando mi hermana y mi cuñado me visitaban en México sometían a cualquiera a intensos baños de proselitismo sicodélico; yo nunca quise, en ese momento, entrarle a los alucinógenos, pero sí me puse a leer libros sobre el tema. Empecé por los de Huxley, los textos conseguibles de R. Gordon Wasson, Albert Hoffman [sic], Timothy Leary [sic] y estudios académicos sobre LSD.
(31)⁵²

Before partaking in the psychedelic experience itself, Agustín explored it on a literary level first. In this respect, the mention of British writer Aldous Huxley (1894-1963) is key. Huxley's influential book *The Doors of Perception* (1954) describes in detail the author's own experience from having ingested mescaline under observation of a psychiatrist who records their conversations and serves as caretaker during the experience.⁵³ Another essay of Huxley's, titled "Heaven and Hell" and often published in tandem with the *The Doors of Perception*, describes imagery drawn from different spiritual traditions. It points out how many aestheticized visions of heaven and hell are similar to what is perceived during the

⁵² R. Gordon Wasson (1898-1986) wrote several texts about his experimentation with psychedelic mushrooms and his trips to Mexico to participate in rituals which employed them. His article for *Life Magazine* in 1957 made a larger public aware of the psychedelic mushrooms and their effects. Chemist Albert Hoffmann (1906-2008) discovered LSD in 1938, was the first to experience its effects (by accident) and to write about it. He published dozens of articles and several books about his discovery. Timothy Leary (1920-1996) was, of course, one of the most controversial and influential counterculture figures of the 1960s. Leary, often considered to be *the* LSD guru, extolled virtues of LSD and its consciousness expanding capabilities. His famous phrase "Turn on, tune in, drop out" was often heard and seen on signs in the late 1960s, influencing many to do just that: turn on their minds with the LSD, tune in to the new reality it opened up to them, and drop out of society. He was an often vilified figure by the conservative right.

⁵³ The rock band, the Doors, took its name from the title of this particular book, which itself draws its title from a quote from English poet, painter, printmaker and spiritual visionary William Blake (1757-1827).

psychedelic experience. Echoes from both of Huxley's texts can also be seen in Agustín's descriptions of his own psychedelic experiences.

An important point Huxley makes with links to Agustín's spiritual journey is that: "The urge to transcend self-conscious selfhood is...a principal appetite of the soul" (67). As such, his text was influential to a whole generation of readers looking beyond what they saw as the superficiality and banality of existence. Once under the influence of the mescaline, Huxley explicates how the apparently superficial existence is transcended as "Space was still there; but it had lost its predominance. The mind was primarily concerned, not with measures and locations, but with being and meaning" (20). The perception of time is also distorted as Huxley describes: "My actual experience of time had been, was still, of an indefinite duration or alternatively of a perpetual present made up of one continually changing apocalypse" (21). Though to clarify, Huxley's use of apocalypse coincides more with its meaning as a revelation, though the dark side of the psychedelic experience as described by Agustín also alludes to its more common usage as the end of existence. Huxley goes on to relate that the experience put him: "in a world where everything shone with the Inner Light, and was infinite in its significance" (22). In being able to see the what Huxley describes as "the very Nature of Things" the self's relationship with the outside world is transformed, blurring the borders between the self and what surrounds it. This, in turn, provokes the rhetorical question posed by Huxley (and by Agustín of himself) of the human species at large: "Who did they all think they were?" (36). As a part of the answer that invites further self-reflection, Huxley states that: "Successfully (whatever that may mean) or unsuccessfully, we all overact the part of our favorite character in fiction" (37). This, of course, is a point that is relevant to us here in seeing the side of the *onhero* presented by Agustín whose persona could correspond to that of a favorite literary character—himself.

Huxley's texts encouraged many, including Agustín given the references to *The Doors of Perception*, to try the psychedelic experience as a path to follow in the quest for self-knowledge. Huxley ends *The Doors of Perception* with precisely such an encouragement that fits the overall scheme of the spiritual journey that Agustín's biography relates. Huxley declares:

But the man who comes back through the Door in the Wall [of our normal perception of existence] will never quite be the same as the man who went out. He will be wiser but less cocksure, happier but less self-satisfied, humbler in acknowledging his ignorance yet better equipped to understand the relationship of words to things, of systematic reasoning to the unfathomable Mystery which it tries, forever vainly, to comprehend. (79)

These ideas also go hand in hand with the framework presented by Agustín in employing the *I Ching's* 42nd hexagram, evolution, in evaluating himself and the existence within which he resides. The psychedelic experience, in his case also accompanied by music, is an essential part of the evolution and self-discovery.

Interestingly, in the text, Agustín describes a hallucination before ever having even tried psychedelics or marijuana as a means of expanding his consciousness. The description is notable from it being an aesthetic manifestation of points made by Huxley in describing his perception under the influence of mescaline. Huxley also tells of visionaries (mystics, saints, poets, and William Blake in particular) capable of inducing such states at will without the help of psychotropic drugs. It is, of course, impossible to say if Agustín truly thought himself to be among this unique group of individuals. Nevertheless, the fact that such a suggestion exists in the text hints that, at least to some extent, he did—or at least that he did not want to attribute all his expansive visions exclusively to the drug-fueled psychedelic experience. Agustín describes the scene as follows:

Nunca supe por qué detuve la vista en una esquina del techo; abajo quedaba la puerta del baño. Sin proponérmelo fijé la mirada en el punto en que convergían las tres líneas; me quedé con la vista transfija mientras en mi mente se sucedían asociaciones de todo tipo. De pronto vi que el punto se encendía; con toda claridad brotaba una especie de chispa de luz sorda que quedaba allí, titilaba después, emitía pequeñas explosiones pequeñas y graduales de mayor luminosidad, y finalmente se extendían encendiendo las líneas del techo en forma de rayas incandescentes. El fenómeno me dejó estupendejo. Dejé de pensar...No podía dejar de mirar el punto de la convergencia de líneas del techo, la sensación era de una serenidad incomparable...(46)

Agustín covers some of the same territory as Huxley when describing his surroundings once the mescaline begins to take effect. Of course, Agustín's inclusion of one his characteristic neologisms, *estupendejo* (combining *estupefacto* and *pendejo*), places the description in an Onda context, relaying an experience that would be just as fitting for one of his fictional characters in moments of personal reflection. There is no distinction to be made in how the scene is described within the autobiographical context as opposed to a fictional creation—the line between textually constructed character of fiction and reality is blurred beyond perception. Also, of course, the incomparable serenity that the moment provides is a further invitation to repeat the experience: “Varias veces después repetí la experiencia pero jamás volvió a ser tan viva y fascinante” (46)—again emphasizing Agustín's own, admittedly limited, abilities as a visionary. Consequently, turning to psychedelic drugs was the next logical step, particularly given their proliferation at the time and the influence of his sister and brother-in-law as easy purveyors of the necessary substances.

Agustín's first experience with LSD occurs in the fourth chapter of the first section titled “Reportarse ante el príncipe”. Regarding that specific mutation of the 42nd hexagram, Cordiglia's Spanish translation of the text says: “Si se debe iniciar un trabajo o asumir un compromiso pospuesto durante largo tiempo porque era muy grave, es este es el momento de obrar con prontitud y seriedad pero sin miedo a fallar. Son tiempos de equilibrio y lúcida sabiduría” (204). The self-reflection that begins to take place in this chapter is the postponed difficult commitment that the *I Ching* is referring to. The task at hand was taken seriously by Agustín as an individual endeavor: “Era el momento de montar en un vehículo sicodélico. No buscaba emociones ni formas de hedonismo. Tampoco me interesaba unirme al incipiente, desarticulado pero de alto wattaje, movimiento jipiteca de ese tiempo” (47). This is one of several occasions throughout the text where Agustín emphasizes his own independence and inability to fully integrate himself within different groups, whether they be hippies, a group of writers with which he is grouped, the leftist intellectuals with whom he interacted, or other esoteric groups in search of some type of spiritual enlightenment. This was also true of his approach to taking psychedelics, of which he preferred mushrooms after finding his initial LSD experience to not be transcendent enough. Regarding

the psychedelic experience, whether it was achieved by consuming LSD or the mushrooms native to Mexico (which have the psychotropic chemical psilocybin), he emphasized that he was not like his friends who would attempt to shape the trip to avoid the deep, unknown portions of the psyche. Instead, he believed he should follow John Lennon's advice from the song "Tomorrow Never Knows" (from *Revolver*, 1966), one of the first songs that attempted to reproduce the psychedelic experience ever recorded:

Me dejaba llevar simplemente. Eso hacía en los viajes, tomaba en serio la recomendación de Lennon: turn on your mind, relax and [float] downstream. No trataba de controlar el viaje, de dirigirlo, de contenerlo: me depositaba en manos de Dios y dejaba que sucediera lo que tuviese que suceder.⁵⁴ (53)

In framing this part of the text as a spiritual journey, Agustín makes clear that he did not believe the psychedelic drugs to be any sort of panacea, but instead were a means that depended on the direct use that was given to them by those who took them, as Huxley himself suggests in both *The Doors of Perception* and "Heaven and Hell".

There are similarities as well in comparing the Agustín's perceptions during his first actual LSD trip and Huxley's first mescaline trip. Agustín shares:

⁵⁴ John Lennon's "Tomorrow Never Knows", according to Turner "was John's attempt to capture something of the LSD experience in words and sounds" (115). It was the most experimental song done by the Beatles up to that point and perhaps the most adventurous rock song recorded up to that time. The song is itself a reference to different texts regarding the psychedelic experience including Timothy Leary's 1964 book, *The Psychedelic Experience*, from which Lennon borrowed, adapted and elaborated. Leary's book is a reinterpretation of the ancient *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, a classic book of Tibetan Buddhism. According to Turner: "The working title of the track was in fact 'The Void', taken from Leary's line "Beyond the restless flowing electricity of Life is the ultimate reality—the void." Its eventual title was a Ringoism which John snatched at because it added some deceptive levity to what otherwise might have sounded like a bleak journey into nothingness" (116). "Tomorrow Never Knows" is still, to this day, one of the most psychedelic tracks of all time and has served to many as a sort of template for recording their own psychedelic, pseudo-transcendental songs. Many of the production devices employed in the song's creation went on to become defining characteristics of much psychedelic music then and now: processed vocals, backwards guitars, sounds from nature, extreme panning of sounds, and, of course, cosmic lyrics to engage the listener and emphasize their being on "the other side".

Las cosas, a su vez, se delineaban con una nitidez portentosa; en ese momento entendía que Huxley, en su primer viaje de mescalina, hubiera visto hasta el tejido más microscópico de su saco de lana. Los colores eran más intensos y corpóreos, y hojear libros de pintura fue balsámico. La música y la pintura conducían, en gran medida, el viaje. (48)

The concrete allusions to Huxley's text, though it again goes unnamed, in this quotation not only refers us back to the text as a reference, but also incorporates elements directly expressed within it: the vivacity of the colors and portentous visual precision and clarity induced by the drug, as well as the act of looking at art books, an activity which is one of the most absorbing, insightful and aesthetically realized portions of *The Doors of Perception*. Also, in describing some of his own hallucinations in the text, Agustín draws from the inventory of imagery enumerated by Huxley in "Heaven and Hell". While there is a concrete experience of his own that Agustín is drawing from, the influence of Huxley's texts in how part of the experience is presented is also clear. There is the influence of the text itself and the fact that Huxley also establishes a vernacular with which to describe the experiences at hand.⁵⁵

Of course, Agustín adds other elements to the text that express the intensity of the psychedelic experience at far greater levels than those expressed by Huxley. In his example from one of his trips on mushrooms, there is imagery that recalls some of the most terrifying and disturbing imagery of the surrealist movement, specifically the paintings of Salvador Dalí and the early films of Luis Buñuel.

⁵⁵ Another connection between Agustín's and Huxley's texts that is not specifically relevant to our discussion here is both's allusion to Van Gogh. Under the influence of psychedelics, both writers feel a connection to Van Gogh and his mode of perceiving. The connection felt by Huxley is decidedly less terrifying than that of Agustín. Huxley feels like he has perceived the chair in his own house the same way Van Gogh saw the chair painted in *Ding an Sich*, better understanding the way vision of the mad painter without fearing never returning from the mad state (28-29). Agustín, on the other hand, in a particularly powerful moment of the last trip before his arrest shares that: "Así es como Van Gogh veía al final, pensé; éste es el paisaje de la esquizofrenia, dolores en todas sus esquinas. Lo peor, pensaba, era que pasaría el resto de mi vida en este estado de percepción; tendría que acostumbrarme a esa realidad infernal, de sufrimientos que no cesaban de gotear. Me hallaba ya en el último borde de lo tolerable" (86). To be sure, Huxley also connects the psychedelic experience with mental illness beyond the reference to Van Gogh. He describes schizophrenics as "a man permanently under the influence of mescaline" within a reality for which his mind has no filter (56-57).

Agustín directly makes a textual connection with the oneiric quality of the surrealist movement and his own trip:

Esa vez también me dejé ir por completo, pero sí retuve un hilo de conciencia, como en los sueños, y pude recordarlo todo. Los hongos me obligaron a tenderme bocarriba y constaté anonadado por qué les dicen alucinantes: en una sucesión rapidísima, vertiginosa, en la pared aparecían ejércitos de hormigas, de cucarachas, se hacían grietas, se derretía el muro, se llenaba de agujeros, de pelos; la perilla de la puerta se abría y cerraba, se desplazaba de arriba abajo; la puerta iba con una velocidad imposible de un lado a otro de la pared; y ésta rebotaba con violencia de atrás hacia delante. De pronto oí un fuerte zumbido, un jet depegaba, me hallaba en la esquina superior de la puerta y veía mi propio cuerpo tendido sobre los cojines junto al escritorio. Me perdí en imágenes. (51)

Some of the specific imagery here can be associated with Buñuel and Dalí's film *Un chien andalou* (1928): the army of ants, the rapid succession of images, the sprouting hairs, and the displacement of the self in perceiving itself elsewhere are all present here and in the film. The description goes on, apparently drawing from other paintings of Dalí's, including *The Geopoliticus Child Watching the Birth of the New Man* (1943) which can be loosely connected to the imagery of: "nacía de mi madre, vivía en su vientre, y después contemplaba la gestación de los mundos" (51). Huxley, too, acknowledges the intensity of the psychedelic experience:

I found myself all at once on the brink of panic. This, I suddenly felt, was going too far. Too far, even though the foins was into intenser beauty, deeper significance. This fear, as I analyze it in retrospect was of being overwhelmed, of disintegrating under a pressure of reality greater than a mind, accustomed to living most of the time in cosy world of symbols, could possibly bear. (55)

And yet, at no time do Huxley's representations express the intensity of the hallucinations to the degree Agustín does as the various aestheticized psychedelic sequences in the text demonstrate. It is also important to note the similarities between some of the sequences here and the examples analyzed by Schaffer from *Se está haciendo tarde (Final en laguna)* (1973) which, as we have noted, was written

during the incarceration in Lecumberri.⁵⁶ To the visual experience, as we mentioned before, Agustín adds the description of listening to music. The music which makes its greatest impact on Agustín is the rock that, in part, was geared specifically to being heard under the influence of marijuana and psychedelic drugs.⁵⁷

The first mentioned in the text is the Rolling Stones' *Their Satanic Majesties Request* (1967), by far the group's most psychedelic endeavor. We can recall that this is one of the records that receives the most attention in *La nueva música clásica*, written around the same time of Agustín's first psychedelic experiences:

Las notas de los Stones eran larvas minúsculas, embriones, formas gelatinosas o ligeras como hilos que transitaban por mi cuerpo. Quién sabe cuánto tiempo pasé así: varias horas hundido en la materia prima de la vida, en la base más honda, hasta que de pronto me levanté exclamando: ¿Qué está pasando aquí? (51)

The feeling of confusion is heightened as the experiences become more intense and the beauty of the experience contrasts more starkly with its terrifying aspect. In the process of describing the music, Agustín aesthetically expands upon the vernacular he had already established in *La nueva música clásica* while again linking it to surrealist art and other abstractions. The following description exemplifies this aspect of how the music further frames the psychedelic experience and expands upon the textual principles for describing previously presented Huxley:

Poco a poco me fue llegando el sonido de una música a la vez dulce y terrible. En circunstancias normales me habría sorprendido al máximo, pues la música era nada menos que *A gift from a*

⁵⁶ In recounting the creation of the novel in the *El Sur* newspaper from Acapulco in 2002, Agustín says of the novel something that echoes the creation of “¿Cuál es la onda?” practically word for word: “*Se está haciendo tarde (Final en laguna)* se me ocurrió de golpe una noche de 1970; era la historia redondita, con todo y título.” (<http://www.suracapulco.com.mx/anterior/2002/mayo/18/pag2.htm>)

⁵⁷ Surprisingly, Agustín says he did not try marijuana until after beginning his experimentations with psychedelic drugs. Once he did, however, it became part of his everyday routine until his arrest in 1970. He describes: “Después de ese viaje, en el que fumé mariguana por primea vez en mi vida, fui amacizándome poco a poquito” (55).

flower to a garden, del buen Donovan, pero me impresionaba aún la idea de que la música construía estructuras geométricas para mí desconocidas, edificios colosales frente a un cielo verde-grisáceo, una inmensidad cubista de atmósfera numinosa; algo como una clave de sol gigantesca aparecía a la izquierda: se trataba de una especie de ciudad de un orden geométrico extraño y severo. La música era esa ciudad majestuosa, perfecta, incomprensible, manifestación de otro lenguaje, de una realidad definitivamente ajena, por siempre inconciente. Vistas del otro-otro lado. Cuando después de siglos, medio reconocí “Someone’s singing” algo ocurrió: el loop se cerró, se completó, y yo me hallaba en los cojines de la sala pensando que estos discos del carajo me enloquecían. (52)⁵⁸

The unique meeting of cultural worlds that is represented in Agustín’s work is all present here: rock, literature and the countercultural experience, concretely manifested in the description of the psychedelic trip. In the literary sense, there are even distant echoes of the grotesque, incomprehensible forms sprinkled with perfect symmetries that compose the city of immortals in Jorge Luis Borges’ story “El inmortal” (1949), though there is no overt reference to it. The imagery from surrealist and cubist art is present, as is the growing feeling of proximity to insanity. In contrast to Huxley, who does not consider himself a good conveyor of visual imagery even with the aid of psychedelic substances, Agustín makes use of a vast array of resources to express the sense of wonder and confusion of the psychedelic experience which is in no short order stimulated by the rock music he listened to.

As the autobiography progresses, the character in question, Agustín himself, begins to inch closer and closer to the edge of insanity, aided along by the psychedelic drugs and the feelings and imagery induced by the combination of the drugs with the music. Again, certain principle points laid out by

⁵⁸ Scottish born folk rocker Donovan (née Donovan P. Leitch, 1946) is another seminal figure of 60s rock. Donovan had numerous hits in the era including “Sunshine Superman”, “Mellow Yellow” and “Season of the Witch”. The double LP box set *A Gift From A Flower To A Garden* (1967) is considered one of Donovan’s more ambitious projects and is representative of the general trend to include more cosmic and veiled drug oriented themes in the lyrics that are replete with double-entendres. The record receives particular praise in *La nueva música clásica*: “Donovan aún no maduraba lo necesario para dar un álbum magistral. Después de conocer al Maharishi Mahersh [sic, the Beatles’ guru as well] lo logró: se llama *A Gift From A Flower To A Garden* e incluye 24 canciones estupendas...”(51-52) .

Huxley (the lucidity of the experience, describing *the other side*) are present in the descriptions, which draw upon a wide array of metaphors to paint a more tangible picture of the feelings induced. The aesthetization of the language used to describe the music in *La nueva música clásica* is further freed up to convey the depths, wonders, strangeness and terrors of the psychedelic experience and to provide accompanying imagery to the array of sounds. Beyond that, the transformation of aesthetized thoughts to psychotic ones and back, that fomented by the drugs, is also evident:

Oíamos *Wheels of fire*, de la Crema; esa música era lo más pesado que había oído: pisadas de dinosaurio, enormes trozos de cemento, masas grises de material densa: apenas se movía. Mi cabello era una cortina de fragilísimos cristales transparentes; con el menor movimiento se producía una explosión de acordes riquísimos. Me hallaba bien lúcido pero ahora estaba *del otro lado*. Por eso no me podía mover. Veía la aplastante realidad de la pared de piedras pintadas, a mi hermana tendida en otro sofa, Carlos recostado en la alfombra. Yo pensaba: pobrecitos, no saben que la conciencia puede abarcar hasta este punto, penetrar en donde no se debe y ver algo tan terrible. En realidad es terrible este estado de percepción nadie debe de conocerlo: es demasiado atroz. Juzgué que un acto lógico y apropiado sería matar a mi hermana y a mi cuñado...Yo reconocía, muy *comme-il-fault*, la capacidad de matar que había en mí. Jugar tochito con un recién nacido. No tanto.⁵⁹ (55)

The same aesthetic principles that are evident here again would not be out of place in a fictional Onda text, as we shall see in the work of García Saldaña and as Schaffer has noted in her article. Despite the vacillations in state of mind, the atrocity of the thoughts and the evident damage the experiences were

⁵⁹ Bringing together three musicians who were already well known in their own right, Cream is generally considered rock's first super group. Formed in 1966, the band consisted of Eric Clapton (guitar, vocals), Jack Bruce (bass, vocals) and Ginger Baker (drums). They were best known not only for being "heavy" as Agustín describes, but for their long displays of instrumental virtuosity, often stretching songs well past the 10-minute mark. The band broke up in 1968 as a result of clashing egos. Of the three, Clapton has had the most successful career having played in rock's second supergroup, Blind Faith, and other bands which he has led through the years.

producing, Agustín, like his characters who do not give in even when faced with obvious obstacles, continued experimenting with the psychedelic drugs.

The search for identity continued with the use of psychedelic drugs, though the results left much to be desired for Agustín, who seemed to be getting further from finding his identity than closer to it as the next passage demonstrates. While listening to Electric Flag's "Killing Floor" high on LSD the fine line between enlightenment and insanity that was referred to by Huxley comes to the fore in Agustín's own experience:

Yo era un hilo de vida, una babilla de conciencia, y contemplaba *eso*. Entonces mi cuñado regresaba, con su kimono y "Killing Floor"; nos pasaba un toque. Esto se repitió ne sé cuántas veces más, era un loop interminable que alguien olvidó desconectar, un pellejito de tiempo primordial; de repente recuperé y miré en mi en derredor: era de noche; una extraña, potente, pareja, luz sin sombras iluminaba lo que yo enfocaba, lo demás era negrura. No supe dónde estaba, era una conciencia sin identidad. ¿Quién soy? me pregunté. ¡Ah!, exclamé, porque acababa de recordar quién era, cómo me llamaba, sabía que estábamos en casa de mi hermana y que nos habíamos tomado un ácido sensacional. De golpe se me vino a la cabeza lo que acababa de ocurrir, casi salté y le pregunté a Margarita, excitadísimo: Margarita, mi amor, le dije, ¿qué vimos? ¿Te acuerdas de lo que acabamos de ver? ¿Qué era? ¿Era Dios? ¿La muerte? ¿El amor? ¿La locura? ¿*Qué fue?* (67)⁶⁰

That such utter confusion is accompanied by "Killing Floor" does not seem to be a textual coincidence, whether it in fact occurred that way or not. Putting it in the context of a truncated evolution within the scheme of the 42nd hexagram of the *I Ching*, the lyrics to Howlin' Wolf's blues song, which again are not

⁶⁰ The Electric Flag was a short-lived group co-led by guitarist Michael Bloomfield and drummer/vocalist Buddy Miles. The group attempted to fuse many different strains of American music, mainly blues, soul and rock. Bloomfield was one of the most influential guitarists of the 1960s, though he is, sadly, mostly forgotten today. Miles went on to greater fame as the drummer for A Band of Gypsies, which was led by Jimi Hendrix. In *El rock de la cárcel*, Agustín mistakenly refers to their album as *Child Is Father to the Man*, which is, in fact, the first record by a similar group called Blood, Sweat and Tears. Released in 1967, the correct name of the Electric Flag record is *A Long Time Comin'*.

included in the text, make perfect sense: “I should have quit you, a long time ago/ I was foolin’ with ya baby, I let ya put me on the killin’ floor”.⁶¹ With the song in mind, in retrospect, the multiple psychedelic experiences seem like a mistake that instead of leading to greater self-knowledge, have landed him on the killing floor of the slaughter house. The insights that he sought were nowhere to be found. In the end he is reduced to asking who, why, what, and where about the most basic things—out of touch with the most basic aspects of reality while confusedly believing that he is on the verge of experiencing a closeness to God and the essence of love, while almost simultaneously confusing it with insanity.

The extremes experienced at this point by Agustín are taken one step further in his final trip before his arrest and incarceration. The description of this experience brings forth other terrifying elements and emphasizes the proximity to madness that the (mis)use of the drug can lead to. Perhaps thanks to his incarceration, Agustín avoided the fate of the many so-called “acid casualties” of the era and was able to return from *the other side*.⁶² Agustín’s description of the trip presents him like someone living on the edge, exposing his body and mind to dangers, incoherent behavior, radical mood swings, and loss of touch with any practical sense of reality that can only, as the text does in the section that follows, culminate in something disastrous. At one point, he no longer feels like a person living within time, instead describing himself as: “La nada en su forma más concreta y sólida. Eso duró eternidades, o sólo un instante, hasta que regresé” (86). Huxley also speaks of the odd separations of mind and body as well as the shift in perception of time. These strange, intense experiences are juxtaposed with those that seem to bring a newness to all perception which, consequently, provides a never-before seen beauty to all

⁶¹ Howlin’ Wolf (née Chester Burnett, 1910-1975) was, along with Muddy Waters, the most influential bluesman to emerge from Chicago in the 1950s. His style and compositions were emulated by many of the British blues groups. “Killin’ Floor” was an often covered song in the 1960s and 1970s.

⁶² Among these is Syd Barrett (1946-2006), the founder of the iconic British rock band, Pink Floyd. There is as much legend as fact surrounding Barrett’s fate. The story goes that Barrett took an inordinate amount of LSD before a concert in late 1967 and never fully returned from the trip. He soon was forced to quit the group and went into hiding for the rest of his life which, in turn, added to his legend. Brian Jones (1943-1969) of the Rolling Stones was also deeply affected by the (over)use of psychedelics and it played a role in his personal disintegration prior to his death drowning in his own swimming pool.

things, and also draws the individual closer to the spiritual world. In the following paragraph from our previous quote, Agustín explains:

Todo era una belleza delirante, maravillosa, purificadora. Textualmente me hallaba renaciendo entre llamaradas, y desde ese momento sabía sin lugar a dudas que la desconexión total por supuesto, había sido la muerte: el nivel bárdico más antiguo, la matriz de todas las formas. (86)

This apparently epiphanic moment is followed by the onset of paranoia and fear leading to a near disintegration of consciousness: “Mi conciencia era una capa fragilísima, una membrana casi transparente que cualquier brisa podía desgarrar” (87). To end the first half of the book, Agustín narrates how he eventually feels the serene and conscious affinity with nature. This occurs only after a turbulent experience that has, for all intents and purposes, removed him from the normal reality experienced by human beings with the appropriate capabilities to function.

The following day, December 14, 1970, Agustín was arrested at the home of musician Salvador Rojo during a raid and soon accused of being part of the ring of marijuana traffickers which rented part of Rojo’s country house. He spent the next seven months in Lecumberri without a hearing and eventually won release admitting to a lesser charge. In the text, he suspects that part of the lack of due process he was given was due to his outspoken criticism of the government beginning in 1968. The text presents Agustín reassessing himself and his own actions. Agustín also consults the *I Ching* regarding his stay in prison, quoting Hexagram 29, “Los peligros permanentes” (again unmentioned explicitly) in the text: “atado con cuerdas. Encerrado en una prisión con espinas en las paredes: durante tres años no se encuentra el camino” (100). Following the previous, seemingly failed, steps towards evolution described in the first six chapters of the narrative, Agustín begins a new routine for creating a new self. The ways of the brash *ondero* are, like the 60s that engendered them, a thing of the past. From here, the text provides a detailed account of Agustín’s existence within the prison. There is an evident shift in style away from the elements present in the Onda and the poetics of rock.

The hindsight provided by being over a decade removed from the events that are narrated in the text also gives Agustín pause and a space to reflect upon what occurred and why—a key point for a

believer in *karma*, like himself, who aims to make sense of his existence within the larger scheme of reality.⁶³ In viewing how Agustín assesses himself and his trials and tribulations, it is also relevant to keep in mind that as an individual, Agustín questioned the validity and morality of many established laws, paradigms (social, cultural or literary) and the *buenas costumbres*. As such, Agustín simply cannot accept his time in prison for simply having dabbled in drug experimentation and attributes his ending up in prison to other actions that had no direct correlation with the events that technically led him there. As he expresses in the text the day he is about to be let out of jail:

Nunca creí que la marihuana o los alucinógenos fueran panaceas de algún tipo. Yo los experimenté como medio de exploración de áreas desconocidas de mí mismo: un auto-análisis, con todos los riesgos que implicaba. Era evidente que de todas esas drogas la marihuana era la menos importante, y por tanto quizá la más peligrosa; yo me había aficionado a fumarla como tantos otros en esa época pero nunca decreció mi capacidad de trabajo, mi creatividad, mi participación constructiva en la sociedad. Me parecía grotesco que fumarla pudiese llevar a la cárcel. Mis errores en *Ya se quien eres* [an unsuccessful film he produced and directed in the era] no se debieron a los alucinógenos sino a una extrema confusión, a la horrenda desprogramación que causó mi forma inmadura de tronar con mi esposa y con Angélica María. Por eso, y por regarla en mi película merecía ir a la cárcel, no por fumar marihuana. (129)

Though admitting mistakes and displaying a degree of humility from having reflected upon those very mistakes, there is still a defiance conveyed by Agustín that resists accepting his fate of spending time in prison for behavior which, despite its illegality, he sees no problem. Also, his point about his own

⁶³ According to Ven. Mahasi Sayadaw at buddhanet.net, karma is the law of moral causation and is a fundamental doctrine in Buddhism. The relevant point for our purposes is summarized as follows: “In this world nothing happens to a person that he does not for some reason or other deserve. Usually, men of ordinary intellect cannot comprehend the actual reason or reasons. The definite invisible cause or causes of the visible effect is not necessarily confined to the present life, they may be traced to a proximate or remote past birth.” (<http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/karma.htm>) In *Dios y los escritores mexicanos*, Agustín explains to Salinas that: “Mi idea de Dios está más cerca del taoísmo y del zen” (125). There is a *karma* component within Taoism that is expressed in Lao Tzu’s *Tao Te Ching*, the fundamental text regarding the Tao.

productivity cannot be questioned as his writing (literary, cinematic, or journalistic), was in constant demand between 1966 and 1971, the 5-year period covered in the text. Further on, he turns his ire towards the hypocrisy of the government for jailing the peasant growers, lower level distributors and users of marijuana, who he sees as “chivos expiatorios” (sacrificial lambs or scapegoats) to appease a hypocritical morality and who are not remotely comparable to the murderers, robbers, fraudsters and rapists with whom they shared the prison. He recognizes the dangers of the harder drugs and their users as well. The hypocrisy, in his view, stemmed from law enforcement using the full extent of the law to punish these individuals instead of going after the cartels, who he saw as being the truly dangerous faction of society (referring to Steppenwolf’s 1968 song “The Pusher” in doing so).⁶⁴ He goes on to advocate the legalization of marijuana to take away the power of the pushers. He also takes the opportunity to disparage the endemic hypocrisy of Mexican society as a whole, articulating his complaints differently after having suffered seven months of incarceration without so much as a hearing to be able to answer to the charges. In his estimation, the punishment clearly did not fit the crime, especially when considered in the grander scheme of Mexican society.

The overall disgust with the societal hypocrisy he had been subjected to is evident in the following diatribe expressed while waiting for his release ticket in the prison:

...en esa época fumar marihuana era ir con una corriente colectiva, una fiesta que no podía durar mucho. La sociedad no mostraba ni comprensión ni sabiduría, sino, más bien, hipocresía, fariseísmo. Donde se intriga, se traiciona, se envilece; donde se justifican asesinatos masivos y la explotación, donde se permiten prácticas políticas, comerciales, industriales, profesionales, financieras, deportivas y culturales impregnadas de usura y de la más vulgar materialidad, donde todos se intoxican de alcohol, estimulantes, tranquilizantes, calmantes, modas, television o fanatismo, de pronto todos se erigen en defensores de la salud, de la virtud, y se escandalizan,

⁶⁴ Drawing their name from the Herman Hesse book, Steppenwolf had numerous iconic hits in the 1960s including “Magic Carpet Ride”, “The Pusher”, and “Born to Be Wild”. The latter two songs gained even greater popularity upon being included in the film *Easy Rider* (1969).

satanizan a muchos jóvenes que rechazan la miseria moral en que se vive y lo manifiestan dejándose las greñas, oyendo rock y atacándose con marihuana y otros alucinógenos. Despeñarlos en la cárcel, especialmente en la de Lecumberri, era a todas luces excesivo. Estar en la prisión, por muy bien que le pueda ir a cualquiera después, es demasiado brutal, injustificado e inapropiado para enfrentar un problema de hondas raíces sociales y psicológicas. (130-131)

The often playful mocking of societal hypocrisy and the problems it produces that is evident in the fictional texts is not present here. Instead, we have a matured character, constructed as an individual who is wiser and, perhaps, more hardened than before, but whose core resistive quality to norms seems deeper still, in no small part due to the prison experience.

As we have seen, the text incorporates all of the elements on autobiography enumerated earlier: 1) the construction of a self; 2) the text as a paradigmatic element as that ascribes meaning to the life it narrates; and 3) the textual elements that can be found in fiction or in an ostensibly non-fiction autobiography. There are also important elements still present from the poetics of rock which deepen the reading of the text such as the *covering* the territory laid out by Huxley and expanding upon it, in the process expressing a personal vernacular regarding the psychedelic experience. The use of rock is essential both as a reservoir of references, whether it be culturally in aiding to define the personality and attitude within the textually constructed self, and with the use of songs that add a layer of meaning to the *model reader*. With *El rock de la cárcel*, Agustín accomplishes all this and more. In the process, he constructs a self that looks back upon his novelistic life pragmatically, acknowledges how an era and cultural phenomena like rock and eastern thought were essential in shaping him and many of his peers, without falling victim to the typical romanticizations of the era's idealism.

Chapter Two
Parménides García Saldaña: Like a Rolling Stone

*If you're going to kick authority in the teeth,
 you might as well use two feet.*

Keith Richards

Parménides García Saldaña: The Onda's Bad Boy

The work of Parménides García Saldaña (1944-1982) has received scarce critical attention since its original publication in the late 1960s and 1970s.⁶⁵ One of the reasons for this lack of attention is, perhaps, that his literary output consists of only four works: the semi-autobiographical novel *Pasto verde* (1968), and the short story collections *El rey criollo* (1970), *Mediodía* (1975), and the posthumous *En algún lugar del rock (el callejón del blues)* (1993).⁶⁶ Beyond the strictly literary realm, García Saldaña wrote *En la ruta de la onda* (1972), a poignant, profound reflection on the 1960s counterculture, its ideals and its ultimate disappointment in the 1970s. The essay stands out perhaps as the author's most lucid work and gives insights into the formation of the Onda movement as a counterculture, its inherent contradictions, and its direct influence on the literature that came from it. It also brings the author's core political beliefs, steeped in Marxism, to the fore as his critical model of the Onda movement and the times within which it existed. As a result of the scant critical attention (and in stark contrast with the vast amount of information available on José Agustín), the biographical information on García Saldaña is also quite limited. Though there are loose quotes and anecdotes from people who knew him scattered

⁶⁵ As of this writing, the MLA International Bibliography shows only two scholarly articles dedicated to García Saldaña: Genaro Pérez's "Juan García Ponce y Parménides García Saldaña en el contexto de la Onda" from 2001 and José Colin's recently published "Paradigmas de "la onda mexicana": *Pasto verde*, el libro maldito o el maldito libro de Parménides García Saldaña" from Spring, 2011. See bibliography for full details.

⁶⁶ The stories in the collections were written several years before their publication. *El rey criollo* consists of stories written before *Pasto verde*, while *Mediodía* draws upon texts written at different dates after the novel. According to Agustín, *El callejón del blues* was originally to be published by Joaquín Mortiz: "Sin embargo, Parménides enfureció, en uno de sus ataques-pasiones, porque tardaban mucho en editarlo y retiró el texto de la editorial. Finalmente en 1976 lo vendió por diecisietemil pesos a Víctor Juárez, un editor de revistas caras, que inexplicablemente retuvo el manuscrito durante casi veinte años y cuando lo publicó le cambió el título por *En algún lugar del rock* y mezcló los cuentos que Par había elegido con artículos periodísticos de la última etapa, cuando estaba más loco que nunca" (*La contracultura en México*, 144).

throughout the internet,⁶⁷ the main sources of biographical information on García Saldaña can be found in Elena Poniatowska's essay "La literatura de la Onda" from *¡Ay vida, no me mereces!* (1985), his literary mentor Emmanuel Carballo's memories of him "Recuerdos de Parménides" in *Notas de un francotirador* (1990) (which includes an interview and a very revealing letter), and the brief chapter José Agustín dedicates to him in *La contracultura en México* (1996).

Agustín, perhaps influenced by reading *Pasto verde*, creates a profile of García Saldaña that coincides well with the autobiographical aspects conveyed by the text. It is impossible to say if he is confirming aspects of García Saldaña's life objectively, or drawing from the self-portrayal which he projects in the autobiographical novel. To be sure, there is no lack of autobiographical references in the novel as we shall see in detail ahead. Epicuro, who represents García Saldaña in the text, shares his admiration for the same writers, the same bands and expresses the author's extremely rebellious, sometimes contradictory, political beliefs. Early on in the novel, Epicuro shares facts and memes that strengthen the connection between the fictional character and the author and lays out some of the themes explored in the novel:

escucho discos de los Rolling Stones y los Beatles para no confundirme con la gente fresa⁶⁸ y para no confundirme con la gente cuadrada uso la melena abultada y nena recuerda que de tu situación tus papas no tienen la culpa de nada nada más que tú debes de saber quien decide tu vida si la estulticia o la calma si el nuevo bravo mundo o la decadencia yo no soy del pri proque las instituciones me enferman

⁶⁷ The information is mostly culled together in blogs paying homage to the late writer and include articles originally published in the Mexican press on the 25th anniversary of his death (2007) and his 65th birthday (2009). One such blog which has culled together a variety of material is *pastoverde08.wordpress.com*, which celebrates the 40th anniversary of the release of *Pasto verde*.

Another blog of note is *parmenidesgarciasaldana.blogspot.com* which is administered by his brother, Edmundo García Saldaña, and also culls a plethora of material, though citation of the original sources is lacking.

⁶⁸ *Fresa* pejoratively refers to the conservative, upper class who lived within the constrictive and hypocritical framework of the *buenas costumbres*. The younger *fresa* generation maintained close ties to their families and traditions and did not imbibe like the *onderos*.

me enferma no sentirme libre y en la vida nena hay que ser libres libres como el viento
 libres como los pájaros y las abejas como los árboles y las flores
 las instituciones asesinaron a Cristo nena
 que predicaba el bien el amor el cielo la vida (29, lack of punctuation from original)

He later adds that: “[...]yo nunca me he creído perro faldero lo bueno es que yo nunca he seguido modelos yo me he instruido he leído libros extranjeros ajenos a su idiosincrasia o idiotagracia” (29, lack of punctuation from original). Though Epicuro states he has never followed any models, García Saldaña, as we shall see ahead, clearly did: the Rolling Stones. Epicuro also has a group of friends which, as we shall see, includes Agustín himself and other Onda figures. Like the real life García Saldaña, he drinks and smokes to excess, and even acknowledges the mental illness which deeply affected the course of his life. It is also significant to note that Epicuro, like the author, is unable to connect with women—an issue which dominates *Pasto verde*.

Though born in Orizaba, Veracruz on February 9, 1944, García Saldaña spent most of his formative years and the bulk of his adult life in the Narvarte neighborhood of Mexico City, described in *Pasto verde* as “la colonia más mediana de las colonias de la clase media” (81). Before becoming involved in literature, García Saldaña was an economics student on a career path to eventually work in the government, in a self-described “torre de marfil” with a post at La Secretaría del Progreso Mexicano y Bienestar Patrio. This path was abandoned when, as he told Carballo in an 1967 interview: “Una voz cósmica, después de cinco horas de insomnio, me dijo: nene...recapacita, la onda se hace en la calle, en el camino, la onda se logra con la comunicación” (241). From that point on, García Saldaña forged his own path, leaving school, avoiding traditional forms of employment, surviving by writing articles, with the aid of family, friends and, when necessary, his own skills as a thief. This was, of course, a path which eventually led him down a road to personal perdition. Needless to say, similar paths to perdition were followed by many renowned figures in rock, including Brian Jones (1942-1969) of the Rolling Stones, García Saldaña’s favorite rock band. Before choosing this path, Carballo remembers him as an idealistic individual whose disappointment in his political belief system (Marxism, Stalinist Communism) led him

to become a “muchacho-que-casi-no-cree-en-nada” (239) and cynical to a point of the young writer saying: “Oh Lenin, tus frases ahora son gimmicks que bien se los podríamos vender a la Coca Cola o a la Procter & Gamble” (241). In *Pasto verde*, Epicuro goes as far to state that:

...no creo en la gente, digo, yo creo en las personas, creo en Bob Dylan, creo en Mick Jagger, creo en Allen Ginsberg, creo en Che Guevara, pero no en la gente. Para mí la gente es un fantasma, para mí la gente no existe, digo la gente se forma de un grupo de seres irreales (96).

García Saldaña expressed such sentiments following a period of deep involvement in Communism. Of course, all of these figures strongly question the establishment at different levels. The basic anti-bourgeois sentiment is the cornerstone for Epicuro’s discourse throughout the novel which assails the *fresa* culture. On the surface, it seems ironic that he is using rock, an imported cultural commodity, as an important launching point for his rebelliousness and worldview, though his reasoning will become apparent shortly. It was not until after the tragedy at Tlatelolco on October 2, 1968 that the left embraced rock for its subversive qualities. *Pasto verde*, published in July, 1968, shows the gap that existed before that fateful date during one of the concert scenes: “Los actores proletarios bajan del escenario y nos gritan ¡Fuera de aquí fuera de aquí burgueses parásitos decadentes!” (69). Rock had been a catalyst for García Saldaña’s emancipation from the grips of any dogma, political or otherwise.⁶⁹ There are numerous examples of García Saldaña’s communist past found in *Pasto verde*, which are, of course, expressed by a different means within which rock plays an essential role.

After a short time studying at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, García Saldaña soon left school to explore nearby New Orleans, its deep heritage of black music (blues, jazz and the city’s particular flavor of rhythm and blues), its black neighborhoods, and the constant debauchery that is

⁶⁹ Regarding this point, Carballo quotes an interview he did with García Saldaña in 1967 or 1968 in which the young writer conveys that: “En esa época [the early 1960s] era stalinista: puritano, dogmático, anciano. Cuando fui a ver la *Dolce Vita*, por ejemplo, me salí a la mitad de la película porque era un film decadente” (241). García Saldaña later adds that: “Bajo mi almohada siempre tenía *Fundamentos de Leninismo* de J. V. Stalin, y of course su biografía” (241).

identified with the city. The experience in the black neighborhoods also gave him a different perspective on rock's roots and its subversive nature:

El rock—en un 80%—procede de los ghettos negros, los barrios más bajos de las ciudades gabachas. Y obviamente la gente de esos barrios es *iletrada, ignorante, analfabeta*. Lógicamente, las palabras que flotan en el aire de todos los barrios paupérrimos donde los negros han sido reclusos, tienen que atentar contra la decencia y la respetabilidad de la clase media gabacha⁷⁰ (*En la ruta de la onda*, 64).

Of course, the model provided by the American middle class was precisely the one being emulated in Mexico. García Saldaña connects the language of rock and its origins in the black ghetto to the lumpenproletariat—a key connection given García Saldaña's heavy involvement with the Communist cause in the early 1960s. With rock, he had found a mode of expression which melded the visceral and intellectual, an all-encompassing way to rebel and directly challenge the bourgeois culture which he came to despise.

As a result, this experience in the United States further shaped his view of Mexico upon returning and contributed further radicalizing his beliefs. Disgusted by the institutionalization of the *fresa* ways of conformity, in *Pasto verde*, García Saldaña declares that “MEXICO: PARAISO DE LAS FRESAS” (77). Immediately afterwards in the text, he sarcastically compiles a long list of phrases which exemplify the *fresa* values which he so vociferously rejects in all of his texts, but most caustically in *Pasto verde*. Some examples from the list, provided almost without any punctuation in the original text, include:

trata de ser buen chico escucha atentamente al maestro el cinco de mayo recita versos no contradigas nada no critiques nada no abandones las consignas si ves que te persigue la tira saca tu credencial de miembro del partido revolucionario[...] es mejor que navegues con el viento[...]

⁷⁰ Gabacho is a Mexican slang term for Americans from the United States.

es mejor ser un naco⁷¹ influyente ladrón y vendido no tener ideas no tener cerebro vivir dentro de la cofradía que no seguir nada y vivir al día es mejor ser gente limpia parecer gente decente y regalarle flores el día de su cumpleaños a la nieta de Obregón, Calles y anexas (78)

García Saldaña's disaffection with the conservative Mexico of the 60s, like many of those in his generation, grew as the 60s progressed. No longer were the traditional values still being propounded by the PRI of any worth to this generation. Instead, it was a new, urban culture whose consciousness, as we have seen in the introduction, was shaped more by mass media culture and its products. As García Saldaña explains in *En la ruta de la onda*:

Y los que nacieron en la ciudad fueron regidos por ella. Su educación la orientaron la radio, el cine, la televisión. Estos 'chilangos' de la Nueva Ciudad de México nacieron desarraigados, sus pensamientos fueron al otro lado, al fin del Sueño. Vanamente se les trató de inculcar 'creencias mexicanas': amor a la Virgen de Guadalupe, a Dios Nuestro Señor, a la Patria Mexicana, a los Héroes Mexicanos, a la Enseña patria. Para ellos el amor a la Patria era sólo palabras, palabras que se devanecían en el Mundo de la Cosa Pública (81).

García Saldaña searched out his own "heroes" or models to guide him within the reality he perceived and wished to shape further.

In literature, as is the case with the majority of the Onda writers, none of the models were Mexican. Instead, the most important model was perhaps the Onda writers' oft-cited influence of the Beat Generation. The influence of authors such as Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, and William S. Burroughs important cornerstone in the development of his literary style and had the added benefit of having street credibility as influential countercultural figures. In reference to Kerouac, *Pasto verde* fits the Beat author's concept of "spontaneous prose" as explained in a 1955 letter to novelist Malcolm Cowley:

⁷¹Naco is a pejorative colloquial term which refers to someone characterized by their poor taste, low class or lack of education. The Academia de la Lengua Mexicana gives two definitions, one referring to indians and indigenous origins while the second refers to someone who is ignorant with little cultural knowledge. (<http://www.academia.org.mx/dicmex.php>)

“The requirements for prose & verse are the same, i. e. *blow*—What a man most wishes to hide, revise, and un-say, is precisely what Literature is waiting and bleeding for” (Chandarlapaty, 78). The *blow* that Kerouac is referring to is the improvisational aspect of the jazz musician, whose feelings can be laid bare for all to experience in the process of expression—much like the blues or rock artist whose expression in words and sound do the same. Regarding Burroughs, Robin Lyden makes a key observation which is also relevant when discussing *Pasto verde*: “...Burroughs’s deliberate intention to confuse and undermine...moral norms and aesthetic conventions which claim the status of ‘empirical reality’ and ‘norms’” (Chandarlapaty, 68). Burroughs accomplished this in a plethora of ways, not the least of which is the “cut-up” method used by the author in his *Nova Trilogy* (1961-1967). The name of the process speaks for itself: the procedure consists of cutting up the text and reassembling it at random, thus disrupting any structural or lineal continuity and creating radical juxtapositions. In a letter to Emmanuel Carballo written during one of his many stays in a mental institution, García Saldaña explains that the original manuscript of *Pasto verde* was 500 pages, far more vast than the roughly 160 pages the different editions of the novel offer. Without the manuscript it is impossible to know what process was used by García Saldaña in editing the manuscript down to its published length. Given how fragmentary and disjointed stretches of the novel are, the possibility exists of him having utilized Burroughs’ cut-up method, though this is strictly conjecture at this point. Nonetheless, the abrupt and radical changes of time and space in the narration do suggest this possibility. And as is also the case with Burroughs, the drug experience and its representation are an important presence in *Pasto verde*. García Saldaña, in referring to the drug that gives the novel its name, explains that:

La marihuana nos da otro lenguaje. Por otra parte, fumar mota es tratar de ingresar gratuitamente a otro mundo; vamos hacia lados desconocidos de la realidad, hacia secretos velados para los demás, hacia otro lado de la fantasía. Fantasía entre un mundo subterráneo, prohibido (*En la ruta de la onda*, 53).

Burroughs had first gained notoriety by specifically depicting underground, prohibited worlds in *Junky* (1953) and later on in *Naked Lunch* (1959). García Saldaña opens the door to a world which, up to that point, 1968, had not been seen in such detail in Mexican literature.

In rock and the rock counterculture García Saldaña found kindred spirits, who not only would leave their mark on his writing, but also deeply affected his way of life and personality. Carballo writes that García Saldaña was more interested in records and marijuana than books and that: “Parménides fue uno de nuestros primeros escritores que en vez de libros tuvo discos en la cabecera” (240). This is borne out further when assuming the premise of *Pasto verde*'s strong autobiographical component. Epicuro, García Saldaña's alter-ego in the novel, declares that “los que me enseñaron el camino de los grandes iniciados” are mostly musicians (all of the Rolling Stones as individuals, Bob Dylan, some notable classical composers of different eras like Beethoven and 20th century avant garde composer Arnold Schoenberg; Chuck Berry, and soul singers James Brown and Otis Redding, among others), a few writers (Francisco de Quevedo as well as the Beat Generation, from which he highlights Allen Ginsberg) and figures from leftist political movements (Marx, Che Guevara, Lenin, and Black Power activist Stokely Carmichael⁷²) (*Pasto verde*, 50). Clearly that is not to say that the young *ondero* ignored literature itself as an influence as there are passing mentions of Cortázar's *Rayuela*, Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo*, and “el mundo caleidoscópico de Carpentier”, among others (*Pasto verde*, 39). However, literature's presence as such is not as prevalent as in the work of José Agustín whose literary references often become an essential component of the text. Like in the work of Agustín, the influences are laid out for the reader to associate the author with a lineage of his own creation. Due to its overt explicitness, this idea can only be loosely associated with Borges' premise in his essay “Kafka y sus precursores” from *Otras inquisiciones* (1952),

⁷² Stokely Carmichael (1941-1998) was one of the key figures in the Black Panther movement of the 1960s in the United States. He is credited with having coined the phrase “Black Power”. As one of the most visible activists in the Civil Rights movement, Carmichael became the de facto spokesman for the Black Panthers and the Black Power movement, though that caused internal strife among the movement. Though he embraced non-violence as a tactic for furthering the movement's goals, Carmichael was not opposed to the use of violence when confronted with the brutal measures taken by police against demonstrators. In 1969, Carmichael eventually left the Black Panthers (for not being radical enough) to live in Africa with his then wife, South African singer and activist Miriam Makeba (1932-2008).

in which more modern works alter the way in which previously published works are read, perceived and understood. Certainly the *zeitgeist* of the times that the world could (and would) be changed can lead to such a conclusion. On the other hand, and more pertinently, given the general disdain for the past and the assertion of independence of the present that García Saldaña's and Agustín's work embody, it seems more likely to serve the function of providing an inventory of thinkers and ideas that need to be assimilated within that present. Of course, these influences combine to create a text that is not easily categorized as either high or low culture which is, as we have seen, a defining characteristic of the Onda literature.

Like José Agustín, García Saldaña was also active as a rock journalist, writing for various publications including the short-lived, but highly influential, *Piedra rodante*, and dabbled in film work.⁷³ He was also close friends with Adolfo "Fito" de la Parra, one of the first Mexican rock musicians to have success in the United States as drummer of the blues-rock band Canned Heat, to whom he dedicates *Pasto verde*.⁷⁴ Another good friend in the rock scene was Alejandro Lora of Three Souls In My Mind, a successful Mexican blues rock band which is still in existence to this day under the name El Tri.⁷⁵ The

⁷³ García Saldaña's involvement in cinema is far more limited than that of Agustín's, consisting, to my knowledge as of this point in my research, only of a collaboration with Juan Tovar and Ricardo Vinós on the screenplay to Tovar's short story "El pueblo fantasma" in 1966 which took third prize in the screenplay competition sponsored by the Banco Nacional Cinematográfico. An example of García Saldaña's rock journalism, an article on the first Led Zeppelin LP from 1969, can be found at <http://www.scribd.com/doc/3289169/Revista-Caballero-articulo-de-Parmenides-Garcia>.

⁷⁴ Adolfo "Fito" de la Parra (b. 1946) had been active in the Mexican rock scene before relocating to Los Angeles in 1966. He joined Canned Heat in late 1967 and has remained in the group since, despite numerous line-up changes. Agustín tells that de la Parra: "...invitó varias veces al Par a Los Ángeles y lo atascó de blues y anfetaminas" (144). The group itself was formed in Los Angeles in 1965 by a group of blues connoisseurs led by vocalist and record collector Bob "The Bear" Hite (1943-1981). Drawing inspiration from Hite's legendary collection of blues 78 rpm records, the band was considered to be among the most authentic white interpreters of the blues who, unlike other artists covering blues material in the era, were very concerned with the originators getting their due recognition and royalties. The group had its peak success playing at the Woodstock festival in August, 1969. Their song, "Going Up The Country", opens and closes the film that documents the legendary festival.

⁷⁵ Formed in 1968, Three Souls In My Mind has been a staple on the Mexican rock scene ever since. The band changed its name to the Tri in 1985. Led by guitarist-singer Alejandro Lora the group has released dozens of records and continues performing to this day. Of García Saldaña's relationship to the group and her own visceral response to their music, Poniatowska explains: "...Parménides es la eminencia gris. Habría que escuchar con cuidado la letra de las canciones para ver nada más lo que dicen estos cuates, las

ideals of the era: living within an eternal youth filled with unbridled freedoms and excesses, as well as the ever-present rebellious spirit of the moment were assimilated by García Saldaña to the core. According to Poniatowska: “Parménides se propone vivir ‘un perpetuo mediodía, cegador y embriagante’” (178). This way of being came to define him not only as a writer but also as a public figure, to the point that it became a detriment to him on all levels. As Poniatowska explains:

Si Parménides no es un gran escritor, es sin embargo un gran fenómeno literario. Nadie vivió tan atrabancadamente⁷⁶ como él. Lo dice así José de la Colina:⁷⁷ “...había en él demasiada disponibilidad a la vida como viniese, una incapacidad casi feroz de entrar en arreglos con lo establecido, una persistente adolescencia que no cedía ni siquiera ante la sucesión de los años”.

(180)

mentadas de madre, los insultos a la policía, al gobierno, a los señores del traje y de la transa, los que andan de lucidores. No intento aquí idolizar o hacer su apología, pero Parménides García Saldaña acompaña a *Three Souls in my mind* en mil reventones, es su inspirador, su narrador, su cuerpo, su alma, un trio de tres almas en mi mente porque cuando tocan son tres almas las que se meten a mi mente” (184). In Rosa Carmen Ángeles’ article “Una de Parménides García Saldaña” from the *pastoverde08* blog, the author notes that García Saldaña was pivotal in the band changing from an acid rock group into a more blues oriented group. For another example of the possible influence García Saldaña had on the Three Souls In My Mind, one need look no further than the lyrics to “Chavo de Onda” (1973) which revisit the spirit of *Pasto verde*: No importa si es en un concierto o en una audición/yo siempre me siento contento en el revento/me pasa cotorrearme chavas/cuando a las tocadas voy/yo soy un chavo de onda y,/me pasa el rocanrol/hay, pobres de los rucos/ellos no lo pueden entender/que soy un chavo de onda y,/me pasa el rocanrol/me gusta oír a la guitarra cuando/empieza a llorar/me gusta oír la batería redoblar/siento que el cuerpo se me enchina/y que las piernas me empiezan a temblar/yo soy un chavo de onda y,/me pasa el rocanrol/ hay, pobres de los fresas,/ellos no lo pueden entender/que soy un chavo de onda y,/me pasa el rocanrol,/me gusta soltarme la greña/para andar en el rol/escuchando un buena rola/de los rolling stones/siempre me visto de mezclilla/cuando a las tocadas voy/ yo soy un chavo de onda y,/me pasa el rocanrol (<http://www.lyricstime.com/el-tri-chavo-de-onda-lyrics.html>).

⁷⁶ Atrabancado is not in the Spanish language dictionary of the Real Academia. It is a term used in Mexico that describes an impulsive individual who does not measure the consequences of their actions. The stories describing García Saldaña’s actions certainly coincide with the definition.

⁷⁷ José de la Colina (b. Santander, Spain, 1934) is one of many Spanish expatriates to settle in Mexico following the Spanish Civil War. He is considered a member of the “Generación de Medio Siglo” in Mexico and his work was received the highest of praise from the Mexican literary elite, including Octavio Paz. The Onda writers like García Saldaña established a break from the aesthetic propounded by this generation, as I have explained in the introduction.

García Saldaña was indeed, as the blog bearing his name describes him, “El Niño Terrible de la Literatura Mexicana” who, in Poniatowska’s words, “...se destacó por sus desplantes, por la absoluta fidelidad a su postura de maldito” (188).

Poniatowska’s choice of words is not casual because, in a plethora of ways, García Saldaña, though not a poet, fits the character type of a modern-day *poète maudit* (cursed or damned poet): radical, anti-bourgeois (despite his own bourgeois origins), against any and all official discourse, perpetually cynical to the point of nihilism (as we have already seen), unwilling to conform to any norm, and unwilling to be fully satisfied with anything. Indeed, the opening lines of *Pasto verde* make reference both to Rimbaud and Baudelaire, perhaps attempting to establish an immediate connection between the author and predecessors who shared, if nothing else, a similar disposition towards the world. One example, which was of course aided along by the hippie style which García Saldaña at times embraced, is how St. Aubyn describes Rimbaud as: “a long-haired tramp, wearing dirty, disreputable clothes...cadging beers from his acquaintances, and making a foulmouthed nuisance of himself” (5). This is not unlike a portrait of García Saldaña himself, whose character in *Pasto verde* says of himself that: “...parezco pordiosero, limosnero de cantinas...” (80) St. Aubyn later recounts that in a public reading in late 1871 or early 1872: “...the drunken Rimbaud caused such a scene by interrupting the poet that was reading his works and by threatening the life of the photographer Etienne Carjat that he was invited never to return” (6). The parallels between these descriptions and those summarized by Poniatowska are notable. As Poniatowska explains:

Después fueron muchas las crónicas de las noches de Parménides; que había insultado a José Luis Martínez⁷⁸ retándolo a que bajara a la calle a romperse la madre con él. Esa noche todo el barrio salió de su casa a ver un “stray cat” (Parménides se sentía gato en el sentido beatnik). Después no

⁷⁸ José Luis Martínez (1918-2007) was a noted critic, essay writer and diplomat who was director of the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes from 1965-1970 and later the Fondo de Cultura Económica. His time as director of the INBA was likely the era in which the incident with García Saldaña occurred. Among his notable essays are “El mexicano moderno” (1958) and his renowned work on Hernán Cortés (1990).

sólo fueron sus noches sino sus enfebricidos, distorsionados días a punta de patadas, moretones, “black eyes” y escándalos. (188)

She later adds that, unlike Agustín and other writers of the Onda who wanted to be taken seriously and respected as writers of literature, “La conducta social de Parménides ...es la de un expulsado, no quiere ni que lo estime Octavio Paz” (190). Regardless of whether this stance was the real García Saldaña or a persona which he presented—and the limited evidence points more towards the former than the latter—he certainly lived and played the part to an extreme. The anecdotally-documented erratic, provocative behavior brought on and exacerbated by his struggles with drug and alcohol addiction and mental illness. García Saldaña’s character type, linkable to the cursed poets, also opens the possibility of a (thus far) unexplored connection between the Onda writer and the fictional, upstart group of poets, *los realvisceralistas*, described by Roberto Bolaño⁷⁹ in his 1998 novel, *Los detectives salvajes*. Indeed, perhaps García Saldaña’s own *Pasto verde* could be considered a manifestation of what visceral realism would look like in narrative form: provoking a visceral reaction from the reader through its construction of a textual reality by means of an irrational, instinctive, absolute, perspectivism which in García Saldaña’s case was further fueled by drugs, alcohol and mental illness.

As I noted in the introductory chapter, while the other writers associated with the Onda literary movement shunned being grouped under the moniker created by Glantz, García Saldaña relished it. He seemed to take it upon himself to prove critics of the Onda right with his extreme, irreverent, patricidal behavior whether it be within the texts or in the “desmadres” (chaos) he was known to cause in public events. As Colin notes: “para [García Saldaña] la literatura como la vida misma debía ser un rompimiento constante con lo establecido. En esto seguía a Bertolt Brecht, quien había afirmado que un

⁷⁹ Chilean writer Roberto Bolaño (1953-2003) arrived in Mexico in 1968 during the Onda’s heyday. According to Ignacio López-Vicuna: “Bolaño rapidly immersed himself in the urban and cultural life of Mexico City. Among his early literary influences were Carlos Fuentes’s sprawling urban novel, *La región más transparente* [Where the Air Is Clear] (1958) and the writers of the Mexican *onda* movement José Agustín and Gustavo Sainz” (<http://www.litencyc.com/php/speople.php?rec=true&UID=12552>).

estilo nuevo que se convierte en paradigma se vuelve obsoleto” (22).⁸⁰ The constant desire to break with any establishment norm also fomented his intense reactions whenever feeling slighted—responses which, at times, consisted of extreme violence, directed towards anyone, even family and friends. Agustín enumerates different incidents in which the homes of friends (such as writer Juan Tovar) and family (his parents and brothers) were practically destroyed and even an episode in which García Saldaña attempted to murder his own mother.⁸¹ In this sense, beyond García Saldaña’s own natural inclinations brought on by the mental illness from which he suffered, another possible model for such behavior is traceable to the hair-trigger personality of Vince Everett. Everett is the main character of the Elvis Presley film *Jailhouse Rock* (1957), in which fisticuffs originating from him come to be as much a defining quality of his personality as his talent. García Saldaña was a great fan of Presley’s, as, according to Carballo, “Elvis Presley le descubrió un mundo” (239). In *Pasto verde*, Epicuro, the narrator and García Saldaña’s alter ego describes Presley as “mi ídolo el rey” (57). Of course, he also titled his first collection of stories, *El Rey Criollo*, after the 1958 Presley film *King Creole* and also assumed “Rey Criollo” as a nickname for himself. Not surprisingly, García Saldaña’s unhinged, violent behavior eventually led him to be incarcerated and later put away in a psychiatric hospital, where he spent the bulk of his final years. Despite their rebellious stance and other incidents in which they were involved, none of García Saldaña’s Onda contemporaries took the general disdain for any sort of decorum to the same dangerously violent level.

Unlike José Agustín who, as we have seen, attempted to put the misgivings of his youth in perspective in his autobiography *El rock de la cárcel*, José Colin notes that García Saldaña: “...estaba tan metido en su rebeldía que nunca tuvo oportunidad de arrepentirse, ni creemos que lo hubiera hecho de haberla tenido...fue sin duda, el personaje más reaccionario de aquella generación” (22). Also, as we

⁸⁰ Brecht’s affirmation is one of the fundamental criticisms leveled by García Saldaña towards the Onda movement and the 60s counterculture in general in *En la ruta de la onda*.

⁸¹ Poniatowska recounts the incident as follows: “Una vez tiró los muebles de su sala “burguesota” por la ventana y cuando su madre intervino, quiso tirarla a ella como el sofá más estorboso” (188).

have seen, while Agustín consciously expressed his desire to be considered a writer worthy of the literary establishment, García Saldaña had no such desire and furthermore, as Colin explains: "...no estaba dispuesto a rendirse a la fama, a la clase social o a la ley" (25). In the process, García Saldaña managed to alienate himself from the necessary avenues to prolong his literary career: continued interest from publishers and critics. Agustín explains that *Pasto verde*: "...no le fue mal en un principio y de no haber sido por el espanto que causó a algunos intelectuales quizá después habría sido un texto más apreciado" (144). As a result, the work slipped truly into the underground, going out of print for decades, circulating only among the select few *model readers* who were best suited to understand and, by extension, appreciate the texts.

García Saldaña and The Rolling Stones: Kindred Spirits in Iconoclasm

Yo sólo soy un vil rocanrolero
Parménides García Saldaña in *Pasto verde*

Despite García Saldaña's close ties to the Mexican rock music scene,⁸² and *Three Souls In My Mind* in particular, the greatest influence on the author from rock was that of the British rock band, the Rolling Stones. Their songs and public image are fundamental in understanding García Saldaña as a writer and the public persona presented in the few anecdotes that circulate about him. The band's influence and presence as a constant reference point as a writer are clear: 1) in *El rey criollo*, each story is preceded by an epigraph consisting of the lyrics to a Rolling Stones song, translated by García Saldaña; 2) their presence in *Pasto verde* is no less significant, with the band or its songs being mentioned no fewer than thirty-five times in the short novel, with the songs being key reference points in the narration of particular scenes as well as *leitmotifs*, and; 3) in *En la ruta de la onda*, García Saldaña traces a significant portion of the decline of the ideals of the 1960s to the tragic events at Altamont, California on December 6, 1969—a free concert organized by the Rolling Stones to cap their 1969 U. S. tour.⁸³ The Stones emerged after Elvis Presley was drafted into the U. S. Army, a point in time when rock was largely “cleaned up” and geared towards a wider audience (1959-1963). The music was consciously marketed to not foment rebelliousness in the youth market that consumed it, though that tendency soon took a different course. The Stones quickly earned the reputation of being rock's “bad boys” in 1963, filling the

⁸² Zolov explains that García Saldaña: “...was irredeemably negative toward native rock groups, which he considered—with the exception of the hard blues sound of *Three Souls in My Mind*—a second-rate imitation and alien to the needs of Mexicans” (160).

⁸³ The 1970 documentary *Gimme Shelter*, directed by Albert and David Maysles and Charlotte Zwerin, documents the entire 1969 tour including the tragic events at Altamont. Though there are several narratives that have emerged since about who was ultimately responsible, García Saldaña blames the Rolling Stones for having hired the California motorcycle gang the Hell's Angels to conduct security duty in exchange for \$500 worth of beer. Given the Angels' fascistic sympathies, they were not a good fit for the hippie crowd whose behavior that day was also influenced by bad psychedelic drugs that were circulating. Ultimately, a black member of the audience was stabbed and killed by one of the Hell's Angels.

void that had been left when Presley was drafted and later reinvented as a more palatable figure for mainstream, not mainly teenage, audiences.⁸⁴ Loyd Grossman notes: “That the Stones were the first pop group who didn’t dress in a uniform fashion and who looked like a bunch of punks hauled off the nearest street corner was an essential part of their musical performance”(48). Due in part to this Grossman emphasizes that: “...the Stones with their tough rebellious manner were the great social liberators of rock” and that “...a large part of their success must be due to the image they project and their way of life rather than to their musical ability” (49, 50). The Stones were the first group to exploit rock to their advantage as what Grossman describes “a stylized and ongoing rebellion” (55). These points are further borne out by Herb Bowie’s points on the Stones in his electronic book, *Reason to Rock*, regarding the themes and topics covered in the lyrics of the music itself:

[The Rolling Stones] were willing to sing about subjects otherwise considered taboo: drugs, sex, dominance/submission in sexual relationships, and violence, to name a few. Yet one must be careful in interpreting their work, for they often played this role with differing (and sometimes overlapping) intentions. At times, they simply wanted to honestly explore a subject not otherwise discussed. In other songs, they wanted to draw attention to society’s confusion between evil imagined and real, between arbitrary social conventions and real ethical principles. In many cases, they wanted to use the energy of such subjects to inspire their music. And in some cases, they simply seemed to be living up (or down) to people’s expectations of them. (http://www.reasonatorock.com/artists/rolling_stones.html)

⁸⁴ The period of 1960-1963 is often considered by rock historians as perhaps the blandest, most clean cut, and most mainstream period in relation to pure pop. The era, with few exceptions, was dominated by figures like Ricky Nelson and Gene Pitney, among others, who were far more vapid in comparison to those who preceded them, and extremely so in comparison to those who would follow. In Britain, there was a similar dynamic, with many balladeers and more pop-oriented singers having earned most of the limelight in those years preceding the emergence of the Beatles and of the Stones shortly thereafter. Elvis Presley, following his military service from 1958-1960, would never again be presented as the untamed figure that corresponded to his image in the 1950s, particularly in films like *Jailhouse Rock* (1957) and *King Creole* (1958).

It is interesting to note some of the parallels in the themes laid out here and the criticisms leveled at the Onda literary movement (Gunia, 12). Certainly, García Saldaña intuited these intentions in the Stones and applied them to his own work and persona.

Another important part of the band's identity emerged from the personalities and background of some, though not all, of the individual band members, but the rest was the doing of the Stones' manager Andrew Loog Oldham. Oldham wanted to present the group as an antidote to the more affable Beatles, whose talents, recognition and, most importantly for the manager, appearances in the press (which consequently raised record sales) far surpassed those of the Stones at this early juncture. Following the mantra that no publicity is bad, Loog Oldham used his considerable public relations skills to manipulate the press by feeding them propaganda about the band, in the process garnering more attention for the Stones and further shaping their image. As Dalton explains:

By early 1964 Andrew had begun planting stories in the press. He supplied journalist with contagious quotes and catchy captions. The provocative headline that appeared in *Melody Maker* in March had all the earmarks of a well-honed Oldham aphorism: "WOULD YOU LET YOUR SISTER GO WITH A ROLLING STONE?" It was just a variation of his slogan "The Stones are the group parents love to hate". (23)

The preceding question and statement further brought to the fore the stark contrast in public image between the Stones and the Beatles.⁸⁵ Clearly, there is a direct challenge to the "proper" behavior that was expected in middle and upper class social circles, with the threat of corrupting the youth, and young women in particular, at the fore. Furthermore, as Dalton quotes Mick Jagger of the Stones: "We'd do anything stupid to get our picture in the paper. It meant record sales. *The surest thing was to do*

⁸⁵ Though the Beatles would shortly become countercultural icons whose influence was feared by parents in their own right, at this point in time (1964-65), they were in the process of being absorbed into the mainstream establishment. This is perhaps most evident with their receiving the MBE (Member of the Order of the British Empire) medal from the queen herself in October, 1965. Though this event was controversial in itself, the medal (it was an award typically reserved for veterans and diplomats), it did push the Beatles towards becoming part of the established mainstream of British culture. Something of this sort would have been unthinkable for a group with a public image like that of the Rolling Stones.

something rude, shock people. We'd do something as a put-on, and they'd write about it for weeks" (23-24, italics mine). The standard, acceptable moral code by which youth were expected to live in Britain, just as we have seen with *buenas costumbres* in Mexico, was at odds with the example being set by the Stones. This dynamic is a constant backdrop in both *El rey criollo* and *Pasto verde*, where the main male characters are in a constant struggle with their female counterparts to get them to free themselves from the norms of society's shackles. Of course, the ultimate goal is to have the women free themselves sexually so the men who chased them could have their way with them and does not take into account their liberation in any deeper social sense, particularly in Mexico where *machismo* was still the order of the day. In fact, *machismo* is perhaps the only norm that is never truly challenged by García Saldaña or other Onda era writers, despite their inherent disdain for the prevalent autocratic patriarchal model which dominated Mexican society at the time.

Keeping in mind just how influential the Stones music, lyrics and attitude were on García Saldaña, it is not surprising that he would also incorporate one aspect into his work they have long been criticized for: misogyny. García Saldaña's particular brand of misogyny can also be linked to the Stones' of which Dalton explains:

The women put down with such cool relish in the Stones' middle period songs are almost all from the English upper-middle class. The attacks on women are actually attacks on the mindless debutante who "purrs like a pussycat," the trendy "darling of the discotheque crowd" and neurotic daughters of the rich. The barely controlled fury of these songs is compounded of their undeniable ambivalence toward women and their middle-class values... (Dalton, 65)

These types of women are the main targets in the stories of *El rey criollo* and are also assailed in *Pasto verde*, though a closer look reveals that both the Stones and García Saldaña go well beyond the points expressed in Dalton's explanation.

Though not directed at any specific woman from the text, Epicuro mocks the general tastes of the *fresa* girl who wants imported goods, a Ford Mustang, and other bourgeois creature comforts before launching into this long diatribe:

Hechicera. Pero así mujer me vales madre.⁸⁶ Eso eres: sólo una mujer. Sí nena, sí eres mujer. Bah pendeja. Mujeres como tú hay muchas, montones. De mujeres como tú están llenos los mercados, las tiendas de zapatos, los cines. De mujeres como tú están llenos los bares y los clubes nocturnos, de mujeres como tú están llenas las playas, de mujeres como tú está llena la historia. De mujeres como tú está llena la vida de los hombres que caminan como espantapájaros por las calles llenas de luz eléctrica. Y claro, sabes llorar, sabes murmurar palabras de amor, sabes ser tierna y atenta y amable y simpático, muy nice. ¿No? Sabes ser mujer...Eso sólo has aprendido...(90)

García Saldaña uses the repeated phrase “De mujeres como tú está(n) lleno(s)/llena(s)” similar to a refrain in a rock song, driving home his point about the superficiality of the desires, the lack of depth of character, the learned behavior. Undoubtedly the passage is readable as an expression of misogyny, though it can be construed to also fit into a larger criticism of the patriarchal autocratic Mexican society’s overall misogyny which has carved out limited, specific roles for women and little else. Given that García Saldaña’s portrayal of women vacillates between the extremes of objectification, idolization and misogyny, we can deduce to some degree that his view lacks the acumen to transcend the limited framework a worldview originating in *machismo*, and whose rebelliousness was shaped by rock songs, could offer.

Misogyny in song lyrics was, of course, nothing new for Mexican audiences given that it was a consistent presence in many of the corridos heard mostly in northern Mexico and the extremely popular boleros heard on Mexican airwaves before the rock era. Unlike the boleros, which have numerous very famous women performers who, in song, also portrayed their former manipulative male lovers as evil, such was not the case in rock, where women performers were (and to some extent still are) rare. In *I Wanna Be Me: Rock Music and the Politics of Identity*, Theodore Gracyk explains that: “rock music is

⁸⁶ Valer madre (or madres) is a colloquial Mexican term which means to be worth nothing.

white music, rock performers are male, and rock songs express men's feelings, especially men's feelings about women" (16). Frith, in his article "Rock and Sexuality", goes a step further in noting that:

[R]ock has become synonymous with a male-defined sexuality: 'Under My Thumb' sang the Stones, the archetypal rock group, 'stupid girl'. Some feminists have argued that rock is now essentially a male form of expression, that for women to make non-sexist music it is necessary to use sounds, structures and styles that cannot be heard in rock (42).

The overt expression of manliness in rock, and particularly the Rolling Stones, is directly traceable to their main early influence: electric Chicago blues. Though there were, and still are, important female artists in the Chicago blues idiom, like Koko Taylor (1928-2009), they were far fewer in numbers and influence. Theirs were not the records that were making an impact on the young, aspiring British musicians such as Mick Jagger, Keith Richard or Eric Clapton. Expressions of male bravado are extremely common in all blues, including the Chicago blues idiom. One need look no further than Muddy Waters' "I'm A Man" (1954), "Hoochie Coochie Man" (1956), "I Just Want To Make Love To You" (1954), Howlin' Wolf's "Shake For Me" (1957) to find this among the many, many examples. Even what appear to be humbler, more self-deprecating songs like B.B. King⁸⁷'s "It's My Own Fault"(1960) have a component of male domination-female objectification and misogyny within them. Though there, of course, are many exceptions within the blues as well, the prevalence of the male bravado/misogyny dynamic is undeniable. Given that the Chicago blues repertoire was one of the main sources for some of the most influential young bands to emerge from England, including the Rolling Stones and the Yardbirds, the lineage is clear.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Riley "Blues Boy" King (b. 1925) is one of the most influential singers and electric guitarists in the history of the blues. Though not a practitioner of the Chicago blues, King's style of urban blues was also an important influence on the young British and American rockers. One of the blues' greatest soloists on his instrument, King established a blues guitar vernacular that is synonymous with the electric blues guitar idiom.

⁸⁸ Of course, the presence of misogynistic themes and lyrics in songs was not limited to groups influenced directly by the blues, like the Beatles. John Lennon's "Run For Your Life" (*Rubber Soul*, 1965) is a case in point. There are numerous examples of sexism and misogyny in rock lyrics and in the

García Saldaña's own taste for the blues and his experience with them first hand in his time in New Orleans cannot be discounted as a key formative experience in the development of his own attitudes and persona. The key influence of Mick Jagger and Stones on him as a conduit for misogyny is stronger when considering how deep their ethos seems to have been assimilated by the young *onduero*. Frith explains that Jagger was one of the first exponents of what he dubs "cock rock" by which he means: "music making in which performance is an explicit, crude and often aggressive expression of male sexuality" (43). He adds that "Cock rock performers are aggressive, dominating, boastful and constantly seek to remind the audience of their prowess" (44). This statement is also the essence of the stance put forth by Muddy Waters when performing "Hoochie Coochie Man" or "I'm A Man" and clearly taken to heart by Jagger in forming his image for public consumption. Frith elaborates on this point by explaining that:

The cock rock image is the rampant, destructive male traveller, smashing hotels and groupies alike. Musically, such rock takes off from the sexual frankness of rhythm and blues but adds a cruder male physicality (hardness, control, virtuosity)...These are men who take to the streets, take risks, live dangerously and, most of all, swagger untrammelled by responsibility, sexual and otherwise. And, what's more, they want to make this clear. Women, in their eyes, are either sexually aggressive and therefore doomed and unhappy, or else sexually repressed and therefore in need of male servicing. It's the woman, whether romanticised or not, who is seen as possessive, after a husband, anti-freedom, the ultimate restriction (44-45).

There are numerous examples of García Saldaña's own expression of this type of ethos within the stories of *El rey criollo* and the quotes from *Pasto verde* we have seen already. It is also clear that García Saldaña's own lifestyle attempts to befit the description above, failing to live it fully by lacking the trappings of power wielded by rock stars like Jagger. The adoption of this sort of ethos is also a

Rolling Stones specifically. For an overview, see Rod Cohen's "Sexism in rock-and-roll lyrics" and Alix Brodie's "Sympathy for the Devil- The Rolling Stones" articles, as well as Mark Wallace's blog post "Misogyny in Mick Jagger and the Rolling Stones' Lyrics". See bibliography for full details.

fundamental component in the misogynistic nature of rock culture as a whole and the attitudes expressed in the music, fashion and imagery, both in its marketing and its lyrics⁸⁹.

As such, yet another parallel model for García Saldaña's own behavior and life credo can be seen in the following quote from the Cincinnati Herald from the Rolling Stones' 1965 American tour. It lays out their desire to forge their own path and live by their own rules—an early example of the untrammelled swagger to which Frith refers put openly on display: “[The Rolling Stones] are, in their own ways, iconoclasts and choose the individual road of freedom of expression, as witnessed by this remark by Jagger: ‘Everybody has their own moral code. I conduct myself as I think fit’” (Dalton, 58). Clearly, this would be at odds with any established norms in the case of the young *onduero* writer. Because “what he saw fit” was often radical and unacceptable under virtually any circumstance, García Saldaña's reputation did nothing to garner him anything positive on any significant level, other than perhaps being a sort of “underground legend” among those not subjected to his affronts.

With the press attention, the Stones, like other rock stars of the 1960s, quickly developed the reputation for being spokespeople of the changing times they were living in, not only through song, but also through quotes in the press. In a very real sense, many of the words expressed by rock stars regardless of the context were considered to be those of modern prophets and a threat to the accepted norms that the establishment felt had to be curbed. Lyrically, Bob Dylan was the most influential figure conveying the feelings of the 60s generation until his motorcycle accident in 1966, when he was forced out of the public eye. In the press, John Lennon of the Beatles had already assumed this role and both

⁸⁹ Through the years, this concept has evolved and seen a variety of different expressions within rock itself and other musical genres. Frith, in defining, cock rock and its role within rock culture, juxtaposes it with teenybopper pop which is marketed and more often consumed by girls. As such, there is a vastly different ethos and accompanying behavior and imaginary which is attached to it. While in present times the concept of misogyny is perhaps more attached to genres such as hip hop or reggaeton, it is also present in country music, heavy metal and other genres and is, of course, not limited to music produced in English. As Deborah Finding's 2009 article “Why Do We Tolerate Misogyny in Music?” shows, the expression of misogyny in music has at times become even cruder and more blatant. Her comments also reminds us that the Rolling Stones come up in any conversation regarding the topic of misogyny in music. For her full comments see:

http://www.alternet.org/reproductivejustice/134440/why_do_we_tolerate_misogyny_in_music/

stirred great controversy (his out-of-context quote from 1966 about the Beatle being “bigger than Jesus” caused an immense backlash in the United States) and promoted numerous causes associated with the 60s, namely the peace movement—though he was also among the first to question the direction of the 60s counterculture and his own role within it with the Beatles’ “Revolution” (1968). This is an idea that concurs with Carballo’s assessment of the young García Saldaña having “una vocación de profeta” (239) and García Saldaña’s own sentiments conveyed in Carballo’s interview that: “Como buen estudiante politizado *sabía que formaba parte de los portadores de la verdad*” (241, italics mine). By the time of *Pasto verde*, this sort of idealism, significantly, has already faded away, though when speaking of the *fresa* middle to upper class he still sees himself as the bearer of truth. It is also clear that García Saldaña agrees with the idea, also expressed by Agustín in *La nueva música clásica* (1968), that the worldview represented in rock songs and culture resonated with, corresponded to, and helped define their specific generation.

Returning to the topic of the Stones, though the constant attention in the press was mostly beneficial for the goal of boosting record sales, notoriety and influence with the youth, it eventually became a detriment to several of the Stones personally. This was obviously the case later in the decade with their well-publicized arrests for possession and consumption of drugs in 1967. Nonetheless, the arrests and the press that it generated made their status as countercultural icons grow even more. Furthermore, their widely-publicized lives, bad habits and all, served as a models for the throngs of fans whose lives they had entered and for whom they were a constant presence in their daily existence.⁹⁰ García Saldaña’s growing reputation as a troublemaker did not have the same effect, of course, though now, over forty years later, it does distinguish him as a unique, extreme example of the Onda generation.

⁹⁰ It is important to note that Paul McCartney (and thus, by extension, the rest of the Beatles) publicly admitted to experimenting with LSD in an interview on June 16, 1967, though there were no arrests or legal consequences. The usually amicable McCartney is combative with the interviewer, placing the responsibility of the influence on youth squarely on the press for delving into private matters. The full transcript of the interview is available at: <http://www.beatlesinterviews.org/db1967.0619.beatles.html> . Keith Richards and Mick Jagger of the Stones were in the middle of their legal tribulations at this point in time following their first arrest in February of 1967. John Lennon and George Harrison would later also face drug charges in 1968 and 1969 respectively.

Of course, there were more positive manifestations of the *zeitgeist* that the Stones also represented. For example, the type of thinking expressed by the following quote from Brian Jones would have resonated even more profoundly in a country under a repressive, conservative regime like the Mexico of Díaz Ordaz, and in no short order represents the emancipating role that youth believed rock to have. The following is drawn from a 1967 interview with Jones published in *New Musical Express*:

“Censorship is still with us in a number of ugly forms,” Brian declared. “But the days of when men like Lenny Bruce⁹¹ and artist Jim Dine⁹² are persecuted is coming to an end. Young people are measuring opinion with new yardsticks and it must mean greater individual freedom of expression.”

“Pop music will have its part to play in all of this. When certain American Folk artists with important messages to tell are no longer suppressed maybe we will arrive at the truth.

“The lyrics of ‘Satisfaction’ were subjected to a form of critical censorship in America. This must go. Lennon’s recent piece of free speech [Beatles more popular than Jesus] was the subject of the same bigoted thinking. But the new generation will do away with all this—I hope.”
(Dalton, 75)

Though it is impossible to say if García Saldaña had been exposed to any of the previous quotes from the Rolling Stones, it is clear from the portraits of him shared by Agustín and Poniatowska, among others, as well as the view of reality expressed in both his fiction and essay work, that he shared the sentiments expressed within them. To be sure, he was a figure who would have relished seeing himself in the same

⁹¹ American Lenny Bruce (née Leonard Alfred Schneider, 1925-1966) was perhaps the most provocative, iconoclastic comedian of his generation. His scathing commentaries on religion, race relations and sex were a direct influence on the following generation of irreverent comics who challenged societal norms such as George Carlin (1937-2008) and Richard Pryor (1940-2005). He was arrested on numerous occasions on charges of obscenity, charges which he challenged on grounds of his free speech rights from the First Amendment of the U. S. Constitution. He died of a drug overdose in 1966.

⁹² American artist Jim Dine (b. 1935) was a staple of the American Pop Art movement and a participant in the performance art “happenings” in early 1960s New York. In 1966, twenty of Dine’s pieces were seized by British authorities from a London gallery on charges of obscenity. The gallery owner, Robert Fraser, eventually paid a fine for a lesser charge, indecency.

category as any of the aforementioned persecuted artists, particularly the Stones. And yet, the limited availability of his work lessened his impact to the point of being practically forgotten, save for by a precious few.

Again, though García Saldaña had his own rebellious inclinations from the beginning, with the Stones and their well-known public image as iconoclastic rebels the young Mexican writer found the most kindred of spirits. The caustic critique of superficiality and lack of authenticity of middle and upper class society which is prevalent in Onda texts can also be found in many early Rolling Stones songs such as “Play With Fire”, “Cool, Calm and Collected”, “Doncha Bother Me”, “Stupid Girl” and “All Sold Out”, and, of course, their 1965 hit, “Satisfaction”, among others. As we shall see ahead, the song is a subtext throughout the first and third sections of *Pasto verde*. Another Rolling Stones song that serves this function in the second and third parts of the novel is the darker, even nihilistic “Paint It Black” from 1966. The Mexican release of the 45 rpm single of “Paint It Black”, to which García Saldaña undoubtedly had access, contains a key insight into his own aspirations as an artist and the role he perceived himself to have within Mexican society. Zolov translates the liner notes found on the record sleeve:

The Rolling Stones hold the trump card among all of the other interpreters of modern music: their authenticity. They're authentic in how they play, sing, dress, speak, behave in public or any other situation; in how they select their repertoire, make their [musical] arrangements, and devote themselves wholly [to what they do], from their image of wanton abandon to the depths of their thinking. (94)

There is an evident connection between the freedom and self-determination expressed here and the way García Saldaña chose to live his life. He sought the same authenticity and emancipation from the society's and literature's norms and pursued them, for better or worse, with wanton abandon. His commitment what he held to be his own authenticity was unyielding in its obstinacy, to the point of being self-defeating and self-destructive. In *Pasto verde*, Epicuro's friend Apolo lauds his authenticity, implicitly recognizing the risks involved in maintaining it with such commitment:

[...]siempre has tenido güevos para mandar todo a la chingada, por eso te admiro, porque ahora vives aquí como mendigo, porque con nosotros nunca has usado máscaras porque en la vida hay que ser farsante, usar máscara con toda la gente, el mundo es de los que chingan y hay que chingar [...] (97)

In a letter to Carballo written during one of his many stays in a mental institution, García Saldaña lays out his whole devotion to what he does and its accompanying authenticity, explaining that: "...desde que empecé a escribir 'en serio' para mí no ha habido otra cosa aparte de la literatura. He sacrificado la 'dolce vita' por escribir, por tratar de escribir sinceramente" (244) —sincerity that involved unmasking as much of Mexican society as he could for all its fakeness and kicking authority in the teeth. Both in life and in some of his writing, it seems there was no excess that was beyond García Saldaña's reach. On the contrary, pushing limits as far as they could go was a challenge that he apparently sought to encounter on a daily basis. With all of these factors in mind, the last line of the first edition of *Pasto verde*, not included in the second edition of 1975, becomes even clearer: "Fuera de mí fuera de mí fuera de mí fuera de mí/Dentro de mi propia fantasía" (168). Sadly, it was a fantasy that along the way had many nightmarish turns, was strewn with disappointment, fueled by deep frustration, anger and despair, and wrought with havoc from substance abuse and mental illness. Such a fantasy is the one told in *Pasto verde*, where the boundaries between life and art seem to melt away.

Pasto verde

*Well, you've got your diamonds and you've got your pretty clothes
And the chauffeur drives your car
You let everybody know
But don't play with me, cause you're playing with fire
The Rolling Stones*

Pasto verde is perhaps the most challenging and experimental of the texts that are associated with the Onda literary movement. According to Agustín, the novel's original title was *La onda*, while according to the previously cited letter to Carballo, the original title was *Consecuencia*. *Consecuencia* is translatable to the English word "aftermath", which is the title to the 1966 Rolling Stones record from which so many of the song references in the novel originate. Beyond the semantic challenges posed by the

multifaceted network of cultural references and the dialect of the *ondero*, whose prevalence we have seen as a defining quality in the work of José Agustín, García Saldaña offers a work whose formal and linguistic complexities confront the reader on a variety of different levels. Colin summarizes some of the challenges the reader encounters in attempting to establish a continuity within the temporal and spatial displacement conveyed by the text. They include the manipulation and alteration of grammar to fit his own aesthetic ends including paragraphs consisting of words strung together without any guiding punctuation. In other cases, even when the words are not forming one long sentence or paragraph, the punctuation arbitrarily appears and disappears. There are also numerous examples in which capitalization is conspicuous in its absence. In the narration itself, the alternation between states of consciousness, whether they be dreams, drug or alcohol induced hallucinations or “actual” experiences juxtaposed in adjacent paragraphs on the same page. The aforementioned experimental use of language freely interjects terminology from the *ondero* slang of the times and English phrases, which are not limited to but most often drawn, from rock lyrics (Colin, 24-25). The linguistic challenges are the same as those highlighted by Carpenter regarding Agustín in her article “Se me hace que no me entiendes”; challenges that can easily alienate an unprepared reader who is not privy to the jargon or the cultural territory from which it is drawn and developed.

Given the novel’s lack of circulation, readership and critical attention, it is interesting to note what García Saldaña himself and other authors had to say about *Pasto verde*. García Saldaña’s own description in the Carballo interview could well be simply another episode from the novel itself. He includes references to drunken experiences in New Orleans, his disillusioned vision of Mexico, conversations about the political realities of “revolution”, a psychedelic dream sequence and allusions to his own role as author: “Y entonces desaparezco y aparezco en un túnel donde confabulo siniestras ideas” (Carballo 243). While Agustín explains that the novel is:

...un caso único en la literatura mexicana, por lo catártico y libre; en su naturaleza cabe todo tipo de exceso, y eso hace que la lectura a veces se arrastre, pero en general es un libro que reta al lector y que lo obliga, en cierta forma, a vencerse a sí mismo (*La contracultura en México*, 144).

Carballo's description of the novel presents a series of dialectic points that explain why, on one hand, the novel was easy for some critics to discard: "[es] una novela tan joven y desamparada como las que escriben los recién llegados" and "una blasfemia", among other things. On the other hand, Carballo also finds it to be a poignant expression of a moment which emphasizes a freedom in which the artist has only to answer to himself and his own authenticity allowing the writer to incorporate whatever he seems fit into his work. As such, the novel expresses a *mélange* of stylistic elements and also is: "una diatriba contra los escritores que no practican sus puntos de vista políticos y estéticos" (240). Regarding this *mélange*, Carballo explains that *Pasto verde* is: "...una novela que, en momentos, puede definirse como romántica, costumbrista, realista, naturalista, modernista, surrealista, expresionista, y, por qué no, behaviorista y del absurdo (es todo y es nada)" (240). Of course, there are (at least) two ways of approaching this stylistic collage that the text offers. For Glantz it could be a case in point of the superficial knowledge of previous literature and the questionable aesthetic footing that she attributes to the Onda writers—an essential element, as we saw in the introduction, in differentiating *escritura* and Onda writing. Another side of the argument, while not discarding the possibility of some degree of superficiality being present, attempts to recognize the fresh, independent voice that the Onda literature was attempting to define on its own terms. In establishing their stylistic diversity, those terms, whether they are used with conscious intent or not, logically suggest allusions to stylistic elements of other eras—hence Carballo's long list of *isms* which partially apply to *Pasto verde*. These, in turn, become fleeting anchor points for certain critical approaches to the texts (more literary, less cultural) which do not account for rock or other defining components of the counterculture as elements more essential to approaching the work—in the end, a work more akin to the "no brow" approach of pop art.

Like several works of the Beat Generation including Kerouac's *The Dharma Bums* (1958) and *On the Road* (1959) as well as Burroughs' *Naked Lunch* (1959), *Pasto verde* is a *roman à clef*. There is a long list of characters referred to solely using nicknames such as Broken Soul, Sadito, Círculo Vicioso, Mr. Pedo, Nervio and Howl, among others. Presumably, the real people connected to these names would have been clearer to those close to the scene described in the novel. Venturing to guess who the majority

of the individuals are, save for Richard O. (Ricardo Vinós, a friend and collaborator of the author's) or Angelina María (Angélica María, the singer and movie star with whom Agustín had a well publicized affair), is to enter the realm of imprudent conjecture at this point. José Agustín, renamed Pepcoke Gin in the novel, is identifiable for having written *De lado* in reference to *De perfil* (49), and *La tumbadora* in reference to *La tumba* (100). Using the his friend Nervio's reaction to the photo of Pepcoke Gin on the cover of *La Tumbadora*, García Saldaña, perhaps in jest (or perhaps not), takes a playful shot at Agustín who, at that point, was having great success with his publications and with women.⁹³ Nervio declares: "Carajo qué cuate tan naco—dice viendo la foto del autor—. Es el rey de los albañiles, carajo pinche naco, aquí sólo los nacos son famosos, mira nada más que cara de naco" (100). Agustín's wife, Margarita Bermúdez, appears as Daisy simply using a literal translation from English. Daisy is one of the many women to whom Epicurois attracted. As is the case with the many other women in the text, his advances are to no avail.

The choice of the name Epicuro (at times Epicrudo, as a play on words with "crudo", meaning hung over in colloquial terms) is significant for the direct connection to the philosopher Epicurus (341-270 B. C.). Epicurus believed that the main goal of human life was to experience happiness from an absence of physical pain and mental strife. He was a non-believer in the afterlife and the possibility of a soul being punished after death—a point which can correspond to García Saldaña's own wanton abandon in living life and as a rejection of Catholic dogma. It is also important to note that:

[Epicurus] regarded the unacknowledged fear of death and punishment as the primary cause of anxiety among human beings, and anxiety in turn as the source of extreme and irrational desires.

The elimination of the fears and corresponding desires would leave people free to pursue the

⁹³ There are occasional examples of bad blood between García Saldaña and Agustín. An example is found in the letter to Carballo, making a play on words on Agustín's first novel in the process: "El año próximo cavaré la tumba de José Agustín" (244). There are no kind words for friend and fellow writer Juan Tovar in this letter calling him "un escritor lleno de fórmulas" whose story he just read "es de un principiante" (244).

pleasures, both physical and mental, to which they are naturally drawn, and to enjoy peace of mind that is consequent upon their regularly and expected satisfaction.

(plato.stanford.edu/entries/epicurus/)

Epicurus formulated an entire system of thought in which he developed these precepts in much greater depth and the apparent hedonism which is propounded becomes reined in by a plethora of caveats. Of course, caveats would be the furthest thing to concern Epicuro, who chooses the elements convenient to living the way he sees fit from Epicureanism and diverges significantly from the Epicurean view on sex. For the philosopher, sex, despite its obviously gratifying aspect, was not in the first tier of importance as he believed it to bring as many, if not more, problems to individuals as it did pleasures. Epicuro even touches upon this: “en realidad no sé qué pensar sobre hacer el amor digo porque hay gente que dice hacer el amor es lo máximo y esa gente nada más vive pensando en *hacer* el amor y en *hacer y hacer* el amor digo ¿esa gente piensa?” (22). These comments notwithstanding, because of Epicuro’s apparently insatiable quest for sex, he ends up being a living example of how sex (or its pursuit in this case) can become problematic in Epicurean terms: dominating his psyche, draining time that could be spent on other endeavors and creating mental strife. Epicuro uses an argument based around the Epicurean premise that human beings feel peace of mind when free of the fear of punishment and consequently experience the pleasures to which they are naturally drawn. As we note in the following passage:

...que te digan la verdad, que digan que tienes que vivir si prejuicios, que no frustres tu vida sexual nena, que hacer el amor es algo simple, que la época de hacer el amor llega y no hay por qué tener miedo, tienes que ser sincera contigo misma nena, darte, sin esperar nada, eso es el respeto, dar sin esperar nada a cambio, el amor está en ti nena, está en ti, no lo escondas nena, no lo escondas, no te traumes, no te frustres, ama, ama, ama...El amor es la base, el amor se siente, nena, está dentro de ti, vibrando, vibrando...(22)

This is the crux of several failed attempts to lure women into bed with him.

There are over a dozen women during the course of the novel who attract Epicuro's attention sexually. Some of them, like Lisa,⁹⁴ Dalia Marina "nuestra Marianne Faithfull"⁹⁵ and the apparently imaginary Mary Jane (another avatar for a Marianne Faithfull-type *güera*), among others, are mentioned only briefly. Others like Sofia (the *fresa* girl), Rocío (the Dylan fan), to only name two, maintain his interest and are developed further. In the end, all of them turn him away, though he often adopts an attitude of rejecting them before he himself is rebuffed.⁹⁶ Practically all of the women to whom he is attracted (real or imaginary within the represented world of the novel), save for the ones conspicuously referred to as "la esposa de mi amigo", "mi amiga Sexishotashell," "Lovable Cherry" and another, "Estúpida" are actually given proper names as opposed to the nicknames that identify the vast majority of the male characters. Estúpida, who is not one of Epicuro's love interests, is essentially a textually developed representation of the Stones' "Stupid Girl" from *Between the Buttons* (1967), an oft-mentioned

⁹⁴ Perhaps the Lisa mentioned in *Pasto verde* is the same as the Lisa who gives the title to Roberto Bolaño's poem of the same title, in which García Saldaña plays a key role. The poem is drawn from the posthumous collection *La Universidad Desconocida* (2007): Cuando Lisa me dijo que había hecho el amor/Con otro, en la viva cabina telefónica de aquel/□ Almacén de la Tepeyac, creí que el mundo/□ Se acababa para mí. Un tipo alto y flaco y/□ Con el pelo largo y una verga larga que no esperó/□ Más de una cita para penetrarla hasta el fondo.□/ No es algo serio, dijo ella, pero es/□ La mejor manera de sacarte de mi vida./□ Parménides García Saldaña tenía el pelo largo y/□ hubiera/□ Podido ser el amante de Lisa, pero algunos/□ Años después supe que había muerto en una clínica/□ psiquiátrica/□ O que se había suicidado. Lisa ya no quería/□ Acostarse más con perdedores. A veces sueño/ □ Con ella y la veo feliz y fría en un México/□ Diseñado por Lovecraft. Escuchamos música/□ (Canned Heat, uno de los grupos preferidos□ de Parménides García Saldaña) y luego hicimos□ El amor tres veces. La primera se vino dentro de mí./□ La segunda se vino en mi boca y la tercera, apenas un/□ hilo/□ De agua, un corto hilo de pescar, entre mis pechos. Y/□ todo/□ En dos horas, dijo Lisa. Las dos peores horas de mi□/vida./□ Dije desde el otro lado del teléfono. (350)

The collection of poems perhaps also offers a more concrete glimpse of how Bolaño conceived the *real visceralismo* the fictional poets of *Los detectives salvajes* would have had to offer, as there are no examples in the novel itself. A prime example is titles "Mi poesía" which displays an avant-garde sensibility in its textual imagery as well as the drawn abstract lines integrated within.

⁹⁵ Pop singer, actress and model Marianne Faithfull (b. 1946) was one of the most visible figures in 1960s London. She was Rolling Stone Mick Jagger's girlfriend from 1966 until 1969, partaking in all of the legendary debauchery that the Stones were known for in that era. During her time with Jagger, she also had affairs with others, including fellow Rolling Stone Keith Richards. Faithfull is mentioned directly in the novel as well.

⁹⁶ As Seth Bovey explains in "Don't Tread on Me": The Ethos of '60's Garage Punk", rejecting before being rejected is a typical strategy employed in garage rock songs of the era to mask the individual's sensitivity and vulnerability, in the process leaving his image of bravado intact.

Stones record in the novel. In the end, Epicuro expresses a bitter loneliness, searching for solace in the fleeting comfort given to him by marijuana: “No tengo a Dalila, no tengo a Sofia, no tengo a Claudia, no tengo a Susana, no tengo a Tania, no tengo a Daisy, entonces empiezo a cantarle a mi eterno amor Maryjane” (137). Maryjane has long been a codeword for marijuana, which, of course, highlights the decadent, escapist aspect and Epicuro’s “propia fantasía” of *Pasto verde*.⁹⁷

The failures with women in the novel have their parallel in García Saldaña’s life as well. According to Agustín:

Sólo le fallaban las chavas, a las que idolatraba y detestaba al mismo tiempo. Pero nunca encontró la manera de abordarlas. Supongo que era tan fuerte su instinto creativo que el amoroso se debilitó. Tenía la pésima costumbre de enamorarse de las mujeres de los cuates: se clavó con la esposa de Juan Tovar...y la mía, pero especialmente de Tania Zelaya, entonces casada con Ricardo Vinós, y le dedicó un largo y prescindible poema en *Pasto verde*. Sólo ella le hizo caso un tiempo y el amor estuvo a punto de ahorrarle la locura, en la que Parménides se iba despeñando porque, entre otras cosas, le gustaba. (*La contracultura en México* 142).

This telling quote summarizes much of the ambivalence and again reminds us of the outright misogynistic sentiments conveyed towards women in *Pasto verde*. His propensity for falling in love with his friends’ companions, while being a somewhat typical occurrence among close-knit circles of friends, nonetheless echoes well-publicized events that were occurring in the private lives of the most visible

⁹⁷ It is apparent that García Saldaña links the name Mary Jane or Maryjane to the Rolling Stones song “Lady Jane” from *Aftermath*. Though there are numerous interpretations to the lyrics of the Rolling Stones song “Lady Jane”, García Saldaña interprets it to be a song about marijuana and it appears numerous times in the novel. Some of the lyrics are as follows: My sweet Lady Jane/When I see you again/Your servant am I/And will humbly remain/Just heed this plea my love/On bended knees my love/I pledge myself to Lady Jane..life is secure/with Lady Jane. In a scene in which he is surrounded by his *onda cuates*, including Pepcoke Gin, the author’s interpretation of the song becomes clear because when the song comes on the record he shares that: “...con esta canción le rindo culto a mi amiga La Gitana [the name he gives to his smoking device]” (49).

members of the Rolling Stones in the late 1960s.⁹⁸ Though several times within the novel he alludes to being (or wanting to be) Mick Jagger, regarding his friends' love partners, perhaps García Saldaña wanted to think of himself as Keith Richards. Richards not only had managed to have an affair with Marianne Faithfull while she was with Mick Jagger, but also stole fellow band mate Brian Jones' girlfriend, model and actress Anita Pallenberg, away from him. I have yet to find any details of García Saldaña's affair with Tania Zelaya, and her presence in *Pasto verde* is reduced only to being mentioned—there is no interaction with her as there is with other characters, though Epicuro calls the screaming fans of his rock band “las Tánias” (35, 36).

Regarding the representation of other women in the text, they are mostly reduced to idolized objects of desire or, as we have seen, objects of scorn for their prudish, *fresa* ways. In the end, none are able to see things the way Epicuro does, as Cherry makes explicit: “Oye siempre ves cosas raras yo nunca he podido ver cosas raras” (33). This two-dimensional point of view is also typical of the representation of women in rock songs as an idealized panacea or the source of pain and evil—a common representation drawn from the blues. In the former category, they are often represented as commodities who offer the utmost fulfillment and are the ultimate prize, a trophy of sorts. The following passage, detailing one of Epicuro's surreal sexual fantasies in all its crude, demented, objectifying boisterousness, exemplifies the critique leveled at the Onda in general of being pornographic, as well as the madness in which Agustín suggests García Saldaña revealed:

estoy socavando tu sexo viendo tu cueva estoy diseccionando científicamente tu sexo
analizándolo ¿qué hay? tu vello pubiano lo estoy sintiendo fino áspero socavando tus entrañas
¿qué hay? tu sexo abierto algo que podría coleccionar guardar en una caja de cristal junto a mis
trofeos deportivos: Epic Aris campeón de navegación en tus profundas aguas tú siempre estás

⁹⁸ The Rolling Stones' rhythm section of Bill Wyman (bass) and Charlie Watts (drums) remained further out of the public eye. An important reason was that they had stable marriages and were not as present in the “Swinging London” scene.

viendo mares en tus sueños mares violentos no el mar quieto al atardecer cuando el sol cae en el horizonte ¿cuántos trofeos como el tuyo quieres que coleccioné en mi vida? (64)

The nightmarish vision leaves behind only an object—stripping away everything but the source of pleasure. There is no face, no mind, no soul, no person. Agustín’s point on García Saldaña detesting women on some level is evident here. The twisted hallucination in this passage can also be related to the presence of *coprolalia* in Rimbaud’s poetry which is developed as an extension of the capacity of completely possessing the object of desire in its material nature and even its excrement—which becomes sacred as a metonymic extension of the desired object itself. Though the idolizing aspect of García Saldaña’s stance on women does not take the text to the same scatological levels as Rimbaud, the desire to possess the object of desire in an absolute, and clearly unrealizable sense, is clearly present here.

Of course, such absolute ownership of a woman is also found in rock songs, notably the Rolling Stones’ “Under My Thumb” with its reference to the girl being the “sweetest pet in the world”. Of the many Rolling Stones songs that attract attention for their attitude towards women, “Under My Thumb” is perhaps the most often mentioned and is the center piece of the aforementioned articles related to sexism in rock in general, and the Rolling Stones in particular. It is also part of the record *Aftermath* which, as I noted, is mentioned numerous times throughout the novel, though the song itself, is not. However, the complete domination of the girl presented within the song is alluded to in the following fantasy shared by Epicuro:

y como soy un destrampado después de mis corrientes de conciencia me vuelvo insano y chasqueo los dedos y aparece mi amiga Sexishotashell bailando adecuadamente ataviada el bolero de Ravel. Yo le ordeno el show, le digo qué prenda debe quitarse, frunce el hocico, y luego vibra los pechos, así de controlada la tengo, así de controlada tengo Sex-is-hot-as-hell que me hace shows gratis cada vez que calentarme quiero pues para ella el sexo-hohohesdivinoohoh y prendo un Alas y vuelo hasta caer dentro del coche de Howl que por el periférico va (23)

The woman in the fantasy is also reduced to a “pet” with the imagery of the “hocico” (snout) being the only reference to her face—which is, indeed, projecting a dissatisfaction which further underscores the

dichotomy of the dominated vs. the dominator. Of course, it is a fact that such fantasies were part of the reality the Stones and many other (later) debaucherous rock bands were living and have lived since then.⁹⁹ This is not the case for Epicuro, who despite being in a rock band, “Los Dientes Macizos”,¹⁰⁰ has no real groupies who are at his beckon call. Epicuro being in a rock band is perhaps the main fictional component that distinguishes him from García Saldaña the author, and yet he does not exploit this aspect, instead keeping it closer to his own reality. As such he does not textually exploit one of the phenomena that characterized the rise to rock stardom: the plentiful availability of groupies who were willing and able to do the rocker’s bidding. While the concert scene, depicting a scene right out of footage of the Beatles or the Stones around 1964 or 1965 (“las nenas gritan, lloran, se desmayan, corren hacia el escenario”(35)), suggests there are plenty of willing “Tanias” available to Epicuro and his band mates, nothing is ever consummated for him.

So, for all his braggadoccio and the attempt to present himself as a dominating Rolling Stone-type character who describes himself as immovable: “un estoico, como una piedra que rueda” who has “un corazón de piedra” (88),¹⁰¹ García Saldaña/Epicuro reveals himself to be fragile, sensitive and lonely. There is another face to the individual who projects and acts out a bluster to mask the deficiency with women that is highlighted by Agustín and is displayed by Epicuro in the novel. The fragility and longing become clear with a general statement about the ways and needs of his *cuates*, that are, of course, also his own: “Si todos los cuates tuvieran una nena, no andarían en la onda, armando desmadres encabronados de vivir, una nena que los comprendiera...” (131) and when, towards the very end of the novel he states to

⁹⁹ Rock history is filled with anecdotes like the one mentioned in Epicuro’s fantasy, some of which are far more scandalous. The first famous anecdote relating to the Stones involves a naked Marianne Faithfull dancing on a table at Keith Richards’ party in which the Stones were first arrested for drug possession in early 1967.

¹⁰⁰ Though the name of the band appears to be intentionally humorous, there were many bands in Latin America that took unusual names such as this. Unlike Los Dientes Macizos, however, the bands often combined “Los” with an English word or an English name.

¹⁰¹ Epicuro’s description of himself is another reference to the Stones and their music. Released in 1964 on the Rolling Stones record *12x5*, “Heart of Stone” is about a girl who is able to resist all advances from men, will not cry under any circumstance and whose heart of stone will, as the refrain repeats, “never break, never break, never break, never break”.

Dalia Marina: “Pero después de todo nena tú sigues fuera de onda, aún estás muy lejos de mí, es por eso que siempre estoy buscando estar fuera del mundo” (140). Both of these statements rationalize seeking a state of virtually constant inebriation as a buffer against the pain of loneliness and sexual frustration.

Epicuro’s sexual frustration is echoed in a key part of the lyrics to “Satisfaction”: “I can’t get no, satisfaction/ I can’t get no girl reaction/ and I try and I try and I try” which he does throughout the novel. Towards the end of the song, the line “’cause you see I’m on a losing streak” not only sums up García Saldaña’s stretch of futility with women, but his general lack of satisfaction in all his endeavors. The song is also one several by the Stones in the repertoire of Los Dientes Macizos and is quoted at different times throughout. But sexual frustration is not the only theme expressed in the song as it denounces: 1) the useless information propagated on the radio which is “supposed to fire my imagination” and; 2) the superficiality of how products are essential in shaping one’s image and displaying social status (“When I’m watchin’ my T.V./And that man comes on to tell me/How white my shirts can be/But he can’t be a man ‘cause he doesn’t smoke/The same cigarettes as me”). The song’s constant reappearance is not only a refrain that underscores the overall sentiments of the Onda generation, it also draws attention to the three main themes which dominate Epicuro’s, and due to the autobiographical nature of the novel García Saldaña’s, lives: 1) denouncing the PRI’s propaganda which presented a false image of Mexico and propped up national heroes whose relevance was questionable to a new generation; 2) condemning the vacuity and superficiality of the *fresa* lifestyle which was shaped directly by consumerism and; 3) as we have already noted, his frustrations and his lack of acumen with women at all levels—sexual, intellectual and, presumably, spiritual.

In reference to the first point, the anti-nationalistic stance and the lack of connection with Mexico’s ever-present past taken in the novel relates to the “useless information” alluded to in the song. It also adumbrates some of the points regarding the disaffection felt by Mexican youth made in *En la ruta de la onda*—disaffection which fueled the creation of a counterculture. For the Onda generation, the historical patrimony itself is “useless information” that fails to “fire the imagination” thanks to its empty rhetoric and unfulfilled promises:

Gracias por la herencia de este Mexiquito tan revolucionario, gracias Pancho Villa, gracias Zapata, gracias, gracias, qué bonita tierra nos dejaron, qué patria tan bella, gracias, todos los mexicanos estamos muy contentos, gracias a ustedes a ustedes, los pobres de aquí desaparecieron.
(97)

In this sense, though wrapped up in the language of the street and the poetics of rock, Epicuro's writing has a social commitment, explaining that: "Voy a escribir me cae para que los cuates no se dejen comer por los fantasmas"(17)—referring to the aforementioned ghosts of the past which, whether they represent the actual values or not, shape the *fresa* paradigm propagated by: "[...]toda esa pinche gente, toda esa gente que nos niega vivir, que nos está imponiendo sus pinches reglas pendejas, sus pinches traumas" (17). Let us not forget the fact that youth did not factor into consideration when constructing the propagandistic national identity which was being incessantly generated by the far-reaching state-sponsored media of the time.

Logically, Epicuro also assails the PRI propaganda machine which was in high gear leading up to the 1968 Olympic Games, which was also the era in which *Pasto verde* was written and published:

yo no creo en los discursos de los diputados y los senadores, yo en realidad no le creo al presidente de ningún país, en realidad todos los presidentes, no sé por qué, me enferman, en realidad es porque yo no creo en la propaganda, propaganda es una palabra que vomito siempre, yo no le haría propaganda a nadie, yo no le haría propaganda ni a Juárez ni a Mao Tse-Tung
(89, italics mine).

Again, the refrain drives the point home, much like a chorus to a rock song generates a hook which remains with the listener. Here, the affirmation of freedom and independence is formulated to stick with the reader—an idea to be assimilated into the subconscious through repetition, like a guiding mantra.

While we have already noted the objectification of women as a sexual trophy as well as the critique of the superficiality of the *fresa* woman, there are other dimensions to the criticism which also lead us back to "Satisfaction" as a subtext in the novel. The narrated portrait of a young *fresa* girl who is trapped in her bubble of boredom, who dreams of how life could be outside her bubble intends to

demonstrate the limits of her *fresa* existence: in essence, she cannot get any satisfaction for herself within it (94). But of the numerous examples of the vacuity of the *fresa* in the novel, the following is perhaps the most direct, most caustic and most steeped in Marxist thought, bringing to the fore how the feminine role and women themselves are comparable to a piece of merchandise ready to be sold to the highest bidder:

No hay nada dentro de ti nena has perdido todo estás hecha de nada has perdido la vida así de simple has perdido la vida nena lo único que te preocupa es el dinero dinero has perdido la dignidad de mujer te ofreces te ofreces te compran como cualquier mercancía te anuncias en los supermercados y en la televisión estás perdida perdida perdida perdida perdida perdida perdida dentro de ti no hay nada excepto desamor excepto negación estás hecha de nada no tienes nada eres transparente invisible estás extraviada nena la niña perdida nena eres de plástico estás perdida perdida eres un objeto en el espacio un objeto sin luz ni color estás perdida en el negro en el negro estás perdida nena estás perdida nena perdida no tienes nada no tienes nada nada nada dentro de ti no hay nada nada nada (40, lack of punctuation in original text)

This passage, aside from being an example *par excellence* of García Saldañas free-flowing diatribes and its employment of rhythmic refrains like the rock songs which so inspired him, presages Epicuro's own rejection of the *fresa* girl, before she would ever have the opportunity to do the same to him. The passage also alludes to another key Stones song serving as subtext in the novel, "Paint It Black", as the girl is also lost in the empty black world suggested by the song. In a critique of the lack of depth fomented by *fresa* culture, Epicuro acerbically mocks the *fresa* girl who artificially beautifies herself to be a more enticing piece of merchandise for her potential suitors:

[...]te ves muy suave, hueles a detergente, pero a farsantes como tú prefiero el detergente, en serio nena, prefiero pasarme la vida solo a tener muñecas como tú que usan pestañas postizas y pechos postizos y pelucas raras nada más para atrapar a cualquier pendejo que se deje[...] (40)

This critique goes to the heart of the superficiality of the *fresa* paradigm within which creating and maintaining appearances is of utmost importance—the quintessentially superficial way of being which is,

in fact, a trap that drains life of its emotions, freedoms and the Epicurean pleasures that humans naturally seek.

And yet, for all his efforts in his quest, Epicuro comes up empty: there is no satisfaction to be found. The building loneliness and alienation become more prevalent as the novel progresses, precisely the feelings conveyed by “Paint It Black”. The song is enunciated from the perspective of a young man whose love has died. While Epicuro at various times expresses that he can find hope in love, his ongoing frustrations with women do not allow that hope to come to fruition. The end result is the same as having had his love die, which in this case takes the form of the hope which keeps him going. On the other hand, there is also a steady stream of nihilistic statements rooted in the loneliness and alienation throughout the novel—statements which remind us of Carballo’s assessment of García Saldaña as a bitter young man who had practically nothing to believe in. We have already seen that he had faith only in a few individuals, but not humanity as a group. In a moment of despair Epicuro’s journey through life finds him in a desolate place: “Y voy por la avenida Amargura esquina con Callejón Sin Salida sintiéndome very very alone, solo, solo, solo” (83). Earlier, Epicuro even recounts the moment when he gives up his Stalinist ideas and realizes that he is left believing that he cannot to commit to political causes any longer (52). As the following passage shows, nothing is worth doing except for attempting to escape reality. The nihilistic emptiness manages to overwhelm Epicuro moments pushing him further into his own alcohol-soaked prison:

y amanece un sol radiante el día está lleno ¿De qué? ¿Qué? Ya amaneció ¿Y? No hagan planes no hagan planes no hagan planes los planes valen lo que los burdeleros padres digo en realidad como dice la naquisa valen madres los planes digo para qué hacer planes para qué carajos hacer pinches planes digo lo que sea que suene y alguien trae una botella de vino y seguimos chupando hasta que uno a uno vamos al señor escusado a guacarear...sí sí carajo ya no no no vuelvo a inflar puta carajo me está llevando la chingada carajo carajo puta qué sol no más ya no digo no hagan planes carajo me lleva la chingada estoy jodidísimo carajo ya no puedo

vomitar por más que me meto el dedo no puedo carajo me está llevando la chingada calmado la cosa es calmada cool cool cool cool cool cool cool coooooool man cooooool (65-66)

There is much strife before Epicuro reaches the questionable solace and comfort that the black out at the end of the passage suggests.

Though there is not direct reference to “Paint It Black” in this passage, some of its most memorable and nihilistic lines can certainly be evoked in reference to it and the path which Epicuro’s character is prone to take: “I wanna see the sun, blotted out from the sky” and that “I look inside myself and see my heart is black/ I see my red door and it’s been painted black / Maybe then I’ll fade away and not have to face the facts/ It’s not easy facing up when your whole world is black”. Though in the previous example, Epicuro expresses his feelings of rage with his own drunken rants, the song is invoked at different key moments to articulate the emotions of the moment, quoting the lyrics to express the disappointment of being rejected by Daisy (97) and his disaffection towards Mexico (101).¹⁰² Beyond that, the song also suggests the episodes of darkness, despair and madness: “No colors any more I want them to turn black”. As we know, these episodes would periodically derail Epicuro/García Saldaña and send him to his stays in mental institutions: “I have to turn my head until my darkness goes”. His own desperate condition which repulsed so many of the women he desired, is also articulated in the song: “I see people turn their heads and quickly look away”. Los Dientes Macizos also cover the song, further assimilating it into Epicuro’s consciousness.

Though the novel ends with another refrain of “Satisfaction” and the frustrations it evokes, the dark feelings of despair suggested by “Paint It Black” are suspended. There is still room left for hope, for a further evolution of youth in Mexico that will lead to their emancipation. Of course, many of these hopes were dashed a few short months after *Pasto verde*’s July, 1968 publication with the massacre at

¹⁰² There are numerous examples of songs other songs doing so throughout the novel as well, notably Bob Dylan’s “Rainy Day Women #12 and #35” which makes several appearances with its unforgettable refrain “Everybody must get stoned”. I have not delved into these because of the focus on and greater prevalence of the Rolling Stones in the novel. In fact, at different times, paragraphs composed mostly of song titles are used to express Epicuro’s thoughts and feelings.

Tlatelolco in October of 1968. Nonetheless, as Zolov, Agustín and García Saldaña, among others have explained, in the wake of Tlatelolco rock and its use as a subversive social tool became a unifying aspect of the counterculture in a way it had not been previously. In this sense, García Saldaña is a visionary, already having imagined the potential of rock as a provider of a common ground and a common language of expression for the counterculture. In this sense, rock itself can be considered a fundamental catalyst for the Onda social movement itself, as García Saldaña suggests implicitly in *Pasto verde* and explicitly in *En la ruta de la onda*.

Despite the varied literary influences I have noted that can be traced in *Pasto verde*, it is clear that the most important influence is rock music and specifically the Rolling Stones. The literary influences like Burroughs, Ginsberg or Rimbaud, are, of course, rebellious in their own right. *Pasto verde* not gaining much critical attention is perhaps traceable to the fact that it is attempting to establish a different, rebellious form of narrative more akin to the music it draws its inspiration from than elements of high brow culture that would have facilitated its reception by the critics of an intellectual elite. In thinking of the novel as akin to rock itself, we can relate this to a fundamental point Wicke makes that:

Rock music is not an object of contemplative enjoyment of 'art' separate from every day life; rock songs are not subjects for contemplation, their meaning is not given to the 'form' by a hidden 'content'. Rock music is a mass medium through which cultural values and meanings circulate, through which the social experiences are passed on which reach far beyond the material nature of the music. (ix)

Though *Pasto verde* is clearly not a mass media product, its multiple sources of referentiality which rely more on rock music than high culture, puts the Onda's cultural values and meanings into circulation in a literary realm. García Saldaña abandoned his potential career as an economist in the ivory tower to take his push for social change into the streets. And though there is no clear objective as to what an ideal society would look like to García Saldaña, *Pasto verde* does lay out what would not be welcome and what frames of mind would not function within it, namely the conservative *fresa* values, the antiquated norms

and the empty promises and rhetoric which were all within the core of the political and, to a much lesser degree, the intellectual establishments.

García Saldaña is also a perfect case in point regarding the role played by rock in society and the diverse meanings that can be attached to the lyrics and images of the artists. Wicke explains:

The 'content' of rock songs cannot be reduced to what is directly played or even what appears to be expressed in the lyrics. For its listeners these aspects only form the medium of which they themselves make *active* use. They integrate them into their lives and use them as symbols to make public their own experiences, just as, seen from another angle, these aspects give the experience of social reality a cultural form conveyed by the senses and thereby influence that reality... '[C]ontent is determined by the contexts the which its fans give it, and on the other hand it is also preconditioned by the social relations of its production and distribution together with the institutional contexts in which these stand. In other words, these contexts become a component of the lyrics, a component of a cultural text formed from cultural symbols of the most varied kind (images, technology, fashion, leisure objects, the everyday materials of the consumer society), and the music is the medium for the formulation of this cultural context. (ix-x).

As we have seen, García Saldaña appears to have intuited such ideas intrinsically and applied them to his life and work. The poetics in *Pasto verde* and the way he (whether we see him as himself or as Epicuro) lived his life take Wicke's point of making active use of rock to levels unseen even in other writers, like Agustín, who were also heavily influenced by rock. As such, the content of *Pasto verde*, when taken out of its rock context and analyzed from different critical perspectives loses an essential component of its relevance: the experience of the social reality from which it originates. In García Saldaña's case, this was a reality in which figures from rock became *cuates* who interacted with him on a daily basis by the assimilation of their music, the appropriation of their lyrics as a form of his own personal expression, and as a way to create a freer lifestyle. Of course, such a social reality and the worldview which proceeds from it, leaves many critical areas in need of social change unaddressed. This is particularly the case in the representation of women and what women's freedom actually meant (less obstacles for men to take

advantage of women sexually) to García Saldaña and perhaps other men in the Onda social movement whose reality was still steeped in the male domination model of *machismo*. Nonetheless, the call to look beyond the superficial trappings offered by Mexico's new modernity and evaluate them critically is a point whose relevance remains important to this day.

Chapter Three

Andrés Caicedo's *¡Que viva la música!*: Music, Identity and Alienation

*Well, it seems to me that you've seen too much in too few years.
And though you've tried, you just can't hide
Your eyes are edged with tears.
You better stop,
Look around.
Here it comes, here it comes, here it comes, here it comes.
Here comes your nineteenth nervous breakdown.
The Rolling Stones*

*Will I live tomorrow?
Well I just can't say...
But I know for sure,
I don't live today.
No sun comin' through my window,
Feel like I'm livin' in the bottom of a grave,
I wish you'd hurry up and rescue me,
So I can be on my miserable way
Well, I don't
Live today...
Maybe tomorrow, I just can't say,
It's such a shame to waste your time away like this...
There ain't no life nowhere...
Jimi Hendrix*

'Un ser humano irrepitible': In the Diaspora of the Onda

In true rock star fashion, the legend surrounding Andrés Caicedo (Cali, Colombia, 1951-1977) and his work has only grown since his suicide at age twenty-five on March 4, 1977—the very day he received the first copies of *¡Que viva la música!* Indeed, Caicedo's posthumous career path follows a number of the key points set forth by Joli Jensen and Steve Jones in *Afterlife as Afterimage: Understanding Posthumous Fame* which discusses the mythmaking process, the reshaping of the image and legacy of musicians after death by family, fans, and critics.¹⁰³ The latter, as we shall see in some detail, has been instrumental in constructing Caicedo's image and, with the help of Caicedo's personal papers, identity and legacy. Evidence of Caicedo's posthumous celebrity is gleaned from the fans from all over who now

¹⁰³ Among the points enumerated by Jones and Jensen in the book are: the evidence of death being a “good career move” that inevitably boosts sales; ongoing discussion of the young artist's potential and promise; the symbolic capital instantly attained by the deceased in regards to defining an era and its ethos; as well as making connections with other musicians who have suffered similar untimely fates.

make pilgrimages to Cali to pay homage. It is an unlikely scenario for the young writer who felt he needed to make his own appointment with destiny.

Caicedo himself had foreshadowed his suicide already in his own personal writings (which he himself did not like to call “diaries”) and in letters to friends and family. In no uncertain terms Caicedo states in a letter to his mother before a failed suicide attempt in 1975 that: “Este acto ya estaba premeditado” (*Mi cuerpo es una celda*, 16). It is also foreshadowed in *¡Que viva la música!*, with several of its characters contemplating or following through with the act. It can be found in the words of María del Carmen Huerta, the main character in the novel, who declares: “Entonces bienvenida sea la muerte fijada de antemano” (186). Active in writing from the age of thirteen, the bulk of Caicedo’s fictional work has been published posthumously, gained a strong cult following inside and out of literary circles, and in some cases, according to Juan Duchesne Winter, has even entered mainstream college and non-college curriculums despite its countercultural nature and representations of sex and drug use.

Though active as a playwright, actor, director, and filmmaker from the age of eighteen, Caicedo early on lost hope of ever gaining fame and fortune, as the following journal entry from January 13, 1972 shows.¹⁰⁴ In it, Caicedo enumerates his feelings on writing, its role in his life and his own ambitions, which regarding his writing, ironically, have been far surpassed in death:

Yo nunca voy a ser ni escritor, ni cineasta, ni director de cine famoso. Lo único que yo quiero es dejar un testimonio, primero a mí de mí, luego a dos o tres personas que me hayan conocido y quieran divertirse con las historias que yo cuento, aunque sean familiares míos, no importa, pero trabajar, escribir aunque sea mal, aunque lo que escriba no sirva de nada que si sirve para salir de este infierno (ja ja) por el que voy bajando, que sea ésa la razón verdadera por la que he existido, por la que me ha tocado conocer (aunque de lejitos) a la gente que he conocido (*Mi cuerpo es una celda*, 39).

¹⁰⁴ Caicedo did travel to the United States in 1973 attempting to sell two of his screenplays in Hollywood as well as spending some time with his sister in Houston while studying English. He did not succeed in selling his screenplays, though he did begin writing *¡Que viva la música!* during the trip.

A seemingly insatiable cinephile, the majority of Caicedo's published writings during his decade of activity (1967-1977) consisted of literally hundreds of film reviews and a handful of short stories done for a variety of publications including the magazines *Aquelarre* and *Vivencias*, as well as the newspapers *Occidente* and *El País*, among others, as well as, of course, the only novel published during his lifetime, *¡Que viva la música!*. He also founded, contributed articles and co-edited the magazine *Ojo al cine* with the group of like-minded young intellectuals dubbed the Grupo de Cali and was co-founder of the Cine Club de Cali, a trendsetting group which also popularized different rock bands, namely the Rolling Stones, among its members.

Writer and critic Sandro Romero Rey, a member of the Cine Club and a key figure in the posthumous publication of Caicedo's work, sorted through trunks full of the papers he left behind and put them in order for their eventual publication. Caicedo was an extremely prolific writer who dabbled in many different genres, had numerous unfinished projects, worked on translations of varied material (including Rolling Stones songs and film reviews) and left a considerable amount of material from which to create a portrait of him that went well past the superficial. A number of the letters have also been gathered, along with other personal writings, by Alberto Fuguet in constructing the montage of texts which is *Mi cuerpo es una celda: Una autobiografía* (2008). Like the previously published diaries and personal papers gathered in *El cuento de mi vida* (2007), this text reveals many of Caicedo's most intimate feelings, his intensity, his disappointments, his struggles with alienation and loneliness, his disdain for growing old, his inability to grow up, his various attempts at suicide and his unappeasable need to transform his experiences, impressions and deeper feelings into texts.¹⁰⁵ Caicedo turned to writing for solace, sharing that: "Mi sufrimiento amainará mientras me dure la fuerza que me haga seguir escribiendo" (*Mi cuerpo*, 130). He reiterated this towards the end of his life, writing in his diary: "Ahora

¹⁰⁵ There is some overlap between the texts, despite being published closely together by the same publishing house. This is inevitable given that both are presenting an autobiographical portrait of Caicedo drawn from the same sources.

escribo para calmarme y para buscar un orden” (131)—an order he was unable to find within himself or his writings.

Fuguet’s montage piece, Romero Rey’s biographical text, and the aforementioned compilation of Caicedo’s diaries, *El cuento de mi vida* (2007), as well as the recently published collection of essays *La Estela de Caicedo* (2009) edited by Juan Duchesne Winter and Felipe Gómez, are all examples of how the figure of Caicedo himself has become just as captivating to critics and the reading public as the writings themselves, if not more so. For Romero Rey, the texts themselves are inseparable from the personality of the author: “Sus textos son excesivos, desmesurados, histéricos, comprometidos y tercos, pero allí hay cuenta de una época y, sobre todo, de un ser humano irrepitible” (29). Fuguet echoes a variant on that sentiment in the explanatory epilogue of *Mi cuerpo es una celda*:

[...] lo principal en Caicedo es Caicedo mismo. Es la ida del cinéfilo como mártir, el post-adolescente latinoamericano alienado con Hollywood, el solitario que se comprometió con la pantalla mientras todos solidarizaban con la causa, el hermano mayor de McOndo, el link perdido al siglo XXI, el fan de Vargas Llosa que escribía guiones de westerns y películas de terror y devoraba las cinta [sic] de Rosen y Truffaut¹⁰⁶ en los cines del centro de Cali mientras que por

¹⁰⁶ French filmmaker and critic François Truffaut (1932-1984) is one of the most renowned figures in French cinema, credited for starting the French New Wave of cinema that came to be in the late 1950s and lasted into the 1960s. The portrait of Truffaut by Colombian critic Juan Carlos González article for *Senses of Cinema* hints at why Caicedo would have felt an affinity to the French director: “Before us lay cinephilia, an unheard of pact between those so thirsty for film they only grow calm within a darkened cinema. Truffaut was the first self-taught critic who ended up a public celebrity, an *enfant terrible* of the *Cahiers du cinéma* and *Arts* magazines”. There is a similarity between this characterization of Truffaut and how Fuguet portrays Caicedo in his explanatory epilogue: solace was seemingly only found in the darkened theater. It should also be added that Caicedo’s own failed foray into the world of filmmaking (*Angelita y Miguel Ángel*, 1971, with Carlos Mayolo) is based on the process and aesthetic explained by González in the same article. González notes that: “Truffaut and the other Parisian directors who presented films at Cannes in 1959 were all very young. The following year, another 50 filmmakers screening their first film added to their ranks. All applied realism and the everyday to their aesthetic design, reinvigorating the cinematic form. They used hand held cameras, jump cut editing and amateur actors to make low budget films outside of the studio system, and experimented with the structure of cinematic language, beginning with an absolute freedom to choose the thematic content of their films.” A documentary on Caicedo and Mayolo’s film, along with footage of the film itself can be found at: <http://www.cinepata.com/peliculas/angelita-y-miguel-angel/>.

esos mismos días, un compatriota suyo [García Márquez] insistía en narrar el pasado como si fuera todo un cuento de hadas. (262)

In further support of Fuguet's point that the most intriguing part of Caicedo's work is the writer himself, one need look no further than the many of critical articles on the author which focus just as much, if not more so, on Caicedo the individual than Caicedo the author. How his mental instability affected his creative muse, how much of his own personal voice can be heard in his authorial voice, and what type of statement he was ultimately making in committing suicide, among other things, are some of the main topics explored. The interest in his influences and his witty, informed, sometimes sarcastic takes on films and literature are evident from the publication of the compiled reviews and articles from *Ojo al cine* (Editorial Norma, 1999) and the more recent *El libro negro de Andrés Caicedo-La huella de un lector voraz*- (Editorial Norma, 2008). The latter, compiled from a folder left behind by Caicedo, is a collection of impressions and reviews and notes on the dozens of books he consumed in his short lifetime and the authors who wrote them.

Fuguet's reference to Caicedo being the big brother of McOndo (the group of young writers he spearheaded in the 1990s which eschewed displaying overt identifying signs of Latin Americanness in their writing) and his shot at García Márquez are both significant in that they link Caicedo's rebellious aesthetic of the 1970s to the 1990s and beyond, as the missing link to the 21st century. This is a key declaration in the critic's shaping of the artist's legacy, in short saying that he was "ahead of his time."¹⁰⁷ The shot at García Márquez also echoes Caicedo's own misgivings about Colombia's most famous

¹⁰⁷ Fuguet makes another comparison of Caicedo being ahead of his time in comparing him to rocker Kurt Cobain (1967-1994), whose fame and influence came over a decade after Caicedo's death. Cobain, unlike others in the infamous "27 club" of deceased rockers (Jimi Hendrix, Jim Morrison, Brian Jones, Janis Joplin), committed suicide. Jones explains that "Cobain's suicide stamped not only *his* music with the mark of the authentic (for he lived, and died, by the beliefs he seemed to espouse in his lyrics) but it stamped *all* popular music (and attendant subcultures) of the era and style as authentic" (13). The question of authenticity for Caicedo is fundamental as well, as we shall see ahead. Jones underscores how Cobain's suicide set him apart from other members of the 27 club as a troubled soul who failed to see a sense of possibility or ever accentuate the positive, and always found dead ends—including his own. Cobain expressed these sentiments in lyrics while Caicedo elaborated them in both his personal writings and prose.

author, whose star was still rising during the 1970s. This should come as no surprise, as Caicedo's aesthetic had markedly different goals. As Duchesne Winter details:

...el realismo delirantemente urbano de un imberbe filo-lumpenesco, pseudo-roquero, salsero y anti-estetizante, en una Cali demasiado conectada a los flujos de la industria cultural norteamericana y transnacional, apenas marcaba sustracción oscura en el horizonte promocional del Boom literario latinoamericano. La estética de Caicedo era demasiado pop, masificada, desclasada, “descuidada”, *desliteraturizada*, “queer”, casi desnacionalizada, en fin, anti-estética, para el programa de la “revolución dentro del lenguaje”, de la reinención de la escritura en cuanto técnica, es decir, de autenticación moderna de la alegoría cultural prevalecente en la época (9-10, emphasis in original).

Concretely, the elements that Caicedo and the McOndo aesthetic share in common are: the rejection of magical realism and mythical realms to frame the Latin American experience, the focus on the urban experience and its particular jargon, and, like the Onda writers we have explored in the first two chapters, the influence of mass media culture in shaping their views of themselves, their societies and their works.

Regarding the alienated, Latin American post-adolescent youth strongly shaped by outside cultural influences, there is also a similar dynamic to that experienced by Parménides García Saldaña or certain characters of José Agustín's.¹⁰⁸ Regarding the use of the youth jargon, Gastón Alzate notes that:

La oralidad en Caicedo es una manera de resistencia cultural, no sólo en el sentido en que es aquello que no está hecho para ser escrito, sino que no ha sido pensado como permanente y que por el contrario, busca no adherirse a la cultura, no entrar dentro de una tradición literaria...Este lenguaje cambiante, característico de los jóvenes de pandillas que comparten el uso de un vocabulario excluyente, puede ser entendido como una manera de demarcar un territorio, de negar el acceso de la sociedad a la intimidad del individuo. Es pues, una exclusión en respuesta a

¹⁰⁸ The Onda is also considered to be a precursor to the McOndo movement. Fuguet's 1994 novel *Mala onda* has numerous similarities with José Agustín's *La tumba* (1964), the first text published by any of the writers associated with the Onda generation.

otra exclusión, la de la sociedad que no permite una verdadera participación del joven en la vida social (48).

Alzate's point shows us several contact points between Caicedo and the Onda, a response to a similar social dynamic of lack of youth participation and loss of faith in society and its institutions, as well as the emphasis on using language, as Victoria Carpenter suggests about Agustín's work, which can exclude certain readers who are unfamiliar with such jargon and the cultural references which are also invoked in the texts. Alzate also writes that Caicedo is characterized posthumously as: "...un escritor precoz, exponente de la decadencia de la burguesía de la ciudad de Cali" (39)—points that, again, remind us of the Onda writers and their position towards the bourgeoisie in Mexico. Even with a slight discrepancy in age, because of Caicedo's innate curiosity towards film and rock music, many influences are essentially the same.¹⁰⁹ The similarities between Caicedo and the Onda do not end there, though there are some specific differences that I will elaborate upon ahead.

Noting the postmodern expressions articulated within his work, critics have also noted that Caicedo had many literary influences from outside and inside of Latin America, as the notes compiled in

¹⁰⁹ Indeed, Eric Zolov refers to *Rebel Without A Cause* as a key influence on the Onda. It is also a film which causes a particular impression on Caicedo. His notes on the film precisely echo the same reasons the film was influential on the Onda generation that Zolov expresses. Caicedo says of the film: "El enemigo es la cultura, cuando la cultura son los padres incapaces, la policía y la bandera de los Estados Unidos, y a un grado más profundo, el ejército de jóvenes alienados, cuya expresión más fácil de rebeldía es la violencia sin destinatario. Así, los heroes no lucharán solamente contra los padres (o contra la ausencia de padres), sino contra sus mismos compañeros de generación" (*Mi cuerpo*, 109). We can relate such an observation to the Onda by substituting the Mexican flag for the American flag, remembering García's caustic diatribes against the *fresas* of his own generation, and the different degrees of self-parody exercised by Agustín (in *La tumba*) and García Saldaña towards themselves. The essential issue of the generation gap and the resulting communication breakdown between generations in the film is addressed by Caicedo: "*Rebelde sin causa*" es una película de agredidos y agresores, y de tal relación se origina otro tema fundamental: la incomunicación entre los maestros/padres/policías/bandera y los alumnos/hijos/James [Dean]/Natalie [Wood]/Sal [Mineo]. Hacia ese aspecto es que está dirigida la dirección de actores: James Dean pide a su padre que saque la cara por él, pero lo hace porque sabe que no le van a ofrecer nada, y lo pide para que no le ofrezcan nada y para tener entonces el motivo de golpear, de agredir al agresor institucionalizado" (131). The latter would seem to be a scenario directly adopted by García Saldaña in starting one of the many *desmadres* for which he gained a reputation in the late 1960s. Caicedo, though never prone to violence towards anyone but himself, did have his share of issues with his father, for whom his writing and affinity for film was nothing more than a hobby—instead believing that his son needed to "get serious", begin a career and marry.

El libro negro and in the diaries of *El cuento de mi vida* both confirm. This, as we have seen, is also the case with the Onda writers, and, as *El libro negro* also confirms, there is a great consciousness of Colombian writers who were his contemporaries—not unlike the Onda writers’ awareness of each other and Carlos Fuentes, who was at the height of his career. Interestingly enough, despite the nihilistic disposition shared with the group of Colombian writers known as the *nadaístas*, there is no mention of them in *El libro negro*, though they are mentioned in passing in *¡Que viva la música!*¹¹⁰ Another point of note in *El libro negro*, of course, is the obvious ambivalence expressed by Caicedo towards Gabriel García Márquez—at times going as far as questioning the famed author’s contributions to Colombian literature. In a very real sense, the patricidal component which was also present in the Onda and the conscious effort to take his art in a different direction is present in Caicedo as well, as the following quote on *Cien años de soledad* makes clear. He describes the novel and its key components as:

La historia de una familia desde el primero al último de sus descendientes. Familia completamente irreal, con personajes tan inverosímiles como Supermán, que viven en un medio donde las supercherías, tradiciones, supersticiones y creencias sobrenaturales toman carácter de hechos reales. Así, y aquí está el mérito de la novela, los Buendía se tornan fabulosos dentro de

¹¹⁰ Nadaísmo is a sparsely studied neo-avant-garde poetry movement originating in Medellín, Colombia in the late 1950s and lasting through the mid-1960s. Steeped in the historical avant garde of surrealism and Dadaism, the movement was also inspired by the Beat Generation. As rebels against the literary institutions of the country, they can be seen in some sense as precursors to Caicedo, though their means of expression was poetry and not narrative. For more on the movement, see: Romero, Armando *El Nadaísmo colombiano, o, La búsqueda de una vanguardia perdida*. Bogotá: Tercer Mundo, 1988. Nadaísmo also has a direct connection to Los Yeti, one of Colombia’s first rock bands who titled their debut release *Nadaísmo a-go-go* (Discos Fuentes, 1966). Though the band explores typical territory for Latin American rock bands of the time by covering and/or re-working material by British and American musicians. They did Spanish language versions and appropriations (significantly changing the lyrics) to the Beatles’ “I Wanna Be Your Man” changed to their own “Ya not te aguanto más”, the Isley Brothers’ “Twist and Shout” transformed into “Llegó el desorden” and Muddy Waters’ “I’m A Man” which was done more directly as “Soy un hombre”, among others. They also explored more cutting-edge topics in such songs as “Pedimos la paz”, “Te espero en la guerra”, and “Me siento loco”. They are influenced by a wide range of different bands including the Rolling Stones, Country Joe and the Fish, and Bob Dylan, among others. It is difficult for me to say as of this writing the extent of the connection between Los Yeti and the poets from the Nadaísmo. Caicedo makes no mention of the band in *¡Que viva la música!*

su irrealidad. Narración fuera de tesis, no niega ni afirma nada, sólo cuenta, expone, narra (*El libro negro*, 92).

Though the apparently scandalous nature of *¡Que viva la música!*'s young protagonist, María del Carmen Huerta, would seem to make her an implausible character, in great part the implausibility stems from someone so young taking herself to so many extreme, previously unreachable places prohibited by social norms, indulging in taboos and essentially cutting herself off from any relationship with family or tradition. Early on in the novel she declares: “¡Pero si no tengo pasado! ¡Mi pasado es lo que haré este día!” (54). This is in complete contrast to the characters of *Cien años de soledad*, for whom the past is still ever-present in different forms, whether they be curses or ghosts who continue to live among the living, among others. Part of the shock provoked by the character at the time is simply an informed and detailed representation of the reality of a youth generation, as we have already seen in García Saldaña, willing to do virtually anything to break free from the norms or the Colombian variant of the *buenas costumbres*. There is an obvious and stark contrast between the concrete reality of the Cali of the early 1970s which, by all accounts of those who lived it who have gone on to comment on Caicedo's novel, was accurately represented in the text and the *irrealidad* and implausibility of the magical realism which Caicedo (and his “descendants” of McOndo) finds, in the end, unconvincing in García Márquez's masterwork. Alzate further explains the contrast between García Márquez and Caicedo:

Haciendo una comparación entre *Cien años de soledad* y *¡Que viva la música!*, podemos interpretar estas obras como parte de las expresiones de la dominación de la resistencia de la cultura dominante en la década de los 70 en Colombia. Triunfa la expresión cultural que refuerza la ideología patriarcal y que a la larga no genera conflicto. La ideología, como suturadora de las diferencias o como representante de la unidad en donde se vive el conflicto, es un intento de reducir las diferencias de las fuerzas que hacen parte estructural de una sociedad no igualitaria que proclama *una identidad falsa* o unos deseos colectivos aparentes (47, emphasis mine).

What becomes clear during María del Carmen Huerta's wanderings through the city is that no ideology can stitch together a national identity from the disparate elements of this fragmented society. Indeed, as

we shall see ahead, Caicedo puts into question all notions of identity, from class, nation or from within the individual in *¡Que viva la música!*.

The wide gamut of other writers of interest who help shape Caicedo's identity as a writer, not all of which are influences adapted to Caicedo's aesthetic, include names such as Edgar Allan Poe (read both in English and in translations by Julio Cortázar), Henry James, James Joyce, Malcolm Lowry, Anthony Burgess and H. P. Lovecraft, among many others. Despite Caicedo's divergence from the prevailing literature of the time, critics have also noted a keen awareness, if not outright influence, from the Boom in Latin America including Julio Cortázar, Carlos Fuentes, Guillermo Cabrera Infante and Mario Vargas Llosa. In *¡Que viva la música!* Caicedo covers some of the same key themes essential to Cabrera Infante's *Tres Tristes Tigres*—music, nightlife, sex, cultural and existential insularism, among others—resituating them in Cali and avoiding the aspects of Cabrera Infante's work which frustrate him as a reader and critic.¹¹¹ Nonetheless, of the writers covered in *El libro negro*, Vargas Llosa stands out as the most admired by Caicedo, characterized as "...tal vez el más importante de los escritores latinoamericanos" (*El libro negro*, 74) and as "Novelista latinoamericano ciento por ciento, cada fibra de su cuerpo pertenece a nuestra América" (71). Caicedo adapted and staged Vargas Llosa's *La ciudad y los perros* Caicedo in a lengthy theatrical presentation (Romero Rey, 38).¹¹²

However, the most notable literary influence on Caicedo for our purposes in analyzing *¡Que viva la música!* is José Agustín. Romero Rey explains that Agustín's novel *Se está haciendo tarde (Final en laguna)* circulated widely among Cali's youth and that: "los jóvenes caleños sabían el dato exacto de

¹¹¹ Caicedo expresses a distinct frustration with Cabrera Infante and *Tres Tristes Tigres*, questioning both the author and the novel: "Caramba, ¿es que Guillermo Cabrera Infante no se dio cuenta de la oportunidad que tenía entre manos de confeccionar una verdadera obra maestra en la novelística si no se pone a recurrir a aspectos engorrosos por el mero gusto de adoptar una posición falsamente revolucionaria? ¿Por qué no dejó correr el material sin agotarlo? ¿Sin cansarlo? ¿Por qué no se dedicó a jugar con aquel lenguaje que conoce tan bien y admira tanto para dejar construida una novela social, de personajes, de ambientes, una novelaza social, de personajes, de ambiente magistral?" (57).

¹¹² Romero Rey notes of Caicedo's early work: "Sus primeras narraciones adolescentes son las menos afortunadas. Hay un excesivo nihilismo y 'recursos' narrativos que pretendían seguir la línea de los triunfos formales de la nueva literatura latinoamericana. Andrés mismo se burlaría, tiempo después de estas trampas 'estéticas'" (45).

cuántos cigarrillos de marihuana se fumaban sus protagonistas” (38). Caicedo expresses an undeniable admiration for Agustín, only seven years his senior, calling him: “uno de los ejemplos más prometedores de la nueva narrativa latinoamericana” while, not surprisingly, given his own profound interest in both subjects, also holding his involvement in film work and writing on rock in high regard. Both Caicedo and Agustín were deeply involved in theater, often mounting productions of their own boundary pushing, iconoclastic plays. In the *oeuvre* itself, Caicedo shares evident parallels with the Onda in general and Agustín in particular. The following quote from Caicedo’s impressions of Agustín’s second novel, *De perfil* (1966), could also be applied to *¡Que viva la música!*:

Su primera persona se estira y se mete en todos los rincones, apunta hacia todos los blancos, preguntando por su presente, de vez en cuando por un posible e incierto futuro, pero sobre todo indagando rabiosamente su origen, la causa de la caótica y divertidísima situación actual. Los jóvenes de Agustín, con su ingenua pero peligrosa violencia arremeten sin pensarlo dos veces contra todo lo que limite su libertad de expresión: religión, hogar, amor, Amistad, estudio, organización social. Agustín sabe que arremetiendo contra todo a fin de probar su validez es la mejor manera de cuestionar la realidad...(61)

In Agustín’s and Caicedo’s work there is a metafictional and/or autobiographical element where the author asserts his presence within the text. *¡Que viva la música!* has many autobiographical elements which become clear when juxtaposed with Caicedo’s personal texts, but, as we shall see in some detail ahead, there is not one single character used by Caicedo as his avatar. Instead, his presence is spread out among several characters who exhibit his characteristics; at times to an extreme. As I already noted, the texts incorporate the jargons of youth and the street of the era, jargons which were previously confined only to the oral realm. Even beyond the misgivings with García Márquez, there is an evident disdain for his nation’s canonic literary, historical and cultural patrimony—as the previous quote of María del Carmen having no past emphasizes. As with the Onda, there is also a non-idealized expression of the *zeitgeist* which permeated the times and his generation, its dark side and all.

This non-idealized expression is, in part, accomplished by focusing on the urban experience of youth including drug use and sexual practice as well use of the first person narrator allowing shifts in the framing of the textual reality. Along with this, a constant theme is the uncertainty regarding individual and generational identity, and an ethos and aesthetic greatly informed, if not directly shaped, by imported mass media culture. This mass media culture includes, but is certainly not limited to, Hollywood films, rock, and, unlike the Onda, salsa which, in turn, not only essentially shape the image conveyed by the writer himself but are truly a part of his core. Rock was, as we have seen with Agustín and García Saldaña, a key component in identity formation for Caicedo and many of his generation. As John Connell and Chris Gibson explain: “Rock music...articulated post-modernism and youth alienation. It combined entertainment with social identity and values such as resistance, refusal, alienation, and marginality” (41)—all of which are consciously (according to the diaries) treated in depth by Caicedo in his writings, particularly in *¡Que viva la música!*.

Of course, Caicedo was a great fan of salsa as well. *¡Que viva la música!* takes its title from a 1972 Ray Barretto record of the same name.¹¹³ Though salsa has become a thriving genre of music that is produced in Colombia, this was not always the case. It too entered Colombia as an exported cultural commodity through the mass media, mostly connecting with urban listeners. Citing Hernando Mottato, Edwin Carvajal Córdoba explains:

Rock y salsa son géneros que surgen y le cantan a la ciudad, a sus nuevos habitantes que son los mayores receptores para que enfrenten esta nueva realidad de vida. El rock y la salsa en este mundo de jóvenes, son dos formas de enfrentar la realidad, de realizar una búsqueda: el rock tanto en novedad, enajenamiento cultural, estruendo, desarreglo de los sentidos. La salsa en cuanto expresión sincrética cultural más auténtica y en donde los jóvenes encuentran una forma de manifestarse individual y socialmente (47).

¹¹³ Conga player and bandleader Ray Barretto (1929-2006) is one of the giants of Latin music and a key contributor to the emergence of salsa in the 1970s. Born and raised in New York, Barretto and his music are examples *par excellence* of the melding of musical styles, Latin and otherwise, that brought the salsa scene about.

Salsa is not a musical genre that influences the Onda, as most forms of Afro-cuban derived music in the Mexico of the Onda was considered antiquated, for the *fresas* and not representative of the Onda's rebellious, emerging viewpoint. The fact that salsa was also geared towards the Caribbean diaspora made it far more appealing to urban listeners in Cali who could connect to it more directly in ways which were not present in Mexico, both culturally and geographically. The title track to Barretto's *¡Que viva la música!* is a case in point as the lyrics not only celebrate the magical quality of musical expression, but also the music of Puerto Rico, Cuba, Panama, Africa and Cuban subgenres such as rumba and guaguancó—all elements that were fused to different degrees in creating salsa. The liner notes to the record also sum up its music containing "African funk, Indian oneness and Spanish screams." As such, it did not have as much value in terms of cultural capital for the Onda writers like Agustín or García Saldaña who were more interested in other imported cultural aspects.

Of course, there are other dimensions to Caicedo's work that mark the clearest distinction from the work of Agustín and the Onda. Of the main ones are the influence of B-movie films like those of Roger Corman¹¹⁴, as well as the darker, more gothically inspired domains created by writers such as H. P. Lovecraft.¹¹⁵ These latter realms, with direct allusions to vampirism and the cannibalistic female vampire, situate the reader squarely within the confines of nightmares—what Felipe Gómez has termed "el gótico tropical" and influenced all of the writers and filmmakers of the Grupo de Cali, who at times referred to themselves as being in "Caliwood". Romero Rey counts these among what he calls Caicedo's

¹¹⁴ Roger Corman (b. 1926) is often referred to as the "King of the B-movie", having produced or directed dozens of low-budget films in his long career. Corman retired from directing in 1970 after 16 years of producing science fiction, horror, biker and psychedelic films. Among the many films to his credit are an adaptation of Poe, *The Pit and the Pendulum* (1961), *Little Shop of Horrors* (1957), *Bucket of Blood* (1959), *The Wild Angels* (1966) and *The Trip* (1967).

¹¹⁵ Howard Phillips Lovecraft (1890-1937) is considered the master of "weird fiction" in English. Dealing with various themes from the occult such as witchcraft, grimoires, and secret cults to monstrous beasts, among other things, Lovecraft was originally published in "pulp" magazines such as *Weird Tales* throughout the 1920s until his death in the 1930s. His reputation has grown since his death and compilations of his work have been translated into a number of languages, including the Spanish editions read by Caicedo.

“thematic obsessions” which, again, also foment the interest in their source, the writer himself. He explains that Caicedo:

Con el lenguaje insistía en traspasar los límites de lo real para proponer una permanente aventura creativa individual. Por ello sus obsesiones temáticas empiezan a tener connotaciones enfermizas. Una y otra vez aparecen recurrencias en sus textos tales como el canibalismo, el vampirismo, la nostalgia, el amor, el sexo, la violencia, la noche como circunstancia, las flagelaciones dentales, el gusto por los complejos y los conflictos (sobre todo, los edípicos), el incesto, y, en últimas, la muerte, como *grande finale* de todas las derrotas (39).

All of these themes make an appearance in some form in *¡Que viva la música!* The texts from *El cuento de mi vida* and those gathered by Fuguet make the personal connection to some of them all that much clearer, underscoring the sickly connotations pointed out by Romero Rey, who not only knows Caicedo’s work perhaps better than anyone, but also had the firsthand contact to personally verify these notions. The lack of any significant interspersions of English, whether it be from rock song lyrics or the characters themselves, is also a key departure from the Onda texts we have seen thus far. It is unclear as to whether this stems from Caicedo simply having a lack of confidence in his English skills, a conscious aesthetic decision or even a consideration of who his readers could be beyond the Grupo de Cali and the Club de Cine.¹¹⁶

As was the case with the work of Agustín and García Saldaña, Eco’s concept of the *model* or *ideal reader* towards whom the text is directed is also important to consider with Caicedo. As the previously quoted letter makes clear, Caicedo’s work was geared towards the like-minded intellectuals and cinephiles of the Grupo de Cali and the Club de Cine. However, references to high culture, while

¹¹⁶ Quotes from Caicedo’s diaries hint at both reasons. At one point Caicedo says that English “es un idioma que no logro dominar” (*Mi cuerpo*, 139). Regarding Spanish’s expressive qualities on a personal level, Caicedo writes: “El inglés es un idioma, de acuerdo, muy práctico, pero nunca tiene la variedad de tratamientos de que uno dispone en español para tratar a una persona según la confianza que le tenga y el afecto que le inspire; por ejemplo, decir <<de mil amores>>. El español es un idioma más dulce y más cariñoso” (*Mi cuerpo*, 67). This latter point would also apply to Caicedo’s writing and having a wider palette from which to draw precisely.

present, are not as overt as they are in Agustín's work. As an example, one need look no further than the lack of namedropping of figures from high culture which is so present at times in the works of Agustín and García Saldaña. Presuming the work was likely geared toward members of his social and intellectual circle is a logical conclusion given that the *model reader* of these types of texts, as I noted previously, is often an individual with a cultural, intellectual and social pedigree similar to the authors themselves. As such, this reader is capable of grasping the multiple semantic levels being expressed in the unique vernacular and network of references expressed within the texts.

Raymond L. Williams has already explored aspects of this concept in his 2006 article "Andrés Caicedo's *¡Que viva la música!*: Interpretation and the Fictionalized Reader". While Williams recognizes this function in Caicedo, he does not point out the comparable dynamic in the Onda when addressing the similarities between *¡Que viva la música!* and the Onda texts. Williams proposes two diametrically opposed fictionalized readers of the novel, the participant and the analytical distanced reader, whose interpretations of the text would differ drastically. According to Williams, one type of reader becomes a participant through the process of being addressed directly by the narrator with salutations such as "estimado lector" and assumptions of the reader being familiar with the social context of the Cali of the early 70s in which the novel takes place.¹¹⁷ This invites the reader to assume the role of an insider—a member of the generation who relates to its ethos and shares its problems and ideals. As we have seen in the first two chapters, this sort of invitation for reader participation is a founding premise of the Onda aesthetic, further emphasized by the use of a vernacular and set of cultural references that would exclude many readers not privy to them, as Carpenter makes clear. According to Williams, the other side of the spectrum represented by the distanced, analytical reader would certainly be less sympathetic to the generation—his role "to discover the inadequacies of the protagonist [as a typical example from the generation] as a reflection of an undefined or contradictory cultural tradition" (52). Broadly speaking, we can observe this to be a similar criticism to those leveled by Margo Glantz or Carlos Monsiváis towards

¹¹⁷ As we saw in the first chapter, this is also the case with the Mexico City found in Agustín's "¿Cuál es la onda?" from *Inventando que sueño*, a book which was in Caicedo's collection.

the Onda. While Williams clearly makes a valid observation, I disagree with the importance placed on the second type of fictionalized reader. Caicedo, much like the Onda writers of the previous decade, had a circle of readers who, as members of the generation, were invested in its habits, hopes and ideals in much the same way. The reader who is also an insider would likely also recognize the generation's shortcomings and their own role within it—much like what also takes place in some of the Onda texts including several of those which we have noted in the first two chapters. The readers, as insider members of the cultural reality being portrayed in the novel, were a key to its subsequent success, as was the case with the Onda novels a decade before in Mexico.

¿La música es la solución?

As one of the insiders and actual *model readers* of the text, Romero Rey explains that: “*¡Que viva la música!* se convirtió, sin proponérselo, en un libro de culto en una generación de lectores que no tenían la lectura como parte de sus prioridades” (43). If the gamut of characters in *¡Que viva la música!* is any indication, reading was the furthest thing from their minds. For some, like the main character herself, the highest priority is, of course, music and the sensations to which it gives rise. The surreal cover art to Barretto's record also suggests one of the underlying themes in the novel: the belief in music's emancipating potential to free listeners (at least temporarily) from the figurative chains of society's norms. The image portrays Barretto reaching for a glowing god-like hand with a key floating above it. Barretto himself is emerging from a conga drum chained down to a stylized urban landscape. The hand itself is emanating light. Also, a line from Barretto's song, “¡Que viva la música!” fits this scheme in the larger sense: “La música es el arte de expresar los sentimientos con corazón/Por eso digo con orgullo que viva música.”¹¹⁸ Caicedo himself acknowledges this to be the case for his entire generation in a filmed interview done shortly before his death. He points out that books, because of the investment in money

¹¹⁸ The surreal cover art to Barretto's record also suggests one of the underlying themes in the novel: the belief in music's emancipating potential to free listeners (at least temporarily) from the figurative chains of society's norms. The image portrays Barretto reaching for a glowing god-like hand with a key floating above it. Barretto himself is emerging from a conga drum chained down to a stylized urban landscape. The hand itself is emanating light.

and, more importantly, time, were being replaced by music as a focus of interest for youth because of its presence in virtually any setting. He goes on to note that even a classic book like José Eustasio Rivera's *La vorágine*, can be replaced by songs by Héctor Lavoe¹¹⁹ or Richie Ray and Bobby Cruz.¹²⁰ Though the reasons why he holds this belief are not elaborated upon in the interview, a statement from María del Carmen perhaps elucidates part of his stance:

La música es la solución a lo que yo no enfrento, mientras pierdo el tiempo mirando la cosa: un libro (en los que ya no puedo avanzar dos páginas), el sesgo de una falda, de una reja. La música es también, recobrado el tiempo que yo pierdo (66, emphasis in original).

Music is treated as a type of panacea which aids in directing how an individual perceives him/herself and his surrounding, and exists in time. The character also iterates Caicedo's stance regarding music and literature, adding film into the mix when stating that she:

...sacaré la teoría de que el libro miente, el cine agota, quémenlos ambos, no dejen sino música. Si voy pallá es que pallá vamos. Vivimos el momento de más significado en la historia de la humanidad, y es primera vez que se ha exigido tanto de los culimpos (187).

The effect is visceral as opposed to intellectual: music being ruled by sensation and immediate reaction instead of the constructs of interpretation on which literature is theoretically constructed.

We can also surmise from the quote that this faith in music is due, at least in part, to the generation gap, whose differing views and priorities from previous generations were exacerbated in part

¹¹⁹ Puerto Rican born singer Hector Lavoe (1946-1993) was hailed as "el cantante de los cantantes". His partnership with trombonist and bandleader Willie Colón (b. 1950) produced some of the most influential salsa records of the late 1960s and 1970s. The records reflected the gritty reality of life in New York's barrio, incorporated rhythms and melodies from throughout the Caribbean, and poignantly addressed the issues of identity.

¹²⁰ The groups led by the Puerto Rican born duo of pianist/arranger/singer Richie Ray (b. 1945) and singer Bobby Cruz (b. 1937) are clearly Caicedo's favorites of the groups playing all styles associated with what is marketed as Latin music: bugalú, jala jala, and salsa, among others. Their success between 1965 and 1974 was practically unrivalled by any other artist. Their concert in Cali in 1969 assured their popularity in Colombia and is a reference point in one of the episodes in *¡Que viva la música!* This appearance, according to Edwin Carvajal Córdoba led to the duo having a particular popularity in Cali: "tanto, que [el duo] le compone una canción a un personaje famosísimo de la ciudad: Amparo Arrebato, y menciona en otras el nombre de la ciudad" (46).

by the uneven process of modernization in Colombia (and Cali in particular) and the influence of foreign mass media culture. Also, the illiteracy factor which had long been an issue among the rural population now inhabiting Cali caused there to be a lack of a reading and literary *habitus* among their youth. As such, this problem leads to many of Caicedo's generation, educated or not, being unable to identify with the nation's past or their role within the nation's present—a dynamic that was also abundantly clear in the Mexico of the Onda. Alzate explains that:

En ausencia de un dogma o de un imperativo de progreso, Caicedo ve en la música el modo preeminente de energía y significación. La música recobra el antiguo terreno que le fuera arrebatado y conservado durante un tiempo por el dominio de la palabra. Las palabras están deterioradas por las falsas esperanzas y las mentiras que se han proclamado (54).

Caicedo's intuitions about music's role is also confirmed by Frith's assertion that: "...the experience of music gives us a way of being in the world, a way of making sense of it" (299). This also explains how the salsa music which exploded upon much of tropical Latin America in the 1970s and was deftly marketed by Fania¹²¹ as a music within which, as we noted with Barretto's "¡Que viva la música!" all peoples with ties to the Caribbean diaspora could identify something of themselves; the modern, urbanized reality in which they lived and experienced the music itself. Edwin Carvajal Córdoba, citing Paul Zumthor, explains that before the emergence of salsa as the music of the working class, afro-cuban music, the genre which was its precursor, provided the sound of choice:

...la música cubana, inspirada en el campo y la ciudad y la letra llena de referencias a la caña, el azúcar, la comida, el sol, el calor, la molienda y al negro, hicieron que estos sectores de la población reconociera como suyos las circunstancias aludidas en las canciones (44).

This was particularly the case among the working class in Colombia, according to Carvajal Córdoba because radio was the most present source of culture, given that the majority of that social class was

¹²¹ Fania was the 70s salsa label par excellence for whom Lavoe, Ray and Cruz all recorded. Virtually every important salsa artist recorded for them at some point. Their influence in sound production and marketing was unparalleled from the late 1960s throughout the 1970s.

illiterate (42). Even into the 70s and beyond, salsa music utilized the type of imagery and references which kept alive images of the Caribbean imaginary of an often idealized past. With this in mind, Caicedo's anti-intellectual point on salsa songs perhaps replacing literature as purveyors of visions of the past could be seen as poignant regarding the state of culture and the decreasing cultural capital of literature in a mass-media driven world. Essentially, it grants the listener the immediate access to the imagery and imaginary without the intellectual commitment to literature, its multiple semantic and historical levels, or the necessary knowledge to decipher them. Through the vision presented by the song lyrics, contemporary listeners are still given access to the imaginary conveyed by literature through another, albeit abbreviated, medium in a propagated modern form of instant gratification. In the same interview, Caicedo also refutes the notion of a work being of higher value simply because of its length.

Caicedo was also of course, like most of his generation, an enormous fan of rock, specifically the Rolling Stones.¹²² In a 1976 text written during his stay at the Clínica Santo Tomás mental institution in Bogotá, Caicedo shares that among his plans upon release is:

...comenzar dándole forma al libro que tengo planeado sobre los Rolling Stones, entroncándolo con el relativo fracaso de mi generación. Yo siempre estuve muy influenciado por la música de los Stones y por su postura *lumpesca* aunque estuvieran disfrutando del puesto No. 1 en la industria (que hoy está en plena decadencia artística) del Rock'n'Roll (*El cuento de mi vida*, 32).

Though not nearly at the level of admiration or assimilation we saw with García Saldaña, who assimilated his own interpretation of the Stones ethos into virtually every aspect of his being, Caicedo spells out the influence of the Stones in no uncertain terms. Also, it is interesting to note that García Saldaña's *En la ruta de la Onda* (1972), though not about the Stones *per se*, details the relative failure of his generation using the Stones as a launching point.

¹²² Though Colombia was not devoid of its own talented home-grown rock bands like Los Flippers, Los Yeti, and Los Speakers, among others, none were based out of Cali and the influence of outside rock was far stronger. Also, we must not forget that at the time, markets for records were far more localized, with regional hits and regional sounds. As such, records or styles that were popular in one region could be ignored in others. Unlike Argentina, Peru, Uruguay and Mexico, Colombia's rock scene did not remain strong into the 1970s, with salsa taking over as the most popular adopted musical genre.

On a similar note is the way Caicedo portrays the only semblance of a flesh and blood rocker who appears in *¡Que viva la música!*, Leopoldo Brook, the young, rich American with whom María del Carmen briefly cohabitates and to whom she loses her virginity. María del Carmen describes the limitations of rock's reach as a full-fledged agent of change, personified in the form of the young American, and the reasons for its failure to fully push the 60s generation to achieve its goals:

Sólo que ante el horno de los cielos Leopoldo Brook añoraba USA, la tierra de sus estudios y de sus encantos juveniles. Llegó aquí para darse cuenta *que una mera sensación de bienestar no alcanza para triunfar en la vida: hacía falta también ambición y empeño*, y sus tardes fueron arrumacándose en la sufriente resignación del trópico (76, emphasis mine).

The disenchantment expressed here is quite clear and speaks to the sense of alienation, marginality and subsequent impotence felt by Caicedo within the small, but significant, counterculture that was at work in Cali. Furthermore, it points to a flawed model to which to aspire—one which is missing the final impetus to make itself an agent of long-lasting change. This same disenchantment is also echoed in Caicedo's letters and diaries in reference to himself. Indeed, though there was an emancipating path suggested by rock, its culture and its ideals, it only took Caicedo and many in his generation (including García Saldaña) so far, as those very same ideals, ambitions and determination lost momentum as the 70s progressed.

It is also interesting to note that, as an individual, Caicedo shared several characteristics with García Saldaña beyond their love of the Stones: mental illness and substance abuse, issues with women, the general disenchantment I spoke of above, a nihilistic streak, and time spent in mental institutions, among others. There is, however, no evidence that Caicedo had read any of García Saldaña's work, despite his familiarity with other Onda writers like Agustín and Gustavo Sainz. All of the biographically oriented texts make clear that Caicedo's collection of Rolling Stones records were among his most prized possessions. Romero Rey also recalls that: "Bien es sabido que a Caicedo los Beatles le producían un fervoroso rechazo, tan grande como su pasión por los Rolling Stones" (24). His way of life, which defied social norms, and commitment to a personal authenticity can be related to the type of ethos promoted by the Stones; an ethos, of course, which was crucial in defining the *zeitgeist* of the era. The Stones, as we

have detailed in the previous chapter, represented a particular kind of rebellious, irreverent, iconoclastic attitude that had wide appeal among the youth of the era and was crucial in their breaking away from the ways of the past. There was a brutal honesty in some of their lyrics which touched upon subjects that had previously been taboo—never before had there been any pop figures with that type of message or image. Their ethos, based greatly in an unfettered hedonism coupled with a self-confidence that crossed into arrogance and vanity, certainly can be found in María del Carmen Huerta, though not Caicedo himself. In fact, in many ways, Caicedo appears to be entirely the opposite, a condition of which he is keenly aware. Caicedo explains his own view on what it takes to succeed in rock:

Cuando le preguntaron a Keith Richards, guitarrista y compositor de Los Rolling Stones, que si se sentía atemorizado ante las muertes oncescivas de su compañero Brian Jones, Jimi Hendrix y Janis Joplin, contestó: <<¿Asustado? Ni un tris. No vaya a creer que soy una persona así débil como ellos>>. Allí está la gran diferencia, en el implacable mundo del rock and roll. El instinto musical debe controlar toda clase de temor, inseguridad y sensación de vacío. El artista tiene que ser de cabeza fría, nervios de acero y muy estabilizado psicológicamente. Y tener nociones de economía. Si no, difícilmente podrá vivir al éxito de la sociedad capitalista (*Mi cuerpo*, 152).

These points are in stark contrast to Caicedo's own misgivings about his own abilities to participate in society and have any sort of success, as he makes clear in a letter to his mother in 1975: "Soy incapaz ante las relaciones de dinero y las relaciones de influencias" (16). As such, rock as it is symbolized by the Stones, not only represents an expression of freedom and rebellion to which he could relate, but also an expression of aplomb; a confidence with a freedom from fear, self-doubt, or emptiness: precisely the sentiments which characterized the demons which tormented Caicedo until the end. Richards' quote also points to the flawed, even contradictory, model to which the youth aspire. The contradiction is evident in youth simultaneously wanting to break from the trappings of their parents' generation by breaking all possible rules, while still living very much in the confines of a capitalist society where monetary success and career direction which are being rebelled against still rule the day in the long run.

Rock and the Stones, as Frith points out, also present a flip-side to these posturings of invincible bravado, explaining that: “Even the most macho rockers have in their repertoire some suitably soppy songs with which to celebrate true (lustless) love—listen to the Stones’ *Angie* for an example. Rock, in other words, carries messages of male self-doubt and self-pity” (51). “Angie” is one of Caicedo’s favorite Rolling Stones songs, but beyond this, it is clear that there is no questioning the self-doubt and even self-pity in the way Caicedo presents himself in letters and to himself in his personal writings. Caicedo also felt a certain affinity with the most mentally fragile of the Rolling Stones, the late Brian Jones, whom he believed was not given enough credit for the success of the band—essentially an alienated figure within the band, despite his contributions to their fame.¹²³

The type of misogyny exploited by García Saldaña in *Pasto verde* is notably absent in Caicedo’s work. However, the sometimes infantile and idealistic representation of María del Carmen Huerta as a sort of *tabula rasa* perpetuates the stereotype of the submissive female in need of guidance and protection. This type of portrayal hints at a different type of misogyny. However, it is important to keep in mind that the character is just fifteen and sixteen years old during the bulk of what is recounted in the novel. As such, the naïveté she displays is a necessary factor in the construction of a plausible, realistic character. Choosing a female lead character separates several of the key autobiographical aspects from Caicedo and brings a different sensibility to the character; one who is focused on sensations, whose *tabula rasa* aspect easily leads her to new situations and experiences and who manipulates certain situations using her feminine charms. By being a young, attractive woman from a certain social class, she is a more radical example of the new freedoms exercised by her generation. Another aspect that must be considered is that though María del Carmen’s choice of path(s) may seem equally troubling from a

¹²³ Jones, in fact, was responsible for naming the band (after a song by Muddy Waters) and guiding its musical direction early on. Though many of the Stones’ songs were group efforts, the bulk of the credits name Jagger-Richards as the songwriting team. It is surprising to note that Jones himself has nothing to his credit as a composer anywhere save for the soundtrack to *A Degree of Murder* (1966) which he did in collaboration with the future leader of Led Zeppelin, Jimmy Page. The film starred his then-girlfriend Anita Pallenberg, who later left Jones to be with fellow Stone Keith Richards. The soundtrack to the film has never been released on record and the master tapes have been mysteriously lost for over four decades.

feminist perspective for its results, she does indeed attempt to assume control of her reality. Indeed, before the reader has had any opportunity to get to know her, she describes herself as a “mujer resoluta” (12) who is ready to make her own choices. I can add that, like the way the pre-Tlatelolco Onda texts are viewed, any direct political commentary is articulated subtly or sarcastically in the novel. In *¡Que viva la música!*, the behavior of the resolute María del Carmen Huerta is a statement in itself which has a political bent of its own. Concretely, she asserts her independence and frees herself from the shackles of societal norms and expectations imposed by her social class and the expectations that coincide with its own *buenas costumbres*. She does this by choosing to embrace an ethos of comportment that would have been unheard of even a few short years before, not only in Colombia, but practically anywhere else in the world. This also opens the possibility of reading María del Carmen, as we shall see in the analysis of the novel, as an allegorical character, as Fredric Jameson would suggest, representative of the radical changes taking place within the nation and the questioning of identity taking place within the postmodern era.

The fact Caicedo chose a female protagonist highlights an important contrast with how women were perceived and portrayed by the Onda movement and the literature that originated from it. As Zolov explains:

[T]he decision to go enescorted, to engage in sex before marriage, to challenge the authority of one’s parents—were infinitely more difficult for women. Moreover, where parents lectured daughters on the social importance of *buenas costumbres*, in the male-dominated culture of La Onda they encountered a double standard toward sexual relations that similarly defined their position. On one hand, La Onda stressed the idea of sexual liberation and the value of experimentation prior to marriage. On the other hand, women were expected to adhere to a higher standard of morality than were men. In reality, women who rebelled by seeking a liberated lifestyle outside marriage were denigrated not only by society at large but even within the countercultural community, which labeled them whores...[I]n Mexico, women were expected to be “clean,” while men were assumed to be “experienced.” In a fundamental sense, therefore, not much had changed (196).

The novel, through the perspective of María del Carmen's subjectivity, portrays her as being in control of all of the sexual relationships and encounters in which she engages, never concerned with any moral or sexual standards suggested by the Colombian variant on the *buenas costumbres*. Her disposition towards sex and relationships can be seen as better coinciding with the unabashed sexual bravado commonly associated with the Rolling Stones and other iconic rockers and is perhaps the most blatant challenge to the expected norms by which she is expected to live. This topic will be further explored in the analysis of the novel.

While there is a presence of other rock music in *¡Que viva la música!*, notably Eric Clapton and Cream, as well as the Colombian group Los Speakers, among others, no other rock group makes its presence felt more than the Stones in the novel. I should also note that Los Speakers explored some of the same themes as the Stones in such songs as "18" (1967), mocking a rich girl, and even covered "Satisfaction" in 1966. Like many Latin American rock bands, they were also directly influenced by the sound of the Stones, though more so by their softer, lyrical side than the bluesy side. The opening line from their 1967 song "Un hombre triste" succinctly sums up Caicedo's nihilistic frame of mind towards the end of his life: "Yo soy un hombre triste que jamás la gente ve/pero que existe en realidad/Estoy como sitiado y condenado a perecer/el mundo carece de bondad". This notwithstanding, assimilating the Stones as the main influence from rock is as important a factor as the obvious influence of film or literature in the formation of Caicedo's identity as an individual and as an artist. Recalling our point from the introduction, Connell and Gibson explain that music can play an essential role in identity formation. In the case of the Stones, their lasting influence through the 70s was in part due to continuing to give their fans role models to look towards in adopting an attitude with which to rebel and live outside the rules, whatever they may be. In Caicedo's case, as I noted, they were also perhaps a model of confidence and swagger towards which to strive. Though not speaking of the Stones in particular, recalling Connell and Gibson's point on musical identity being a means of challenging social norms, reacting to mainstream cultural practices, providing an avenue for the expression of marginalized voices, and creating a seeming connection with outside cultural practices, underscores how the Stones' appeal seemingly transcended

barriers of language and culture, while also inspiring young musicians, as well as artists like Caicedo. Indeed, Caicedo himself also adopts the sort of ethos suggested by Connell and Gibson in life and art, becoming what was then a new type of artist which champions no-brow culture which draws in different degrees from the high and the low with equal facility—while, as comments in *El cuento de mi vida* reveal, holding a suspicious view of intellectuals and their institutions. Caicedo's and the Onda's unique approach to intertextuality is also related to this point, as they wished to place themselves, to one extent or another, outside of the continuum of what had been their national literatures. More concretely relating to music, as we have seen, the influence of salsa as a reference point in identity formation is also key factor. Though at times he felt alienated and distanced from whatever cultural flow was occurring outside of Cali, time has proven that he had indeed tapped into such a cultural flow, reacted to and appropriated aspects of it for his own identity as an artist and individual, and, in the process, expressed the previously unheard voice of his generation in Colombia.

Mi cuerpo es una celda: Drugs, mental illness, nihilism and suicide

*What a drag it is, getting old
Kids are different today, I hear every mother say
Mother needs something today to calm her down
And though she's not really ill, there's a little yellow pill
She goes running for the shelter of a mother's little helper
And it helps her on her way, gets her through her busy day
And if you take more of those
You will get an overdose
No more running for the shelter of a mother's little helper
They just helped you on your way
Through your busy dying day
The Rolling Stones*

Caicedo, as is widely known, suffered from a plethora of mental health issues. Many of these issues were aggravated by his own struggles with drugs and alcohol, particularly the use of different pills. These first-hand experiences, much like is the case in the work of William S. Burroughs, Agustín or García Saldaña, among others, provide Caicedo with the necessary material to portray the effects of drug use, its consequences and its surrounding culture realistically. Caicedo's dependence spawned a love/hate relationship with drugs that is evident in his personal writings and in the attitudes adopted by

María del Carmen in *¡Que viva la música!* Some of the descriptions in the following long passage from *¡Que viva la música!* can also be found practically verbatim in *El cuento de mi vida* when Caicedo details his own struggles with drug use:

A esa alturas la Pasionaria me producía entusiasmo general por todo sin aprehender nada, anulación del sentido de escogencia, difuminación de la concentración hasta no poder recordar ni la forma correcta de agarrar una cuchara, hilaridad general, doble facilidad de comunicación, quiebres y ardores y alquitrán en la garganta, dolor *blanco* y angostura y vacío de corazón, imposibilidad de descanso, digestiones prolongadísimas, equis y zetas puntudo en el estómago, falta de apetito seguido de gula exagerada; pero cada cosa que se come va agrandando ese buche de indigestion, ante lo cual no queda otro remedio que tirarse al suelo y torcer de nuevo, exagerada capacidad de sufrimiento ante nimiedades, sensación de astillamiento y descascaramiento del cerebro, pinzas apretando el bulbo, el asiento, sangrientas telarañas en los ojos, brotes y erupciones en la piel, perpetuo borrón de sueños (79-80).

On the other hand, María del Carmen's joys under the effect and preferences are also clearly spelled out, most of which coincide with Caicedo's own preferences ("perico", a slang term for cocaine and the clear hard liquors such as aguardiente, white rum and vodka) as explained in the diaries. Nonetheless, the ultimate result of many of these descriptions, as is the case with Agustín regarding his own drug use in *El rock de la cárcel*, is to provide words of caution from an experienced user, acknowledging the *zeitgeist* and without losing sight of why there was appeal to try the drugs and continue using them in the first place—using the fictional character as a direct avatar for himself. The most rampant drug use represented in the novel is associated with María del Carmen's friends who are also rock aficionados and residents of Cali's more affluent north side. Both the drugs and the music are key components to their identity, as we shall see in detail ahead.

In perhaps one the clearest example of the interest in Caicedo the individual, Solín Nobel's 2009 article "Andrés Caicedo: Historia debida-un reporte clínico" delves directly into the issue of Caicedo's mental health, life events which triggered or exacerbated different problems and his ultimate suicide—

positing a number of explanations as to why he chose that route in the end. Caicedo began to consider suicide as early as 1973, attempted suicide as early as 1974, again in 1975, and twice more in 1976. Caicedo's failed attempts in 1976 led to a two month stay in a mental hospital in Bogotá, a traumatic event in itself which did not keep Caicedo from ultimately succeeding a few months later.¹²⁴ Utilizing the discipline of suicidology, Nobel explains the different types of suicide and offers a number of possibilities as to which corresponds most to Caicedo's case. Another key point Nobel makes is that men are more prone to drug and alcohol addictions to block out their problems than women, and Caicedo is certainly no exception.

Looking back to the 19th century, Nobel draws upon the work of Emile Durkheim, whose book *Le suicide* (1897) was among the first to investigate this commonplace practice of that century. Amongst the types of suicide enumerated by Durkheim is the anomic suicide that Nobel explains as follows:

Individuo y sociedad deben lograr y mantener un equilibrio mediante normas sociales ni muy fuertes ni demasiado laxas. El desequilibrio producido por exceso o falta de regulación daría paso, respectivamente, a la ocurrencia de suicidios *fatalistas* y *anómicos* (del griego *a-nomos*, "sin ley"), estos últimos característicos de sociedades que han experimentado cambios demasiado rápidos (31, italics in original).

¹²⁴ On July 8, 1976, shortly after his release from the mental hospital, Caicedo wrote to fellow *Ojo del cine* collaborator Miguel Marías. In the letter, it is still apparent that Caicedo had some intention of ending his life, despite previously having expressed otherwise in a letter to his parents begging them to get his release and a few hopeful words in the letter itself. In the letter to Marías, Caicedo writes: "Todavía no alcanzo morirme. Lo que pasó fue que estuve 2 meses y 16 días en una clínica de reposo, costosísima por cierto, después de dos intentos de suicidio, a saber: 1) 25 valium de 10 mm. Y cortada de venas estilo *Trenes rigurosamente vigilados*, y 2) 125 de las mismas. Estado de coma durante cinco días o más y con la vida en un hilo. Pero aquí estoy, Miguel, repuesto y animado a pesar de los efectos secundarios del Prolipsin, inyección por recomendación médica que me aplican cada 15 días" (224). The film to which Caicedo refers is a Czech film from 1966 which won the Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film. The reference to it also hints at how, to a not insignificant degree, Caicedo created a character in his correspondence, which to great extent narrated his life and allowed Fuguet the material to assemble into an "autobiography".

The emphasis on balance as a key component for the individual and society are certainly lacking in the Cali of the early 1970s that experienced change at an alarming rate.¹²⁵ The case of María del Carmen's immediate role model in the novel and predecessor in the scene, Mariángela, can also be read as an anomic suicide. Fatherless on one hand, with a very Catholic mother to whom she could not relate on the other; living freely unattached to any man, institution, political cause, or anything else, for that matter, she developed an identity defined by being unfazed by anything—fostering an alienation and despair that culminates in her jumping thirteen stories, head first, to her ultimate demise.

Beyond the changes to Cali's landscape and demographic, Caicedo lived through the 60s and early 70s experiencing the rapid political, social and cultural changes which ushered in the post-modern world. Alzate explains that:

En los tiempos de crisis o cambios radicales, las imágenes con las que los miembros de la colectividad se identifican pueden cambiar rápidamente. Estos cambios en los modelos de identificación producen un sentimiento de abandono, frustración y ansiedad. Como resultado, los miembros de la colectividad buscan objetos más seguros, en ocasiones regresan a códigos del

¹²⁵ Córdoba, citing Alejandro Ulloa, explains that the process of industrializing Cali from the 1930s to the 1950s brought about an enormous transformation in the city's landscape and demographic—changes which were still being dealt with in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Cali also hosted the Pan-American Games in 1971, which brought more investment and changes to the cityscape. In previous decades, the construction of the railroad to the port of Buenaventura which connected it more directly with the rest of the world, the growth of the sugar industry and its exports, and finally the growth of further infrastructure, factories, the expansion of the media and communications, as well the establishment of subsidiaries of multinational corporations all occurred in this short period of time. He adds that: "Este proceso de industrialización movilizó a miles de personas de distintas regiones del país, que fueron enganchadas como mano de obra a una economía creciente. Fue así como se formó el proletariado industrial urbano de Cali con los estratos de población popular: obreros, empleados y trabajadores de la industria. De otro lado, la clase dirigente, integrada por industriales y comerciantes, adelantó el proyecto de industrialización y modernización de la ciudad (Ulloa, 1992, 442). De esta forma, Cali se convirtió en centro urbano, comercial e industrial, epicentro receptor de emigraciones. Los nuevos habitantes encontraron en la joven ciudad una oportunidad de vida que se adaptó a las costumbres que exigía la urbe: grandes avenidas, barrios populares y de clase alta, ruido, crimen, suicidio, locura, drogas, sexo, zonas industriales, edificios y centros comerciales. Es la creación de una nueva cultura urbana que incorporó nuevos elementos culturales, como la música, no sólo en la ciudad de Cali, sino también en otras ciudades de latinoamericanas" (40-41). This topic is also explored in Nelson Antonio Gómez Serrudo's "Andrés Caicedo en clave urbana" from *La estela de Caicedo*.

pasado del pasado o intentan constuir nuevas situaciones sociales y nuevos códigos simbólicos (41).

Though an active participant in the cultural and social changes that were occurring and an agent in attempting to construct the new social situations and symbolic codes to which Alzate refers, the rapid nature of change seems to have left Caicedo unsettled. In a letter to his mother before a suicide attempt in 1975, he shares that: “Yo muero porque ya para cumplir 24 años soy un anacronismo y un sinsentido, y porque desde que cumplí 21 vengo sin entender el mundo” (*Mi cuerpo es una celda*, 16). As an explanation, Nobel brings up the possibility that:

...en la confrontación con las anteriores, su generación [se] vive una época de explosiva liberación y rebeldía que es lentamente reprimida por una corriente conservadora y reaccionaria. Por convicciones que tendrían que llamarse políticas (aunque él [Caicedo] nunca las definiera con esa palabra), el sujeto ahonda aún más este grado cuando se distancia también de los esquemas preponderantes de su clase social y racial. De repente se encuentra en una situación inesperada de aislamiento en la que los contactos con los demás habitantes de la ciudad ya no son claros ni fuertes (39).

These sentiments again remind us of the Mariángela character who is in a process of slowly withdrawing herself from the relationships she has maintained for the simple reason of no longer being able to relate. Of course, feelings of alienation were not new for Caicedo: he had suffered from them beginning at a very young age, dating back to early experiences at a Catholic school away from home. It also occurred within his own home due to a frayed relationship with his father, with whom he had his share of issues. In 1976, Caicedo recounts of his father:

Él ha debido sentir mucha alegría cuando yo nací, pero muy pronto fue creciendo una rivalidad entre él y yo, hasta que, hará menos de un año, me propuso que no nos habláramos más, que no nos metiéramos el uno con el otro, y yo quedé todo desconcertado, un tanto asustado, sin saber qué decir (*El cuento de mi vida*, 21).

His father believed his writing and affinity for film was nothing more than a hobby (even calling his writings “pendejadas”)—and always held that his son needed to “get serious”, begin a career, and marry. So while there is a patricidal sentiment exercised aesthetically, as we have seen with disregard to cultural patrimony and writers his senior, complete estrangement from the flesh and blood father figure was not a desired result for Caicedo, given the previous statement. The experience at the Catholic school, which included run-ins with a dictatorial pedophile priest, though shorter, was no less traumatic, leaving a lasting mark on Caicedo’s problematic relationship with sexuality. It was also the polar opposite of the ethos and lifestyle of the late-60s and early 70s, adopted by Caicedo and so many of his generation, in part from following the lead of the Rolling Stones and other figures from rock. The view from this other extreme, while it afforded its generation the appearance of absolute freedom while living an eternal *carpe diem*, lacked enough solid guiding principles to channel its strong idealism in a pragmatic way to achieve many of the generation’s desired goals for fundamental social change—a lament acknowledged by Caicedo, Agustín and García Saldaña when looking back at their generation. Caicedo, with his own admitted shortcomings, felt unable to cope or adjust—believing that his inability to engage in basic societal functions was slowly killing him and that it was better to be in control of the situation by taking his own life.

And yet, after death, there seems to be the performative side of Caicedo, on display early on as an actor/director, which is also present within the writings he left behind. He was very conscious of the fact he was leaving behind a testimony of who he was and what he stood for, at least, aesthetically speaking. If anything, the writings compiled by Fuguet, Romero Rey’s biographical text, Caicedo’s diaries and the clinical report put forth by Nobel, paint a portrait of Caicedo as a character worthy of a novel himself—hence, the interest in the individual. The distinction between his fictional characters and his own life seemed to be blurred at times as the following excerpt from 1975 makes clear:

He numerado estas páginas partiendo desde el uno, pero creo que son el primer intento de continuar ese libro <<Pronto: historia de una cinesifilis>>, al menos como ejercicio, si lograra no hacer otra cosa que atender el cine y tomar notas, muchas notas, y reflexiones, e ir tejiendo la

ficción del hombrecito que va al cine hasta que se enloquece. Que se enloquezcan mis personajes, no yo. O que si me acontece (esto ya lo he dicho hace muchos años, cuando estaba muy chiquito), que sea porque el corazón me lo pide, no porque yo lo induzca a ellos por métodos artificiales y tan fáciles. Oh, yo creía antes que el mecanismo de la autodestrucción era una forma de lascivia, ahora voy sabiendo que no más es una forma de comodidad, la mayor de todas, obscena y perversa hasta la médula (*Mi cuerpo*, 159).

In essence, self-destruction to Caicedo at one time seemed like a form of prurience—easily adaptable from the rockers or film stars he admired, later evolved into a form of nihilistic comfort that he took to its logical conclusion.

Romero Rey points out that Caicedo had displayed nihilistic tendencies in his early fictional writings and those tendencies become clearer upon reading his correspondence and diaries. For example, towards the end, he feels no interest towards anything: “...la falta de estímulo en las lecturas, en los nombres, me traerá un apocamiento en lo que hasta ahora, cuidada o descuidadamente, ha sido mi vida” (*Mi cuerpo*, 170). Nothing to believe in, no longer inspired to write, and trapped in a lonely world of boredom, the character he creates within these texts shares many of the characteristics enumerated by Juan Herrero-Senés in his article “Nihilismo y jovialidad: escorzo del protagonista de la novela de vanguardia española,” which surveys a gamut of nihilistic avant-garde characters in 1920s and 1930s Spain. Though we discard the possibility of any influence from the Spanish texts on Caicedo (there is no mention by critics nor in *El libro negro*), the striking nature of the parallels does not allow them to be ignored. The similarity of the social contexts in which both Caicedo (and the Onda writers for that matter) and the Spanish avant-gardists lived: two different moments in time when the very nature of what defined a modern society was in the process of being rapidly redelineated, shaking its very foundations and creating a period of new artistic and social liberties. These upheavals, as Durkheim had already noted at the end of the 19th century, caused enough confusion for those who attempted to make any sense of them that they lead to anomic suicide. This is particularly the case for characters who were the main instruments for the writers pondering the modernization process and could be more prone to an anomic

suicide. In his book, *El nihilismo: Disolución y proliferación en la tardomodernidad*, Herrero-Senés points out how in times of rapid modernization, the tendency to gravitate towards nihilism intensifies as the nihilist subject cannot keep up or internalize the rapid rate of change that surrounds them, points to which I have already alluded.

Herrero-Senés observes that the nihilistically leaning characters of the Spanish avant-garde demonstrate individuality and depth, but only on occasion are able to reach any sense of harmony or stability in their lives. It is clear that Caicedo, in his strong individuality and depth, struggled with finding any sense of harmony or stability—even in times in which he was in a relationship with the woman he loved, Patricia Restrepo, and active as a writer and film critic. This imbalance is pushed to the point that he ended up killing himself in what for most individuals would have been a moment of triumph for him personally and professionally, the publication of *¡Que viva la música!*. Herrero-Senés adds that these types of nihilistic characters: “Más bien constituirían habitantes de su tiempo con todas las contradicciones irresueltas de éste” (388). As we noted in the suicide letter to his mother in 1975, Caicedo feels like at age 24 he is already an anachronism unable to attach meaning or sense to his reality since age 21—a prime candidate for an anomic suicide. Herrero-Senés cites Ródenas de Moya’s description of avant-garde characters as being cultured and meditative, young, impetuous, perplexed, living in an eternal present without resolving to (or, in Caicedo’s case following through enough to) define their life goals and the projects necessary to bring them to fruition. Caicedo’s critique of his generation also echoes this point. But there is much more.

Caicedo, by his own admission, to a significant extent also has what Herrero-Senés describes as a broken personality: someone who is ignorant of his own identity, who finds himself to be a prisoner of his own conscience (a common complaint in Caicedo’s personal writings), who is excessively preoccupied by his own thoughts to the point of feeling trapped within them (it is not casual that Fuguet chose to call Caicedo’s autobiography *Mi cuerpo es una celda*), is unable to trust anything or anyone (even his beloved mother, his lover Patricia Restrepo, or, perhaps least of all, himself) (Herrero-Senés, 390). Herrero-Senés later writes that amongst these characters sex and eroticism in general have a privileged place and

represent maximum closeness between individuals, which, however, are also problematic (391). Caicedo also is candid about his sexual issues in his correspondence and diaries. His own history would point to these problems: falling in love with an eight year-old girl, Clarisol Lemos, when he was nineteen years old, an inability to connect with most women interested in him, having doubts about his own sexuality from an early age, and alluding to a homosexual encounter in his final letter to Patricia Restrepo during their relationship, among others.¹²⁶ Herrero-Senés also points out how the avant-garde character rejects “la felicidad como fruto de una existencia burguesa que se desprecia” (392), much like Caicedo does with his own comfortable, middle class position within Colombian society, eschewing, like his character María del Carmen Huerta, the well-worn path laid out by social norms and expectations for a different type of life—those which coincide with patriarchal expectations in María del Carmen’s and Caicedo’s cases. The nihilistic characters, also share a propensity to flee, or to contemplate suicide (394). Both options are exercised by Caicedo, first abandoning his neighborhood in northern Cali to live in different parts of the city, thus experiencing its different demographics firsthand, spending extended periods of time in the family’s summer home in Silvia and with extended stays in the United States and Bogotá. Finding nowhere to be at ease, suicide takes him to his final destination.

The model for María del Carmen Huerta can ostensibly be gleaned to be Clarisol Lemos, the very young girl with whom Caicedo fell in love. The dedication of *¡Que viva la música!* seems to make the connection obvious: “Este libro ya no es para Clarisolcita, pues cuando creció llegó a parecerse tanto a mi heroína que lo desmereció por completo” (3). Caicedo helped “corrupt” her (in his own words) with their inappropriate relationship and drugs and alcohol—though according to a diary entry from 1976, the process worked both ways as Clarisol and her brother, Guillermo, had him try psychedelic mushrooms

¹²⁶ In a particularly revealing journal entry on the matter from May, 1976, Caicedo’s confusion, disinterest and sexual issues are all laid bare: “Me da un miedo atroz pensar en que se está debilitando mi interés por todo. No resisto esta soledad, busco compañía y no resisto la compañía. Y pensando, sabiendo y estando de acuerdo en que <<amor es el alimento/que tiene vivo tu cuerpo>>. Casi me despellejo vivo buscando un objeto de amor, alguna criatura con gracia que me inspirara mejores pensamientos. Definitivamente no tengo ningún interés en esa serie de combinaciones que llaman <<lo sexual>>” (*Mi cuerpo*, 131).

and the narcotic Daprisal. Of their relationship, Caicedo explains: “Con Clarisol hicimos un pacto: ‘Tú aparentas mi edad y yo la tuya’, y así pasábamos el tiempo, cada uno desconcertando a su manera” (*El cuento*, 29). In an earlier diary entry from August, 1975, Caicedo describes the situation with the young girl as follows:

Pobrecita ella, tan chiquita que es. No se ha desarrollado aún como es normal, y temo que esté un tanto preocupada. A su edad (13) darse cuenta de que tal vez se ha excedido un poco en todo, es una toma de conciencia dura, y yo sufro por ella, porque no es justo que de pronto una niña piense en que tal vez no tenga mejor futuro que el pasado que (¿malgastó?), no sé (*Mi cuerpo*, 183-184).

This notwithstanding, there is an autobiographical element which informs the creation of the character as well. María del Carmen in her discourse throughout most of the novel would not appear to be a nihilistic character—though that clearly changes in the diatribes towards the end. Even there, towards the end of the novel, giving herself the nickname of “Siempreviva” (Alwaysalive) would seem to directly contradict such a notion. Though the nickname and its implications, like the other roles she plays during the novel, can also serve to be just another mask of the many donned throughout—none of which fit in the end. As such, she and many members of her social circle, like the literary character the biographical and autobiographical texts present of Caicedo himself, indeed exhibit certain characteristics of the prototypical nihilistic characters laid out by Herrero-Senés. Despite his close affiliation with the *Círculo de Cali* and the *Club de Cine*, Caicedo iterates on several occasions that because of his absolute loss of interest, he feels no affinities with anyone or anything, even the self displayed in the many pages left behind—whether they are his film or book reviews, his fictional narratives, correspondence or diaries. At the heart of the issue is the process of identity formation, the quest to find a literal and figurative place to be, a place of solace away from the seemingly inevitable alienation found in all of the sectors in the urban landscape, the very disconnection explained by Durkheim. Within this search, the role of music is obvious and fundamental in assuming and attempting to establish identity, though even there it is not the panacea the either Caicedo or María del Carmen would have wished it to be. With *¡Que viva la música!*

Caicedo explores the problematic nature of the postmodern identity within the Latin American context, directly rebelling against long-held assumptions and values that had shaped notions of Latin American identity up to that time, even recent times with regards to the Cuban Revolution and its political implications. Rock and rock culture are the essential launching point for the undertaken journey.

¡Que viva la música!: The Failed Search for Solace and Belonging

*I'm looking through you, where did you go?
I thought I knew you, what did I know?
You were above me, but not today.
The only difference is you're down there,
I'm looking through you, and you're nowhere...
The Beatles*

*Outside my window, is a tree.
There only for me.
And it stands in the grey of the city,
No time for pity, for the tree or me.
There is a world of pain
In the falling rain
Around me.
Is there a reason for today?
Do you remember?
I can hear all the cries of the city,
No time for pity for a growing tree.
There is a world of pain
In the falling rain
Around me.
Cream*

¡Que viva la música! recounts María del Carmen Huerta's urban journey from her upper middle class neighborhood in north Cali, on to the south, to its outskirts and ultimately to the center of the city. In general terms, María del Carmen's journey corresponds with the movement from civilization (the north end of Cali, its affluent, lighter-skinned residents, private schools, luxury homes, sympathy for the United States, and the bourgeois values so many youth rebelled against in Caicedo's time) to barbarism (the working class south side with its people of color, its different ethos and corresponding values, its connection to non-European and non-American (USA) cultural roots) to primitivism (the outskirts of town and the country, where there is no moral code, only strength and violence rule) and finally to the center of the city where she will live on in anonymity—for all intents and purposes, erased from the existence which contained her before. In an urban landscape, the novel updates the journeys undertaken by the protagonists of Rivera's *La vorágine* (1924) and Alejo Carpentier's *Los pasos perdidos* (1953) who follow similar trajectories, and are also ultimately erased from their previous existence, with only a text left behind. The urban landscape makes it unnecessary to travel far, as the different environments

converge in the modern city's palimpsest. It also asserts Caicedo's approach to intertextuality which rebels against the traditional notions of nation and runs counter to the official stories and concepts of identity expressed in the *novelas de la tierra*, ultimately asserting the alienation of the city and a lack of stable values from which to build in the present of the 1970s. Though nature is no longer an antagonist for María del Carmen, human nature, at times represented in its basest and crudest forms, and the implicit search for belonging and meaning are a constant backdrop.¹²⁷ With nature no longer an adversary within this urban setting, modern existential concerns serve as the menacing backdrop in its stead. María del Carmen abandons the pre-ordained path for girls of her social class and re-invents (or as Alzate suggests degrades) herself within each sector of the city during what is ostensibly a process of identity formation in a world that, for her, offers no firm anchor for defining herself.

María del Carmen's journey through the different areas, associations with different social strata and the different conclusions she comes to about herself and her place within society along the way also recall the *bildungsroman* genre. Again Caicedo's take on the genre rebels against traditional notions of it. As Walter Horace Bruford explains of the genre:

In a typical "Bildungsroman" we are shown the development of an intelligent and open-minded young man in a complex, modern society without generally accepted values; he gradually comes to decide, through the influence of friends, teachers, and chance acquaintances as well as the ripening of his own intellectual and perhaps artistic capacities and interests as his experience in these fields grows, what is best in life for him and how he intends to pursue it. (Doub, 1-2)

Bruford refers to young men as the feminine *bildungsroman*, as Yolanda Doub points out, is a relatively recent phenomenon. Nonetheless, we can note how the general description fits our purposes in examining María del Carmen's development in *¡Que viva la música!*, though clearly here there is no "teacher" in any

¹²⁷ Such is the case of Bárbaro, whose name defines him, as is often the case in the *novelas de la tierra*. Bárbaro's temper is feared by all who know him and he makes his living robbing tourists in the country, often humiliating, torturing and murdering them in the process. There is no vestige of civilization to be found in this character, whose dealings with the world around him are based almost exclusively on his crude expression of virility, strength and brutality.

traditional sense, though she is in her at times infantilized, *tabula rasa* representation apparently seeking guidance. Doub, whose work focuses specifically on the Latin American *bildungsroman*, cites a number of different authorities on the genre that further elucidate other critical aspects of the *bildungsroman* which are also applicable to Caicedo's novel. Doub points out how the genre as a whole has developed and evolved over time: "in such a way that it now incorporates forms that address the complexities of race, class, gender, and sexuality in a contemporary, postcolonial world" (2). It is also important to note the autobiographical aspect in the genre and how it can specifically consign the challenges felt by an individual in crisis without the means to connect (or choosing not to, as is the case of María del Carmen) society's norms, rituals and accepted patterns.

Doub, informed by Franco Moretti's *The Way of the World*, notes how a fundamental component of modern socialization is coming to grips with the inherent contradictions which are involved and internalizing those contradictions:

Moretti aptly demonstrates that the *Bildungsroman* goes hand in hand with modernity. [He] even goes so far as to declare the *Bildungsroman* "the symbolic form of modernity," as an acknowledgement of the power of this contradictory literary form to represent the transitory and conflict-ridden nature of societies undergoing changes such as those exemplified by the "new and destabilizing forces of capitalism" (4).

Doub adds, citing Jorge Larrain's ideas regarding Latin American modernity, that:

[A] sense of crisis permeates the economic realm and, according to Larrain, is directly transferable to the domain of cultural and national identity...As a result, individuals can experience an identity crisis as well, and may even encounter difficulty engaging with society (5).

We have noted some of these aspects previously regarding Caicedo's own psychological make-up and the crises he conveyed within his personal texts and letters. This, in turn, becomes an issue that is expressed within the novel as well in dealing with María del Carmen's identity and (dis)integration into society. In this process of defining identity, Doub argues that travel and immersion in different social contexts is a key to the formation of the self, which evolves and adapts to each context (7). As such, María del

Carmen's movement through the different realms of Cali and their corresponding ties to civilization, barbarism and primitivism further underscore the literal and figurative lack of a sense of place and identity experienced by the main character and the author, from what we can observe from his personal texts.

The focus on María del Carmen's identity is referred to early on in the novel as she looks at herself in the mirror "que...tenía una fisura en la mitad que chupaba mi imagen, que literalmente se la sorbía" (18). The mirror skews the reality that it reflects. This is symbolically significant in that it also reflects María del Carmen's particular sense of self which is formed outside of herself and not from within. Caicedo constructs the character with what appears to be an overt superficiality with only small hints of reflectiveness. Only in the end do we find that superficiality to be mostly, though not completely, feigned. During the mirror scene, she is already practicing how she will be portraying herself at her next *rumba*, putting on a mask of sorts, by smoking a cigarette, posing and making faces in front of the mirror. The considerable vanity that she puts on display throughout the novel is an important factor in noticing her gradual physical deterioration which her habits are perpetrating on her at such a young age. There are, of course, other important factors here at work. Frith, in "Music and Identity", explains that:

Identity...comes from the outside not the inside; it is something we put or try on, not something we reveal or discover. As Jonathan Ree puts it, "The problem of personal identity, one may say, arises from play-acting and the adoption of artificial voices; the origins of distinct personalities, in acts of personation and impersonation" (307).

María del Carmen's upbringing to the point where the novel begins coincides with what Frith describes as suburban culture: where the family aids the child in building a future by guiding them, through their values (the relationship between effort and reward), towards a career, complement their school activities with constructive leisure activities and also, significantly, instill the sense of competitiveness in the child (39). Upon beginning her journey, all of these values are abandoned and towards the end of the novel are, indeed, profusely and explicitly disparaged.

María del Carmen abruptly abandons her schooling at her prestigious college preparatory school, her out of school study sessions on Karl Marx and the career path of being an architect. In one of the few moments of reflection scattered throughout the novel before the last section, she addresses the reader directly and shares:

Cada vida depende del rumbo que se escogió en un momento dado, privilegiado. Quebré mi horario aquel sábado de agosto, entré a la fiesta del flaco Flores por la noche. Fue, como ven, un rumbo sencillo, pero de consecuencias extraordinarias. Una de ellas es que ahora esté aquí, segura, en esta perdedera nocturna desde donde narro, desclasada, *despojada de las malas costumbres con que crecí*. Sé no me queda la menor duda, que yo voy a servir de ejemplo. Felicidad y paz en mi tierra (42, emphasis mine).

María del Carmen's full confidence that she will serve as a model for future generations shares in the idealism of the time that the youth generation could reshape the social landscape. Her addressing the reader directly in relaying her own narrative goes to the heart of one of Ree's points as cited by Frith: "Ree goes on to argue that personal identity is therefore 'the accomplishment of a storyteller, rather than the attribute of a character'"(307). As such, the role of María del Carmen as the narrator of her own story is central to how she presents her own transformations and adoption of various identities. Regarding this element, Frith quotes Kwame Anthony Appiah to point out that:

Invented histories, invented biologies, invented cultural affinities come with every identity; each is a kind of role that has to be scripted, structured by conventions of narrative to which the world never quite manages to conform (307).

As a result, María del Carmen can never fully adopt the cultural values of the different groups she encounters throughout the different parts of the city beyond a brief time. This, as she shares in the previous quote, truly leaves her *despojada*—dispossessed of any association to her previous selves and the groups with whom she (sometimes only briefly) integrated herself and whose values she adopted.

Her narrative, in the end, is that of an alienated nihilist whose characteristics fit the blueprint laid out by Herrero-Senés. Indeed the character serves as a direct mouthpiece of Caicedo's sentiments about

his own existence as expressed in the personal texts that have come to light in recent years. The following passages from the novel perhaps best demonstrate just how close the relationship is between María del Carmen's ending point and Caicedo himself's. In her existence, María del Carmen has, for all intents and purposes, performed an anomic suicide without actually taking her life. Though she does not follow in the footsteps of her role model¹²⁸, Mariángela, who indeed follows through with the suicide, she admires her for having done so. In less dramatic fashion, she has extracted herself from the previous narrative plotlines that constituted her life and identity. This occurs to the point where acquaintances from her recent past no longer recognize her—there is hardly a vestige left of who she was upon beginning her journey. We can note how the following passages only differ slightly from many of the concerns put forth by Caicedo in the personal texts:

Que no accedes a los tejemanejes de la celebridad. *Si dejas obra, muere tranquilo, confiando en unos buenos amigos.* Nunca permitas que te vuelvan persona mayor, hombre respetable. Nunca dejes de ser niño, aunque tengas los ojos en la nuca y se te empiecen a caer los dientes. Tus padres te tuvieron. Que tus padres te alimenten siempre, y págales con mala moneda. A mí qué. Jamás ahorres. Nunca te vuelvas una persona seria. Haz de la irreflexión y de la contradicción tu norma de conducta. Elimina las treguas, recoge tu amor en el daño, el exceso y la tembladera (188, emphasis mine).

The highlighted portion of the quote leads us back to a suicide letter directed at his mother from a failed attempt in 1975 in which Caicedo states “Dejo algo de obra y muero tranquilo” (*Mi cuerpo*, 16). And while in the letter he expresses some remorse towards his dealings with his father, the words Caicedo puts on María del Carmen's pen are a far closer reflection of the position he actually took in life, never actually becoming a “persona seria” by his father's standards. The tremendous highs and lows

¹²⁸ María del Carmen describes Mariángela as follows: “Le gustaba ser mirada. No resistía que la tocaran. Ella fue hasta donde llega mi conocimiento, la primera del Nortecito que empezó esta vida, la primera que lo probó todo. Yo he sido la segunda” (18).

experienced and incongruent dealings with his personal relationships are also reflected in his not agreeing to truces and making contradiction the norm.¹²⁹

Regarding Caicedo's misgivings about sex and difficulties with relationships (particularly his tumultuous relationship with Patricia Restrepo), María del Carmen, who appears to feel great freedom without any complex in the sexual realm gives her reader the following advice, in the process alluding to Caicedo's own dabblings in homosexuality and touching upon the themes enumerated by Romero Rey which are expressed in *¡Que viva la música!* and even more explicitly in other writings:

Olvídate de que podrás alcanzar alguna vez lo que llaman "normalidad sexual", ni esperes que el amor te traiga paz. El sexo es el acto de las tinieblas y el enamoramiento la reunión de los tormentos. Nunca esperes que lograrás comprensión con el sexo opuesto. No hay nada más disímil ni menos dado a la reconciliación. Tú, practica el miedo, el rapto, la pugna, la violencia, la perversión y la vía anal, si cees que la satisfacción depende de la estrechez y la posición predominante. Si deseas sustraerte a todo comercio sexual, aún mejor (188-189).

María del Carmen's words seem to be advice directed at Caicedo himself, reminding us of Romero Rey's point on Caicedo's failed attempts to purge his inner demons by putting them in writing. Later in the monologue directed at the reader, María del Carmen adds:

Para la timidez, la autodestrucción.

Adonde mejor se practica el ritmo de la soledad es en los cines. Aprende a sabotear los cines.

No accedas al arrepentimiento ni a la envidia ni al arribismo social. Es preferible bajar, desclasarse; alcanzar al término de una carrera que no conoció el esplendor, la anónima decadencia.

¹²⁹ Caicedo had an ongoing feud with filmmaker Carlos Mayolo (1945-2007) on whom he laid blame for the ultimate failure of their collaboration on the unfinished film project titled *Angelita y Miguel Ángel* (1971). Caicedo's relationship with Patricia Restrepo, Mayolo's ex-wife, also became a factor in the feud, though Restrepo left Caicedo and initiated relationships with other members of the Cali film community.

Para endurecer la unidad sellada, ensaya dándote contra las tapias.

No hay momento más intenso ni angustioso que el despertar del hombre que madruga. Complica y prolonga este momento, consúmete en él. Agonizarás lentamente de berrido en berrido enfrentarás los nuevos días (189).

María del Carmen never appears to exhibit the characteristics (timidity or the resolve for self-imposed hardening by repeatedly banging herself against the wall) or experience any type of despair resembling what is conveyed in the previous passage. Instead, we have on display the self-loathing and self-destructiveness that ultimately led Caicedo to his demise.

In a reference that seemingly connects María del Carmen to the figure of Clarisol Lemos, she simultaneously advises and warns:

Atraviesa verticalmente todas las posibilidades de precocidad. Ya pagarás el precio: a los 19 años no tendrás sino cansancio en la mirada agotada de capacidad de emoción y disminuida la fuerza de trabajo. Entonces bienvenida sea la dulce muerte fijada de antemano. Adelántate a la muerte, precisale una cita. Nadie quiere a los niños envejecidos. Sólo tú comprendes que enredaste los años para malgastar y los años de la reflexión en una sola torcida actividad intensa. Viviste al mismo tiempo el avance y la reversa (186).

Regarding this reference, I say seemingly regarding Clarisol because the tiredness, the emptiness in his eyes, the inability to express emotion, the inability to work and welcoming a pre-set appointment with death again lead us to thoughts expressed by Caicedo in the 1975 suicide letter and in personal texts following his stay in the mental institution in 1976. In the letter, Caicedo states:

Estoy enormemente cansado, decepcionado y triste, y estoy seguro de que cada día que pase . cada una de estas sensaciones o sentimientos me irán matando lentamente. Entonces prefiero acabea de una vez (*Mi cuerpo*, 16).

In the personal texts found in *El cuento de mi vida*, he complains that the medication that is supposed to keep him from reaching the depths of depression is instead deprived him of emotional reaction which, in turn, furthered his general disinterest in the very things that had previously stimulated him and come to

define him, including writing. Not surprisingly, this was a situation which, in his mind, which was even worse than death. While, as we saw previously, Caicedo was concerned with Clarisol's mental well-being and ability to adjust to a more normalized life after having grown up too quickly, access to the personal texts confirms that the concerns are more directly linked to the writer himself. This quote also echoes the Rolling Stones song, "19th Nervous Breakdown": "Well it seems to me you've seen too much in too few years/ and though you've tried you just can't hide/ your eyes are edged with tears". It is impossible to know how Clarisol was adjusting to being a "niña envejecida", but we do know from Caicedo's personal texts that his eyes were well beyond simply being edged with tears from his own experiences that, in turn, led to his own nervous breakdowns. With this incursion of the writer's own voice, the narrative of María del Carmen's and Caicedo's lives converge as do, to a great extent, their identities when comparing the voices in Caicedo's personal texts and the novel, as we have seen.

This convergence of writer and character is not present throughout the novel, which leads us back to the development of María del Carmen's identity within the text itself. Her identity and the changes it experiences are, almost throughout, inextricably linked to music and the social groups with which particular types of music are associated. Again, Frith's research found in "Music and Identity" is an appropriate starting point:

Identity is not a thing but a process—an experiential process that most vividly grasped *as music*. Music seems to be a key because it offers, so intensely, a sense of both self and others, of the subjective in the collective (295, emphasis in original).

Later he adds that:

Music constructs our sense of identity through the direct experiences it offers of the body, time and sociability, experiences which enable us to place ourselves in imaginative cultural narratives. Such a fusion of imaginative fantasy and bodily practice marks the integration of aesthetics and ethics (309).

Caicedo seems to have intuited precisely these points made by Frith in *¡Que viva la música!* Referring to the former, as I noted before, aspects of Caicedo are divided among several different characters in the novel, reflecting his own process of identity.

María del Carmen's first musical influence in the process of shaping her identity is directly linked to rock, the music that is most prevalent among the youth of her home neighborhood in north Cali. Early on in the novel, she admits complete ignorance regarding music, slowly learning from borrowed records from friends and being surrounded by it at the *rumbas* at which she always longs to be. In her parents' home, there is also imported music, in this case from the United States: the soundtracks to the 1930s musicals of Jeannette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy—perhaps as close to a polar opposite as one can get to music to the rock of the Rolling Stones or Cream or any number of the groups mentioned in the novel. It is precisely this type of music which rock was aesthetically rebelling against from its inception in the 1950s, a process which was further perfected in the 1960s and beyond. Indeed, the iconoclastic posture of a band like the Rolling Stones directly confronts the bland, vanilla portrayal of reality which ignores inconvenient truths such as the power dynamic in race and gender relations, among other social problems, and promotes the myth of Hollywood happy endings in which “everything works out in the end”. The novel itself rebels towards this latter point given the life trajectory taken by María del Carmen and the disdain for mainstream values expressed within the text. Not casually, María del Carmen portrays herself as a sort of vampire, whose existence is only expressed during the night—eschewing the daylight hours of traditional social productivity and previously mentioned suburban values, living exclusively for the nighttime and the *rumba*.¹³⁰

¹³⁰ Early on, María del Carmen declares: “Tuve este pensamiento: “qué tal vivir sólo de noche, oh, la hora del crepúsculo, con los nueve colores y los molinos. Si la gente trbajara de noche, porque si no, no queda más destino que la rumba” (22). Her sexual relationship with Leopoldo Brook also displays vampire-like qualities, with her assuming complete control of the situation feeling that she literally owns his penis and sexuality. The gradual decline in his energy and general masculinity, aside from being attributable to his heavy drug consumption, can also be read as being drained from being depleted by María del Carmen, the the vampire. Liliana Moreno Muñoz explores this and other aspects of María del Carmen's character in depth in “Siempreviva o la heroína cruel: aspectos del mito femenino en *¡Que viva la música!* de Andrés Caicedo” in Winter's *La estela de Caicedo*.

While rock music offers the gateway by which to express her rebellious side, María del Carmen is not privy to all its message, not knowing English nor, at the beginning, having any knowledge about the bands which she hears: “Todos menos yo sabían de música” (12). Her conduit into this world is Ricardito el Miserable, a character in whom Caicedo infuses some of his darker characteristics. Upon introducing him, María del Carmen gives us an immediate allusion to Caicedo regarding Ricardito el Miserable’s nickname: “...así lo nombro porque sufre mucho, o al menos eso es lo que él decía” (15-16). Again, Caicedo in letters and personal texts is not shy about conveying his suffering, at times alluding to the fact that he had ruined several social situations with his suffering disposition. María del Carmen says of Ricardito el Miserable that: “Uno no podía permitir que él se pusiera a hablar de melancolías, eran muchas las historias de las fiestas que había agitado, de las muchachas que había aburrido hasta la muerte con su melancolía” (23). Among other things that Ricardito el Miserable shares with Caicedo himself are: an odd, at times extremely unhealthy relationship with his mother who wants to send him to a mental institution, ties to the U. S., enough knowledge of English to decipher and translate song lyrics, great knowledge of rock bands, problems with insomnia and a long list of mental health and substance abuse issues.

The long list of mental health issues from which Ricardito el Miserable suffers is laid out in a questionnaire to the mental hospital where he is eventually interned. María del Carmen receives the questionnaire in the mail, the last contact that she has with her troubled friend. The questionnaire points out many of the same ills that Caicedo himself complained of in the personal texts written in the same era he was working on *¡Que viva la música!* including: insomnia, fits of crying, general fear and angst, drug abuse, sexual difficulties, considering suicide, fear of going insane, and, an inflated sense of self-importance. The symptoms are also characterized by María del Carmen as being representative of the ills of her generation: “O Ricardito Miserable, que te perdiste cargando todos los síntomas de mi generación” (71). Though the novel was finished before Caicedo’s own internment in the mental hospital in 1976, given the length and severity of Caicedo’s issues (as well as his mother’s strong involvement in his life),

it is not beyond the realm of possibility that he may have received treatment previous to that stay. Regardless, it still provides a concrete connection between the character and the author.

María del Carmen continued to tolerate Ricardito because he was, until the arrival of Leopoldo Brook and his “amigos fascinantes”, her closest escort in the world of rock. As I suggested in the introduction by expanding on Dorfman and Mattelart’s assertions about Disney comics in *Para leer al Pato Donald*, rock can be viewed as the figurative big brother which opens up a world of rebellion and illicit possibilities. Ricardito is the concrete manifestation for María del Carmen, the keeper of the keys to an essential part of this world: knowledge of the music and the necessary English to be privy to its message. The following example from the text makes Ricardito’s role with María del Carmen clear:

“Poné ese radio, ¿quierés?”, y yo que lo pongo y suena tremendo *Rock* pesado y seguido. Miré a Ricardito emocionada. “Es Gran Funk”,¹³¹ me informó. El entendía. Yo lo admiraba (29).

Her admiration, of course, had its limits. Nonetheless, Ricardito’s role in giving María del Carmen access to the rock world is key, particularly serving as a simultaneous interpreter translating lyrics for her at parties.

One such case is his translation of the Stones’ “Moonlight Mile”, the closing track from *Sticky Fingers* (1971)—a record, like most of the Stones’ 70s albums, almost as legendary for the debauchery which went on during its recording as it is for the music contained within it. The song’s lyrics, which are, for the most part, accurately and even poetically translated by Caicedo, offer a glimpse into the rock star’s meta-reality behind the scenes, including the weariness of the seemingly eternal *rumba* they are living themselves while on the road. It is also clearly a cocaine song from the title which alludes to a line of cocaine and also with the lyric: “When the wind blows and the rain feels cold/ With a head full of snow”. Ricardito points out the double entendre in the line to make sure the still relatively naïve and ill-informed

¹³¹ “Gran Funk” refers to the Michigan rock band Grand Funk Railroad. A power trio consisting of Mark Farner (guitar), Mel Schacher (bass), and Don Brewer (drums), the band was active from 1969-1976. They have, like many rock bands of the period reformed several times with different line-ups. During their first stint in the limelight, they had a number of hits including “We’re an American Band” and “I’m Your Captain” which are still staples on classic rock radio.

María del Carmen, who did not even recognize it as being a Stones' song, fully understands. Its relevance within this context is clear, there is a down side to the *rumba* life which is inevitably felt in the long run no matter how much is done to make sure, like María del Carmen does, that appearances are kept. There is also foreshadowing to María del Carmen's eventually abandoning the rock scene of the north side youth in one of the lyrics with which Caicedo exercises poetic license in translating: "El sonido de extranjeros no me enseña nada/Solamente otro día loco, loco en el camino" (50).¹³² The poetic license taken by Caicedo in translating the lyric is significant in that it alludes to the limits of the foreign music's reach as far as identity formation, whether the reader takes enseñar to mean "to teach" or "to show". Clearly, the language barrier is something to consider whether it can "teach" anything—a significant departure from the Onda texts where the English language of rock is never considered such and, instead, is directly introduced to the text as a nod to those privy to its significance literally, symbolically and culturally. The other case of it meaning "to show" is no less significant given how the youth of Cali's north side are emulating and even idolizing their rock star heroes by using a music not all of them understand as a defining factor within their collective identity as rebels, while also imitating rock star habits, regardless of the consequences. For some in the scene, adopting rock as a means of emancipation is a leap of blind faith, aided and abetted by the power of a peer pressure that is shaped by imported multimedia culture. Of course, María del Carmen eventually abandons the rock scene of the north side youth because it is no longer showing her anything of worth in her process of identity formation—an identity that will obligate her to not only become fluent in the names and songs of rock, but also in the English language. Despite learning more in-depth about her newfound culture, there is still a sense of alienation within the scene—an essential element that is missing and ultimately drives her away.

Regarding the challenges presented by English, Ricardito, sensing his power of being the holder of the knowledge María del Carmen desires goes on to say of his translation of "Moonlight Mile": "Hasta

¹³² The original English lyric is: "The sound of strangers sending nothing to my mind/Just another mad, mad day on the road".

mejoré la versión. La letra que te dicté es mejor que la original de esos matachines” (51). As a response, María del Carmen shares with the reader: “Me mareó una posibilidad de engaño total. Si había mejorado la letra era que la había *cambiado*. ¡Oh, cómo me sentí de desamparada sin mi inglés!” (51, emphasis in original). The knowledge she seeks for the identity she wishes to adopt is not available to her in the traditional schemes of school and study groups within which she has participated up to now. She must learn by other means: participating in a scene and learning from the streets. Though it is not just Ricardito’s presence which causes María del Carmen to not attend her study group meeting to study Marx’s *Das Kapital*, his is the key presence early on during the fateful day in which she abandons her previous life and the process of her identity takes the decisive turn which redefines her future. Obviously, the study group does not offer her the answers for the knowledge she now seeks. She swears to having understood everything at those meetings, including the history of her own country—which she from then on forsakes in lieu of an unsustainable utopia which is symbolized by the night life of the *rumba*. With the simple gesture of missing the meeting and never returning, the values of many leftist Latin American youth of the previous decade who had been inspired by the Cuban Revolution are cast aside. In their place, she seeks a life within which a nominal opposite to Latin American Marxist thought is practically idolized: rock and the other imported products of the mass media culture industry made available by an incursion of cultural imperialism. Looking further back in the history of Latin American thought, the warnings of such Latin American luminaries like José Rodó or José Martí, who cautioned of the dangers of foreign influence in Latin American culture are never even considered. The modern Latin American identity perceived by Caicedo welcomes such an incursion and understands it as being inevitable.

Of course, María del Carmen is assuming an identity very much in line with the youth of her social class who, in general terms, are adopting extraneous, artificial voices drawn from the imported mass media culture as part of their identity construction. In María del Carmen’s case, these voices are neither literally nor figuratively understood as she is limited by her inability to comprehend English and fully grasp some of the codes drawn from the imported culture. This refers us back to one of Renato Ortiz’s fundamental observations on the dynamic of cultural imperialism and national identity in Latin

America which revives and reposes the question of “who are we” in the continent once more. María del Carmen’s search for identity and her turn towards alienation during the process are shaped in no uncertain terms by cultural imperialism. Ortiz, in “Revisitando la noción de imperialismo cultural” explains that the problem of emulating the United States had been debated since the 19th Century, had been limited more to the political and economic realm until after the Second World War when the expansion of the mass media culture allowed for new avenues to culturally colonize subjects in other countries. Ortiz explains: “En las palabras de Armand Mattelart (1973;1979): ‘La expansión de la influencia americana estaba contribuyendo para la esclavitud de la conciencia nacional’” (46)—influence felt even more in the social class of north Cali, where contact with the culture from the United States was more direct than in other social realms and served even more so as a model which to aspire. According to Ortiz, the imported culture, in essence, served to inculcate alien traces into the culture which differed fundamentally from the perceived authenticity of the *ser nacional*. As such, the phenomenon of cultural imperialism contributed directly to the development of cultural alienation such as that experienced by Caicedo and shown to be experienced by María del Carmen in the novel.

With Ricardito out of the picture and her already living with Leopoldo Brook, María del Carmen begins the learning process of fully integrating herself into the rock community on her own: “Acumulé una cultura impresionante” (72). What follows this statement in the novel is the digression with María del Carmen’s take on the demise of Rolling Stone Brian Jones. Here, we can glean Caicedo’s sympathies towards him and he presents his downfall and eventual death in terms similar to the way he presents his own gradual downward spiral in his personal texts. There are several statements in this four page digression with these clear parallels of which three stand out: “Murió fue de desencanto”, “...ya se estaba debilitando por dentro de pensar en lo infortunado que era”, “...lo acomplejaba, supersensible que era, sentirse medio provinciano”, and “se fue alejando de los invitados” (72-73). We have already noted how Caicedo also connected with rock’s softer, sensitive side—the side which all of the macho bravado tends to mask and deny. Choosing this Rolling Stone, as opposed to say Keith Richards, conveys much about Caicedo’s own sensibilities and that with which he identifies in the Stones. There is no recounting of

Jagger or Richards' many sexual conquests, their seemingly endless appetite for drugs and alcohol, or quoting songs like "Street Fighting Man" or others with bravado and purpose. Instead, María del Carmen relates to us the story of the Rolling Stone who was done in by his disenchantment, his inability to connect any longer, who best exemplifies her statement: "Es que eso del *Rock and Roll* le mete a uno muchas cosas raras en la cabeza. Mucho chirrido, mucho coro bien cantado, mucha perfección técnica, y luego ese silencio y encierro..."(89). Though written and recorded after Jones' death, "Moonlight Mile" also relates to him and his struggles on the road and his ultimate inability to maintain appearances before finally disintegrating.

María del Carmen's account of Brian Jones' exit from the Rolling Stones emphasizes the role of Jagger and Richards in diminishing his role in the band, gradually undermining his confidence and sense of self and as a significant personal blow to his manhood, Richards stealing away his girlfriend. This account is echoed in the general disenchantment and the difficulties with colleagues expressed by Caicedo in this text from 1975 or 1976:

Pero la falta de estímulo en las lecturas, en los nombres, me traerá un apocamiento en lo que hasta ahora, cuidado o descuidadamente, ha sido mi vida. Seguro que sí. Su trato ha sido una forma radical de compartir la horrible decepción ante quienes eran, hasta hace poco, mis compañeros de trabajo. Me censuraron, se aprovecharon de mis flaquezas, me subestimaron, y yo tuve que huirles y quiero seguirles huyendo (*Mi cuerpo*, 170).

Jones died before ever having to redefine himself and reconstruct his identity. Caicedo killed himself in the process of finding a sense of solace with himself. The admiration for the aplomb showed by Richards that I quoted previously was never present in Caicedo—as such, the affinity to Jones and recounting his end give us a sense of Caicedo's sentiments as well.

I have already noted one of Frith's key points regarding the close ties between identity and music, but there is another key component regarding music and youth. Regarding youth peer-groups, Frith states that: "[Music] is a means by which a group defines itself, and it is a source of in-group status"(10). In the case of the youth of north Cali, knowledge of English, rock groups and their history, as well as familiarity

with song lyrics are all essential—again exemplifying the power and reach of the process of cultural imperialism suggested by Ortiz. While Ricardito el Miserable has a number of shortcomings which would seem to be non-starters as a participant in the scene, being well versed in all three categories makes him an asset to at least María del Carmen, though this is of little to no concern to him. As he leaves María del Carmen she says of Ricardito: “Lo vi alejarse rápido y torpemente. Nunca fue de ánimo colectivo. Nunca comprendió los grupos” (35). María del Carmen understands that to fully fit into the group, to be part of that collective and its accompanying identity and be able to fully adapt the collective into an individual identity she must know more. The cultural capital represented by English and rock songs in English is evident throughout the first part of the novel. As María del Carmen and Ricardito walk with a group of friends, they listen to friend Tico’s radio on the street. As a song in Spanish comes on, someone in the group becomes upset at Tico: “Ya había uno que le quería pegar: ‘o pones algo en inglés o te sacudo’” (34). When it comes time to pick which party to attend, the one thrown by el flaco Flores is chosen for the fact that he has just received a fresh batch of records from the U. S., as such, making it the most desirable place to be. As Connell and Gibson point out, music is also essential in aiding identity formation for social groups, whether they be classified through ethnicity, gender or class (15). The latter is key here given that appropriating rock music as a part of the identity process reaffirms Cali’s affluent north’s relative power and social status compared to other sectors of the city and the country. In Cali, rock is the music of the privileged few, those of the North, while in other sectors of the city and country identities are informed and, in part, defined by other forms of music, as is the case with salsa in the southern part of the city or more traditional folk forms and cumbia outside of the city. As such, it becomes essential for María del Carmen and her sense of belonging to this collective identity to overcome the obstacle of the language. She is quite conscious of this upon seeing Leopoldo Brook sing in English for the first time without Ricardito by her side to translate for her, sharing that: “Me voy a morir de la vergüenza si esta noche él [Leopoldo Brook] me ve emocionada ante letras que no entiendo” (38).

Given the process of identity in which the youth of north Cali are engaging: striving to be as close as possible to their idealized vision of American or British youth, learning their language, copying their

fashion and, of course, making use of their music, it is safe to say that Leopoldo Brook personifies the model to which members of this group aspire. Because of his roots in the United States, native English fluency and ability to play the electric guitar, he is unique within the group as his identity shaped by elements of his own culture. María del Carmen is particularly smitten with the young American who, in the flesh, brings rock and roll to life. Experiencing rock and roll in English by an American or British performer¹³³ in person was not an option available to many, if any, Latin American youth at the time, which further adds value to Leopoldo Brook's own status and cultural capital, converting him into a central figure within the scene. The adoration received by bands like the Beatles and the Stones, among others, during their early days created a new phenomenon of devout fanaticism as of then unseen. Rock musicians, for better or for worse, had become idols worthy of worship to many of the youth. Even a nobody in the larger scheme of things like Leopoldo Brook could elicit a reaction of devotion simply from picking up the electric guitar and performing live for this small crowd, the rock community of Cali. The following passage illustrates this clearly: "La cocaína, además de ponernos a todos inmediatamente felices, provocó en Leopoldo dos horas de música en inglés, y yo lo admiré y *lo adoré en mi devoto silencio*" (41, emphasis mine). Of course, the drugs are also an inextricable component which does not simply enhance the experience for the devoted, but is in this case the impetus for it to even occur. Again, the infantile quality we have observed in María del Carmen is present. This quality essentially converts her into a *tabula rasa*, mesmerized and willfully allowing herself to be defined by the incursion of the foreign rock culture. The entire community of north Cali youth has indeed been converted by the reaches

¹³³ There were dozens of bands in Latin America that performed in English into the 1970s. These English language performances were not limited to covers of established material, as many bands wrote and performed their own material in English as well. There were also the bands who would cover well-known hits and translate the lyrics into Spanish, the *refrito* practice which Zolov has described in Mexico. This practice was widespread in most of Latin America (Argentina and Uruguay are the notable exceptions) and characterized the work of Los Speakers and Los Flippers in Colombia. In the novel, María del Carmen expresses familiarity with the Animals' "House of the Rising Sun" and has a general knowledge of the lyrics from the Spanish language version done by Los Speakers called "Casa del sol naciente", the title track of their first LP. Through the 1960s and into the 1970s, bands who sang in English, by and large, were considered to be more authentic in their approach to rock, though that certainly changed as the 1970s progressed and into the 1980s.

of cultural imperialism—the 19th Century fears of Martí and Rodó, among others, of North American imperialist cultural colonization has become a reality among this group. In some senses, the language employed by Caicedo shows a greater degree of influence, that of a false prophet who is a flawed model to which to aspire. Of course, the rock community which was comprised of the north Cali youth was only a community in the loosest sense because as Frith explains:

The rock ‘community’ refers not to an institution, to a set of people, but to a sensation...The rock experience—‘the magic that can set you free’, to quote the recurrent editorial phrase with which the paper [*Rolling Stone* magazine] was launched—describes the uplifting adolescent moment against which all subsequent rock’n’roll experiences are to be judged...(36-37)

María del Carmen is experiencing precisely this moment that Frith describes, a sensation of togetherness and belonging amongst a group of like-minded individuals. The admiration she displays towards Leopoldo Brook exemplifies Frith’s point on rock singers being symbols of achievement who in their performances display a mastery over their lives (37). It later becomes abundantly clear that Leopoldo does not in fact have any control over his own, the appearances put forth are simply another element to the performance.

María del Carmen also displays an act of religious worship by listening in devout silence as Leopoldo performs on his electric guitar. The scene here puts on display the phenomenon that rock concerts in the 60s, because of the unbridled devotion displayed by the fans, were described in religious terms: “rock concerts were ceremonies of the *spiritual* communion of youth” (Frith, 40).¹³⁴ While

¹³⁴ There is also an association with worship and the electric guitar which, in part, began with graffiti around London in 1966 proclaiming “Clapton is God”, referring to Eric Clapton. Leopoldo is a great admirer of Clapton, emulating his way of playing note for note and performing Cream’s “White Room” for the crowd. The song itself, written by Cream bassist Jack Bruce (b. 1943) and poet/lyricist Peter Brown (b. 1940), is an excellent example of cryptic, poetic at times surrealistic lyrics in rock. As such, the lyrics display a degree of sophistication that suggests a number of avenues for interpretation. There are also lines from the song which also serve as a fitting backdrop for the scenes being represented in the novel: “Dawn light smiles on you leaving, my contentment” and “I’ll sleep in this place with the lonely crowd/where the shadows run from themselves”.

rejecting traditional values, religion included, the youth have found another form of coming together relevant to the parts of culture with which they can identify. This, Frith identifies to be essential in the process of collective identity formation noting social groups concur on values which are expressed or reflected in their cultural activities, that the groups become aware of themselves as groups through their cultural activity and the accompanying aesthetic judgments (296). The essential problem is that rock and the formation of rock communities, for all their appearances and symbolic attachments, do not form a credo or way of life in itself, but as Frith argues, are a leisure activity. A very powerful leisure activity, to be sure, which fosters "...fantasies about leisure, about different ways of life, about different *possibilities* of community" (40). Ultimately, Frith concludes that notions of rock community are a myth. As such, it is comparable the utopian space which María del Carmen associates with the *rumba*, which in the end are unsustainable because they only produce the mere sensation of well-being, without having any solid goals or determination to achieve them behind it—precisely the critique María del Carmen makes of Leopoldo Brook in his lifestyle once the disillusionment with him and the rock scene as a whole begins to emerge.

On an individual level, the myth of the rock community can be seen as an extension of Frith's point that identity in itself is an ideal within which music plays an essential role:

But if musical identity is, then always fantastic, idealizing not just oneself but also the social world one inhabits, it is always real, enacted in musical activities. Music making and music listening, that is to say, are bodily matters, involve what one might call *social movements*. In this respect, musical pleasure is not derived *from* fantasy—it is not *mediated* by daydreams—but is experienced directly: music gives us a real experience of what that ideal could be (308).

Of course, what the ideal could be does not correspond to reality, a point which becomes clearer to María del Carmen the longer she remains part of the rock scene. The gender roles dictated by rock and

Eric Clapton (b. 1945) is one of the most renowned and influential guitarists in the history of rock. In the 1960s he was a member of several of the most legendary rock and blues groups in Britain: The Yardbirds, John Mayall's Bluesbreakers, Cream and Blind Faith. He also participated in several recording sessions by the Beatles and George Harrison. In the 1970s he led Derek and the Dominos and embarked on a solo career after beating heroin addiction and eventually marrying Patti Boyd Harrison, George Harrison's first wife. He is now considered an elder statesman of rock and has returned to his roots playing the blues.

assimilated by the rock scene of north Cali preclude her from being a driving force and also deprive her of living the absolute freedom which attracted her to the scene in the first place. Those freedoms, in the end, are nothing but an unrealized ideal. As we noted in the previous chapter, rock historically is a male-dominated genre with many prescribed, often misogynistic, gender roles which are not easily transcended. As Frith clearly lays out in his article "Rock and Sexuality":

It is boys who experience rock as a collective culture, a shared male world of fellow fans and fellow musicians. A girl is supposed to be an individual listener, she is not encouraged to develop the skills and knowledge to become a performer... This is another aspect of rock's sexual ideology of collective male activity and individual female passivity (46).

During her deepest moments of involvement in the group María del Carmen describes herself in terms that make her conform to the ideals of rock's ideology: "Yo, inocente y desnuda, soy simple y amable escucha. Ellos llevan las riendas del universo" (66). In the long run, however, passivity is not an option for the resolute and independent-minded María del Carmen. Though she has no wish to become a rock performer, she does engage in the one sanctioned and performative activity within rock's sexual ideology: dancing, where the woman can take on the dominant role. She had already taken on the dominant role sexually with Leopoldo Brook, but in public this was her means of asserting herself as a driving force within the scene. Having already decided to leave Leopoldo, she ultimately abandons the rock scene when she is told to not turn up the music at her final rock party, precluding the possibility of dancing and depriving the gathering of the essential element which provides the sensation of community and the apparent substance to the myth: the music itself.

It is at that point she hears the salsa from the party across the street and the process of identity formation continues in another part of the city, informed by the culture and imaginary of another genre of music, the salsa of the working class south side of Cali. Rock had opened the door for her to rebel, now the next step in the journey had begun. And while the rock persona of María del Carmen was apolitical on the surface, her actions spoke louder than words. Upon entering into the salsa culture, she has an epiphany that reminds us of the altered translation of "Moonlight Mile" which says there is nothing to be

learned from the sounds of the foreigner. Freed from the shackles of an identity rooted in a foreign culture, a mask which did not fit, she declares:

Me inflé de vida, se me inflaron los ojos de recordar cuánto había comprendido las letras en español, la cultura de mi tierra, donde adentro hace un sol, grité descomunadamente: “¡abajo la penetración *cultural* yanky!” (101, emphasis in original).

The same cultural penetration which she had attempted to have define her mere days, if not hours, before. This point again leads us back to Ortiz who explains that: “El hombre colonizado al comprender el fundamento de sus cadenas podría, en el ámbito de las luchas nacionalistas, modificar su sino, construir otro camino para sí” (45). And thus, the door is opened for María del Carmen to walk away and get in touch with a rekindled sense of identifying with what she now sees as her own culture.

The text from here begins to incorporate salsa lyrics into the dialogues as a constant—an impossibility with rock due to the language and cultural barriers dealt with by María del Carmen, though the use of salsa in *¡Que viva la música!* lies outside the scope of this chapter.¹³⁵ She allows herself even greater, some would say barbaric, sexual freedoms, eventually even becoming a prostitute despite still receiving money from her father. As Alzate succinctly summarizes:

Situada fuera de los límites de la legalidad, la vida de la protagonista es un reto para el orden social establecido. Una vida seminómada donde la calle, un espacio transitorio, se convierte en el espacio por excelencia. Una vida con códigos que atentan directamente en contra de la ley común, donde no se respeta la propiedad privada, ni la moral burguesa que terminan configurando una serie de antivalores que la sociedad no está dispuesta a aceptar (50).

With this point in mind, we can see how, in a very concrete sense, *¡Que viva la música!* serve as a prototypical anti-*bildungsroman*. This becomes particularly clear in noting Doub’s basic assertion that “In the traditional novel of formation, the story concludes as the hero integrates into society (which

¹³⁵ For a look at salsa and its use in the novel, see Romero Rey’s chapter “Toda la música de *¡Que viva la música!*” in *Andrés Caicedo, o, La muerte sin sosiego*. The topic is also considered at length in Carvajal Córdoba’s “Música y ciudad en *¡Que viva la música!* de Andrés Caicedo.

symbolizes his maturity and acceptance of social norms)” (3-4). Instead of integrating herself into society, she herself *dis-integrates*, in the sense that she withdraws every step of the way along the nihilistic path she sets for herself.

Despite abandoning the rock scene of the north and continuing the process of attempting to iterate an identity in other environments, María del Carmen takes the initial rebellion, iconoclasm and resistance entrenched in the rock ethos and exercises them to an extreme. Each stop along the way leads to further alienation and disconnection on her part, leading to the nihilistic diatribes which echo Caicedo’s thoughts from his personal texts. The failure to fully connect in any urban environments speaks to the alienation felt by her generation, for whom the truths of the past were no longer relevant and the promise of the liberties of the 60s went unrealized, not having enough substance behind them to bring about the ideals on which the imagined communities which comprised the movement were built. The anti-values embraced by María del Carmen serve to erase her from society. Without taking her life, she commits an anomic suicide which leaves no vestige of her past selves, another form of disintegration, again reminding us of the nihilistic characteristics in both Caicedo and María del Carmen—the strongest bond between character and author.

The quandary faced by both Caicedo and María del Carmen regarding identity and their standing in the world, particularly when considering them as synecdoches for a generation, also suggests a potential allegorical reading to the novel following Fredric Jameson’s polemical view of allegory in texts produced in the Third World. With its uneven modernity and its enormous, geographically well-defined gaps between rich and poor, Caicedo’s Cali, of course, is part of this Third World. In reference to texts produced within it, Jameson posits that:

Third-world texts, even those which are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic—necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory: *the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society* (69, emphasis in original).

Jameson later goes on to suggest that within the Third-World texts: “[...]psychology, or more specifically, libidinal investment, is to be read in political and social terms” (72).¹³⁶ In these terms, María del Carmen’s sexual relations can be seen as representative the different degrees of penetration and influence of cultural imperialism, as well as its transformative effect on identity. The entrance into “modernity”, as such, necessitates such a relationship with Leopoldo Brook, the young American before moving on to reassess and refashion her own identity within a world that more clearly acknowledges what few connections she feels towards her Latin American roots. However, unlike the nation-as-woman metaphor we saw in Chapter 1 with Requelle and Mexico in Agustín’s “¿Cuál es la Onda?”, at no point does María del Carmen espouse positions that defend or represent any sort of national institutions in a positive light. The opposite is, as we have seen through her actions and diatribes, the case.

Taking María del Carmen’s trajectory as a whole within Jameson’s suggested framework, the novel can suggest the potentially devastating effects of cultural imperialism upon a national identity—taking away whatever essence was there before, potentially misguiding it towards an unforeseen nowhere within which everything is questioned and nothing is answered. María del Carmen ends up living as a prostitute, marginalized in her own home city. Her once alluring and enticing beauty, which she used as her main resource to exercise her main control of her life is beginning to fade—used up in the years of incessantly exploiting it. The journey begins by looking in a skewed mirror in which the looker wishes to see modernity and adopts a pose suggested from the outside media culture which has entered her realm and played an undeniable role in defining her first steps towards and within independence. In the end, after assuming different masks and dabbling in different societal possibilities, María del Carmen ends up

¹³⁶ Jameson’s assertions on Third World literature and allegory from this article have been widely criticized and debated. For example, in *Las conspiradoras: la representación de la mujer en México* (Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1994), Jean Franco retorts: “Fredric Jameson hizo la absurda generalización de que la novela del Tercer Mundo tiene la forma de la alegoría nacional. Esto está sujeto a discusión, pero es cierto que las novelas realistas por lo general contienen personajes que representan a diferentes fuerzas nacionales” (188). *¡Que viva la música!*, can fit into Jameson’s scheme of analysis, particularly when considering the influence of cultural imperialism and its influence upon national identity. Also, in reference to Franco’s point of agreement with Jameson, the representation of the different social strata occur through youth. This is significant in the sense that, unlike María del Carmen, many of the assumptions about their class and national identity are not yet in question.

stripped of essence, with no future towards which to focus her energies, in an empty nihilist space without any answers or faith to guide her.

While Jameson's polemical reading of Third-World texts is indeed applicable to *¡Que viva la música!*, it strays us into realms beyond what I have suggested thus far. Nonetheless, a reading of the novel within this framework will lead us to many of the points I have touched upon here. As we have seen, the strong autobiographical component of *¡Que viva la música!* becomes clear when compared with Caicedo's recently published personal texts. This reiterates Fuguet's point on the most interesting thing about Caicedo being the author himself and Romero Rey's assertion that the texts are inseparable from the individual. The autobiographical connection is also among several characteristics that puts the novel in the diaspora of the Onda, as is the appropriation of music, as well as the use of other references to mass media culture not discussed here, as fundamental components in the process of forming the character's identities. For both Caicedo and María del Carmen, they are unrealized, alienated pieces of an individual whose ephemeral nature is defined in time by music: "Yo soy la fragmentación. La música es cada uno de esos pedacitos que antes tuve en mí y los fui desprendiendo al azar" (65). In the case of both Caicedo and María del Carmen, the music that spoke to them is the essential component to their identity; an identity unable to find a sense of solace or belonging in the very postmodern world they were, unknown to them, defining.

Chapter Four

El país de la dama eléctrica: Exiled to the imaginary

If I'm free, it's because I'm always running.
Jimi Hendrix

Rock, identity, and the psychological exile

Drawing its title from the Jimi Hendrix Experience's 1968 album *Electric Ladyland*, Marcelo Cohen's (b. 1951) first novel *El país de la dama eléctrica* (1984) approaches the role of rock in identity formation from the perspective of the nomad, the exile and its effect on the disaffected youth in the Argentina of the Proceso de Reorganización Nacional executed by the military junta between 1976 and 1983. Cohen was already a self-imposed exile in Spain by the time the coup led by Jorge Rafael Videla took control of the country on March 24, 1976. He did not return to his homeland until 1991. The coup and the subsequent changes brought about by the iron handed repression that followed—30,000 would disappear in the years of the *Guerra sucia*—led to a significant number of Argentines heading into exile. For those who remained and were not on board with the changes being imposed by the Junta of generals, the experience was similar to being an exile in their own land. The relative freedoms, advancement and greater visibility of the counterculture that had blossomed less than a decade earlier came immediately fully under assault by the Proceso and soon seemed like a distant memory.

In the novel, Cohen adeptly manages to present both the perspective of the psychological, or to use Joseph Brodsky's term, metaphysical exile who remains in the country; and the exile abroad who is defined by his deracinated state by presenting parallel narratives in different locales: one a fictional Mediterranean island, the other a fictional neighborhood in the Buenos Aires of the Proceso. Both narratives tell the story of a young rock musician's search for his disappeared girlfriend and the uncomfortable reunion with his estranged mother who abandoned him and whom he has not seen in several years. The musician, named Martín Gomel, searches for his girlfriend, Lucina, not only out of love, but because she is in possession of some illicitly attained cash that he sees as the key to buying the equipment he needs to become the rock star he envisions himself undoubtedly to be in a mere four years

time. He claims half of the money as his. Martín, the nomadic, deracinated exile, narrates his journey on the Mediterranean island, while the occurrences in Buenos Aires are narrated by a psychological/metaphysical exile, Gerardo—a former librarian and educator forced out of his posts by the military regime.

That Cohen himself was an exile when writing the novel in 1981 and 1982 brings up some significant points about the writer in exile, the work produced during that exile and how the experience of exile shapes the author's artistic identity, as well as what themes are presented within the work. In *The Dialectics of Exile: Nation, Time, Language, and Space in Hispanic Literature*, Sophia A. McClennen offers a fundamental assessment of the writer in exile which can be linked with the effects of the Proceso and the Cohen's different articulations of cultural identity put forth in *El país de la dama eléctrica*.¹³⁷ McClennen explains that:

The political struggles of the twentieth century in Spain and Latin America were often specifically tied to efforts to redefine the nation, and we find a consistent tension between conservative efforts to homogenize national culture and progressive efforts to pluralize it. Consequently, the cultural background of these authors was not fixed, unified, or homogenous. Noting fragmentation or a plurality of discursive voices in their narratives, then, does not imply that they are rejecting ties to their nations' past. Because the work of these authors resists conventional forms of literary and critical categorization, they best depict the crisis of cultural identity produced through contemporary exile. (4-5)

Cohen as part of a generation of post-Boom Latin American writers in exile certainly intuited this dynamic in his experience and expressed it through the main characters in the text, utilizing rock and rock culture as a textual and cultural well from which to express these new cultural realities brought about by deracination and the effects of a global mass-media culture. Cohen, though he had left Argentina before

¹³⁷ McClennen's study does not include Cohen, instead focusing on Juan Goytisolo, Cristina Peri Rossi, and Ariel Dorfman—all of which were exiled due to the effects of dictatorship in their respective countries of origin.

the beginning of the Proceso, was undoubtedly touched by it, as were all Argentine expatriates and exiles. As such, *El país* reflects a key point brought up by John Spalek and Robert Bell in their introduction to *Exile: The Writer's Experience* that: "The most salient characteristic of exile literature is its inexorable involvement, whether directly or in disguise, with the political situation that caused it" (xiii). It is also classifiable within one of the categories enumerated by Joseph Strelka in his essay "The Novel In Exile" as it puts forth an "indirect rendering of the contemporary world" in the part of the narrative situated in Buenos Aires, and a "direct reference of the contemporary world" in the other, where the events take place on a Mediterranean island (26). Adriana Bergero explains that *Insomnio*, Cohen's second novel, represents, a space that is a crossroads of very current conditions in the world, the deterritorialization of social identities generated by the neoliberal state model, surveillance and citizenship, tension between the local and the global, deindustrialization and migration, a break with past systems and the collective action of civil society (35). The same is true of *El país de la dama eléctrica*. The novel was not published until after the Junta left power in 1983, though nowhere have I seen any reference to it being censored for its representation of a fictional Buenos Aires during the Proceso as was the case in Brazil in the late 1960s and through most of the 1970s.

Clearly, Cohen addressing the Buenos Aires of the Proceso from another continent of course fits clearly within the parameters of literature produced in exile, but it is his particular cultural perspective that is notable here. Though there are some clear Argentine archetypes at work in the novel, the representation occurs without being overly tinged with sentimentality or nostalgia. This latter point is also an important component of latter twentieth-century writing in exile according to Andrew Gurr in *Writers in Exile: The Identity of Home in Modern Literature*. Gurr further states that: "Distance lends perspective though not enchantment to the exile" (17)—a facet that is revealed the perspective of the young nomadic exile: main character and devout rocker Martín Gomel. Martín is also the center of attention in the other parallel narrative, and everything truly does revolve around him. It is the lack of distance that also helps to define Gerardo, the other main character and narrator in the novel whose existential crisis is presented as a contrast to that of the free-spirited rocker.

As such, rock and its ethos are central signifiers and reference points throughout the novel, as is the context in which it remained a relevant as a provider of counterculture for Argentine youth under during the years of the Junta. Sergio Pujol reiterates in *Rock y dictadura* that changing the way people thought and the homogenization of Argentine culture was one of the main goals of the Proceso. They attempted to achieve this by severely curbing access to education, what could be taught, and emphasizing a Christian morality that they themselves did not even practice while torturing and murdering dissidents. Along with this, there was a coordinated effort to emphasize patriotism, *argentinidad*, and traditional Argentine values. As Pujol summarizes:

Desde el 76, los militares intentaban por distintos medios—empezando por la violencia directa—cortar de cuajo con el pasado de los 60 y 70 y refundar así el país, sus instituciones y relaciones sociales. El temor había sido el arma más eficaz contra las identidades no queridas por la dictadura: la del dirigente obrero, la del militante universitario, la del político joven...Esas identidades no desaparecieron pero debieron *guardarse*, en un repliegue entre desesperado y estratégico. (139)

Rock, as an inextricable part of the counterculture, was also disdained and targeted by the regime. Though there were no records burned publicly, in the eyes of the regime the rebellious and potentially subversive message could undermine national symbols and values. Kurlat Ares explicates that rock groups were perceived as a menace to the social order even in the period before the 1976 coup because of the foreign values they were deemed to represent: “fusionando, en mismo movimiento, al hippismo [sic] con el marxismo y el pacifismo” and that they were associated with the loss of national identity for developing non-traditional musical genres (268). As such, there was an overt tension between the tango traditionalists and rockers as well as the left leaning folk artists who viewed rock as a product of cultural imperialism (268). In the novel, however, this is not the case for the young Martín who instead personifies an open-minded stance towards the music which internationally most typifies Argentina when he states: “Ya ves que me gusta el tango, los arreglos sobre todo” (114). Regarding Kurlat Ares’ other statement, the residents of Villa Canedo, the fictional Buenos Aires neighborhood where one of the two

parallel narratives takes place, they do not know what to make of him upon his arrival, mistakenly calling him “el hippito ese”, though he is not as Gerardo immediately points out (63). The difficulty in pigeonholing Martín also adds to the reaction of fascination that he causes in the neighborhood, particularly amongst the women. In the grey setting of the urban landscape—the sky is consistently described often as “color pizarra,” the color of a chalkboard—the dyed red hair and the almost unintelligible songs of this 20th Century troubadour injects life into a neighborhood where many houses have gone dark and empty and where the remaining residents have become or made themselves numb to the reality that surrounds them.

Regarding another component of the rocker type also present in Martín, drug use, Pujol notes that: “El rock traía cabello largo, y el cabello largo traía droga, y la droga traía amor libre, y del amor libre a la disolución de la institución familiar había sólo un paso. Esto era así en el imaginario conservador de una buena parte de la sociedad argentina” (25). Furthermore, the young rocker type was thought of as “[r]ebelde y un poco inconsciente, hedonista y ajeno al mundo del trabajo y la producción” and that “Tal vez el rockero no fuese un subversivo, pero con toda seguridad era drogadicto y afeminado. Muchos argentinos no sólo los militares, pensaban de este modo” (25). Martín Gomel and his fractured family represent these stereotypical notions in the novel in no uncertain terms. The mother having abandoned Martín years before, the father off in Europe doing business and the mother’s apparent lesbian affair with a neighbor all suggest the failure of the core family institution, with a wild card, unconforming rebel like Martín as the resulting offspring. In the Buenos Aires narrative, there is no mention of any extended family—in itself unusual given its strength within Argentine culture. The island narrative does mention the very superstitious Russian Jewish grandmother whose strong fantastic beliefs and the world they entail are a strong influence on Martín and his worldview.

Despite the efforts of the Junta, rock remained an important cultural signifier and refuge for youth and a natural response to the rigidity and discipline being imposed by the regime. Pujol makes clear that:

...el mundo del rock, con su prédica contracultural, con su mensaje implícito de rebelión contra toda forma de disciplina, se convirtió en un mundo paralelo, otra medida del *ser joven*

argentino...En realidad, lo que el rock hizo en los momento más feroces de la dictadura fue preservar el *ethos* rebelde de los años 60 y 70, si bien vaciado de contenido político (53, emphasis in original).

Rock and rock culture both maintained their level of importance in the formation of youth identity and maintaining some semblance of rebelliousness within the repressive environment. Nonetheless, as was the case in pre-Tlatelolco Mexico and as we will see in Chapter 5 in the case of Brazil, there was a disconnect between rock and the left. A key factor here is that, even before the 1976 coup, rock and some of its main Argentine practitioners, like Luis Alberto Spinetta¹³⁸, had conserved a largely apolitical stance. To a great extent this apolitical stance made rock, even *Rock nacional*¹³⁹ as it came to be known in the 1970s, unacceptable as the soundtrack for revolution. Nonetheless, as Kurlat Ares makes clear, despite their non-ideological stance, many musicians adopted a confrontational position:

...a fin de alimentar la imagen del joven inconformista que pintaban los medios, en parte como un gesto estético de ruptura, en parte como simple respuesta visceral de rechazo a la imposición de valores sociales considerados “burgueses” en una sociedad cuyos cimientos parecían estar en crisis. (269)

Rock was ostensibly an urban phenomenon in Argentina. In taking an anti-establishment, albeit non-ideological position, as Kurlat Ares elaborates, rock put into question one of the founding national

¹³⁸ Luis Alberto Spinetta (1950-2012) is one of the key figures in Argentine rock. From his first band Almendra, formed in 1968, through his numerous subsequent projects in the 70s, 80s and beyond, Spinetta was always one of the main trendsetters in Argentine rock.

¹³⁹ Argentine rock, or *Rock nacional*, of the 1970s was highly influenced by one of the strongest currents in British rock of that decade: progressive rock. The progressive rock style was defined by its emphasis on complex arrangements, instrumental virtuosity (and long solos to highlight it), a fusion of jazz and classical elements, and themes often drawn from science fiction or fantasy literature. Though it is true that progressive rock was the strongest style in Argentine rock and practiced by some of its most luminary figures (Luis Alberto Spinetta and Charly García), like any attempt to define “rock,” there were a number of different sub-styles and deviations from the style that other groups produced as well. Examples of this are groups like Arco Iris, that fused jazz, rock, folk and classical elements into their music and Alas, that used tango as one of its key components. There were, of course, important exceptions such as the heavy, guitar driven rock of El Reloj and a number of different bands that emerged with the changing trends towards the end of the decade.

concepts: civilization—associated with the institutions within the urban environment and influenced by European and American culture—, and barbarism, associated with the rural, under-educated masses. With rock there was a different, difficult to categorize perspective that, as we see in the above quote, also put into question the “civilized” bourgeois values that had informed and shaped the national identity since the late 19th century. In speaking with Gerardo, Martín openly questions the implicit conformity in the civilized world, which leads down a potentially brainwashed path and challenges its inhibiting norms. Rock offers him the way out of all of this as he states: “Por lo que ofrece la civilización, ¿para qué te vas a reservar? Vamos a terminar como los japoneses, cantando todos los días el himno de la empresa antes de trabajar nueve horas...A mí loco, me copa el rock. ¿Y a vos?” (115). Gerardo, of course, has his reasons for being more guarded—having been forced from his jobs as an educator and as a librarian by the Junta. Nonetheless, as both Kurlat Ares and Pujols make clear in separate arguments, there was a process in which a new identity was at work, one that also assimilated the inevitable influence of the mass media culture and specifically, the rock subculture within it—all elements which are present in the construction of Martín’s character and his disposition within the text.

As I mentioned at the beginning, *El país de la dama eléctrica* presents the perspectives of both the exile abroad and the psychological and political exile whose previous identity has been all but erased living under the dictatorship. Cohen achieves this by presenting two parallel stories in two different locales: one a fictional Mediterranean island, the other the fictional neighborhood in Buenos Aires, Villa Canedo. McClennen states that exile literature tends to represent utopic or dystopic spaces. By presenting both locales, Cohen dabbles in both: the dystopic space being the Buenos Aires of the Proceso with its citizens under constant surveillance; the other an idyllic Mediterranean island where an eccentric cast of exiles has found a place to seemingly live free from the constraints of “normal” society. For the latter situation, which would seem to conform to 60s ideals of personal freedom, Cohen debunks the utopian myth that anyone can ever truly escape society’s grasp altogether. A fascist leaning Austrian tycoon controls commerce on the island, profits from every product that arrives and has helicopters constantly making their presence felt in the background. More importantly among this cast of characters,

there are the limitations of self-imposed abulia which is further fostered by their unbridled eccentricities. Though the novel ostensibly has the same cast of characters in both locales to fit into the parallel plots, there are slight differences that distinguish them physically and in personality, different names and, because of the distinct environments, occupations. The one character whose name and characteristics change least is the one who has the strongest connection between both locales: Martín. Martín is always a confident individual full of apparent aplomb on the island, while in the city he is presented as more of a petulant rebel without a cause. This, to some extent, would seem to be a function of who narrates in each locale: Martín narrating his own tale in odd chapters on the island, while the former librarian Gerardo narrates in the even ones in Villa Canedo. Gerardo is an example *par excellence* one of the internal, psychological exiles who has lost essential components of his identity, having been stripped of his previous role as librarian and educator, relegated to writing advertising slogans and delivering *damajuanas* (5 liter jugs of wine) in Buenos Aires. He is the type of exile described by Joseph Brodsky in his essay “The Condition We Call Exile”:

For the other truth of the matter is that exile is a metaphysical condition; to ignore or to dodge it is to cheat yourself out of the meaning of what has happened to you, to doom yourself into remaining forever at the receiving end of things, to ossify into an uncomprehending victim. (103)

Martín’s arrival in the neighborhood in search of his now-disappeared girlfriend opens the door for Gerardo to begin to comprehend what indeed has happened to him and his now stagnant condition.

The launching point of the island narrative is hinted at in the urban one and different aspects of each come together towards the end of the novel. In a loose sense, this hearkens back to previous works in Latin American literature such as Juan Carlos Onetti’s *La vida breve* (1950) in the fusion of disparate storylines and Julio Cortázar’s “El otro cielo” from *Todos los fuegos el fuego* (1966) whose main character exists in different locales of time and space. Of course, there is also the relationship to Cortázar’s *Rayuela* and the novel lends itself well to be read in alternating chapters to read each parallel narrative as its own *nouvelle* which allow for markedly different readings. Given Cohen’s self-expressed affinity for specific details, it is clearly not coincidental that *Rayuela* is referred to directly in the novel.

Similar occurrences narrated from different perspectives also recall the various permutations of the same situation narrated in Guillermo Cabrera Infante's *Tres tristes tigres*.

It also is reminiscent of William S. Burroughs, a writer for whom Cohen displays clear admiration in a short essay titled "Burroughs y el combate por la inmortalidad" (1997) where he quotes Burroughs' use of simultaneous chronotopes which bring together everyone he has ever known in his life (*¡Realmente fantástico!*, 87). Cohen confirms as much in a 2010 newspaper interview available online¹⁴⁰:

El país de la dama eléctrica tenía un espíritu algo *beatnik*, pop..., Empecé a utilizar fragmentos heteróclitos en materia de paisajes, tiempos, invenciones contradictorias, fragmentos diversos de experiencia, y los ponía en un mismo espacio. Por simple contiguidad, surgía algo nuevo.

In another sense, these alternating locales and perspectives are traceable to the author's own sense of being as an exile: a clear connection to the language and perspectives of the Argentina he left behind and the sense of estrangement inherent in the role of being a writer in exile intent on breaking with the *Boom's* vision of Latin America. Utilizing the alternating narrators in the form of the novel achieves the varied perspectives with the language, style and references employed. There is no mistaking the deeply Argentinian vernacular employed in the chapters narrated by Gerardo. His references, drawn mostly from the world of high culture give us insight into the character's disposition and tastes. Cohen displays a sense of humor with this as well. For instance, Gerardo, having been a librarian, seems to channel an aspect of Borges—the quintessence of Argentine high culture—in the passage: "quizá lo mejor fuera ordenar los libros alfabéticamente, o por género, o por países; en todo caso, tenía solamnte dos novelas polacas y ninguna finlandesa" (62). With this type of reference in mind, it is logical that Gerardo never makes a reference to rock and it is apparent from the beginning that its aesthetic and ethos are unknown to him. Gerardo's tastes are in the classical, tango and even minimally in the jazz realm (in a nod to Cortázar, perhaps) from the references stated in the novel. By contrast, Martín's expressive language would be completely lacking without the constant references to rock lyrics both in Spanish (from Argentine artists

¹⁴⁰ The interview can be found at: <http://www.lanacion.com.ar/1221141-el-reencantamiento-del-mundo>

popular in the late 1960s and 1970s like Manal, Almendra and Charly García) and English (from a myriad of artists that we shall see in more detail in the following section) and statements in English slang that he seamlessly incorporates into his own idiosyncratic jargon. His identity, as we shall see in detail later in the chapter, is almost completely composed of aspects of the rock ethos and culture. Martín is an authentic rocker through and through. Because of the competing vernaculars and different ethos, not to mention generations represented by each character, both settings represent different variants of the conflict between the rocker (Martín) with the intellectual (Walter on the island, Gerardo in Buenos Aires). It is a situation that was playing itself out in the cultural field and its debates during the 70s and 80s, including in Argentina as Kurlat Ares demonstrates well in the article I cite.¹⁴¹

Cohen's attention to the various details he presents within the text is fundamental in looking at the different semantic layers he offers. In the case of *Rayuela's* presence, it is the librarian, the intellectual of a previous generation passing it on to Martín—who will most likely ignore it and whatever lessons on culture and life are to be gleaned from it—including awareness of the national high cultural pedigree. The character Martín personifies a disposition expressed by Cohen himself in the same 2010 interview that *El país de la dama eléctrica*: “Era un libro de gran inconciencia literaria, aunque me permitió cortar -yo ya vivía en España- con una visión de América latina, ligada al *boom*, que ya no podía sostener”. This disposition again echoes those of the writers we have seen in the first three chapters regarding their own relationship with their literary patrimony. Cohen was in step with certain trends in Argentine literature as Kurlat Ares explains:

...la literatura argentina y, en particular, la novela, sufrió una compleja metamorfosis. Uno de los elementos de esa transformación fue la antes mencionada inversión de los valores positivo/negativo de la fórmula sarmientina. Este proceso, sin embargo, afectó sobre todo al

¹⁴¹ There are other references regarding the changing narrators that Cohen works in to the text. For example, a passing reference to Wilkie Collins' *La dama de blanco* (*The Woman In White*), published in 1859, also occurs in the novel. This novel, considered one of the first in the detective genre tells its story from the perspective of different narrators as well.

espacio hegemónico del campo cultural, generando una crisis ideológica [sic] para la cual no hubo respuestas de consenso. Más bien, esta situación abrió una serie de interrogantes sobre la función misma de la literatura [sic] y de sus materiales lo que, a su vez, permitió [sic] el desplazamiento de códigos largamente establecidos en el campo. Entre los muchos materiales que empezaron a circular en esos años, los códigos del rock eran quizás aquellos cuya carga ideológica proveía un dispositivo eficiente para enfrentar el complejo proceso de reconversión (280).

While Martín engages and befriends Walter/Gerardo, his advice and comments are dismissed as being out of touch with his contemporary reality. It is his own perspective that is the only one of true importance.

The underlying tension between characters also stems from a generational conflict as Walter/Gerardo, though aware of the importance of certain social and cultural changes that inform the rocker Martín, has not internalized those changes and functions in a different cultural realm that does not connect with the rock ethos, likely believing the general point of view about rock held by society at large as explained by Pujol. Also, given his former stature within the intellectual elite, the previous generations of thinkers for whom the division between high culture and mass media culture was not negotiable on the pop culture side's terms. Though, of course, the effects of *paraliterature* referring back to Solotarewski's use of the term, had been at work in the Argentine literary field with Borges and Bioy Casares' reworkings of the detective genre and Manuel Puig's drawing from the mass media vernacular to create his unique brand of pop. The conflict and Walter/Gerardo's position regarding Martín boil down to an intellectual community refusing to accept that mass media culture had usurped its ability to shape the larger scheme of cultural trends—even more so in an environment like that of the Argentina of the Proceso where the intellectual was looked upon with suspicion and censored outright. In this environment, the mass media, including many imported cultural products, functioned to distract a general public not necessarily politically involved enough to be directly touched by the violence.

Furthermore, Gerardo exemplifies many of the key historically cited characteristics enumerated by Edward Said in *Representations of the Intellectual*. Among these there is the powerful personality in perpetual dissent with the status quo who is, nonetheless, "an individual endowed with a faculty for

representing, embodying, articulating a message, a view, an attitude, philosophy or opinion to, as well as for, a public” (11). Gerardo’s public intellectual world is no longer available to him being an exile in his own city, having removed himself from his former haunts, his former social and professional circle no longer active. Being an internal exile, he has indeed become “ossified” in the sense described by Brodsky. As Gerardo states:

Desde que los militares me dejaron sin el puesto de bibliotecario en la Caja de Ahorro evito visitar los barrios que abandoné.

Antes de que llegara Martín, algunas tardes me subía al colectivo que me llevara al centro. Ahei vagabo un rato por las librerías, a veces hasta me regalaba una botella de whisky y, después de perder dos líneas de billar con algún ex colega, volvía al barrio *convencido de que pasando la noche en casa no iba a perderme ninguna revelación*. (44)

He is a man robbed of an essential component of his identity, of his curiosity and of what he himself viewed as his stature—constantly living with the contrast of who he once was. Of his former life, he has friends abroad, friends who have disappeared and others who apparently live in the same situation as him—with a constant awareness, if not outright fear, of the surveillance that probably tracks his every move and of which he is keenly aware. Of course, because of the context within which he now functions, he is no longer in a position to be the influential figure that the archetypal intellectual, according to Said, would see himself to be. Regardless of whether he ever was or not in such a position, the fact that any potential for it no longer exists has hollowed out an essence from his core self.

Putting this into the historical perspective provided by Said, there is a parallel to be drawn between Gerardo and Frederic Moreau from Gustave Flaubert’s 1869 novel *L’éducation sentimentale*. Said says:

The failures of [the] 1848 [Revolution] are for Flaubert the failures of his generation. Prophetically, the fates of Moreau...are portrayed as the result of [his] own lack of focused will and also as the toll exacted by modern society, with its endless distractions, its whirl of pleasures, and, above all, the emergence of journalism, advertising, instant celebrity, and a sphere of

constant circulation where all ideas are marketable, all values transmutable, all professions reduced to the pursuit of easy money and quick success. (19)

While his own generation has been quashed by the iron hand of the Proceso, the younger, potentially dissident generation represented by Martín does not appear at all to value nor care about Gerardo's generation's (or other previous ones') contributions, tastes or opinions, instead resisting, rejecting and bypassing them for the rock heroes (in Martín's case) or other mass-media models after which they model themselves. The lazy, unproductive, hedonist embodied by the overall Argentine imaginary of the rocker is shared by Gerardo who sees the failure in turning the tide in the future directly linked to Martín and his generation's mass-media induced shortcomings.

The jealousy and frustration which rear their presence in Gerardo's thoughts and actions are rooted in his inability to influence the younger generation, as Martín makes clear on several occasions. To begin with, Martín does not care about having Gerardo as an audience, knowing full well that Gerardo's aesthetic paradigms stem from another cultural realm and are unable to assess Martín's rock songs. Indeed, most of Martín's audience in Villa Canedo does not understand much of anything about him, but are still fascinated by his mere presence and how he seems to embody rock itself right before their eyes. Martín, when discussing his magnetism that brings him a daily audience in the neighborhood bluntly tells Gerardo that: "No me interesás especialmente" as part of the audience (115). He further adds that: "No te das cuenta que estás petrificado, que parecés un presentador de circo?" (115). Gerardo's metaphysical and psychological condition as an exile has allowed the world to pass him by. Of course, any other advice from Gerardo/Walter is unwelcomed by Martín for the same reasons and in the island narrative, where Martín is the narrator, references to Walter (though he repeatedly affirms how much he likes him) are often laced with biting sarcasm such as calling him "el largófono de Walter" for his long-windedness, among other comments (80).

The young rocker's presence provokes a crisis in Gerardo of the realization that life has passed him by and accentuated his inability to alter its direction to rescue what is left of it. Even before Martín says that he's become petrified, Gerardo recognizes his own aging, that life has already somewhat passed

him by: “Me levanté, fui tambaleando a pararme frente al espejo y descubrí una cara envejecida, de vasija de barro: ni el mejor unguento habría podido esconder la caída” (113). Gerardo’s consciousness of such a situation make the obvious disconnect, if not outright rift, with Martín’s world that much more notable: “[Martín] me dijo que el mundo moderno me iba a aplastar como una aplanadora” (156).

Gerardo indeed recognizes that he is set in his ways and that reality has absconded with who he once was and his ability to engage with the future embodied by Martín. He does not allow for Martín’s natural freedom—in which he sees significant degree of superficiality from all the trappings he wears—to lure him in because he himself states that: “...nunca me gustó que me convencieran de nada” (88). Nonetheless, Martín’s presence does awaken a side of Gerardo that had been laying dormant. Though his attempted role as mentor, guide and guardian are rejected by the young rocker, he realizes that: “Hacia mucho tiempo que yo no me imponía pruebas. *Había perdido la costumbre, o estaba demasiado ocupado en sobrevivir*” (117). The nowhere land of psychological exile within his own city brought about by the loss of his previous identity contribute to both stated reasons equally, the new identity type, unrealistically free and idealistic as it is given its context, minimally renews Gerardo’s sense of existence and further alienate his sense of self. The ambivalence towards change, his disposition, the roots to which he still clings are all brought together in the following quote in which Gerardo wants to will himself into a strength he clearly lacks. All this while acknowledging a degree of self-sabotage which is likely induced by the very fear he says not to have and no longer allows him to imagine a future for himself:

Yo me rodeé de celadas. No me dan miedo los cambios: a estas alturas podría soportar borrascas, metido en una cueva y atado a la ilusión de persistencia que da una novela de seiscientas páginas. Así me aparté cuando me obligaron a despedirme de mi puesto en el colegio y todavía después, cuando también me dejaron sin amigos. Pero las celadas tienen el inconveniente de que uno puede desatar los mecanismos por descuido; obligan a andar muy atento. Con la atención, para colmo, crece una fiebre sin temperatura, y uno empieza a agigantar lo que ve con su crispación.

(133)

Towards the end of the novel, it becomes clear that Gerardo is unwilling to travel and become a true exile—the fear of the larger change of potentially being a complete non-entity in a foreign land being an unacceptable solution for him and a source of jealousy when assessing Martín. This latter point, coupled with Martín’s ability to gather an audience and connect with that audience, are both a sore spot for the Walter/Gerardo character. It is yet another example of him being unable to literally perform his function, as Said describes it, as an intellectual whose influence matters and whose reach will never equal that of the charismatic Martín. No longer does he function as an intellectual in the sense described by Spalek and Bell, as one of the: “spokesmen of culture—whose professional tool is their language and whose aim is to preserve and develop the cultural tradition they represent” (xi). The culture there was to preserve now lays dormant through the efforts of the repressive regime while the developments within that very culture for which he was a torch-bearer have passed him by.

Living In *Electric Ladyland* (*El país de la dama eléctrica*)

*Have you ever been (have you ever been) to Electric Ladyland?
 The magic carpet waits for you so don't you be late
 Oh, (I wanna show you) the different emotions
 (I wanna run to) the sounds and motions
 Electric woman waits for you and me
 So it's time we take a ride, we can cast all of your hang-ups over
 the seaside
 While we fly right over the love filled sea
 Look up ahead, I see the loveland, soon you'll understand.*

Make love, make love, make love, make love.

*The angels will spread their wings, spread their wings
 Good and evil lay side by side while electric love penetrates the sky
 Lord, Lord I wanna show you
 Hmm, hmmm, hmmm
 Show you.*

Jimi Hendrix

Rock accompanies Martín wherever he goes. It is a part of his core self. While this is clearly suggested in the chapters narrated by Gerardo, it becomes completely clear in the chapters he narrates about his own story and the unique way in which experiences it. Indeed, rock not only speaks for him through the songs he writes and performs, it quite literally speaks to him and interacts with him in the

form of the ghosts of Jimi Hendrix, Jim Morrison, Janis Joplin and the recently deceased John Lennon, among others. Besides these interactions, the novel also offers numerous quotes and allusions to rock lyrics drawn mostly from British, American and, significantly, Argentinian bands from the late 1960s and 1970s (Manal, Almendra, Charly García, and Moris, among others). Cohen, like Agustín had previously done in Mexico, displays a vast knowledge of musical culture, rock and otherwise, which appear in the novel as informed references. While the root influences on Martín are from a previous generation, the musical references are by no means limited to the late 60s/early 70s and the potential nostalgia for that recently bygone era is notably absent. In fact, figures from later in the 70s decade as diverse as Meat Loaf, the Talking Heads, Bruce Springsteen, reggae icon Bob Marley, punk icon Johnny Rotten and glam rocker David Bowie, among others, appear in references from Martín. Martín, while associating himself most closely with rockers from a previous generation also understands that he must incorporate current trends to be able to reach his ultimate goal of being a rock star for his own generation. As is the case with Cohen as a writer, there is a consciousness of needing to look forward and not getting mired in longing for a bygone era without losing sight of that same bygone era's importance in shaping the present. As such, in the text, Martín is also aware of rock's roots and the ghost of bluesman Big Bill Broonzy (1893?/1903?-1958) as well as jazz singer Billie Holiday (1915-1959), among others, also make passing appearances.

To the musical references we can also add the occasional presence of the cursed poets Charles Beaudelaire, Arthur Rimbaud and Paul Verlaine, either as ghosts in the case of Rimbaud and Verlaine, or allusions in conversations within the text.

Pujol points out that there was a clear link between the world of rock and that of the cursed poets, as well as of the avant-garde, all points we have seen at play in rocker's identities and the identities of rock influenced writers such as Parménides García Saldaña. The source in Argentina was the tiny underground press:

En el mundo de las revistas subterráneas, que tendría su momento cúspide hacia 1979, se movía según sus propias leyes. Había, sin duda, un pacto de lectura entre esas publicaciones y el joven ávido de poesía maldita, vanguardias sobrevivientes y mucho rock. (61)

This was the subculture to which the *porteño* Martín Gomel in the novel belonged and from which the island incarnation of the rocker originates. Martín shares the similarity with characters of Agustín's for being an unusually cultured and talented teenager (he is only 19 in the novel) whose worldview is strongly, if not almost completely, shaped by the cultural references that compose his character and fuel his aspirations.

Nonetheless, given that the novel titles itself after a Jimi Hendrix record I will focus on the late icon's importance in the text above other references. He is the ghost with whom Martín has the most direct connection and interaction, as well as having a number of characteristics that he shares with the late superstar. An African-American with Native American roots born in Seattle on November 16, 1942, Jimi Hendrix (née Johnny Allen Hendrix) was a figure like no other during his brief time living in the limelight and remains an icon more than forty years after his passing. Though there had previously been other influential, visible African-American rock stars—namely Little Richard, Chuck Berry and Bo Diddley—none of them managed to reach the superstar status Hendrix enjoyed from 1967 until his death in 1970. Hendrix was a unique talent who redefined how the electric guitar was played and added a level of showmanship that was for the most part unseen in rock up to that time—displays that have since become commonplace in rock stagecraft.¹⁴² His showmanship, honed through several years touring the

¹⁴² The first iconic appearance for Hendrix occurred at the Monterey Pop Festival in June, 1967. In his first appearance in the United States since becoming a star, Hendrix lit his guitar on fire on stage while it was still plugged in to his amplifier. Hendrix acted like a sort of psychedelic witch doctor, gesturing towards the flames of his guitar as if eliciting spirits—spirits that were the otherworldly sounds produced by the feedback. Using feedback and destroying equipment on stage had been in the repertory of the Who's Pete Townsend's stage antics since 1964, but never had anyone done something quite like this. Staged pyrotechnics have been a part of rock ever since, though not often (if ever) executed by the musician himself.

chitlin' circuit,¹⁴³ had direct ties to influential rhythm and blues (r & b), blues and rock artists (and masterful showmen) Aaron "T-Bone" Walker¹⁴⁴ and Chuck Berry, among others. Playing the guitar behind his back, with his teeth, between his legs coupled with the as-of-then unheard otherworldly sounds produced by feedback, and the virtuosity that seamlessly melded the earthiest blues with the cosmic, psychedelic imagery elicited by his music and lyrics made him one of the most revered and instantly recognizable figures of sixties rock. His stage presence was amongst the most blatantly sexually suggestive in rock, transforming the electric guitar into a phallic symbol of epic proportions. He was equally recognizable and influential for his provocative, colorful outfits that also helped define the ostentatious fashion sense that has been associated with rock in its different permutations, with the punk and grunge movements as significant exceptions, from the psychedelic late 60s era onward. Hendrix's meteoric rise to fame in late 1966 and early 1967 made his presence all the more notable, seemingly having emerged, like Martín in Villa Canedo, out of nowhere. Even though he had been a professional musician the better part of half a decade having "paid his dues" on the road in a supporting role in the bands of numerous blues and r & b luminaries such as B.B. King, Little Richard and the Isley Brothers, among others.

As the first black rock superstar, Hendrix had a particular and, at times, uncomfortable, position. His extravagant stage and press-created public persona belied the introspective, sensitive, and highly imaginative individual who had dabbled in poetry and art from a young age, scribbled song lyrics on any available paper (including cocktail napkins) when the muse hit him and, like other figures of his time like

¹⁴³ The chitlin' circuit was the collective of different music venues through the south and midwest played by black artists from the late 19th century through the late 1960s. The circuit included large, famous theaters such as New York's Apollo and Chicago's Regal, among many others, as well as smaller venues. Virtually all of the known blues, soul and, to a lesser degree, jazz artists did the circuit, particularly after World War II. Hendrix, having played with Little Richard and the Isley Brothers, among others, gained significant experience on the chitlin' circuit.

¹⁴⁴ Blues singer and guitarist Aaron "T-Bone" Walker (1910-1975) was among the first artists to record on the electric guitar. His style was emulated well into the 1950s. Also a talented dancer, Walker perfected many moves on stage that have become part and parcel for many blues guitarists since—such as playing the guitar behind his head while doing the splits.

legendary jazz saxophonist John Coltrane (1926-1967), believed music to be the key to reaching a higher plane of consciousness. All the attention from the press took its toll on Hendrix, who admitted to feeling like a victim of public opinion and of second-guessing himself as a result. In Scott Isler's compilation of Hendrix's own statements from an amalgam of interviews published in *Musician* magazine in 1991, a key point brings out not only Hendrix's personal ethos but also one of the most salient points about the idealistic personal freedoms espoused and longed for by rockers—including Martín Gomel. Hendrix stated: "What I hate is society trying to put everything and everybody into little tight cellophane compartments. I hate to be in any type of compartment unless I choose it myself" (44). For the Latin American youth of the 1970s living under a dictatorship in virtually all of the countries of the Southern Cone, the "little tight cellophane compartments" were all too real in the form of the experiments in social engineering and clear boundaries of acceptable behavior forced upon them by the repressive government-sponsored violence as well as the innumerable jail cells that awaited at any given moment.

Martín, upon arriving on the island and seeing some of the older women going about their daily lives contemplates what the consequences of fitting into a place would be:

¿Pero qué pasaría si yo también me envolviera la cabeza en un pañuelo negro y comentara sobre las lluvias de mayo, todo sin sacarme las botas verdes? Seguro que no pasaría nada. *Solamente a mí, que siempre quise ser un duro rockero peligroso, la psicodelia me ablanda el corazón.*(15, emphasis mine)

Though the image is a bit absurd, it clearly conveys and accentuates the unavoidable clash and impossibility of fitting in which Martín's inherent sense of individuality and freedom. His desire to play up his ruggedness and self-sufficiency, someone who needs no-one else, is betrayed by the peace and love aspect of psychedelia which he, and his model Hendrix, also hold dear. Both aspects are present in Hendrix and his ethos, according to his own words, is best understood through his music.

One of The Jimi Hendrix Experience's earliest singles, "Stone Free," also represents the type of life Martín attempts to live in the novel: an itinerant idealist with ties to nothing but what he sees to be as his destiny as a rock star. The first chorus sets the tone for the song:

Everyday of the week I'm in a different city
 If I stay too long, people try to pull me down
 They talk about me like a dog
 Talk about the clothes I wear
 But they don't realize they're the ones who're square

Yeah!
 And that's why
 You can't hold me down
 I don't want to be tied down
 I gotta move on....

Hey!
 I said
 Stone free do what I please
 Stone free to ride the breeze
 Stone free, baby I can't stay
 I got to got to got to get away (Transcription mine)

Later in the song, Hendrix refers to the easy to break plastic cages imposed upon him, how he refuses to be tied down by anything and that he always needs to move on. Hendrix often said his songs and music spoke more eloquently about him than anything he could say in interviews and this song contributes not only to the image of his public persona, but can be seen as an expression of a personal ethos for all to hear. Of course, this sits in stark contrast to the world of Walter/Gerardo whose metaphysical/psychological exile has curbed an essential component of his identity.

Martín's adoption of this ethos in the novel is clear from his role as a perpetual traveller in search of his destiny. And while Martín does not want to "be tied down" by any woman as the song suggests, he is smitten with Lucina, a figure with whom in reality he has had scarce contact and, as a result, converted into an idealized image. While he frames his search as a quest for the money he needs to fulfill his rock star destiny, his loneliness and desire for companionship is also palpable from suggestive phrases he lets slip from behind his hard, self assured rock-star-in-the-making façade. Nonetheless, as much of an idealist as the island Martín is, mostly living and experiencing life on his own terms, there is an intent to reconcile somewhat with his mother who abandoned him and redefine his roots--of which he clearly has very few, if any. Interestingly, there are parallels between Martín's family and Hendrix's: both having been abandoned by their mothers, both having fathers who were gamblers and only intermittently present, and

both having grandmothers who drew from unique cosmologies in their belief systems (Hendrix's grandmother was a ¼ Cherokee, while Martín's Russian Jewish grandmother inculcated her strong belief in superstitions in Martín's world view). Because of both of his parents' lack of involvement in his life already, Martín already is "stone free" to do as he pleases, but that is not enough and the search for Lucina is also an opportunity to attempt to connect with his roots. Martín admits that seeking Lucina on the island where his mother lives is a "[p]avada de Edipo" (37). While his father provides him the occasional financial support he needs to continue his travels and lifestyle, there is no guidance beyond that. Perhaps the strongest influence on Martín, as I mentioned earlier, is his Russian Jewish grandmother and her superstitions. Martín's deracination begins with his family and he has no particular set of social norms set by his family to rebel against. The freedom within which he operates foments an unyielding individualism, despite the fact that he has no immediate need to conform to any norm other than that of the rocker archetype—something which already he sees himself embodying.

Hendrix also expressed rock's unyielding individualism in song in "If 6 Was 9" from his second LP, *Axis Bold As Love* (1967):

If the sun refused to shine,
I don't mind, I don't mind,
If the mountains fell in the sea,
let it be, it ain't me.
*Alright, 'cause I've got my own world to look through,
And I ain't gonna copy you.*

Now if 6 turned out to be 9,
I don't mind, I don't mind,
Alright, if all the hippies cut off all their hair,
I don't care, I don't care.
*Dig, 'cause I've got my own world to live through
And I ain't gonna copy you.*

White collared conservative flashing down the street,
Pointing their plastic finger at me.
*They're hoping soon my kind will drop and die,
But I'm gonna wave my freak flag high, high.
Wave on, wave on...*

Fall mountains, just don't fall on me
Go ahead on Mr. Business man, you can't dress like me.
Sing on Brother, play on drummer. (Transcription and emphasis mine)

The song is an example *par excellence* of personal freedom expressed in rock, a rejection of the necessity to fit into preconceived “cellophane compartments” in society—compartments that Martín believes to have transcended and refuses to give into.¹⁴⁵ While Martín does make an attempt to fit into the island’s social fabric and bond with his mother on his own terms, he does not in the end for reasons we will elaborate upon ahead. When he realizes that despite all the apparent freedoms that surround him, he is being compartmentalized by all its residents, including his mother. He is an outsider who is superficially appreciated as a performer and a curious distraction, thus becoming pigeonholed into a set role within the social fabric of the island community. Instead, while conversing with Hendrix about their imminent departure (they travel everywhere together, after all), he hums the song (215). The song lyrics, however, are not quoted in the text. The line “I’ve got my own world to look through/live through and I ain’t gonna copy you” is the ethos by which Martín lives. Pujol also makes clear that the rocker type, made a comeback among Argentine youth of the late 1970s and early 1980s as a reaction and rejection of the sanitized youth and consumer culture that the Junta encouraged and put into the mainstream in its attempts to change youth (136). The song, of course, also echoes the ethos of the rock counterculture of the 60s whose model continued in varying degrees through the next decades. According to Pujol, it is also an apt description of the position held by young Argentine rock fans during the Proceso who rejected the more mainstream, non-controversial media products marketed to the late 70s youth as a way to diminish rock’s influence.

Notably, Hendrix did not become famous until he was whisked away to England in late 1966 by producer Chas Chandler. It was just another step in Hendrix’s nomadic existence—an existence that would remain so until his death. Up to that point, he had just been another of many talented black musicians toiling away trying to survive in his homeland in practical anonymity. By the time of his

¹⁴⁵ Different rock subcultures have their own norms, of course, which set standards of style, behavior, politics, and taste as Peter Wicke, Loyd Grossman, Theodore Gracyk and Simon Frith, among others, make abundantly clear in their research. Martín, with his open ears, open mind and considerable talent, is presented as having transcended these potential limitations.

appearance at the Monterey Pop Festival in June, 1967 his meteoric star had already risen in England, establishing his unique image as a black man like no other in the public's consciousness. In his years in the limelight, this did not always play well with many black activists and members of the black community who believed he had "sold out" in the white man's world and did not represent their values, their calls for freedom and revolution or their political commitment. Though not the first racially integrated band of the 1960s, The Jimi Hendrix Experience was certainly its most visible and its two other members, bassist Noel Redding (1945-2003) and drummer John "Mitch" Mitchell (1947-2008), were both white.¹⁴⁶ It was not until 1969 after the dissolution of the Experience that Hendrix had a predominantly black band, the short-lived Gypsy Suns, Moons and Rainbows which performed at the legendary Woodstock festival and the equally short-lived all black Band of Gypsys.¹⁴⁷ Nonetheless, he was a figure outside of the black cultural mainstream. So, while Hendrix is undeniably an icon within pop culture, he is not necessarily regarded as a black cultural icons like John Coltrane, Bill Cosby, Otis Redding or any number of hip hop artists like Tupac Shakur, among others.

With this in mind, Hendrix identifying himself with the term gypsy becomes no casual matter. The gypsy imaginary has a long history in art and literature as well as in political discourse and the formation of pejorative colloquial language throughout Europe. While it mostly furthers the negative stereotypes of the gypsies being untrustworthy, fearsome, nomadic outsiders and thieves, there is another romanticized, mythologized side of the gypsy for which Hendrix, in his own capacity as a perpetual outsider, found an affinity. As Jean-Pierre Liégeois explains in his exhaustive study of gypsies, *Roma, Gypsies, Travellers*:

¹⁴⁶ The first racially integrated rock group was Love, formed in Los Angeles in 1965. Hendrix had befriended Love's leader, African-American singer-songwriter Arthur Lee years before. Around the same time of the emergence of the Jimi Hendrix Experience, a few other groups emerged such as The Equals in the United Kingdom and the soul-rock-funk pioneers Sly and the Family Stone from San Francisco.

¹⁴⁷ With Band of Gypsys, Hendrix's music became more focused on elements of American black popular music trends beyond the blues. The era can be seen as Hendrix's attempt to be seen more as a black artist with roots in the African American experience instead of as the bombastic rocker with which he had developed his international reputation. Not coincidentally, it was with the Band of Gypsys that Hendrix recorded his only overtly political song: "Machine Gun."

At the furthest reaches, there is great appreciation for the mythical Gypsy: he is beautiful, an artist leading a life free of petty restraint, a symbol of liberty, accepted if he appears in the sanctioned margin of folklore or the performing arts: music, dance, the circus, song, life in an old-fashioned wooden caravan. (190)

Furthermore, Liégois elaborates that “Gypsies and Travellers know how and what they are; they feel it, they live it. It is a lifestyle and art of living, based on ineffable, impalpable ways of being and on ways of doing which may be variable and ephemeral” (109). Incomprehensible to those not privy to it, the gypsy lifestyle leads to them being “accused of living outside the most basic rules” because “their rules are not known by outsiders” and unrecognizable to them (190).

Beyond the clear connections these points have to the Hendrix lyrics we have seen so far, it is important to note the curious attention that Martín provokes with his unusual appearance (dyed hair, an earring, a guitar on his back, leather pants or torn jeans and green suede boots), his constant public performances and what little is known of him by the native characters in both settings within the novel. Despite this, Gerardo notes that Martín:

No tenía nada de forastero: simplemente quería desquiciar a los vecinos y ellos le permitían colarse con los mismos gestos de cargarse un bolso al hombre o estirar la mano para que frenase el colectivo. En este barrio donde nadie se haría leer la fortuna, todos le prestaban un atención pachorrenta, como si fuera el cartel de una estación intermedia. (111)

In the grey backdrop of Villa Canedo, Martín was soon to attract the attention of the authorities, worrying Gerardo who makes one of several similar statements early on: “Era difícil acostumbrarse a mirarlo, y *daba miedo lo que pudiera pasarle*” (30, emphasis mine). At another point, he is described as being similar to a “beduino,” a classic symbol of alterity and lack of civilization within the Argentine cultural imaginary dating back to Domingo Faustino Sarmiento’s *Facundo* (1845) and his *Viajes* (1849). Of course, Martín’s look is nothing out of the ordinary when considering his self-assembled identity as a rocker and joining the rocker “tribe.” Given Pujol’s point on how rock youth were viewed and systematically harassed in the Argentina of the Proceso, the comments simply reiterate the repressive

context within which Martín has attempted to create a niche. On the other hand, in the island setting, where everyone is a settled exile who has created a niche for their own eccentricities, his presence as an outsider and the seemingly mysterious, extra-familial reasons for his being there initially upset the quotidian balance. Though soon he too is offered a specific role within the community—a role not unlike that of the romanticized gypsy, always somewhere nearby to entertain.

One final point on the gypsy connection is the song “Gypsy Eyes” from *Electric Ladyland*. While never mentioned in the novel, it sums up Martín’s drive to find Lucina and the spell under which she has put him:

Well I realize that I've been hypnotized, I love you gypsy eyes
I love you gypsy eyes
Alright!

Hey!
Gypsy.

Way up in my tree I'm sitting by my fire
Wonderin' where in this world might you be
And knowin' all the time you're still roamin' in the countryside
Do you still think about me?
Oh my gypsy.

Well I walked right on to your rebel roadside
The one that rambles on for a million miles
Yes I walk down this road searchin' for your love and ah my soul too
But when I find ya I ain't gonna let go.

I remember the first time I saw you
The tears in your eyes look like they're tryin' to say
Oh little boy you know I could love you
But first I must make my get away
Two strange men fightin' to the death over me today
I'll try to meet cha by the old highway.
Hey!

Well I realize that I've been hypnotized, I love you gypsy eyes
I love you gypsy eyes
I love you gypsy eyes
I love you gypsy eyes
Alright!

I've been searchin' so long my feet have made me lose the battle
Down against the road my weary knees they got me
Off to the side I fall but I hear a sweet call

My gypsy eyes is comin' and I've been saved.

Oh I've been saved
That's why I love you uh
Said I love you
Hey!
Love you uh
Lord I love you
Hey!

As noted before, while Martín attempts to hide his feelings for Lucina by repeating the fact that she ran off with money that was his, he lets his guard down on several occasions. The language used to describe Lucina also links her to the gypsy imaginary directly as Martín explains: “Por media Europa, la busqué, porque parece que la juega de gitanita andariega” (37). He also refers to her as the “la brujita rubia de la perdición” and “la mujer cuerva” (36). Her having run off with Martín’s cut of the booty also reminds us of the negative stereotypes of the gypsy imaginary, that of the thief while also alluding to the secret magical powers the gypsy wields by calling her a witch who is, one way or another, shaping his destiny. On the other hand, for Martín there is no other kindred spirit like Lucina and despite coming to the realization towards the end of the novel that what had occurred was a likely result, he cannot break free from Lucina’s spell.

A key point to keep in mind moving forward is that the gypsies, like the rocker, are a ubiquitous sub-culture that can be found virtually anywhere in the Old World where Martín lives and travels. Hendrix intuited the gypsy connection for his own role and persona: an outsider looked upon with curiosity, whose raw sexual energy attracts immediate attention, whose way of living and seeing the world follows its own set of rules, and whose constant itinerancy allow, or in the worst case force, him to maintain this role. Martín, perhaps like Hendrix, adopts this role out of necessity, realizing his own role as a deracinated exile he adopts a culture that can exist in the margins anywhere. It is clear that this condition of being a deracinated exile is not something to yet be fully contemplated, for the journey to his destiny of rock stardom is still not complete. It is, nonetheless, something that lingers in his mind: “Un día voy a preguntarme por qué nunca me obsesionó tener un techo” (144). The realization towards the end of the novel that his mother has always been and always shall be an enigma to him further reaffirms

this condition of nomadic exile that defines him. His identity, because of his deracinated state, must be constructed from cultural references and assembled in a personal way that eschews any type of full integration into any community.

In no uncertain terms, Martín's vision of the world is tinged with solipsism, a creation of his own perception: "Sospecho que soy un invento...Pero mientras uno se deja llevar solamente por los ojos, lo mismo da lo que de veras existe afuera y lo fabricado atrás de la frente. No es que dé lo mismo: es lo mismo" (128). With this in mind, Martín's relationship with the ghosts who accompany him is all the more real to him and even perceptible to others at given moments both on the island and in the city settings (though, of course, they are imperceptible to Gerardo). The solipsistic edge to Martín clearly displays that he truly does have "his own world to live through" as the Hendrix song "If 6 was 9" conveys. This is hinted at early on in the novel when he states: "Me gustaría tanto creer en Dios. Porque así, no sé en qué creo, *salvo en lo que voy haciendo*" (21, emphasis mine). And what he is doing is being a rock musician, adopting an ethos where the deracination and itinerancy is a source not only a source of inspiration but a source of life itself. As he explains to his mother, "si no lo hago [rock music], más vale me corto la jugular" (35).

The flip side of this is the world of tenuous meaning and indignities experienced by the exile full-throatedly expressed by Martín during an acid trip. It is in this tirade, however, that the voice of the narrator seems to stray from that of Martín to that of the exiled writer himself:

Camino en cuatro patas gritando que me devuelvan los días despilfarrados fregando sartenes en restaurantes, hacienda encuestas, mendigando en los peajes, escuchando mala música por los altavoces de los supermercados, leyendo editoriales de prensa sobre las finanzas del estado. Hay una casa que estalla y se recompone, tiene el ritmo de mis parpadeos, adentro hay un monje finlandés que somete a privaciones y sinuosos maltratos a un mancebo con ínfulas de caballero.

O es una manceba. Sepámoslo bien: esto no sirve de nada. Puro desahogo jantancioso. (196)

Presented both directly and metaphorically, the picture painted here by Cohen seems unlikely for Martín and his solipsistic edge—an individual who seemingly succeeds in functioning in a world of his own.

Nonetheless, presented under the pretense of the psychedelic experience that expands consciousness, it fits into the narrative and presents the challenges of the exile in concrete, realistic terms.

And yet, if Martín is a personification of rock, this expression falls perfectly into his beliefs about rock which are neither utopic nor, as we have seen in previous chapters, nihilistic while acknowledging the cathartic release expressed within the blues: “Porque el rock es una música realista” (78). A realistic music that must draw from a vast gamut of experiences translated into sound: “Con los ruidos, con todos los matices de los ruidos, se hace el rock” (78). Assuming the realist stance fosters a stoicism in Martín that is a source of inner strength and a motivation to keep moving forward:

A mí me importa un bledo eso de las experiencias traumáticas. Todo el mundo la pasa mal. Si se pudieran justificar las chanchadas de un tipo porque de chico le pegaban con un cepillo, o un cabo lo humilló, o la pifió con su vocación, en el mundo no habría hijos de puta. Y hay, cómo no. Tengo que hacer algo contundente, si no, es posible que me convierta en una flor artificial. (125)

Being continually on the move and evolving is also a key part of the essence of Martín and is his main complaint about the society of the island’s exiles who are, for all intents and purposes, trapped in the niche they have created. For Martín, they are like the artificial flower which cannot grow nor evolve, specifically that which he does not wish to become. He sings the 1970 Guess Who¹⁴⁸ song “Talisman” to express the point more clearly, highlighting the line: “Artificial flowers cannot die, for life within them is illusion” (125). This is also a statement about authenticity and Martín’s realization of how he is being compartmentalized by the residents of the island into a specific role—marginalized as an outsider. While there are numerous allusions to the residents knowing key information that would help Martín in his quest to find Lucina, that help is continually denied. When the time comes that Martín wants to take matters into his own hands and scout the island on a motorcycle on his own, no-one will lend one to him because

¹⁴⁸ Formed in Winnipeg, Manitoba in 1965, the Guess Who (not to be confused with the British Who) were Canada’s first famous rock band. Their numerous hits are still such as “American Woman,” “These Eyes,” “No Time,” and “Undun,” among others, still regularly grace the airwaves of classic rock radio. The track sung by Martín is an album track from *American Woman* (1970) that was not a hit and displays some of the depth of Cohen’s breadth of knowledge on rock and a detail that strengthens the Martín character.

as Walter states: “ellos apenas te conocen” (127). To this Martín retorts: “¿Cómo que no me conocen? Se pasan el día oyéndome cantar y en los ratos libres me piden favores. Ahora resulta que me desconfían” (127). It is a situation all too common for the exiled outsider in his attempts to integrate—relegated to a specific role acceptable to the community without the benefit of full participation. It is not unlike what Liégois postulates about the role of the gypsy: “The Gypsy is not defined as he is, but rather as he must be to meet socio-political requirements” (193). Martín is not defined as he is, the offspring of one of the community’s members and by extension a member of the community in need of help, but as the outsider, the performer who injects life into the quotidian drudgery, seemingly not a fully realized member worthy of full integration. Accepting him fully into the fold beyond his accepted role as a curiosity or as an entertainer is a step too far, one that would upset the mirage of quotidian harmony into which the eccentric residents of the island have deluded themselves. Martín senses this palpable ambivalence: “No da la impresión de que se mueran de amor por mí, y sin embargo cada uno quiere algo, y sin embargo no largan prenda” (150). The exile, a stranger to the new environment, is accepted only in a certain role, but, significantly, rejected in others.

Towards the end of the novel, the community organizes a party in honor of Martín, but Martín wishes no part. Though he attends, he quickly finds his way out, eschewing his role as the entertainer and curiosity to be celebrated. Again, he must live life on his own terms which conform to his solipsistic freedom, unburdened by any role to place him in a cellophane compartment, to use Hendrix’s terminology. Realizing his position as an outsider and burdened by the role placed upon him, the time comes to move on, to continue to be stone free—at any price. His disposition moving forward had been expressed earlier in the novel stating:

Soy un anacoreta, nada me lo regalan, conquisto mis triunfos flagelándome. Para cada revelación existe un camino y es imposible llegar sin llagas en los pies. *Todo lo que pueda aguantar es ventaja que saco.* (146)

As an anchorite to his own cult of freedom, rock, and to a lesser extent the blues, Martín continues believing in himself. Without any tangible roots anywhere, the cultural references *become* his

metaphysical roots—his homeland is *El país de la dama eléctrica*. Living there, as a permanent exile from a tangible, social world of roots, again approximates him to the imaginary of the perpetually exiled gypsy. Martín makes clear that this sort of life is not a passing state, but one which defines him as he tells the ghost Hendrix after he asks him if he's been to Electric Ladyland: “Y no es que haya estado: yo vivo en el país de la dama eléctrica” (84).

To conclude, a quote from Cohen about narrating and the process of making sense of the different components of his reality that a writer must juggle and eventually piece together. Comparing the role of the writer to that of the great jazz musicians working within a given framework Cohen states in his essay “Algunos tiempos perdidos” that:

El narrador en cambio traduce acontecimientos. Pero no creo que uno sólo escriba lo que ha pensado; desde otro punto de vista, uno piensa lo que va escribiendo, escribe como una manera de pensar. No hablo de escritura automática, sino de una disposición abierta, no del todo involuntaria pero no siempre accesible, que sintetiza realidades cuando el cuerpo y el pensamiento acuerdan con las energías del lenguaje...A mí me gustaría escribir sucesos sin clímax...O historias donde nunca pase lo que *debía* pasar. (180)

El país de la dama eléctrica undoubtedly fits into these points laid out by Cohen on his aspirations in writing and facing his condition as a writer in exile. Gurr notes that: “Exile as the essential characteristic of the modern writer anticipates the loss by the community as a whole of identity, a sense of history, a sense of home” (14). In the novel, Cohen as an exile creates a homeland that is only reachable through its connection with music and texts. This ineffable and unreachable place is present throughout the novel, but nonetheless serves to edify metaphysical pillars for constructing meaning and developing a new sense of identity within the condition of exile. It is a textual mechanism that simultaneously recognizes the fractured sense of self of the exile, of living here and living there simultaneously—acknowledging that we are different identities in the different worlds with which we come in contact. The exile, in his experience, must inevitably face up to his own fractured history, his divided self that cannot escape from the comparisons back to the values of his homeland in attempting to pull the pieces together of his fractured

self. As such, as Gurr adds: “Deracination, exile and alienation in varying forms are the conditions of existence for the modern writer the world over. The basic response to such conditions is a search for identity, the quest for a home, through self-discovery or self-realisation” (14). Such is the search of Martín Gómel, but perhaps an unreachable goal as a solipsistic rocker or faux gypsy or an exile without any tangible roots. For Gerardo should he be able to break from his own metaphysical exile it is different, like that of the exiled writer that according to Brodsky is “constantly fighting and conspiring to restore his significance, his leading role, his authority” (103). There are, of course, no easy answers if any at all; and the open-endedness of the text further accentuates the ineffable amalgam of uncertainties experienced by the exile while positing a way forward through the construction of new cultural identities.

Chapter Five

Tropicália: An Era Seen Through Its Aesthetic and Ignácio de Loyola Brandão's *Zero*

*Eu vou
Por que não, por que não
caminhando contra o vento
sem lenço e sem documento*
Caetano Veloso

Tropicália and the Brazilian Avant-Garde

Tropicália emerged in Brazil in 1967, forever changing the Brazilian cultural landscape on a number of levels. The moniker, though mainly associated with the innovative and groundbreaking music that most brought it to public consciousness, also had strong ties to the visual arts, theatre, film, and literature. It was a quintessential expression of the *zeitgeist* as experienced by a group of artists in their evaluation of the meaning of Brazilian identity, culture, modernity, contemporaneity and development—thinking of the latter term in all its possible senses, including socially, artistically and politically. Tropicália presented a uniquely Latin American articulation of Pop Art, though unlike the Pop Art movement did not ultimately serve the imperative of consumption as it did in the United States. The involved artists also dispensed with traditional left-right dichotomies in politics, questioning both the right-wing military regime's vision as well as the proletarian-populist, nationalist, leftist vision that had preceded the coup of 1964 during the presidency of João Goulart. Tropicália's dialogue and intellectual engagement with national history, identity, culture and arts as well as contemporary issues and cultural trends point us to its many ties with the historical avant-garde and the Brazilian *modernistas* of the 1920s. Though repressed and censored by the regime, the Tropicalists succeeded in changing the intellectual conversation in the 1960s and beyond. The Tropicalists embraced Brazil for all its virtues, contradictions and "backwardness," creating unique statements of enduring artistic expression whose poignant representation of the times in which it was conceived transcend being period pieces and open up questions of aesthetics, the role of the artist in national discourse and are a clear early expression of postmodern sensibility.

Noted critic Roberto Schwarz, in his essay, "Culture and Politics in Brazil 1964-1969," eloquently sums up the elements and practices of the movement:

Venturing a little, perhaps one can say that the basic effect of tropicalism depends precisely on its subjection of...anachronisms [drawn from the Brazilian cultural imaginary], at first sight grotesque, but on second thoughts inevitable, to the white light of ultra-modernity, so that the result is transformed into an allegory of Brazil. The stock of images and emotions belonging to the patriarchal country, rural and urban, is exposed to the most advanced or fashionable forms and techniques in the world—electronic music, Eisensteinian montage, the colours and the montage of pop art, the prose of *Finnegan's Wake*, theatre which is at one and the same time raw and allegorical, with physical attacks on the audience. It's in the internal contrast that the peculiar attraction, the trade mark of the tropicalist image lies. The result of the combination is strident, like a family secret dragged out into the middle of the street, like treachery to one's own class. It is literally an absurdity—this is the first impression it gives—however, the misfit reveals to the onlooker a real historical abyss, a junction of different stages of capitalist development.

(140)

With these points of Schwarz's in mind, we shall proceed in both our analysis of *Tropicália* and of Ignácio de Loyola Brandão's *Zero*. The reference to Russian filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein (1898-1948) and his experimentations in film montage as well as the reference to pop art highlight the fundamental aspect of juxtaposition that is at work in *Tropicália*. The reference to Eisenstein is also important regarding the influence of film on the Tropicalists, though the greatest influence is drawn from the Brazilian Cinema Novo movement of the 1960s. This enumeration of different components makes clear the postmodern sensibility involved in the creation of the Tropicalist aesthetic.

Unlike other the Latin American countries treated in this dissertation, Brazil is a unique case in its relationship to rock and the ties between the Tropicalist wing of rock, literature and other forms of artistic

production. Spearheaded musically by singer/songwriters Caetano Veloso,¹⁴⁹ Gilberto Gil,¹⁵⁰ and Tom Zé,¹⁵¹ the rock group Os Mutantes,¹⁵² composer and arranger Rogério Duprat,¹⁵³ the larger movement also included poet/journalist Torquato Neto,¹⁵⁴ visual artist/philosopher Rogério Duarte,¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁹ Composer, singer, writer and overall cultural icon Caetano Veloso (b. Santo Amaro da Purificação, Bahia, 1942) should need no introduction. Veloso is one of the key figures in Brazilian culture since the mid-1960s and one of the founders, along with Gilberto Gil and the rock band Os Mutantes, of the musical wing of the Tropicália movement. A student of philosophy, film, and literature, Veloso brings an intellectual sophistication to his observations and opinions that is often lacking from pop stars of his stature.

¹⁵⁰ Composer, guitarist, recent Cultural Minister of Brazil, and overall cultural icon Gilberto Gil (née Gilberto Passos Gil Moreira, Salvador, Bahia, 1942) should also need no introduction. Gil helped spearhead the inclusion of rock into Tropicalia upon discovering the Beatles in 1967. A gifted guitarist and singer, Gil has also been involved in politics on and off since the 1980s. He has also been an important advocate for black race issues in Brazil since the 1970s.

¹⁵¹ Composer, singer and multi-instrumentalist Tom Zé (née Antonio José Santana Martins, Irará, Bahia, 1936) is perhaps the most avant-garde of the Tropicalists. Zé studied music while at the University of Bahia with European exiles Ernst Widmer, Walter Smetak and Hans Joachim Koellreutter, all composers versed in the 20th Century avant-garde. Zé met Gil and Veloso while all were students in Salvador in the mid 1960s. He continues active to this day. Zé, with Veloso, Gil and singer Gal Costa are considered the core of what became known as the Bahian group.

¹⁵² Os Mutantes, unlike the other Tropicalist musicians, hailed from São Paulo, where they formed in 1966. Composed of Rita Lee (vocals, guitar, flute), and the Baptista brothers Sérgio (guitar, vocals) and Arnaldo (bass, vocals), the band is one of the most unique in the history of all of rock. Their own records as well as those in which they served as backing band for Gilberto Gil and Caetano Veloso are examples *par excellence* of what the Tropicalia sound is in its initial forms.

¹⁵³ Rogério Duprat (1932-2006) was a classical cellist, composer and the arranger for the vast majority of Tropicalia records. His orchestrations and arrangements were key components to the overall Tropicalia sound.

¹⁵⁴ Poet and journalist Torquato Neto (née Torquato Pereira de Araújo Neto, 1944-1972) was an important member of the Tropicalia group and the Brazilian counterculture in general. Neto was responsible for the lyrics to several quintessential Tropicalia songs including Gil's "Geléia Geral" and "Marginália II." He committed suicide in 1972.

¹⁵⁵ The multitalented artist/philosopher Rogério Duarte (b. 1939) designed many of the striking record covers of the Tropicalia movement. Arguably, Duarte is the creator of a specific Latin American manifestation of Pop Art as his significant body of work would attest. He was also a close friend of Caetano Veloso and was instrumental in shaping the Tropicalist philosophy. His work in the 60s and 70s can be seen as a visual manifestation of Tropicalist aesthetic principles.

writer/filmmaker José Aggripino de Paula,¹⁵⁶ and theater director/actor/playwright José Celso Martinez Corrêa,¹⁵⁷ among others.

The Tropicalist group also had strong ties to Cinema Novo filmmaker Glauber Rocha,¹⁵⁸ whose seminal 1967 film *Terra em Transe* was highly influential in the movement. According to Caetano Veloso, the film, among other things, articulated the political stance and disillusionment artists had with previous leftist/populist ideals as the right wing military dictatorship which came to power on April 1, 1964 began to tighten its grip.¹⁵⁹ As Veloso clarifies: “essential faith in the popular forces—and the very respect that the best souls invested in the poor man—that here was discarded as a political weapon and an ethical value in itself” (61). He further adds that:

¹⁵⁶ José Aggripino de Paula (1937-2007) was a writer and filmmaker. Though socially part of the group that was the *tropicalistas*, he was distant in certain fundamental ways. The novel *Panamérica* (1967), while very focused on elements of pop culture (the characters were mainly myths drawn from mass media: movie stars like Marilyn Monroe, Marlon Brando and many others) and making an avant-garde statement on the impact of cultural imperialism, did not fuse elements of Brazilian culture into itself the way the Tropicalistas did. As Veloso says in *Tropical Truth*: “In sum, *Panamérica*, which seemed to have come after *tropicalismo*, did not influence it. In fact, the book came close to inhibiting its emergence” (90).

¹⁵⁷ Director José Celso Martinez Corrêa (b. 1937) led the important theatre troupe *Teatro Oficina*, which revived Modernist Oswald de Andrade’s play “O Rei da vela” in 1967. One of the key figures in Brazilian avant-garde theater, Zé Celso as he is commonly referred to remains active today.

¹⁵⁸ Filmmaker, actor, director Glauber Rocha (1939-1981) was one of the key figures in the development of Brazilian Cinema Novo in the 1960s. His combination of political themes, Brazilian archetypes drawn from history and folklore, and incorporation of international trends in film was highly influential among the Tropicalists, namely Caetano Veloso who wished his artistic identity to be a little like Glauber Rocha and a little like bossa nova singer and innovator João Gilberto (b.1931), who he considers to be a great poet.

¹⁵⁹ As Heloísa Buarque de Hollanda and Marcos Gonçalves explain about the film in *Cultura e participação nos anos 60*: “Guiado por uma sensibilidade estética moderna, alegórica, profética, Glauber voltava-se para reapresentação extraordinariamente crítica do Brasil populista e do modelo intelectual revolucionário que aí se desenhara. A valorização, tão própria desse período, do poder revolucionário da palavra seria confrontada no filme com a dura realidade das relações de poder, onde a diferença do impulso intelectual, dificilmente os “poemas precedem os fuzis”. A “esquerda literária”—como diretor teatral José Celso Martinez iria mais tarde caracterizar a *intelligentsia* de início da década—aparece em *Terra em Transe* na figura de Paulo Martins, jornalista, poeta e militante que, dilacerado por sua experiência política e intelectual, conclui: “a política e a poesia são demais para um homem só” (47-48).

I sincerely did not feel that the construction workers of Salvador, or the few factory workers one could identify as such, or even the comparatively numerous workers at Petrobrás—any more than the “proletariat” seen in films and photographs—could or should decide what my future might be. When the poet in *Land in Anguish* [*Terra em transe*] declared a lack of faith in the liberating energy of “the people,” I heard this not as an end to possibilities but rather as proclamation of what I now needed to do. (67)

Decidedly, this stance taken by Veloso and underlying the Tropicalist philosophy and aesthetic was a break from the nationalist left’s politics and vision for the nation prior to the coup. Christopher Dunn, one of the foremost scholars on Tropicalism, explains that:

On a discursive level, the Tropicalists proposed a far-reaching critique of Brazilian modernity that challenged dominant constructions of national culture. Instead of exalting the *povo* (masses) as agents for revolutionary transformation, their songs tended to focus on the quotidian desires and frustrations of “everyday people” living in the cities. (*Brutality Garden*, 3)

This final point will be key in our analysis of *Zero* ahead. Clearly, this vision engaged the idea of modernity and national culture head on, understanding the importance of not becoming mired in antiquated ideals national essence and populism, while also resisting the impositions of the dictatorship and acknowledging the emergence of what we now term the globalized world and expressing the *zeitgeist* in a specifically “modernized” Brazilian vernacular.

In time, the group adopted its name from avant-garde artist Hélio Oiticica’s 1967 ambient anti-art *penetrável* titled *Tropicália*.¹⁶⁰ In contemporary art terms, Oiticica’s *penetrável* can be directly associated

¹⁶⁰ Artist, theoretician and conceptualist Hélio Oiticica (1937-1980) was one of the key figures in Brazilian and Latin American avant-garde. The prolific artist worked and innovated in various media: in painting (influenced by Paul Klee, Piet Mondrian and Kazimir Malevich), sculpture (mobiles, his *Bólides*—glass containers filled with coffee, color pigment, sand, dirt which engage the viewer’s conception of the everyday objects) textile art (the *parangolés*, colorful capes donned by the Tropicalists among others in their public appearances, banners) and multi-media mazes which composed the *penetráveis* (precursors to the contemporary installation). Oiticica was also an important writer and thinker on the theory and practice of the avant-garde. His proximity to the Tropicalist circle was also key in the development of its philosophy and aesthetic.

with the installation, though the term was not extant at the time, incorporating the spectator as an interactive, mobile component of the work. As Flora Süssekind describes it: *penetráveis*

Tropicália was a compilation, in the form of a labyrinth, of a group of “tropical ideas” (parrots, sand, plants, gravel), “real places” (Rio de Janeiro, Morro da Mangueira), and diverse “images” (geometric structures, shacks, *favelas*, inscriptions, wood planks, television). It was a penetrable whose path ended in front of a permanently turned on television and resulted, as the artist suggested, in the “terrible feeling” of “being devoured by the work, as if it were an enormous animal” (*Tropicalia: A Revolution In Brazilian Culture (1967-1972)*, 33).

The radical juxtapositions of stereotypical images of the tropics and the uneven modernization of contemporary Brazil artistically presented a spatial and sensorial rendering of contemporary *brasilidade*. The image of *brasilidade* presented in Oiticica’s *penetrável* put into question the idea of national Brazilian authenticity propounded both by the more essentialist representations emanated from the left previous to the coup. It also engaged the spectator to be a participant and created a different sensual experience in art.

Though not directly connected in its origins to the *Tropicália* movement and the music for which it is best known, the concepts articulated in the work were also essential in the formulation of the Tropicalist aesthetic practices. This is also the case with Oiticica’s essay “Esquema Geral da Nova Objectividade” which was included in the catalog for the 1967 *Nova Objectividade Brasileira* exhibit at the Museu de Arte Moderna where *Tropicália* was installed. The *penetrável* also questioned the dictatorial regime’s project of Westernized modernization which disregarded large swathes of the population which perpetuated the radical historical economic and social inequalities that had plagued Brazil since its beginnings. As Oiticica himself makes clear to readers of the essay, the piece was conceptually a direct descendant of Brazilian Modernism of the 1920s. More specifically the piece had conceptual links to the ideas of Brazilian Modernism’s key figure, poet, novelist and polemicist Oswald de Andrade (1890-1954), whose 1937 play *O rei da vela* had been staged by the José Celso Martinez Corrêa Teatro Oficina in 1967.

The question of authenticity and what defined *brasilidade* had been essential in the development of Brazilian Modernism in the 1920s. Oswald de Andrade had addressed the question in both of the manifestos he wrote in the era, the *Manifesto Pau Brasil* (1924) and the *Manifesto Antropofágico* (1928). The latter became of particular relevance in the 1960s for the Brazilian avant-garde and among the Tropicalists. The *Manifesto Antropofágico* had re-entered intellectual discussion in Brazil a decade earlier with the concrete poets of São Paulo, who were also a direct influence on the Tropicalists while de Andrade's work was also a direct influence on Ignácio de Loyola Brandão. De Andrade's latter manifesto focused upon the syncretic nature of Brazil, discarding notions of a national essence while using the anthropophagic tendencies of the Tupinambá natives as the root trope for expounding upon Brazil's unique cultural reality with all its seemingly irreconcilable contradictions. The cannibalist trope acknowledges the undeniable influence of metropolitan culture upon the national cultures in the periphery, making selective and critical absorption and incorporation of cultural products and technologies from abroad its fundamental component.¹⁶¹ Of course, while always a mitigating factor in

¹⁶¹ More recently, Brazilian critic Silviano Santiago reiterates the fundamental importance of a cannibalistic trope and the recontextualization/resignification of metropolitan influence in Latin American cultural production in his essay, "The Space In-Between." He states that: "The major contribution of Latin America to Western culture is to be found in its systematic destruction of the concepts of *unity* and *purity*: these two concepts lose the precise contours of their meaning, they lose their crushing weight, their sign of cultural superiority, and do so to such an extent that the contaminating labor of Latin Americans reaffirms itself as it becomes more and more effective. Latin America establishes its place on the map of Western civilization by actively and destructively diverting the European norm and resignifying preestablished and immutable elements that were exported to the New World by the Europeans. Since Latin America can no longer close its doors to foreign invasion nor recuperate its condition as a "paradise" of isolation and innocence, one realizes with cynicism that, without such resignifications, its product would be mere copy" (30). Kenneth David Jackson explains of the Brazilian avant-garde's use of the European model that: "esse *background* europeu proporcionou aos modernistas meios de expressar temas ou caracterizações nacionais através de métodos inovadores de composição. Na Europa, ao contrario, a *avant-garde* representava interesses que iam além do nacionalismo, numa tentativa de expressar temas universais. Poder-se-ia dizer, com certa ironia, que os modernistas brasileiros apoiaram-se na *avant-garde* européia que não tange às técnicas com que declararam sua independência dos estilos e idéias importadas da Europa, ao mesmo tempo em que desenvolveram temas nacionais ou folclóricos que não eram, de modo algum, vanguardistas o si mesmos. Assim, qualquer avaliação das obras modernistas deve, certamente, levar em consideração duas direções essenciais: em primeiro lugar, o nacionalismo crítico resultante da observação mais precisa da vida brasileira e, em segundo lugar, a necessidade que tinham os modernistas de estilos de escrever inovadores e

post-colonial nation building, a greater collective consciousness among artists of outside cultural influences was an important part of the reality being dealt with at a whole new level in de Andrade's 1920s. It became an even more critical factor in the post-World War II mass media explosion that had come to fruition by the 1960s in Brazil, aided along by the modernization and media campaign of the regime in power.

Because de Andrade rejects notions of adopting or copying an intact untouched, prefabricated/preconceived foreign cultural scheme, his position can be seen as more aligned with Néstor García Canclini's ideas on hybridization. García Canclini recognizes and explores the inherent contradictions brought about by a melding of cultural practices, defining hybridization as: "procesos socioculturales en los que estructuras y prácticas discretas, que existían en forma separada, se combinan para generar nuevas estructuras, objetos y prácticas" (*Culturas híbridas*, 14). He adds that: "A su vez, cabe aclarar que las estructuras llamadas discretas fueron resultado de hibridaciones, por lo cual no pueden ser consideradas fuentes puras" (14). Six decades earlier, Oswald de Andrade inherently understood a variant of the concept articulated by Canclini, taking it a step further by adding a level of conscious artistic intent in the re-elaboration of the foreign influence and assuring a national reference or comment in the creation of a work. As Dunn explains, for de Andrade: "Metropolitan cultures were to be neither slavishly imitated nor xenophobically rejected but simply "devoured" for the purposes of elaborating an autonomous cultural project in Brazil" (*Brutality Garden*, 18). This, of course, went against the official stance regarding a unified, and unchanging (particularly regarding socio-economic structures), Brazilian culture rooted in certain historical truths and colonialist assumptions about Western cultural, and by extension economic, superiority. According to de Andrade, what unites Brazilians is cultural anthropophagy itself as the first line of the Manifesto states: "Só a antropofagia nos une. Socialmente. Economicamente. Filosoficamente" (*Modernidade*, 268). Dunn summarizes that:

contemporâneos através dos quais pudessem expressar sua nova consciência da realidade" (*A Prosa Vanguardista na Literatura Brasileira: Oswald de Andrade*, 13).

“Brazilians [and by extension *brasilidade*] are not defined by who they are but rather by what they do, which, in Oswald’s formulation, is to “digest” myriad cultural influences” (*Brutality Garden*, 19). These precepts would be at the heart of Tropicalist thought—an inherent understanding of culture as practice open to all possibilities.

Specifically, the Tropicalist musical movement drew its name from Oiticica’s piece via the opening song of Caetano Veloso’s self-titled first solo LP which adopted the title “Tropicália”. The song had no title for a short period after its recording in 1967. Veloso recalls that newspaper photographer Luís Carlos Barreto (who had aided in the cinematography in *Terra em transe*) upon hearing the song suggested the title in reference to Oiticica’s *penetrável*, of which Veloso was unaware at the time. Hesitant to adopt a title from another artist’s work, the name stuck after Veloso was unable to come up with another title that satisfied him more. Indeed, parallels could be drawn between the song itself, Oiticica’s piece and the ideas drawn from the *Anthropophagic Manifesto* of the juxtaposition of Brazil’s preponderant pre-modern and ultra-modern elements. Dunn calls the song itself “the most outstanding example of allegorical representation in Brazilian song” and whose lyrics “form a fragmentary montage of events, emblems, popular sayings, and musical and literary citations”, explaining that:

Veloso’s “Tropicália” is also an ironic monument to Brazilian literature and culture that includes textual references to Romantic writer José de Alencar, Parnassian poet Olavo Bilac, composer Catulo da Paixão Cearense, and pop icons Carmen Miranda and Roberto Carlos. The song opens with a declamation that cleverly parodies a foundational text of national literature. As the sound engineer, Rogério Gauss, was testing the microphones for the recording, the drummer Dirceu extemporaneously parodied the *Carta de Pêro Vaz Caminha*, a letter to the king of Portugal written after the Cabral fleet had landed on the South American coast in 1500. “When Pero Vaz Caminha discovered the Brazilian land was fertile and lush, he wrote a letter to the king saying that all that is planted grows and flourishes. And the Gauss of that time recorded it. Attuned to aleatoric and comic gestures in vanguard music of the 1960s, the conductor-arranger of the session, Júlio Medaglia, decided to incorporate the anachronistic parody over the “primitive”

sounds of drumbeats, bells, and high-pitched, birdlike whistles. Following the witty anachronism, the sound of a brass and string orchestra enters, creating an atmosphere of epic suspense and drama (*Brutality Garden* 87-88).

The music from the introduction displays the juxtaposition of the modern (string orchestra, Western harmonic arrangements and studio effects) and pre-modern aspects (primal percussion with echoes of Africa and the Brazilian jungle) of Brazilian culture relative to the rest of the song, while the lyrics play the contrasts off of each other to create the overall imagery. The effect of the contrast echoes the experience of walking through the sand and palm trees and ending up facing the television set in Oiticica's *penetrável*. As another of several examples from the song we have Iracema (the protagonist in José de Alencar's 19th Century Indianist novel) juxtaposed with Ipanema (the upscale beach neighborhood in Rio where the bossa nova, a symbol of modernity for Brazil *par excellence*, developed). Also prevalent is the imagery of the recently founded Brasília, whose symbolic significance had turned from referring to aspirations of utopia to the dystopian reality of being the center of operations for the ever more repressive military regime—a façade of apparent progress which could not fully mask the historical inequalities of the nation: “O monumento é bem moderno/Não disse nada do modelo/Do meu terno/Que tudo mais vá pro inferno/Meu bem.” Though rock is not a component of the song itself, it is an important component of another piece on the record, “Alegria, Alegria”, one of the Veloso's most successful songs of the early Tropicalist period.

Taking into account the elements seen from Oiticica, Oswald de Andrade, and Veloso, we note that a fundamental component of the Tropicalist aesthetic, as Schwarz mentioned, is that of juxtaposition by various means, contrasting combinations that acknowledge past, present and, the possibility to aesthetically and philosophically open a path towards the future—a vision of Brazilian culture in action, defining itself in practice. The combinations, of course, can have a jarring quality—accentuating the importance of shocking or provoking the audience into a greater consciousness about themselves, their cultural pedigree (including stereotypical imagery of Brazil as a tropical paradise), the conditions of political violence and perpetuation of social misery under a repressive dictatorial right wing military

regime—a factor which also affected the development and changing disposition of Tropicália during its brief heyday. Nonetheless, in formulating their articulation of modern Brazilian culture, there was no material that was off-limits as a source for potential elaboration—a decidedly postmodern stance that was furthered by the interactions amongst artists from different fields.

The openness in regards to incorporating source material from various national and international sources, and the importance of the mass media which was inherent in the movement, created a situation that differed significantly with certain cultural tendencies closely linked to the nationalist/populist/leftist political environment developed during João Goulart presidency (1960-1964) which immediately preceded the coup. The prevailing thought among the mostly left-leaning intellectuals which thrived during those years was, not surprisingly, that imported foreign cultural elements would impinge and transform the essence of what it saw as authentic national. This is precisely the sort of thinking that the *Anthropophagic Manifesto* had declared itself against and is questioned, if not debunked, by cultural critics such as Canclini and Silviano Santiago, among others. Veloso elaborates that:

The *tropicalistas* decided that a genuine blend of the ridiculous aspirations of Americanophiles, the naïve good intentions of the nationalists, traditional Brazilian “backwardness,” the Brazilian avant-garde—absolutely everything in Brazil’s real cultural life would be our raw material. Genuine creativity could redeem any aspect of it and make it transcendent (20).

As Flora Süssekind explains, the appropriation of foreign material by the Tropicalists was met with much criticism at the time, reignited a heated debate on the meaning of “national culture” and further highlighted the contradictions brought about by Brazil’s uneven process of modernization (*Vidrieras astilladas*, 42).

Among the criticisms from the intellectual and political left was the appropriation of elements of rock music which, given the anthropophagic disposition of the Tropicalists at the moment, was inevitable in defining their concept of modernity. And yet it was rooted firmly in the Brazilian thought of Oswald de Andrade—a fact that was utilized by Tropicalists in their own defense. As Caetano Veloso explains:

The idea of cultural cannibalism fit *tropicalistas* like a glove. We were “eating” the Beatles and Jimi Hendrix. Our arguments against the nationalists’ defensive attitude found in this stance its most succinct and exhaustive enunciation. Of course we started to use it extensively and intensively, but not without attempting to rethink the terms in which we adopted it (156).

The result of this rethinking was revolutionary for its time. The incorporation and transformation of long debated philosophical and aesthetic precepts into the realm of pop music and putting forth pop music’s significance as a mode of artistic expression not only make Tropicalia’s ties to the historical avant-garde and then-contemporary avant-garde abundantly clear, but also place it as a key example of Latin American postmodernism. As Veloso explains about how the Beatles’ influence manifested itself on himself and Gilberto Gil:

The lesson from the Beatles that Gil wanted from the start to incorporate was that of an alchemical transformation of commercial trash into an inspired and free creation, as a way of reinforcing the autonomy of the creators—and of the consumers. That’s why the Beatles interested us in a way that the American rock of the fifties had not. The most important thing was not to replicate the musical procedures of the British rock group, but rather their attitude in relation to what popular music really meant as a phenomenon. *Our point of departure was actually at hand for us, not the sound of the four Englishmen.* (103, emphasis mine)

Philosophically speaking, the stance adopted by Gil, Veloso and the Tropicalists regarding rock and its interaction with Brazilian music and culture also had close ties to the thought put forth by the Brazilian concrete poets of the 1950s. It was the concrete poets of the 1950s, not coincidentally, who had helped to revive interest in Oswald de Andrade and his ideas on Brazilian culture and art—ideas which they themselves would begin to apply and transform.

The movement began in 1952 with the efforts of Décio Pignatari (b. 1927) and brothers Haroldo de Campos (1929-2003) and Augusto de Campos (b. 1931). It was they who were responsible for the subsequent publication of the magazine *Noigandres* which brought attention to the movement. All three poets had important ties to artists from other fields including Hélio Oiticica and often published regarding

the arts and culture in the Brazilian press. Aside from befriending Veloso, Gil and others in the Tropicalist circle, Haroldo de Campos would become one of the strongest defenders of the movement in the press, specifically in regards to the incorporation of rock elements as an inevitable step in the evolution of Brazilian music and the movement towards modernity. Like their Pop Art contemporaries emerging across the Atlantic, the Brazilian concrete poets acknowledged and made use of the new vernacular offered by mass media culture, recognizing its undeniable importance in artistically expressing contemporary modernity. Carlos André Carvalho explains that for the concrete poets: “Não só os *mass media*, mas quase tudo passa a ser associado, seja às adivinhas, a linguagem popular, as gírias ou os *slogans* de marcas e produtos” (79). There are, of course, clear affinities to aspects the Tropicalists themselves, as we have seen, adopted into their aesthetic vision. Within this scheme the importance of repetition and variation is also paramount for the concrete poets, as is particular emphasis to the graphic presentation of the words on the printed page—also an essential component in *Zero*.

The emphasis on the layout of the printed page and the different possibilities it presented when reading the text were also linked to the practice abandoning traditional poetic discourse, themes and rejecting lyricism. The result made the poem an object in itself instead of an interpretation of objectivity or the subjective representation of sensations. As Carlos André Carvalho explains citing Hilda Lontra, there are fundamental links between the concrete poets and de Andrade’s Modernist generation:

Os movimentos de vanguarda surgidos no Brasil a partir da década de 1950 recuperam as idéias fundamentais do modernismo em dois aspectos. Primeiro, assim como os poetas de 22, os textos desses vanguardistas demonstram a procura de mensagens ou de temática que fizessem do poema um testemunho crítico da realidade sociopolítica nacional. Segundo, procura de códigos, os quais, rejeitando a tradição do verbo, tornassem o poema um objeto de linguagem de fácil percepção, integrado—ou integrável—na estrutura dos meios de comunicação de massa (29).

The concrete poets, following de Andrade’s model, also resisted the reductionist, purist notions of cultural and artistic nationalism. Based out of São Paulo, the rapid industrial transformation of the city became an ineludible topic explored and exposed by the concrete poets, highlighting the drastic contrasts and uneven

modernity that had already begun to take shape. I should also add that the two points highlighted by Londra are also articulated by Oiticica in his “Esquema Geral da Nova Objectividade”.

The idea of uniting at times clashing fragments into a whole in Tropicalia is traceable to the concrete aesthetic, in the process innovating the pop song form and pointing the way for the evolution of Brazilian music. The evolution of Brazilian music was an important point for Veloso himself given the artificial restrictions imposed by the different camps of musicians during the 1960s. He himself had proposed the importance of evolution, while keeping previous styles and tradition in mind in a 1966 interview before the advent of Tropicalism.¹⁶² Once the movement was underway, it came to fruition, also creating parallels with expression in the visual arts and the concrete aesthetic. As Veloso explains of the Tropicalist sound:

Instead of working together to find a unified sound that would define the new style, we preferred to utilize one or more sounds that were already recognizable from commercial music, so that the arrangement would be an independent element that would enhance the song but also clash with it. In a way, what we wanted to do could be compared to the contemporary practice of sampling, and the parts we were combining were “ready-mades”. This freed us from creating any sort of fusion, a musical mayonnaise that would be vulgarly palatable...(102)

Nowhere is the influence of the concrete poets more evident than in Gil and Veloso’s joint effort “Bat Macumba” (1968) where instead of a “musical mayonnaise” there are disparate clashing elements that work together without necessarily resolving the tension produced by their juxtaposition.

¹⁶² Carvalho quotes the interview given to the *Revista Civilização Brasileira* which makes Veloso’s desire to expand the horizons of Brazilian music and the elements used to create it abundantly clear: “Só a retomada da linha evolutiva pode nos dar uma organicidade para selecionar e ter um julgamento de criação. Dizer que samba só se faz com frigideira, tamborim e um violão sem sétimas o nonas não resolve o problema. [Noted Samba musician] Paulino da Viola me falou há alguns dias da sua necessidade de incluir bateria e contrabaixo em seus discos. Tenho certeza de que, se puder levar essa necessidade ao fato, ele terá contrabaixo e terá samba. Aliás, João Gilberto para mim é exatamente o momento em que isto aconteceu: a informação da modernidade musical utilizada na recriação, na renovação, no dar-um-passo-à-frente da música brasileira. Creio mesmo que a retomada da tradição da música brasileira deverá ser feita na medida em que João Gilberto fez” (53). It is safe to say that Veloso and his Tropicalist cohorts took it one step further, though they never lost sight of the need to infuse elements of Brazilian music, history and culture into their work.

There are two versions of the song, one done by Gil backed up by Os Mutantes on the Tropicalist record-manifesto *Panis et Circensis* (1968) and by Os Mutantes themselves on their first record (1968). The song is built on a two-chord vamp with bongos accentuating a strong rock backbeat provided by an electric bass and drum-set and a guitar (an acoustic twelve string in Gil's version and a distorted fuzz guitar on Os Mutantes), at times answering, at others playing over, and others intermingling with the rhythm of the sung lyrics. The song, according to Dunn, was transcribed by Haroldo de Campos, though there are different variations of its graphic representation available.

Bat Macumba ê ê, Bat Macumba obá
 Bat Macumba ê ê, Bat Macumba obá
 Bat Macumba ê ê, Bat Macumba obá
 Bat Macumba ê ê, Bat Macumba obá
 Bat Macumba ê ê, Bat Macumba obá
 Bat Macumba ê ê, Bat Macumba obá
 Bat Macumba ê ê, Bat Macumba obá
 Bat Macumba ê ê, Bat Macumba oh
 Bat Macumba ê ê, Bat Macumba
 Bat Macumba ê ê, Bat Macum
 Bat Macumba ê ê, Batman
 Bat Macumba ê ê, Bat
 Bat Macumba ê ê, Ba
 Bat Macumba ê ê
 Bat Macumba ê
 Bat Macumba
 Bat Macum
 Batman
 Bat
 Ba
 Bat
 Bat Ma
 Bat Macum
 Bat Macumba
 Bat Macumba ê
 Bat Macumba ê ê
 Bat Macumba ê ê, Ba
 Bat Macumba ê ê, Bat
 Bat Macumba ê ê, Batman
 Bat Macumba ê ê, Bat Macum
 Bat Macumba ê ê, Bat Macumba
 Bat Macumba ê ê, Bat Macumba oh
 Bat Macumba ê ê, Bat Macumba obá
 Bat Macumba ê ê, Bat Macumba obá
 Bat Macumba ê ê, Bat Macumba obá
 Bat Macumba ê ê, Bat Macumba obá

Bat Macumba ê ê, Bat Macumba obá
 Bat Macumba ê ê, Bat Macumba obá!¹⁶³

Its graphic representation makes all the more clear that the song is based on a sole poetic fragment that expands and contracts. As Carvalho explains:

A primeira observação diz respeito à disposição gráfica do texto sobre a página. O texto, criado a partir da supressão e da reconstrução de dois neologismos parecidos entre si, termina por sugerir, pelo menos, três signos iconográficos...Os signos são asa abertas (de um morcego?), a parte superior da máscara do super-herói Batman ou da cabeça de um morcego e um par de seios dentro de um decote visto de cima, todos estilizados, claro. (81)

Carvalho goes on to compare the song to other concrete works such as Décio Pignatari's "terra" and Ronaldo Azeredo's "velocidade," also built graphically on ostensibly one term.

The song (perhaps more Os Mutantes version than Gil's because of the inclusion of the psychedelic fuzz guitar) is also a quintessential example of the Tropicalist aesthetic of bringing together different elements of Brazilian and foreign culture to create a hybrid all its own. The song includes Batman and the Afro-Brazilian religion *macumba* while also throwing in a reference to Brazilian rock (iê-iê, more on this ahead) for good measure in creating the neologism upon which the song is based. The time the song was written saw an explosion in the market of all things related to Batman due to the popularity of the American television show which had begun airing in the United States in 1966 and exported to other media markets abroad. The show, diverging from the image of Batman as the shadowy, dangerous character he represents now in film and in comics (and had at his inception as a character in the 1930s) was instead done in a Pop Art and camp style, emphasizing bright colors, using deliberately ridiculous dialogue and overblown elements, as well as the use of full screen shots of renderings of the

¹⁶³ This particular version is drawn from <http://letras.terra.com.br/mutantes/125343/>. The version reproduced by Carvalho presents some slight, but significant differences, using "batmakumbayêê batmakumbaoba" as the song's launching point graphically, though it could be pronounced in a similar way as the other representation. He points to the phoneme "k" in his analysis and the ultimate image of the song in its concrete poetic form. The title of the song on the records is written "Batmacumba," which is why I have included the version using the "c" instead.

onomatopoeic words such as POW! and BLAM! during fight sequences. These latter elements were, of course, drawn from and used to great effect in the comic book panel paintings of Roy Lichtenstein (1923-1997), one of the key figures in American Pop Art. Brandão also included the use of these techniques to great effect in *Zero*.

One of the easily ridiculed camp elements in the comic and the show was Batman's plethora of gadgets, vehicles and places which inevitably carried a "Bat" ahead of whatever object it identified, such as "Batmobile" or "Bat-Shark-Repellent-Spray," among many, many others. It seems then that the obvious question that was asked was "why not a Bat-*macumba* in Brazil?" After all, *macumba* and other religions of its sort were not simply a part of Brazil's pre-modern, pre-urbanized past, its accompanying imaginary and a potential example of its supposed "backwardness" for the Western sensibility, but a part of the culture that still thrived among certain sectors of the population. Batman, through the mechanisms of globalization and mass media culture, had found a place within Brazilian culture that was arguably as visible, if not more so in the cases of some social strata, than *macumba*. Dunn suggests that "Bat Macumba" is "perhaps the most hybrid song in the entire tropicalist repertoire" and that its fusion of disparate elements "suggests that products of the multinational culture industry like Batman and rock have been "Brazilianized" and, conversely, that Afro-Brazilian religion is central to Brazilian modernity and not a folkloric vestige of a premodern past" (*Brutality Garden*, 105). Of course, these conclusions about the song are reached with a significant degree of analysis and abstraction—activity that is notably absent when approaching many pop songs, particularly one that at first glance is lacking any lyrical content like "Bat Macumba." The song's amalgamation of disparate elements, some of them "ready-made" (the rock beat), distorted electric guitar and theoretical depth transcended the boundaries of what popular music in Brazil had been up to that point, marking the evolution on a musical as well as conceptual level. Another aspect to consider is that "bat macumba" is pronounced [ba-tʃi-ma-kum-ba] which allows a further play on words with the verb "bater," therefore allowing for further meaning with regards to the forbidden beat of macumba drums.

The “anthropophagic” Tropicalist process and result are clear. Sússekind emphasizes significant commonalities between the Tropicalists and Oswald de Andrade’s first modernist group:

...the idea of devouring and systematically reinventing foreign cultural models, as well as the idea of Brazil as a syncretic crossroads of perspectives, languages, and distinctly temporal rhythms. Both of them also believed that tension and constant movement—between high culture and bad taste; literate culture and oral traditions, between the national and the foreign, archaic and modern; between the contemporary and the revision of “repressed components of nationality” — constituted the Brazilian cultural process. All this would bring the Tropicalists closer to the first Brazilian modernists. (*Tropicalia*, 36-37).

She also notes, without enumerating them in detail, some significant contextual differences that set them apart. Artistically, perhaps the main contextual difference was the emergence of a movement to which I have ongoingly alluded and which was, on a variety of different levels, mirrored by the concrete poets and later the Tropicalists themselves: Pop Art. The critique of the superficiality of consumerist society, the transposition of material from the realm of advertising, comics and movies, as well as the awareness and adoption of parts of the consumerist vernacular as a mechanism of engaging in criticism of mass culture by means of itself, among other factors, are all echoes of Pop Art found in Tropicália.

Tropicalism, the Incorporation of Rock and the Left

The particular incorporation of rock was one of the elements rethought by the Tropicalists which also fit into a larger scheme of cultural criticism practices adopted from Pop: using the very means mechanisms used in creating the object of criticism to make a statement or critique about it. Sússekind explains that with Tropicalism:

...la crítica a la industria cultural y a las imágenes arcaizantes o desarrollistas del país se da en el espectáculo mismo, se transforma en espectáculo. En lugar de recibir sólo el mundo “en una pequeña vidriera de plástico transparente”, como llamaría la atención Gilberto Gil en la canción “Vitrines” [1969] (“Vidrieras”), lo que se intentaba era apropiarse de la vidriera (*Vidrieras astilladas*, 22).

Indeed, the rise of television programs featuring different musical styles and television sponsored song festivals (to be televised, of course) in the latter half of the 1960s was, as mentioned above, an avenue of which the Tropicalists took great advantage. The song festivals put them at odds with protest song performers and the audiences sympathetic to them who were not ready to accept the type of evolution in Brazilian music which the Tropicalists were bringing forth nor the combination of native elements with those drawn from foreign sources, namely rock and the electric guitars used to produce it. To be sure, the festivals and the weekly television programs such as *O Fino da Bossa*,¹⁶⁴ among others, were the space where “national music” was defined, originating a number of cultural debates as to what MPB (Música Popular Brasileira) was, as well as what the limits of its social role should be.

Rock entered Brazil as it did all international markets in the 1950s, but was not a significant cultural or marketing phenomenon until after the 1964 coup when the influence of the United States was felt culturally on a more palpable level. Veloso explains that there were very few artists who connected with the first phase of rock in Brazil and that its lack of popularity:

...was dependent upon the kind of taste and economic power that allowed ready access to information about American culture—records, movies, magazines—in other words, an audience of reasonable affluence, but such people maintained an elitism to which the whorehouse-edge of Elvis did not appeal (20).

The optimistic nationalism of 1950s Brazil also did not create a receptive market for this foreign musical style either. Following the 1964 coup, this changed significantly with the emergence of a Brazilianized, though still at times highly derivative, style of rock called the Jovem Guarda. This style of rock, often also called *iê-iê-iê* (a title drawn from the refrain in the Beatles’ 1963 hit “She Loves You”), became massively popular in the mid-decade among Brazilian youth of different social classes, no longer limited in reach and appeal to the upper classes. Figures like the aforementioned Roberto Carlos, Ronnie Von, as

¹⁶⁴ The show, *O Fino da Bossa*, was tremendously popular from 1965-1968 and considered the conservative choice as to the direction Brazilian popular music should take even receives mention in Caetano Veloso’s song “Tropicália.”

well as bands like The Brazilian Bibles, The Beat Boys, and the ironically named Os Canibais, among many, many others, either created Portuguese versions of best-selling rock songs from abroad or established their own pop-rock vernacular closely following the foreign model.¹⁶⁵

Mainly aided by a television program of the same name hosted by Roberto Carlos, sales of Jovem Guarda records were extraordinarily successful from 1965-1968. This came as a direct result of the expansion of television, which was a key cog in the Castello Branco regime's propaganda and modernization program, which it began to implement upon assuming power in 1964. As Heloísa Buarque de Hollanda and Marcos Gonçalves explain:

O golpe de 64 traz consigo a reordenação e o estreitamento dos laços de dependência, a intensificação do processo de modernização, a racionalização institucional e a regulação autoritária das relações entre as classes e grupos, colocando em vantagem os setores associados ao capital monopolista ou a eles vinculados (20).

The Jovem Guarda was also acceptable and useful in the new regime's overall program as it could be associated, as had been the case in Mexico a decade before, with the notions of cultural modernity and imitation drawn primarily from the United States and the American model of a consumerist middle and upper class.

The Jovem Guarda also created new opportunities for the already massive Brazilian record industry.¹⁶⁶ As Dunn notes:

¹⁶⁵ With very few exceptions, this phenomenon was the norm among Latin American rock bands prior to 1967 when the influence of psychedelia began to alter the sound of many bands in a more unique and personal direction. As we mentioned in Chapter 1, in Mexico the practice of recording Spanish language versions of foreign rock songs was referred to as "refritos" (refrieds). One example of many is the Beat Boys "Canção Que Ninguém Mais Cantou," (1968) a Portuguese language interpretation of the Beatles' "Your Mother Should Know" (1967). It should be noted, however, that Gilberto Gil did the same in 1971 during his forced exile in London, though in a style that is unmistakably his own and without any discernible pretense of scoring a hit with the recordings.

¹⁶⁶ By the 1960s, only the United States and Japan issued more records than the Brazilian industry, which boasted two of the largest urban record-buying markets in Latin America.

...the Jovem Guarda was a pop phenomenon, attracting an immense following among the urban working and middle classes. The image of youthful yet apolitical rebellion projected by the Jovem Guarda became extremely useful to record companies and other manufacturers of consumer items seeking to tap into a growing market for “youth culture” (*Brutality Garden*, 59).

Dunn goes on to explain that the themes in the songs avoided political and social criticism, instead focusing on “themes of male bravado, sexual liberation, fashionable clothes, fancy cars and wild parties” (60). While there were challenges to the conservative social stances which were ostensibly associated and propagated by the Castello Branco regime (and even more so following under the Costa da Silva and Medici regimes from 1968-1972), the apolitical essence of the Jovem Guarda and its *iê-iê-iê* music posed no real threat to the government. It reiterated the typical rebellious themes of youth found in most rock before 1965 and instead served as another distraction produced in the growing mass media market.

The regime correctly saw this non-threatening aspect of the Jovem Guarda because *iê-iê-iê* was almost universally condemned by the actual threat to it: left leaning factions of students, former Goulart era government functionaries and supporters, the growing group of armed Communist guerrilla factions, and intellectuals who saw the style as an example *par excellence* of cultural imperialism’s assault on what, as we have seen, they deemed to be authentic, nationalistic Brazilian culture, as well as being an obvious display of bad taste. The use of the electric guitar was held in particularly low regard, as were the oft-utilized English lyrics. The essential critique of *iê-iê-iê* was its lack of *brasilidade* and the very present fear of fundamental cultural transformation posed by the repressive right-wing military regime. It also stood in stark contrast to the cultural programs begun in the 1950s and further fomented during the Goulart era from within and outside the government.

In particular, the program and positions of the Centro Popular de Cultura (CPC, People’s Cultural Center) were ostensibly the antithesis of what the Jovem Guarda symbolized. Founded in 1962, the CPC, working in conjunction with the União Nacional dos Estudantes (UNE, National Student Union) and modeled after the state-sponsored Movimento de Cultura Popular (Popular Culture Movement) literacy program, strongly opposed the influx of foreign capital into Brazil (advocating a nationalist model,

instead), were highly critical of imported cultural products from developed nations (particularly the United States). During its less than two year existence during the Goulart presidency, the CPC had created a politically committed culture industry of its own which intended to engage the masses and involve them politically. As Dunn explains:

Working on several fronts, the CPC staged agitprop plays at factory gates and in working-class neighborhoods, produced films and records, and published pedagogical books for popular consumption. The CPC project was predicated on the idea that revolution could not be achieved simply through union activism and electoral politics (*Brutality Garden*, 40-41).

Because of the importance and value given to political commitment and engagement within the arts and culture products, the apolitical, frivolous and culturally colonized nature of the *iê-iê-iê* was seen as a large step backwards by the left. Dunn explicates that Carlos Estevam, one of the leading theorists associated with the CPC, had already distinguished three types of popular culture: *arte de povo*, *arte popular*, and the desirable *arte popular revolucionária*. According to Estevam, *arte popular*, which consisted of products created by the culture industry (music heard on the radio, soap operas, and romance, adventure and light comedy films), was to be disdained as inconsequential and escapist entertainment for the masses. The Jovem Guarda, of course, perfectly fit into this category. Furthermore, as a cultural and market phenomenon which modeled itself upon the United States, it represented a polar opposite of what was valued culturally and artistically by the CPC:

Drawing heavily from the cultural program of the Brazilian Communist Party, CPC artists and intellectuals advocated a national-popular paradigm for cultural production based on the conviction that only that which was “popular” was authentically national (*Brutality Garden*, 41).

As we have seen, the politically committed revolutionary popular art, which served political purposes as well as aesthetic purposes, set a certain standard in the intellectual left in connecting itself with populism and social change.

Even with the CPC now defunct after the coup, such values were in the spotlight among the first artistic reactions to it. The most cited is Oduvaldo Vianna, Paulo Ponte and Armando Costa’s musical

Opinião,¹⁶⁷ which premiered in Rio de Janeiro in 1964. The work served in many respects, according to Buarque de Hollanda and Gonçalves, as “um marco para a cultura pós-64”, pointing out that the program notes to the musical maintained certain fundamental ties to the CPC’s core values of politically committed art:

...a idéia de que a arte é “tanto mais expressiva” quanto mais tenha uma “opinião”, ou seja, quanto mais se faça instrumento para a divulgação de conteúdos políticos; a idealização, um tanto problemática, de uma aliança do artista com o “povo”, concebido como a fonte “autêntica” da cultura; e um certo nacionalismo, explícito na referência de indisfarçável sotaque populista às “tradições de unidade e integração nacionais” (Buarque de Hollanda and Gonçalves, 22-23).

After the coup, emphasis in protest art is directed towards the middle class, a middle class that, as we noted before, needed to be provoked. Different from the officially sanctioned protest art of the CPC in the Goulart era, art which as Sússekind explains in was “driven by a didactic aesthetic and a formal reductionism that, according to contemporary beliefs, made it possible for an ideally constructed popular audience to assimilate and empathize with it” (*Tropicália*, 40). In *Zero*, the inclusion of the ironically named minor character Héroi represents the CPC, its goals and its ultimately diminished reputation by the end of the decade.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ The production is notable also as the career launching point of Maria Bethânia (b. 1946), sister of Caetano Veloso, and one of the foremost singers in the history of Brazilian music. The young Bethânia replaced Nara Leão (1942-1989), a singer who had already found fame recording bossa nova and as the muse of other bossa nova artists earlier in the decade. Leão was among the first artists to use her stature to voice resistance to the coup and also later participated in the Tropicalia movement singing one song on the album-manifesto *Panis et Circensis* (1968). Leão was a key figure also in that her social pedigree was that of an educated upper-middle class which had, in many circles, supported the coup. Leão was a public figure who represented, in no uncertain terms, a non-populist faction of resistance to the newly established dictatorship.

¹⁶⁸ The character, a good writer and singer, would travel the country educating the poor. When the coup came, he was in hiding while waiting to see which direction the national situation would take. During the interim, erroneous reports of his execution began to circulate earning him the nickname and becoming a sort of mythical figure amongst those he had known. That came tumbling down upon his re-emergence, though the nickname stuck in an ironic fashion.

This difference in focus also entailed a shift away from the populist, leftist and, notably, state-sanctioned art of the previous half-decade which would have crucial aesthetic and political implications for the group of artists, filmmakers, theater troupes, poets and, of course, musicians who would launch the Tropicalist movement in 1967. There was a further shift away from tying the question of authenticity, particularly in the realm of national art, strictly to the popular realm. The modernizing and neo-modernist tendencies of the 1950s had already addressed this issue, with it promoting and creating two of the most influential movements shaping Brazilian arts during the following decade: concrete poetry and bossa nova.¹⁶⁹ Both of these movements were fundamental in the Tropicalist movement's idea of *brasilidade* and the necessary mechanisms to express it in its various forms. It also clearly placed Tropicalism in a "space in-between", to use Silviano Santiago's term, politically and culturally defining itself independently by articulating its take on national cultural identity in postmodern terms. The Tropicalists, significantly, also saw rock as an indispensable musical element of the modernity and musical evolution of *brasilidade* they were expressing—after its entrance there was no stepping back.

The prevailing thought of the Tropicalists was that an art was required that provoked the middle class with the means to buy records, go to music and theater performances and see movies. By extension, of course, this was the same audience that would buy books. As Santiago reminds us, the book consuming audience as a separate category was the smallest—around sixty thousand readers in a country of 110 million by Roberto Schwarz's estimate in 1970. Santiago describes this mostly predictable, middle-class urban audience of writers, dilettantes, university professors and students, as: "both

¹⁶⁹ Though it incorporated extended harmonic structures from American West Coast Cool Jazz into elements of samba, bossa nova was not faced with essential questions of authenticity upon its advent in 1958. The reason being that it still expressed essential elements of *brasilidade*, albeit modern and urbanized, which were in line with the progressive, modernizing version of Brazil proposed by the government of Juscelino Kubitschek (1956-1960). Indeed, bossa nova has become practically synonymous with Brazil, its identity and its imaginary abroad. It was also a key launching point to what has become known as MPB, Música Popular Brasileira, and an influence on Tropicalia as well. Veloso speaks of bossa nova singer/guitarist and initiator João Gilberto (b. 1931) in only the most laudatory terms, going so far as to call him the key figure in continuation of Brazilian musical history. Music scholars such as Ruy Castro and Gerard Behague trace the beginning of the bossa nova movement to Gilberto's 1958 recording of Antonio Carlos Jobim's (1927-1994) "Chega de Saudade".

sophisticated and conservative, petulant and cosmopolitan, and ultimately superficial, a public which today puts on airs of living in a metropolis” (81). This was an important sector in need of provocation into a greater consciousness of the then-current state of affairs and changing state of notions of national identity. Buarque de Hollanda and Gonçalves explain:

Utilizando informações contemporâneas, abertos à absorção de elementos das correntes culturais internacionais como o Pop norte-americano e de olha na tradição moderna das artes brasileiras, a produção plástica apresentava novidades. Experimento e intervenção: renovar a construção da obra de arte significativa também propor uma nova relação com o público. ... “Começou-se a criar—diz Rubens Gerchman¹⁷⁰—uma série de ambientes que envolveriam e até mesmo agrediriam os espectadores. Era mais forma de conscientizar o espectador em relação à proposta que a gente estava fazendo. (27-28)

Gerchman’s statement in the quote makes clear that the provocation of the audience took place on a direct, physical level with Happenings and interactive theater—both of which were assimilated and adopted by the Tropicalists. Regarding the different levels of provocation, Sússekind elaborates:

What was required, then, was to “incorporate the Brazilian problematic on a level of revolutionary expression and to wound the audience” (Glauber Rocha), and to “position this audience, absolutely naked and defenseless, to jumpstart their initiative and create a new path” ([Theater director José Celso] Martinez Corrêa). “I, personally, feel the need for violence. I don’t think it will work out with us just caressing one another,” Veloso said in an interview on August 20, 1967. “I want us to really know what we put up with and see that we are in a country that can’t even talk about itself. We need to feel real shame and to be able to break things open.” This radicalization was in dialogue, obviously, with the field of clandestine political resistance in the country. For it was at this time when, alongside the growing governmental repression and

¹⁷⁰ Rubens Gerchman (1942-2009) was one of the participating artists in the *Nova Objectividade Brasileira* exhibit in 1967 which also included Oiticica’s “Tropicália.” Gerchman himself had one of his paintings “Lindoneia” put to song by Gilberto Gil on the record-manifesto *Panis et Circensis*.

paramilitary operations of the “communist-hunting commandos,” there was also a widening base of militants, the formation of numerous guerrilla cells, and armed attacks from the Left, especially on banks and armored cars (*Tropicalia*, 41).

The overall implicit and explicit violence within the Tropicalist songs can be easily missed by the casual listener as many of the songs present major-key joyful melodies, many non-dissonant orchestral arrangements, and appropriation of older musical and singing styles which can mask the depth, irony and violence of the criticism that is being expressed. In other cases, of course, the radical sonic juxtapositions make the message more apparent or, in other cases, accentuate statements on the banality, paradoxes and contradictions brought about by modernity.

Despite denouncing the then-current reality, the dialogue with the guerrilla activity is not explicit in *Tropicália*, only mentioned in passing in Caetano Veloso’s “Alegria, alegria” (recorded 1967). It is likely that this mention is not even in reference to the Brazilian guerrillas given that at the time of the recording the Brazilian guerrilla movement was just taking shape and Che Guevara was making headlines for his involvement in Bolivia.¹⁷¹ This was the case because the more politically charged songs ceased to be produced even before the enactment of Ato Institucional 5 (AI-5) on December 13th, 1968. The law ostensibly stripped citizens of what little rights they still had to express dissent, abolished habeas corpus, increased the executive powers’ already broad authority (effectively neutralizing the judicial and legislative branches) and also led to an unprecedented increase in surveillance and scrutiny at every level of daily life. The guerrilla activity is, however, a central theme in Brandão’s *Zero*, reflecting a defining component of the moment.

Tropicália: Brazil Talking About Itself

Gilberto Gil’s “Marginália II,” (recorded 1967, released 1968) with lyrics by Torquato Neto is a prime example of “the country talking about itself”, violently condemning its then-current state of affairs,

¹⁷¹ The informative sticker on the jacket of a recent LP reissue of Caetano Veloso’s second Tropicalist LP from 1969 erroneously claims that Veloso’s “Irene” is about a machine-gun toting guerrilla when in fact the song is about Veloso’s younger sister.

accentuating its contradictions, the “panic and glory” of being Brazilian and living in Brazil, of tropical paradise/tropical hell and its place in the obligatory periphery that is the Third World. There is also an ironic expression of the subjugated state of mind of the colonized subject—essentially blaming himself for his sin and affliction of suffering from shortcomings within the hegemonic worldview of the metropolis and his condition of being “chained” to his marginal position within the world. The song’s expressions of stark contrasts and ironic self-loathing, shining the spotlight of ultra-modernity on the archaic to the point of self-mockery and absurdity support Schwarz’s critical assessment of *Tropicália*. Here, the medium of the pop record is the ultra-modern component, with its status as a product for mass consumption with Rogério Duprat’s innovative musical arrangements (multiple textures, call and response, strident horn punches) and production (panning that makes full use of stereo recording techniques, use of echoes in the background—procedures which link the production values directly to the Beatles’ *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Heart’s Club Band* LP). The imagery and concepts are drawn directly from the inventory of ideas composing the Brazilian imaginary as well as, significantly, the metropolitan imaginary in regards to Brazil. The upbeat rhythms and energetic, joyful expression in Gil’s voice are themselves the stark contrast to the biting social commentary contained in the song, which begins by striking the tone of a prayer:

Eu, brasileiro, confesso
 Minha culpa, meu pecado
 Meu sonho desesperado
 Meu bem guardado segredo
 Minha aflição
 Eu, brasileiro, confesso
 Minha culpa, meu degredo
 Pão seco de cada dia
 Tropical melancolia
 Negra solidão
 Aqui é o fim do mundo, aqui é o fim do mundo, aqui é o fim do mundo,
 Aqui, o Terceiro Mundo
 Pede a bênção e vai dormir
 Entre cascatas, palmeiras
 Araçás e bananeiras
 Ao canto da juriti
 Aqui, meu pânico e glória
 Aqui, meu laço e cadeia
 Conheço bem minha história

Começa na lua cheia
 E termina antes do fim
 Aqui é o fim do mundo, aqui é o fim do mundo, aqui é o fim do mundo,
 Minha terra tem palmeiras
 Onde sopra o vento forte
 Da fome, do medo e muito
 Principalmente da morte
 Olelê, lalá¹⁷²

The difference with pre-coup optimism and faith in the nation's modernizing potential are obvious. Brazil is no longer a potential model for modernization in the periphery, the symbolic capital once represented by Brasília now tarnished by the retrogressive military regime—once again Brazil is at the “ends of the earth.” The strong winds of fear, hunger and death belie the modernizing image the regime put forth to woo foreign investment. The fear of death became more palpable as the Costa da Silva regime began tightening its grip upon assuming power in 1967. These verses also echo romantic poet Antônio Gonçalves Dias'(1823-1864) “Canção de Exílio”: “Minha terra tem palmeiras onde canta o sabiá” and in Oswald de Andrade's “Canto de regresso à pátria”: “Minha terra tem palmares.” Dunn, citing Santiago, explains the shift in perspective in the before and after of the coup in his article “Tropicália: Modernity, Allegory, and Counterculture”:

Silviano Santiago makes a distinction between the optimism that characterized much of the literary and cultural production before the military coup, and the *alegria*, or joy, of Tropicalist and post-Tropicalist culture. For Santiago, an "edifying and constructive social optimism" bolstered by faith in national development informed much of the politicized culture of the period before the military coup. With the ascension of an authoritarian regime, this optimism subsided, but it was not replaced with pessimism. Instead, the political terror provoked what Santiago calls a “Dionysian and Nietzschean” reaction against repression and censorship: “Joy exploded in mockery and laughter, in parody and circus and in the human body that sought plenitude and pleasure in pain itself” (*Tropicalia*, 70).

¹⁷² All lyrics here and in references ahead are quoted from letras.terra.com.br.

This “Dionysian and Nietzschean” mockery can explain the festive mood that the music and the vocal execution of the song allowing it to revel in the pain it conveys. The Nietzschean element also alludes to the nihilistic element which manifests itself in detail in *Zero*. The song is far less rock-oriented than other critical songs on the record, like “Procissão,” and less informed by the cinematic techniques of multiple perspectives employed in the innovative “Domingo no parque” which would be lauded by the concrete poets and the artists associated with film. Nonetheless, as a direct critique of the then-current reality, none of Gil’s songs from the era compare except perhaps “Coragem pra suportar,” which documents the struggles of newly arrived immigrants to the urban landscape from the *sertão*.

A far less critical and violent perspective, that of what Dunn calls a modern-day carefree Brazilian *flâneur*, is present in Caetano Veloso’s “Alegria, alegria” (recorded 1967) and is found on the same record which includes “Tropicália.” Musically, it is a clear example of the syncretism Veloso himself has described as being defining of Tropicalist thought and art, consciously departing from the then-current established paradigms of MPB. Backed up by the Argentine expatriate rock group The Beat Boys, the song, a variant of the traditional Brazilian *marcha*, includes distorted electric guitars and electric organ, elements which were not present in the example from Gilberto Gil above. Because of the divide between different camps regarding what MPB should be and the disdain for the Jovem Guarda’s rock stylings, this in itself was a sonic assault for audiences at the 1967 TV Record song festival in which the song was debuted. As Dunn notes:

Veloso was jeered when he first performed during the eliminatory rounds with the Argentine rock band The Beat Boys. The audience reacted against the presence of a foreign rock group on stage with a young Bahian performer who had just released his first LP of bossa nova songs [a year before]. At that time, the electric guitar was still regarded by many cultural nationalists as a sign of cultural “alienation.” The very presence of a rock group suggested Veloso’s affiliation with the Jovem Guarda. Yet he succeeded in winning over an initially hostile audience during the eliminatory round and was received enthusiastically during the finals (*Brutality Garden*, 65).

The song became a phenomenal success in the latter months of 1967, opening the door for what would follow during the pivotal year of 1968.

The song itself documents the plethora of images that bombard the urban subject. The experience of the walk through the city fills the *flâneur*'s eyes with colors, surrounded by pictures and names while drinking a Coca-Cola—an example *par excellence* of the influence of the United States' economic imperialism on tastes abroad.¹⁷³ Veloso himself states of the use of the *flâneur* and Coca-Cola in the song:

It was a way of placing the listener simultaneously near and far from the vision of the world held by the character, who says in the song: "I'm going." Among the images, that of Coca-Cola seemed to define the composition: new and appearing there almost as if by chance, Coca-Cola assured that "Alegria, alegria" would go down in history. (100)

The collage of clashing images which he experiences relays the listener to their sources in the media and their specific means: observing magazine covers and newspaper headlines including space ships, guerrillas (likely not the Brazilian variety as the movement was just beginning), advertisements, the atomic bomb and French sex symbol Brigitte Bardot. As we shall see in greater detail ahead, *Zero* utilizes layout of the newspaper to convey its reality with headlines corresponding to the different fragments that compose the novel. Also, the similar imagery drawn from the mass media is present as well including different sex symbols and astronauts. Coca Cola also plays a role in the life of the main character José Gonçalves as he becomes a slogan writer for bottle caps during the short period of time he attempts to lead a "normal" life. Notably, it is the only "decent" job he is ever able to find.

In the song, the reference to the regime's presence is also clear, as the *flâneur* is walking unconcerned without the identification ("sem documento") that could be demanded at any given moment. "Caminhando contra o vento" can be read in a literal sense of a pleasant late spring breeze or as the

¹⁷³ Santiago points out that the youth and children of the post-World War II era were referred to as "Coca-Cola boys"—"the perfect target[s] to achieve the change in the habits of entertainment and leisure" (120). A whole sector of the population who, if we recall Dorfman and Mattelart's main argument, would also be ripe for ideological reprogramming.

opposing winds of the regime which could theoretically stymie his progress. Dunn notes that the song, with its evident similarities to Jovem Guarda rock, has a greater consciousness of “the fragmented experience of urban life,” and that:

He [the wandering narrator of the song] *exhibits little interest in ideological struggle and armed conflict*, reflecting instead [perhaps autobiographically for Veloso at the time] on an impending marriage and opportunities to sing on TV. He lives “without books and without guns/without hunger, without a phone/ in the heart of Brazil.”¹⁷⁴ *Individual desires and preoccupations obscure collective struggle*, while [in the song] music loses its redemptive meaning, serving only to “console” him (*Brutality Garden*, 66, emphasis mine).

We can glean a certain degree of apathy from the narrator—precisely the type of apathy and disengagement that the movement and other artists associated with it sought to provoke. The narrator of the song can reflect the listener him/herself, engaging the new realities which would settle in prohibiting group political activity and emphasizing the “me first” byproduct of a consumerist society that is present in Veloso’s in “Baby” which playfully reels off a list of products that the listener “needs” with the refrain “você precisa.” We can also read it to mask a degree of disillusionment and latent nihilism present among the opposition to the regime created by the promise of an era unfulfilled. For the politically engaged from the left, this apathy was never an option. For others, as the historic inequalities and lack of opportunities became accentuated under the repressive regime, the apathy turned to rage, not only filling the ranks of the armed guerrilla cells but also exploding the crime rate. As we shall see ahead, this is a fundamental theme in *Zero* as is the resistance to join a collective, ideological struggle.

Gil and Veloso’s “Panis et Circensis,” again recorded twice, once on the Tropicália record-manifesto of the same name and on the first Os Mutantes record, alludes to the regime’s use of television

¹⁷⁴ The original Portuguese lyrics read: “Sem livros e sem fuzil/Sem fome, sem telefone/No coração do Brasil.”

as a means of distraction and appeasement of the general public to foster apathy.¹⁷⁵ Beside the public spectacles already present in Brazilian Carnival and other local celebrations, the regime had the ever-growing television market at its disposal, with sensationalist yellow journalism, ongoing reports of the United States' space program, and music variety programming, among other things, providing the necessary distractions on a daily basis. The Tropicalists' insertion into the music variety programming and their having their own show starting in late 1968 brought greater attention and scrutiny to their two leading figures, Gil and Veloso. The disconnect between what was occurring outside and the spectators in their dining rooms is the evident contrast conveyed in the song. This, of course, was a strategy put in place by the regime itself. The song is again a varied collage of sounds: borrowing from production values found in the Beatles recordings from 1967 (*Sgt. Pepper* and *Magical Mystery Tour*), and incorporating *musique concrète*,¹⁷⁶ as part of the tapestry behind the rhythmically complex, joyful vocals of Os Mutantes. The quality of the vocals, at times sounding like a complex children's song, again belies the message: the apathy and lack of engagement of the public who are not shaken out of their apparent stupor by anything—whether it be literal or figurative lions and tigers in the gardens, a murder in broad daylight on a busy street, or the leaves of the dream plant ready to be plucked:

Eu quis cantar
 Minha canção iluminada de sol
 Soltei os panos sobre os mastros no ar
 Soltei os tigres e os leões nos quintais
 Mas as pessoas na sala de jantar
 São ocupadas em nascer e morrer

Mandei fazer
 De puro aço luminoso um punhal
 Para matar o meu amor e matei
 Às cinco horas na avenida central

¹⁷⁵ The original Latin phrase “panem et circensis” was coined by the Roman satirist Juvenal (55-60? A.D.- 127) in 100 A. D. in reference to how the ruling classes appeased the masses by distracting or diverting them from contemplating their real issues at hand: their own subjugation.

¹⁷⁶ *Musique concrete* is an avant-garde form of composition developed in France by composer Pierre Schaeffer after World War II. The technique involves assembling various natural and industrial sounds that can then be manipulated electronically, lengthened, shortened, put into loops, etc. The Beatles' use of the technique was emulated by many artists in rock and is a common technique employed in many of the Tropicália recordings.

Mas as pessoas na sala de jantar
São ocupadas em nascer e morrer

Mandei plantar
Folhas de sonho no jardim do solar
As folhas sabem procurar pelo sol
E as raízes procurar, procurar

Mas as pessoas na sala de jantar
Essas pessoas na sala de jantar
São as pessoas da sala de jantar
Mas as pessoas na sala de jantar
São ocupadas em nascer e morrer

The concern lies with the extremes of life, birth and death, ignoring the in-between which has grown empty—an allusion to the apathetic, disengaged public unaware of its own standing within its own existence. Eduardo Bessa, in studying the role of television in the work of Brandão, explains that: “O telespetacor procura, então, olhar a realidade através dos óculos da TV, e o meio torna-se um instrumento de despersonalização, levando os homens a sossobrarem em formas de comportamento inspiradas em modelos estereotipados de ação” (59). He adds, quoting Theodor Adorno, that television’s role of alleviating the tensions of the world as well as the aspect of depersonalization: “...age como costumam agir os estados totalitários, pois toda sua ação busca a centralização e estandardização” (59). As such, the emphasis put by the regime on expanding the reach of television in Brazil is further understood as a true means of attempting to control and placate the public—potentially undermining seeds of unrest preemptively in establishing a passive television culture.

Tom Zé’s “Parque Industrial,” included on both the *Panis et Circensis* LP and Zé’s own first LP titled *Grande Liquidação* (1968), is another poignant reflection on the changing times, mocking the regime’s idea of progress and modernity. Zé’s own recording of the song is an outstanding example of pop music as Pop Art. It also contains elements absent in the other rendition, including an errant circus music quotation of “God Bless America” on xylophone to begin which soon begins to clash with dissonant sounds produced by a rock band (Os Brazões), a parodic march section which, appropriately, would be just as home in a commercial jingle touting the ease of use of a new product, before launching into its satirical recounting of “progress” with, among other things, the pomp and circumstance under a

“retouched” or “refinished” blue sky, the moralist magazine enumerating a movie star’s sins, and, again, the paperbound blood bank that is the omnipresent, sensationalist yellow press:

É somente requestrar
E usar,
É somente requestrar
E usar,
Porque é made, made, made, made in Brazil.
Porque é made, made, made, made in Brazil.

Retocai o céu de anil
Bandeirolas no cordão
Grande festa em toda a nação.
Despertai com orações
O avanço industrial
Vem trazer nossa redenção.

Tem garota-propaganda
Aeromoça e ternura no cartaz,
Basta olhar na parede,
Minha alegria
Num instante se refaz

Pois temos o sorriso engarrafado
Já vem pronto e tabelado
É somente requestrar
E usar,
É somente requestrar
E usar,
Porque é made, made, made, made in Brazil.
Porque é made, made, made, made in Brazil.

A revista moralista
Traz uma lista dos pecados da vedete
E tem jornal popular que
Nunca se espreme
Porque pode derramar.
É um banco de sangue encadernado
Já vem pronto e tabelado,
É somente folhear e usar,
É somente folhear e usar.

The reference to the “happiness” brought by “garota-propaganda” on the wall also touches upon what critic/philosopher Eduardo Subirats has termed virtual culture, within which forms of perception and communicative interaction are mediated by the mass media and electronic communication. As he explains: “No solamente trata del empobrecimiento de la experiencia humana o de la desrealización del

sujeto. Se trata también de su sustitución por las técnicas y estéticas de producción de la realidad” (*Culturas virtuales* 13). Zé’s observations echo the apathy and distraction shown in “Panis et circensis” while adding the element of reality and culture being experienced in a fundamentally different way—a second-hand, mediated reality in which notions of nationalist purity untouched by popular, urban media culture are gone. Furthermore, the song satirizes the regime’s efforts to sell its own ideological wares, touting foreign, prepackaged forms of modernity to be adopted, reheated and used, whether they are in fact “made in Brazil” or not. The critique is not unlike what Eduardo Bessa states about Brandão’s thoughts on television and television advertisements: “A percepção deles está próxima da crítica contra a propaganda de [Max] Horkheimer e [Theodor] Adorno, que vêem nela um instrumento de dominação que vive apontando saídas falsas e usando a mentira como seu principal instrumento.” (73).¹⁷⁷ To these points we can also add a comment on the *modernistas* opposition to adopting foreign culture by simply reheating it for home (Brazilian) use—a practice which is mocked by extension in the song. The last suggestion of “folhear e usar” also goes directly to the problem posed by Roberto Schwarz years later in his essays “Misplaced Ideas” (*Ideias fora do lugar*) regarding the basic shortcomings of the premises of the foreign thought upon which key portions of Brazilian culture are founded. One last point worth noting here is that “garota propaganda” was the name of the Maurice Capovilla’s 1968 cinema novo film adaptation of

¹⁷⁷ *Zero* has numerous examples of this critique of television and specifically the government’s use of it to convey a dishonest image of what the regime actually stood for and how it in fact acted. As the following irony-laden fragment, headlined as “Meios de Comunicação” clearly conveys:

“Às 23 horas, como faz todos os dias, o Presidente apareceu na televisão, cortando a transmissão de futebol. Alto, olhos claros, ar paternal, jeito de avô, bonzinho, voz pausada, tranqüila (Como é bom esse homem, como é bom esse homem, como é bom esse homem: frações de segundos, os letreiros surgiam na tela: subliminal).

Às 23,04, o Presidentie bom-magnânimo-liberal, ergueu a mão direita e abenCoou o seu povo, o povo de todo o país (ame-O). “Durma bem, minha boa gente”. A população fez o sinal-da-cruz, e agradeceu. (190)”

This sort of group-think type of brainwashing is, of course, what is also criticized in the song “Panis et Circensis” discussed above.

Brandão's novel *Bebel que a Cidade Comeu* (also published in 1968) for which the author himself wrote the screenplay.¹⁷⁸

There are, of course, numerous other examples regarding Tropicália music's assessment of the then-contemporary state of affairs in Brazil. Arguably, there is no other pop music anywhere that delves as deeply into national identity, history, musical and cultural heritage, and the new challenges of modernity brought about by the mass-media driven culture nor which disavows common notions of political wisdom, and resists the heavy hands of dictatorship than Tropicália. Indeed, as Charles Perrone and Juan E. De Castro both iterate, the Tropicalists helped change the perception of the pop singer to that of a serious artist and public intellectual who participated in the sociopolitical mobilizations and debates about the direction of the arts (De Castro, 67). All that while breaking new ground in the artistic scope of pop music and bringing about changes in Brazilian music and culture that are still palpable today. As Caetano Veloso reflects:

We had not attained socialism, had not even found its human face; neither had we entered the Age of Aquarius or the Kingdom of the Holy Ghost; we had not overcome the West, had not rooted out racism or abolished sexual hypocrisy. But things would never be the same as they had been. (306)

It is also important to note here that of all the Tropicália music, none has more affinities with *Zero*, as we shall see in detail ahead, as Tom Zé's *Grande Liquidação*.

Tropicália: Temporal and Conceptual Definitions and Limits of the Movement

Critics differ in how wide the scope of the Tropicalist label is and how long the movement existed as such. For Dunn, perhaps the United States' foremost scholar on the topic, the movement only existed in 1967-1968, ostensibly ending with the December 27th, 1968 arrest and subsequent exile to

¹⁷⁸ Maurice Capovilla (b. 1936) was a colleague of Brandão's at the *Última Hora* newspaper in the 1960s. Brandão himself contributed the screenplay for the film. The film, according to the state sponsored film website Programadora Brasil, like Rocha's *Terra em Transe* from the previous year, puts into question the notion of "povo" (the people) and "povo de verdade" (the true people) as defined by the nationalist left.

London in 1969 of Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil. He also declares that “In fact, Tropicália only coalesced as a self-conscious movement in the field of popular music” (*Brutality Garden*, 85). He continues noting that other artists and mediums (Rocha, Oiticica, etc.) that came to be associated with the Tropicalist label only did so after the musical movement had gained notoriety as such. Dunn acknowledges the fact that the Tropicalist aesthetic continued to inform Brazilian popular music and other arts but that the movement as such ended. Other critics such as Carlos Basualdo, Ivana Bentes and Caetano Veloso himself, among others, trace its demise to 1972—the year Veloso and Gil returned from their exile—by when, as Basualdo explains: “The repressive character of the Brazilian dictatorship had ended up fracturing the collective dimension of the Tropicalist experience” (22). Veloso himself wanted no leadership role upon his return and acknowledged in an interview to the conservative magazine *Veja* in a 1972 interview that there no longer was hope in organizing people around an ideal—definitively ending the movement for all intents and purposes.

Nonetheless, given the lasting influence well beyond 1968 of the aesthetic and political statements made by the movement and examples conforming to its principles between 1969 and 1972, my own position aligns with that of Bente who approaches the movement and other artistic manifestations of the period as a series of common language practices and themes put into use to create the wider spectrum of Tropicalist art. In her article “Multitropicalism, Cinematic Sensation, and Theoretical Devices”, Bente provides us with some important theoretical tools with which to approach Ignácio de Loyola Brandão’s *Zero* in relation to Tropicália and as a key manifestation of some of its aesthetic principles in another medium. Bente’s approach also provides us with a concise inventory of some of the mechanisms put into practice in Tropicalist music and other related fields of the era as well as being techniques employed by Brandão in *Zero*:

[W]e are interested here in these language practices: carnivalization, parody, allegory, meta-language, fusion, collage, polyphony, camera-character, shock and a new relationship with the spectator. These procedures go beyond the common themes and characters of the fields of cinema, music and theater. The relationship between linguistic practices and the historical

context is what enables a productive approximation of Tropicalism, Anthropophagy, *Chanchada*,¹⁷⁹ cinema novo, cinema marginal and television (100).

It is with this approach in mind that I view *Zero* as a piece of the Tropicalist/Pan-Tropicalist mosaic. Furthermore, there are some direct affinities I will explore with the Tropicalist music and its avant-garde aesthetic pedigree in general and the music of Tom Zé's *Grande Liquidação* in particular. Up to now, *Zero* has not been considered as a reflection of the Tropicalist movement despite being created in the era. There is a variety of reasons for this, of course, not the least of which is the fact that it was not published in Brazil until several years later, thus removing it temporally from the immediate *zeitgeist* which existed in the moment of its creation. Nonetheless, I have shown numerous aspects of Tropicalism and the artistic movements that nurtured it precisely to show its affinities to the movement, though it was not a part of the movement *per se*.

Ignácio de Loyola Brandão: A Chronicler of the Times

Ignácio de Loyola Brandão (b. 1936) is unlike the other authors I have discussed thus far concerning any connection to rock. On the surface, that connection appears to be lacking as Brandão came of age before rock had much influence in Brazil and Brazilian cultural production. However, *Zero: Romance Pre-histórico*, written in 1969, is very much a product of its time, expressing the *zeitgeist* of the times in much the same, at times even far more critical, way as the Tropicalist movement. From the beginning, Brandão's literary endeavors were in touch with the times. After publishing his first volume of short stories *Depois do sol* (1965), critic José Octávio Guizzo in 1965 observes that "Quando fala na primeira pessoa, Ignácio de Loyola Brandão é a própria geração de nossa época" (Silverman, 213). With this in mind, it is important to consider *Zero* not only is in touch with its times as an artistic protest-reaction-resistance-denunciation of the repressive military regime and all of the violence that was unleashed in the era, but also reflects aesthetic and thematic affinities as well as the points enumerated by Bente in expanding the scope of Tropicalist research. Of course, as we have seen, rock is a key

¹⁷⁹ *Chanchadas* were musical comedy films popular in Brazil from the 1930s to the 1950s.

component that enters the discussion with Tropicália and Brandão's inclusion in this study. While we have spoken at length up to now about the role of rock and the formation of personal and artistic identity for the writers in the previous chapters, that is not the case here. Regarding identity, *Zero* is focused on the larger questions of the seemingly paradoxical elements of Brazilian national identity and culture, highlighting the radical contrasts, disparities and juxtapositions found therein in 1960s Brazil and notions of *brasilidade*—concerns we have also noted to be crucial in the formation of the Tropicália aesthetic and ethos. All of these enumerated aspects seemed further exaggerated within the context of the military regime, its use of the mass media to convey their official, alternate version of reality and its perpetuation of Brazil's historical inequalities—points highlighted in depth in the novel in ways impossible within the pop song medium.

Zero, as I mentioned, was written in 1969, but in part due to the increased censorship and scrutiny present after the enactment of the Costa da Silva regime's Ato Institucional Número 5 (AI-5) on December 13, 1968, was not published until 1974 in translation in Italy.¹⁸⁰ A year later, the first Brazilian edition appeared. It was soon censored when the Ministry of Justice alleged that the novel was a “atentado à moral e aos bons costumes” (Sá, 52). This did not occur before the first edition sold out, a second was printed, won various prizes, and began to circulate clandestinely in different illicit duplicated formats until it was finally “liberated” for full on publication and circulation in 1979. Twenty-eight editions have been printed since. Despite the fact that by all accounts literature was not scrutinized as much as television, film or even pop music, the new restrictions imposed by the regime did lead to many books being banned, bookstores and publishing houses closing shop. As a result, in 1969 it was clearly not enough to transform Brazil into simply a “país da América Latíndia” and have São Paulo change to “São Maulo” to avoid the type of scrutiny the criticism contained in the novel was sure to attract when its content was so clearly drawn from the quotidian reality being experienced at the time. The caustic

¹⁸⁰ The translation was a part of series called “I Narratori” by the Feltrinelli publishing house. The series highlighted the work of other important writers from both Americas, such as American James Baldwin, Gabriel García Márquez, and João Guimarães Rosa.

criticisms of dictatorship, the mocking of the capitalist goals and mechanisms of said regime, attacking the church's stance and close relationship with the dictatorship (policing women's sexuality even after marriage while turning a blind eye to rampant torture and executions), and the tragically nihilistic representation of a dystopic Brazil were too risky for any publisher in 1969.¹⁸¹ Officially, the reason given the author was the difficulty in printing the book with its innovative use of typography and page layout, incorporation of diagrams, onomatopoeic comic book exclamations drawn from Pop Art (e. g. PAM! or BOOM! in large, different, oblique type), and extensive, mostly metafictional, footnotes. Mairim Linck Piva explains: "A recusa de algumas editoras pederia vir acompanhada da justificativa de que, por implicar o uso de diferentes caracteres gráficos, o texto atingiria um custo de produção elevado, o que seria um inconveniente para a comercialização" (55). The visually engaging aspects, apart from being a clear articulation of a Pop Art mechanism, are a direct link to Brandão's career as a journalist for São Paulo's *Última Hora* newspaper and the graphic palimpsest of signs conveyed by the printed newspaper page—hence the novel's fragmentary and optically dynamic construction. The fragmentary and optically dynamic construction reflect the palimpsest of the urban experience represented in the novel as well. This sort of expression, we can recall, is also at the heart of Caetano Veloso's "Alegria, alegria"

¹⁸¹ These fears were furthered with the January 26th, 1970 passing of Decreto Lei 1077 which targeted the publishing industry and sought: "proteger a instituição da família, preservar-lhe os valores (sic) éticos e assegurar a sadia e digna da mocidade; Considerando que se tem generalizado a divulgação de livros que ofendem frontalmente à moral comum; Considerando que tais publicações[...]insinuam o amor livre e ameaçam destruir os valores morais da sociedade brasileira; Considerando o emprêgo (sic) desses (sic) meios de comunicação obedece a um plano subversivo, que põe em risco a segurança nacional" (Reimão, 123). The quotation of the law, extracted from Sandra Reimão's *Repressão e resistência: censura a livros ana Ditadura Militar*, also echoes the decrees mocked by Brandão throughout *Zero*—decrees that point out the degree of absurdity fostered by censorship, particularly when the hypocrisy behind their moralist stance is exposed. In her study, Reimão details the inconsistent, arbitrary nature of the censorship of books—oftentimes having censored books continue to sit on store shelves because of lack of government manpower for policing the censorship decrees. These types of laws, coupled with the effect of the AI-5, nonetheless had a chilling effect and led to the situation of having clandestine book warehouses such as the one represented in *Zero*. *Zero* was, of course, censored after its initial publishing in 1975 and reprinting in 1976 because of the content, as Reimão explains which displayed: "personagens portadoras do complexo, vícios e taras [...] delinquência, suborno, latrocínio e homicídios, sem qualquer referência a sanções [...] A pornografia foi largamente empregada [...] e são feitas rápidas alusões aos responsáveis pelo destino do Brasil e ao trabalho censório" (70).

which we analyzed previously. The use of this technique also links Brandão the aforementioned concrete poets of São Paulo.

In his 1980 article “Escribir bajo los ojos de la censura (Tres novelas brasileñas)” Emir Rodríguez Monegal makes several key points on the role of the novelist in times of great censorship, as was the case in 1969 Brazil. The novelist’s role changed to tell the stories that the censors wanted to suppress and the moral censors wished to sweep under the rug away from public view. In essence, the writer of fiction’s role changes to that of chronicler of the times. Because of this function, the novelist’s craft changes by no longer approaching their art in purely literary terms because of their new role as purveyors of a fiction that is the only place where the censored news can be obtained, albeit *à clef*.

In an interview with *Discutindo Literatura* available on the author’s own website, Brandão confirms as much in detail:

Na época da ditadura eu via amigos sendo presos, morrendo, desaparecendo, sendo torturados. Via o País convulsionado com a luta armada e a repressão. Trabalhei em um jornal, a *Última Hora*, que foi visado, ameaçado, arruinado. Vivíamos em sobressalto com os atos terroristas, com os assaltos a banco (desapropriações, como se dizia), com a possibilidade de ao abrir a porta de sua casa dar com a polícia. O que eu podia fazer? Não era do meu temperamento ir para a luta armada. E decidi escrever o livro que retratasse tudo o que vivíamos. Guardei tudo o que na *Última Hora* a censura proibia. Enchi gavetas com entrevistas, reportagens, ensaios, fotos, caricaturas, cartuns. Era um Brasil que o leitor não tinha podido conhecer. Decidi transformar aquele material em literatura...Com poucas exceções, com os fluxos de consciência de alguns personagens, nada no *Zero* foi inventado. Se alguém, hoje, quer saber como foram aqueles anos, pode ler *Zero*...Os relatos chegavam e eram enviados para a imprensa estrangeira. Tive vários em mãos, copiei alguns no meu livro. Havia, apesar de tudo, por todos os lados, uma reação, uma resistência. (2)

In terms of the cultural and artistic field, *Zero* also provides us with a glimpse at the different aesthetic and political considerations concerning artists in Brazil in the late 1960s. These concerns and

considerations were also shared by the Tropicalists in their ultimately successful attempt at creating the next evolutionary step in Brazilian music which reflected the postmodern, globalized, mass media driven reality that was taking shape.

To be sure, Ignácio de Loyola Brandão can be considered amongst the first exponents of a postmodern literature in Brazil. Indeed, he meets certain key criteria laid out by Silviano Santiago in his essay on the postmodern narrator when he posits that: “the postmodern narrator is the one who extracts himself from the narrated action in a manner similar to a reporter or spectator. He narrates the action as spectacle that he watches (literally or not) from the audience...He does not narrate as an ‘actant’” (134). As we have seen from the previous quote from Brandão himself, he was actually a privileged observer privy to information not readily available to the public because of the censorship and did not want to get involved in the armed struggle. We can also make this connection of Santiago’s to the narrator of Caetano Veloso’s “Alegria, alegria,” whose position is both within and outside of the sphere of action he comments and reports upon. It also becomes clear that his mode of action was writing instead of the front lines of the armed conflict that had developed as an underground resistance to the iron-fisted Costa e Silva regime and its draconian laws such as the AI-5. Santiago, referring to Walter Benjamin’s three stages of historical evolution of the narrator explains that by the third stage of evolution (which Benjamin devalued), the narrator is serving the function of: “... a journalist, that is, he who only transmits the information through narrating, since he writes not to narrate the action of his own experience, but what happened to x or y in such and such a place at such and such a time” (134). *Zero*, of course, is not reduced to Brandão simply fictionalizing censored events he accumulated as a journalist. Brandão also inserts the narrator into the situations he recounts with often ironic, satirical commentary introduced via footnotes. Other times these footnotes serve to add other key information or to offer the reader an alternate way of reading the episodes, allowing for multiple possibilities of what is “real” in the represented world. The simultaneous distance and presence of the narrator in this sense, mimicking an ironic editorial voice of a journalist-commentator, accentuates the nature of a mediated reality where the “real” is in the end a construct of language. So while the postmodern narrator, according to what we’ve

extracted from Santiago, as a non-actant no longer narrates what they have experienced themselves, he is free to comment upon the narration how he sees fit. In *Zero*, this serves two key functions: making clearer the ineludible layer of subjectivity inherent in any representation while also providing a space for humor that through the first half of the novel, mitigates the sordid reality and the horrifying events that occur within it.

Of course, the disregard for convention that exemplifies postmodern art and thought is present in Brandão's work as are the characteristics of postmodernism laid out by Pereira which we quoted in the introduction: affinities with the other media, the multiplicity of voices, the ironic and often caustic social and political critiques, as well as the experimentation with vernaculars drawn from other media. René Ceballos reaffirms these points explaining that in *Zero* that the juxtaposition and superimposition of different types of text, pictograms, etc. are used to great effect to bring the novel closer to other media, deconstructing traditional forms employed in novels and communication, and executing a transcoding which draws from all types of discourse without regard to its original source (65-66). Ceballos also explains that it is precisely *Zero*'s fragmentary construction which allows for the abrupt inclusion of different types of text. The fact that these types of text are employed in conjunction with intertexts from different media, Ceballos argues, makes it a *plurimedial* text. I would add that the techniques and references of which Brandão makes use also tie into the transposition mechanism utilized in Pop Art and in *Tropicália*—both of which are also a *plurimedial*, given how they freely draw intertextually from different media, their consciousness of art that engages the erudite and the popular. Specifically in *Tropicalia*'s case we can add its use of cinematic techniques and references, as well as its consciousness of its status within the realm *produssumo*.

Even a cursory look at *Zero* makes its assault on convention obvious. As Silverman notes: norms of punctuation are broken (the clearest example which is repeated being placing the question mark at the beginning of sentences which we saw earlier in a quote from the text); the aforementioned experimentation with graphics (drawing on the onomatopoeic comic book words as well as the pseudo-scientific diagrams which are interspersed throughout the text); orthographic excess and games with neo-

logisms or non-sensical deconstructions of words which harken back to the concrete poets; the unusually blunt, crass, and at times obscene vocabulary which breaks with notions of elitist, traditional literary decorum; and the extensive use of scatological references mixed with extreme, irrational violence (219).

Earlier Silverman explains that:

Zero utiliza, no ponto de vista da revista *Veja*, um “estilo pop-concreto.” Diz que Loyola “evita quase sempre a narrativa linear, preferindo esmiuçar a ação em pequenos itens ou quase capítulos, sempre intemporais, ligados por recursos que vão de *slogans* publicitários e *graffiti* até letras de músicas e expressões de gíria... (211)

With some of these points we can see the potency of the *zeitgeist*, particularly when considering that José Agustín and Parménides García Saldaña were employing some of the same techniques in Mexico in establishing the Onda. Save for the scatological references and the extreme nature of the violence involved in *Zero*, we can also see from these previous points, particularly perhaps the “estilo pop-concreto,” the clear connections with the aesthetic realm of Tropicália that we have demonstrated up to now. I have laid out the numerous aspects of Tropicalism and the artistic movements which nurtured it precisely to show *Zero*'s affinities to the movement, though it was clearly not a part of the movement *per se*. That said, Brandão was a journalist in São Paulo immersed in everything that was happening in the moment, was old friends with José Celso Martínez Corrêa who was associated nominally with the group, and participated within the Cinema Novo group as a screenwriter of films, notably the adaptation of his own *Bebel que a Cidade Comeu*. Despite being written in the immediate proximity and during in the era associated with Tropicalism, *Zero* has not been considered as a reflection of the movement. There are a variety of reasons for this such as those enumerated above, but another is the fact that it was not published in Brazil until several years later, removing it from being an immediate expression of the *zeitgeist*. However, as we shall see ahead, the connections to the movement are indeed evident.

Zero: Urban Postmodernity and Barbarism

*São, São Paulo meu amor
São, São Paulo quanta dor
São oito milhões de habitantes*

De todo canto em ação
 Que se agridem cortesmente
 Morrendo a todo vapor
 E amando com todo ódio
 Se odeiam com todo amor
 São oito milhões de habitantes
 Aglomerada solidão
 Por mil chaminés e carros
 Caseados à prestação
 Porém com todo defeito
 Te carrego no meu peito
 São, São Paulo
 Meu amor
 São, São Paulo
 Quanta dor
 Salvai-nos por caridade
 Pecadoras invadiram
 Todo centro da cidade
 Armadas de rouge e batom
 Dando vivas ao bom humor
 Num atentado contra o pudor
 A família protegida
 Um palavrão reprimido
 Um pregador que condena
 Uma bomba por quinzena
 Porém com todo defeito
 Te carrego no meu peito
 São, São Paulo
 Meu amor
 São, São Paulo
 Quanta dor
 Santo Antônio foi demitido
 Dos Ministros de cupido
 Armados da eletrônica
 Casam pela TV
 Crescem flores de concreto
 Céu aberto ninguém vê
 Em Brasília é veraneio
 No Rio é banho de mar
 O país todo de férias
 E aqui é só trabalhar
 Porém com todo defeito
 Te carrego no meu peito
 São, São Paulo
 Meu amor São, São Paulo
 Tom Zé

Zero's structure reflects the process by which Brandão created it—by collecting episodes censored for publication in *Última Hora*: “*Zero* nasceu também da censura. Eu era secretário do jornal. [...] E aí as primeiras coisas proibidas eu fui jogando na gaveta. [...] Tudo que está aí é coisa real e é o Brasil. E aí falei ‘dá para fazer um romance, dá para montar um romance’” (Reimão, 156-157). To these episodes he added fictional vignettes and interspersed other than more-current events of 1969. As such, the fragments and vignettes with accompanying headlines alternately follow the plot and provide plentiful asides which paint the narrator’s representation of the national context, flash back to the main characters’ respective pasts, create an allegorical subplot displaying the failings of the regime towards the poor, and provide commentary on the context and occurrences within the novel itself. To that, there is the important aforementioned inclusion of numerous diagrams, comic book exclamations and separate boxes of text which complement and interrupt the flow of the work in similar fashion to how photos, advertisements and other stories function in a newspaper.

The setting for the novel is “São Maulo” which he describes in terms similar to Tom Zé’s “São, São Paulo”:

Selva de asfalto—cidade desumana—metrópole voraz—comedora de gente—antro de neuróticos—túmulo de vidro—floresta de cimento armado—cidade que mais cresce no mundo—locomotiva puxando vinte vagões—o maior centro industrial de América Latíndia (212)

Its plot, only one of the many elements at work, can be summarized as follows. José Gonçalves, a former law student now living in “São Maulo” cannot find a good job. The beginning of the novel finds him working as a rat exterminator in a movie theater, while later he finds work as a writer of captions for Coca-Cola bottle caps. Despite the fact that he lives in a megalopolis, he finds himself, like the people in Tom Zé’s “São, São Paulo,” living in “aglomerada solidão,” alienated and isolated from the sea of humanity that surrounds him. He is only able to finally meet his wife, Rosa, through a service that places newspaper personal advertisements on their behalf. This is not only a clear example of the alienating, dehumanizing aspect of the megalopolis in all its cruel, obvious, ineludible splendor, but a variant of Tom Zé’s mocking of people marrying on television shows (“casam pela TV”) found in “São, São Paulo.” As

a result of their rushed and superficial courtship, it is plainly evident that, even before their marriage, they are undeniably incompatible. Rosa represents the consumerist mindset propagated by the mass media, wanting to be a housewife in her own house with all its trappings. José, while he does work to provide for them, is unmoved by such trappings being a frustrated free spirit stymied by his own unrealized expectations as well as those of consumerist modernity imposed upon him by his wife.

The fight for survival within the urban environment, already full of challenges on its own terms, is exacerbated by the phantasmagoric reach of the military regime whose presence encroaches more upon the lives of the citizens on a daily basis. José turns the aggressiveness and frustration he develops from his day-to-day survival towards his wife with whom he is in constant verbal and physical conflict—while at others they are having copious amounts of graphically depicted sex or living a more consumerist existence going to movies and out for pizza. This same aggressiveness and frustration felt towards his wife, greatly instigated by his obligation to provide for her, soon turn him into a thief and later into a nihilistic murderer. Because of his criminal activity, he is pursued by the authorities and simultaneously attracts the attention of the urban guerrillas who were robbing banks and committing acts of terrorism—the “*uma bomba por quinzena*” alluded to by Zé in “*São, São Paulo.*” Though he is ostensibly “apolitical” (another part of his nihilistic disposition to be sure), resisting the regime and not committing to the political cause of the “Comuns” (Communist urban guerrillas), he does join their cause as a decidedly un-idealistic mercenary/hit-man who aids the guerrillas in their heists and hunts down police and government figures. Eventually, his friend Átila, his acquaintance Héroi, and his neighbor Malevil, a student, also join the cell led by former medical student Gê—an obvious, if slightly transformed, avatar for the then-recently deceased Che Guevara.¹⁸² The fates they suffer at the hands of the regime’s torturers (one ironically nicknamed “*Ternurinha*”—the little tender one), the unbridled cruelty and violence perpetrated by both sides in their ongoing battle, as well as Rosa’s fate at the hands of a “pre-

¹⁸² The description of Gê in the novel leaves little doubt, as the Communist guerrillas: “*Seriam comandados por um guerrilheiro magro, barbudo, que fumava charuto...ele se formara em medicina e depois largara tudo*” (83).

modern” cult take up the last third of the novel as whatever playfulness is at work in the first parts disintegrates into a hopeless, nihilistic dystopia.

Zero: Portraits in Nihilism

The characters serve key functions in displaying specific critiques of life under the regime and their distinct natures provide us with the polyphony and subplots necessary to experience the incessant challenges posed within an urban jungle under siege by an ever more repressive and controlling government, as well as an ever more violent resistance. Regarding the treatment of the characters, we can recall Dunn’s point on Tropicalist songs reflecting “the quotidian desires and frustrations of “everyday people” living in the cities” (*Brutality Garden*, 3). This point is, of course, taken to extremes in the novel to accentuate the allegorical mechanisms at work. The characters are, in fact, anti or infra-heroes, whose shortcomings, delusions, rage and psychoses all play out tragically within their dystopic existence to the point in which they all become nihilistic.

In his article “The Problem of Nihilism: A Sociological Approach,” Meerten B. ter Borg explains that:

In its broadest connotation, to say one is nihilistic is to say that one has no authentic values, no real ends, that one’s whole existence is pure nothingness. If one denies this, then it is easy to unmask the values and ends one claims as untrue, unreal, and worthless. This critique can be directed at persons, but it can be extended easily to groups or even to society as a whole. People can see others as nihilistic, but also themselves. (2)

The characters and society in *Zero*, even Gê, are lacking in real ends, while most—and most obviously José—are lacking in authentic values. José’s nihilistic lack of faith in humanity is clear in a conversation with Gê about his lack of full commitment to the guerrillas: “Olha, Gê, você nunca vai entender. *Um grupo, pra mim, é um castelo de cartas. Soprou uma embaixo, vai tudo pro chão*” (188, emphasis mine).

Perhaps José’s only authentic value is that of uncompromising individualism, repeatedly affirming some form of the phrase “Quero ser, eu” (178). And yet, this potential value leads to nothing constructive within the restrictive confines imposed by an oppressive, iron-fisted dictatorship. The

relative meaninglessness of the individual on any significant level is accentuated by the opening sequence in *Zero* in which José himself is contrasted with the vast universe. The contrast is executed in two columns separated by a line which break down just how average and small José is in the larger scheme as compared to the vastness of the universe and its diverse components. For all intents and purposes, José himself is practically a “zero” in comparison.

Although it is not expressed on a conscious level, José searches for meaning in different realms—failing to find it in all of them. First there is José’s absolute lack of faith in the Catholic religion though it is a value his mother’s failed attempts to instill, as was the common social practice, during his upbringing. There is also an important connection to be made with the role of the church and the corrupt application of its principles within the novel, as they are accomplices to the regime’s atrocities and are key in counseling the regime as to what must be done to repress the public (particularly women’s sexuality) to “uphold their moral standards.” One of the many asides in the text titled “PENSAMENTO DO DIA” mocks this type of widespread failure, declaring: “Hoje mocinho, amanhã bandido, graças a Deus.” This sarcastic “graças a Deus” as well as the reasons for lack of faith are echoed in the lyrics to Gilberto Gil’s “Procissão” from his 1968 self-titled record which essentially question faith giving results in the earthly world and not after death:

Eles vivem pensando
 Aqui na Terra
 Esperando
 O que Jesus prometeu
 E Jesus prometeu
 Coisa melhor
 Pró quem vive
 Nesse mundo sem amor
 Só depois de entregar
 O corpo ao chão
 Só depois de morrer
 Neste sertão
 Eu também
 Tô do lado de Jesus
 Só que acho que ele
 Se esqueceu
 De dizer que na Terra
 A gente tem
 De arranjar um jeitinho

Pra viver
 Muita gente se arvora
 A ser Deus
 E promete tanta coisa
 Pro sertão
 Que vai dar um vestido
 Pra Maria
 E promete um roçadoPro João
 Entra ano, sai ano
 E nada vem
 Meu sertão continua
 Ao Deus dará
 Mas se existe Jesus
 No firmamento
 Cá na Terra
 Isso tem que se acabar

Perhaps nowhere is José's complete lack of faith in both a spiritual and earthly sense more evident than the "LIVRE ASSOCIAÇÃO" (one of many that comment upon occurrences in the novel) where he contemplates the possibility of having the child Rosa wants. It also expresses nihilism on a larger-scale social level:

Esse filho que Rosa quer, não pode nascer. Eu, também quero. Mas não, sei. Aqui, não tem hoje, nem amanhã. Não tem nada, só alguns instantes. Uma vida, não são instantes, é tudo. O tudo, aqui é a morte, amanhã. A prisão, a impossibilidade de meu filho ser alguma coisa, viver, amar. Impossibilidade de crescer, estudar (matam ele na escola), ter emprego, ter outros filhos. Medo, meu, de Rosa, dos meus vizinhos, geral. Medo pavor, receio. (190)

In a real sense, this reflects José's frustrations towards the direction that his own life had taken. The reference to the figurative prison within which the child would live also recall the "laço e cadeia" and "tropical melancholia" of living in "o fim do mundo" expressed by Gil and Torquato Neto in the previously discussed "Marginália II". In the grander scope of the novel, there are numerous ironic "Jaculatorias" (Prayers) that also are used for ironic ends.

To be sure, João's nihilism is not limited to a lack of faith in religion. After spending several days with a self-proclaimed guru, simply called "O Homem" in the carnivalesque community of attractions called Boqueirão and going through the entire program of personal transformation preached by

the guru, José emerges, for all intents and purposes, no better off in terms of dealing with his difficult reality nor transformed in any positive way. If anything, the experience, though it does awaken and affirm José's individuality, highlights the vacuousness of existence beyond the guru's walls. It is an existence that the guru himself, for all of his spiritual acumen and vision, does not fully comprehend because: "Ele nunca sai dessa barraca. Nunca, dia ou noite. Ele estuda, medita, conversa. O mundo vem até aí. ? Praque sair. Ele conhece o mundo, através das pessoas" (27). A larger, allegorical statement on how a faith can corrupt perception is evident here and while its focus on inner development (presented ironically in a psychedelic prose in the novel) could potentially help and enlighten the individual in other circumstances, the harsh reality outside trumps whatever benefits it may offer. The episode also ironically mocks the many trends of spiritual transformation that emerged in the late 1960s following the Beatles' experiences with the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in 1967. In fact, it is the Beatles' association with "O Homem" in the novel that attracts the attention of José's friend, Átila, and leads to the encounter.

José is educated, having studied law previously, and becomes well read during his stay with Átila in a warehouse which houses books banned by the government. Through this experience, José and Átila, like the author himself, become fans of American author F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940), who becomes an interspersed reference throughout. While reading does indeed expand his horizons, the implicit danger of exercising thought in the context of a repressive regime is highlighted in an aside by the narrator under a small subheading titled "Sucata" (scrap metal or junk) which also shows one of the more restrained examples of experimentation in punctuation and graphic presentation found in the novel:

JOSÉ CHEGA DE LER ESSES LIVROS / VOCÊ JÁ LEU MAIS DE MIL VOCÊ NÃO É MAIS
 AQUELE JOSÉ QUE ENTROU NESSE DEPÓSITO / BESTEIRA LER ESSAS COISAS SÓ
 COMPLICA A VIDA / NÃO DEIXE AS MILÍCIAS REPRESSIVAS SABEREM QUE ESTES
 LIVROS EXISTEM AQUI / VOCÊ JÁ ESTEVE UMA VEZ NAS INVESTIGAÇÕES / SE FOR
 OUTRA VAI SER O SEU FIM/ VOCÊ DESPARECE COMO TANTA GENTE ANDA
 DESAPARECENDO / MAS VOCÊ NÃO SABE ESTAS COISAS ELAS NÃO SÃO

PUBLICADAS ELES NÃO DEIXAM PUBLICAR / PÁRA JOSÉ / PARA DE LER ESSES
LIVROS: sucata (53)

The direct allusion to censorship and policing thought are clear from this passage, as is the role of the novelist suggested by Rodríguez Monegal and Reimão as that of conduit of suppressed knowledge to the public. The quote also conveys the dangers of actually knowing and perceiving more beyond potentially changing the individual into someone with greater consciousness of the world at large. The very reason is, of course, that knowledge in the repressive environment can, indeed, complicate things should the individual be arrested and tortured—a concern of José’s later in the novel once he is involved with the Comuns asserting that it only takes one tortured prisoner folding to bring down the whole cell. Throughout the novel there are fragments that inform the reader of the steady stream of scientists and intellectuals who are on their way out of the country, leaving behind an intellectual *sertão* and a true void in thought.¹⁸³

Of course, other ideas that complicate things for José and other readers are those in the political realm—books which bore José and, despite having begun studies in law, which he does not understand completely. He also questions the words themselves, perhaps a nod from Brandão to the concrete poets, challenging the arbitrariness of determining their meaning and their formation:

José lendo, os romances terminados, sobrando os livros políticos. Chatos, ele não entende todos, mas lê, gosta de ver as palavras. José começa a se cansar das palavras, letras somadas, ? por que estas letras juntas querem dizer alguma coisa. ? E se ajuntar letras assim: çlutgrf. ? Isso é uma palavra. Cansado de ficar sentado em cima dos livros. Queria alguém que explicasse os livros políticos. Átila não queria saber, não se importava, vivia fumando, comendo ovos quentes, e ouvindo tangos. (49)

¹⁸³ A humorous example of this appears in one of the newspaper-styled interspersions in the text headlined as “O PROGRESSO DA CIÊNCIA” which shares that: “ ‘Nossa equipe de cientistas descobriu que as galinhas mais felizes botam ovos mais saborosos.’ (Interrompemos esta nota para uma comunicação oficial)” (157). This short vignette displays the regime’s media machine at work: providing frivolous information to the public in the name of “science” which is then interrupted by an official announcement.

Though it is not developed throughout the novel on any sort of theoretical level, there are numerous examples of concrete type wordplay and neologisms, as well as use of concrete techniques on the printed page. The question at hand seems perhaps to be more focused on questioning the very building blocks of knowledge and its utility in the repressive environment that does not value it or those who spread it. As such it comes as no surprise that, despite wanting to know more about the political books, José's quest for knowledge stops there as it would not be a tool to necessarily improve his situation the way he wishes—though because of his nihilist disposition it is unclear how that would occur anyway.

Regarding this final point, there are direct connections with three *Tropicália* songs. The first demonstrates *Tropicália*'s openness of absorbing influences: a tango (perhaps heard by Átila) recorded by Caetano Veloso in a faithful rendition in 1969 on his second Tropicalist LP. References to tango appear interspersed throughout the novel. This particular tango, Enrique Santos Discepolos' "El Cambalache" (meaning second hand furniture store in Lunfardo¹⁸⁴) from 1934 was made most famous by the iconic singer Carlos Gardel (1890-1935). The song, though originating from another time and another country, sums up the nihilistic, defeatist attitude which began to permeate the sectors of Brazilian society not benefited by the regime's economic policies and heightened controls—Veloso recorded it after his stint in prison before heading to England to his exile. There is much of José's nihilistic disposition found in the lyrics:

Que el mundo fue y será
 una porquería, ya lo sé.
 En el quinientos seis
 y en el dos mil, también.
 Que siempre ha habido chorros,
 maquiavelos y estafaos,
 contentos y amargaos, varones y dublés.
 Pero que el siglo veinte
 es un despliegue de maldá insolente,
 ya no hay quien lo niegue.
 Vivimos revolcaos en un merengue
 y en el mismo lodo

¹⁸⁴ Lunfardo is a dialect that emerged amongst the lower classes of Buenos Aires towards the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. Its presence is a constant in tango lyrics and it is an essential component of the tango culture.

todos manoseaos.
Hoy resulta que es lo mismo
ser derecho que traidor,
ignorante, sabio, chorro, generoso o estafador...
¡Todo es igual!
¡Nada es mejor!
Lo mismo un burro
que un gran profesor.
No hay aplazaos ni escalafón,
los ignorantes nos han igualao.
Si uno vive en la impostura
y otro roba en su ambición,
da lo mismo que sea cura,
colchonero, Rey de Bastos,
caradura o polizón.
¡Qué falta de respeto,
qué atropello a la razón!
Cualquiera es un señor,
cualquiera es un ladrón...
Mezclao con Toscanini
va Don Bosco y La Mignon,
Ringo Starr y Napoleón,
John Lennon San Martín...
Igual que en la vidriera
irrespetuosa
de los cambalaches
se ha mezclao la vida,
y herida por un sable sin remache
ves llorar La Biblia
junto a un calefón.
Siglo veinte, cambalache
problemático y febril...
El que no llora no mama
y el que no afana es un gil.
¡Dale, nomás...!
¡Dale, que va...!
¡Que allá en el Horno
nos vamo' a encontrar...!
No pienses más; sentate a un lao,
que a nadie importa si naciste honrao...
Es lo mismo el que labura
noche y día como un buey,
que el que vive de los otros,
que el que mata, que el que cura,
o está fuera de la ley...

Veloso's version only slight changes to the lyrics, adding notable Italian conductor in Arturo Toscanini¹⁸⁵ to replace Stravinsky from the original lyrics and the two Beatles, Ringo Starr and John Lennon. The message is clear: nothing matters. And while there is no way of knowing from the text if José heard this particular tango, there are numerous points within it which are inseparable from the criminal into which he develops, his general nihilistic disregard for virtually everything and the encouragement given in the song "Dale, nomás...Dale que vas" (Go ahead, go ahead you're on your way). Of particular note is "el que no afana es un gil" (he who doesn't steal is stupid), that it's the same to kill as to cure or live outside the law. Indeed, upon deciding to become a thief, José thinks of himself as an idiot for not having thought of being a thief before: "Besta, como você é besta, Zé Gonçalves. Besta, até no nome. Dividir. Ah, ah, i, i, i, ic, ic, ic. Até me deu solução. Se eu não tenho dinheiro. Se não tenho emprego para ganhar dinheiro. Roubo. Fácil. Roubo e se acabou" (132). At this point he abandons all his legal jobs (one of which, we'll recall, was writing slogans under Coca Cola bottle caps) and all semblance of the "normal" employment—all in order to provide the trappings of the consumerist life desired by his wife.

The development of José into a criminal is also reminiscent of another song by Tom Zé from *Grande Liquidação*: "Catecismo, Creme Dental e Eu." Early in the novel, José is portrayed as a frightened, relatively pusillanimous individual whose future acts of fearless criminality would seem impossible. The transformation from this state into his criminal role is echoed in the lyrics by Zé:

Nasci no dia do medo
 Na hora de ter coragem
 Fui lançado no degredo
 Diplomado em malandragem
 Caminho, luz e risco,
 Aflito,
 Xingo, minto, arrisco, tisco,
 E por onde andei
 Eu encontrei o bendito fruto em vosso dente,

¹⁸⁵ The inclusion of Toscanini (1867-1957) in Veloso's version is not casual in terms of making the song a statement about Brazil in 1969: Toscanini famously refused to conduct for Mussolini and Hitler in the 1930s for political reasons. Veloso singing a 35 year old tango as a type of protest song also says a great deal about his deflated state of mind after his two months as an uncharged political prisoner and reflects the attitude which affected the Tropicalists and other intellectuals as a whole as the regime's grip tightened further.

Catecismo de fuzil
E creme dental em toda a frente.

José, like the character in the song is exiled to marginality in his own land—his degree in criminality, presumably informed by the catechism of the gun. Teeth are traditionally symbolic of aggressive and defensive power—a sign of defense or threat in the wild. As symbol of power teeth were collected by shamans and warriors as a means of channeling the power of the animal from whom it is taken or the defeated enemy—drawing a parallel to anthropophagic rituals in which the victim’s essence and strength are consumed and assumed. The verse “bendito fruto em vosso dente” is a direct parody of the biblical passage “bendito é o fruto de vosso ventre,” further emphasizing the seemingly all-encompassing presence and power of the commercial promotion within a society in the process of industrializing and adopting new cultural norms. Given the urban, conflict-filled context presented by the songs on the record, the symbolic meaning of aggressive and defensive power can figure into its interpretation, particularly when noting that the catechism of the gun, the form of urban aggression par excellence, is what immediately follows. Teeth are also symbolic of vitality through their function in breaking down food for consumption. Transposed to the urban, consumerist context critiqued by Zé on the record, and the references to criminal activity, they can also be seen to symbolize that very context’s main means of survival: money. The toothpaste itself is an example of the modern accouterments available to those with enough means (by no means everyone in the urban jungle of São Paulo) in the urban setting. The song goes on to say the Brazilian family’s future will be one “do hálito puro” (of fresh breath) provided by the toothpaste—again a critique of the consumerist non-reality presented and sold by the media dishonestly promising “a better life” through consumption.

Zé’s “Sabor de Burrice” also reflects a bit of nihilism regarding the reach of knowledge, its value and how stupidity permeates virtually every facet of society. Perpetuated in universities, schools for the laurel-leaf crowned (louros) intellectual elites, and prevalent on both the left and the right politically, it is ultimately consecrated by television despite it conveying its message in grammatically perfect Portuguese:

Veja que beleza
 Em diversas cores
 Veja que beleza
 Em vários sabores
 A burrice está na mesa
 Ensinada nas escolas
 Universidade e principalmente
 Nas academias de louros e letras
 Ela está presente
 E já foi com muita honra
 Doutorada honoris causa
 Não tem preconceito ou ideologia
 Anda na esquerda, anda na direita
 Não tem hora, não escolhe causa
 E nada rejeita
 Veja que beleza
 Em diversas cores
 Veja que beleza
 Em vários sabores
 A burrice está na mesa
 Refinada, poliglota
 Ela é transmitida por jornais e rádios
 Mas a consagração
 Chegou com o advento da televisão
 É amigo da beleza
 Gente feia não tem direito
 Conferindo rimas com fiel constância
 Tu trazes em guarda
 Toda concordância gramaticadora
 Da língua portuguesa
 Eterna defensora

The song certainly shows some of the healthy skepticism adopted by the Tropicalists and their critiques of the role of the media in shaping public discourse, a means they intended to usurp. In *Zero*, Brandão exposes another side, the stupidity in the constant stream of official announcements by the regime on radio or television used in attempting to reshape the public's way of thinking, no matter how absurd. One example relates directly to the constant stream of intellectuals and scientists sent into exile by the regime and how they justified such actions: "O presidente e uma declaração: 'Quando a ciência subverte o homem e corrompe, é melhor ter um país sem ciência, atrasado'" (41). Tropicalists and Brandão's critiques of late 1960s Brazil go to the heart of this sort of thinking—indeed, it is worth remembering the

refrain to “Marginália II” when regarding this type of rhetoric and the action it spurs: “Este é o fim do mundo.”

Another key character in the novel is José’s friend, Átila. Átila displays a different type of emptiness in his nihilistic disposition and is a product of the virtual culture, once again using Subirats’ term, which alters the way in which reality is experienced, now fully framed by the paradigms established by the products of mass media. Subirats refers directly to the impoverishment of the human experience brought about by this phenomenon that, in turn, fosters the lack of authentic values explained by ter Borg regarding a key component of nihilist thought. Átila is a perfect example of this, and through his character, we again find a link to Tom Zé’s “Parque Industrial” which we have discussed previously in conjunction with Subirats’ ideas. Átila, in a very real sense within the novel, lives in a fantasy world constructed by the mass media. The reader learns this about him upon his introduction with a footnote regarding his girlfriend Carola: “Carola só existe em fotos de publicidade. Átila inventa tudo” (14), later reiterating that he is: “um sujeito que cria as namoradas” (27). Later, he falls in love with the image of a woman from “Holiday On Ice,” “Uma loira de plumas na cabeça e com patins. Os braços levantados na posição de vedete” (95). He tears down the poster and meticulously pieces it back together. He is so inspired by the image that he goes to meet the woman in the image. To Átila’s surprise, the woman also likes him, they dine together and find they have little to talk about except for “o Scott Fitzgerald.” This awkward encounter then leads Átila to the conclusion that he shares with José:

? Sabe, Zé. Tem uma coisa. Eu descobri uma coisa. Olha, eu gosto mais dela no cartaz. Muito mais. É mais bonita, mais boa, alegre, eu falo o que eu quero, em português mesmo. É genial, ela no cartaz, quietinha. Foi daquele jeito que eu me apaixonei, assim eu quero, que ela fique.
(96)

Átila’s character personifies the lines from Tom Zé’s “Parque Industrial” in reference to the women in advertisements (garota propaganda) and the role they can assume within a virtual culture like the one in which the character lives: “Tem garota propaganda/ Aeromoça e ternura no cartaz/ Basta olhar na parede/ Minha alegria/Num instante se refaz.” Though the specific model (a stewardess instead of an ice skater)

in the song is different, the mechanism at work is the same.

Átila joins José in his excursions with the Comuns, is eventually captured and is brutally tortured by the regime as they attempt to extract information about the cell. No longer can Átila live in his isolated, virtual, media-shaped reality. The torture scenes involving Átila are perhaps the most graphic and scatological in the whole novel—serving as the starkest of contrasts with his previous, mediated experiences. While being captured and tortured, Átila himself reveals his own nihilistic core and ignorance of what actually was happening with the Comuns and the desire to end his suffering: “(Por que não me matam de uma vez. Se eu soubesse o que querem, contava. Num tem quem num conte. Mas não sei nada, só saía com o Zé [José], *não tinha outro jeito de viver*:)” (262, emphasis mine). Átila’s eventual death and inhumation not only bring out an element of fantasy in the novel—Átila continues to sense after being dead and buried—it reemphasizes the stark contrast of a hypersensual (in the exaggeration of the senses, not in the sexual sense), immediately experienced reality and the mediated, virtual reality through which he experienced life before his capture, torture and execution:

Átila concebeu a morte. Enterrado, era a permanência. Conservava os sentidos: tacto, olfato, visão, audição, paladar. Morete, impossança diante dos bichinhos que corriam pelo seu corpo e boca já cheios de terra. Era perceber-se comido. Morte, mesmo, era o cheiro, terrível, atroz, excessivo, incômodo, invencível, infastável. Um cheiro espantoso, torvo, que ia ao fundo dele e vinha dele. Parecia que ele tinha nascido naquele momento, dentro do cheiro. Átila apodrecia. Estava se descompondo e sentia o cheiro terrulento da própria decomposição...queria gritar. Sua voz, não existia...Átila desapareceu e o cheiro (Átila) permaneceu. (272-273)

This passage conveys possible extremes of reality, the Átila of before who experienced everything virtually—the type of individual at whom many of the Tropicalist lyrics are directed; to the Átila who is reborn in death while experiencing his own corpse’s decomposition through touch, taste and smell—the three senses which are incommunicable through the means of the media which had shaped his paradigm before.

The ironically named character Malevil, though relatively minor in the grand scheme of the

novel, offers a more direct connection to Tropicália and specifically Caetano Veloso. Malevil is a student with nothing to do since the government's closure of the universities who eventually joins the cell of Comuns which includes José and Átila. One of the first things we learn about him is that he wants to go to the United States and his intentions there: “Vou buscar fitas gravadas. *É preciso atualizar a música deste país*” (124). We can recall Caetano Veloso's quote from 1966 stating that he wanted Brazilian music to take a step forward (see footnote 15, p. 17) and later the idea of drawing from the Beatles and Jimi Hendrix in the formation of the Tropicalist aesthetic in making this connection. Furthermore, he is described as having, like Veloso makes clear in his interviews of the time and in his autobiography, “um profundo senso cívico” (212).

Malevil, like Veloso, is also a musician with intentions of stirring things up and provoking the public as the following passage makes clear:

No banheiro tinha um vidro de álcool, ele passou no rosto. O conjunto Blue Devils tocava. Malevil jogou o álcool debaixo da mesa, riscou o fósforo. Todo mundo correu. Malevil foi para o palco, enquanto o fogo se espalhava. Ele pegou a guitarra elétrica e tentou tirar *Reach Out*, a música que ouvia Marilee Rush cantar. (276)

After literally starting a fire provoking the audience, Malevil usurps the stage a rock group whose name suggests that it is a Jovem Guarda group—a moment that is symbolic of Veloso and Tropicália's own ascent into the limelight. It is also significant that Malevil, like the Tropicalists, uses the group's very means (the electric guitar) for his own expression which, significantly, draws directly from a foreign vernacular: a psychedelized American soul music recorded by a pop singer (Marilee Rush) who was not known for that sort of combination.¹⁸⁶ Interestingly, Rush's producer's own treatment of the song, a 1967 hit for the Motown group the Four Tops transforms it and recontextualizes it in similar fashion to the

¹⁸⁶ Singer Marilee Rush (b. 1944) is best known as the singer of “Angel of the Morning,” an enormously successful pop hit in 1968. Her recording of the Four Tops' “Reach Out” is extremely unusual for her output, including a long (for pop song standards) psychedelic instrumental passage. She never had recorded anything like it before nor did she afterwards.

musical re-appropriations taking place amongst the Tropicalists. The lyrics, given the dystopic setting and chaos that leads up to and follows the passage in question, are also significant because, save for the refrain offering hope, there is a painful darkness from within expressed which echoes the feelings of desperation experienced by the characters:

Now if you feel that you can't go on (can't go on)□
 Because all of your hope is gone (all your hope is gone)□
 And your life is filled with much confusion (much confusion)□
 Until happiness is just an illusion (happiness is just an illusion)□
 And your world around is crumbling down, darlin□
 Reach out come on girl reach on out for me□
 Reach out reach out for me□
 I'll be there with a love that will shelter you□
 I'll be there with a love that will see you through
 When you feel lost and about to give up (to give up)□
 Cause your life just ain't good enough (just ain't good enough)□
 And your feel the world has grown cold (has grown cold)□
 And your drifting out all on your own (drifting out on your own)□
 And you need a hand to hold, darlin□
 Reach out come on girl reach out for me□
 Reach out reach out for me□
 I'll be there to love and comfort you□
 And I'll be there to cherish and care for you
 I'll be there to always see you through□
 I'll be there to love and comfort you□
 I can tell the way you hang your head (hang your head)□
 You're not in love now, now you're afraid (you're afraid)□
 And through the tears you look around (look around)□
 But there's no piece of mind to be found (no piece of mind to be found)¹⁸⁷□

Though Malevil seems to be driven throughout the text, his executing this song displays a bit of his own nihilistic hopelessness amidst the worsening situation which surrounded him—not unlike the cynical negativity found in Caetano Veloso's rendition of "El Cambalache." It should be noted that Veloso's version of "El Cambalache" was recorded during the same era as *Zero* was being written. In the text, as was the case with the Onda texts we saw in the first two chapters, the lyrics are not made explicit and the onus is on the reader to make the full connection on the meaning of the song's inclusion within the

¹⁸⁷ The lyrics are taken from:
http://www.oldielyrics.com/lyrics/the_four_tops/reach_out_ill_be_there.html

text.¹⁸⁸

Though there are numerous musical allusions in the text, the presence of rock and particularly of Tropicália are conspicuous in their absence save for brief mentions of the Beatles' "I Want To Hold Your Hand" (their first hit, 17) and "Carry That Weight" (from the 1969 LP *Abbey Road*, 244). Also, there is no mention of bossa nova either. The music mentioned is predominantly tangos and boleros whose nostalgic and melancholy essence hearken back to another more psychologically distant time from the contemporary modernity. Regarding Tropicália, the mention of a Jorge Ben¹⁸⁹ record in one of the novel's many asides is the closest explicit reference found in the novel (97). I have not mentioned Ben to this point because he only had loose associations with the Tropicalists and was not part of the movement *per se*. The lack of allusions perhaps is due to something made explicit within the text itself. In one of the asides titled "HORA OFICIAL" which reproduces an announcement from the regime it states that: "As gravadoras têm um mês para liquidarem os estoques de músicas profanas. Dentro de trinta dias serão permitidas apenas músicas sacras e as marchas patrióticas" (141). The statement does not include the musicians themselves, though given the rest of the context laid out in the novel, the use of the verb "liquidarem" certainly suggests it. Although this hyperbolic sense of censorship did not fully occur under the regime, it does remind us as readers of the intensified scrutiny and control brought about by the implementation of the AI-5 in late 1968. Read from a Tropicalist perspective it can also express, perhaps in a veiled gesture, the exile and subsequent disappearance of the two most recognizable faces of musical

¹⁸⁸ That is predominantly the case with allusions to other music in the text, such as the bolero "Angustia," among others.

¹⁸⁹ Jorge Ben (né Jorge Duilio Lima Menezes, 1945; now known as Jorge Ben Jor) is another key figure in the development of Brazilian music in the 1960s. Fusing samba, jazz, bossa nova, rock and, in the 1970s, funk, Ben created his own "anthropophagic" musical style, though he is only very loosely associated with the Tropicalists. His 1969 self-titled LP is perhaps the closest manifestation to Tropicalism in his work and contains his ode to Brazil "País Tropical," which, though it finds a place to criticize Brazil, is far less caustic than the critiques put forth by the Tropicalists. His first hit "Mas Que Nada" (1963) is among the most recognized and recorded Brazilian songs. He collaborated with all the Tropicalists save for Tom Zé at different times, including recordings with Gilberto Gil, Gal Costa and Caetano Veloso. Not overtly political and more concerned with issues of black cultural identity in Brazil, Ben's oeuvre is also among the most intriguing to emerge from Brazil. He is still going strong at age 67.

Tropicalism, Gil and Veloso, from the Brazilian scene in late 1968 and their exile in 1969.

Our final character profile is that of Rosa, José's wife. Her fate is no better than that of Átila, though for different reasons that shall become clear ahead. With Brazil's late 1960s shift to emulating the United States' cultural model of consumerism, marketing strategies that had worked in the U. S. were logically translated to the new market. As Mamiya explains:

Women had long been acknowledged as primary consumers in the typical household, and corporations and advertisers oriented their promotional campaigns towards women. Ads of this period sought to convince consumers (i.e. women) that purchasing the proffered goods and services would enhance their lives. (124-125)

An uneducated mulatta from the interior town ironically called Filhoda,¹⁹⁰ Rosa's character personifies the desires of the brainwashed consumerist. We have already detailed Brandão's mocking of advertising language and consumerism in our previous section on Pop Art. Rosa marries José desiring a "normal" life, with her own house and all its trappings, convinced that she will be a realized individual in the process. Along the way, it begins to sink in that such will not be the case and she falls into a deep crisis of *abulia*—denoting the nihilistic connection with placing value in something, consumerism, which is in essence empty of it.

Perhaps the greatest irony of Rosa's existence, and there are many enumerated throughout the novel, is her ultimate demise at the hands of a *Velha Ige-Sha* (the Ancient Church), a literally anthropophagic cult for which she is "A Enviada" (The Chosen One). She is eventually kidnapped and eaten by the cult that operates within the city itself. The imagery used to describe the scene of the anthropophagic ritual is notable for the clash of the modern and pre-modern we have emphasized as being fundamental to the Tropicalist aesthetic and the presence of the pre-modern within the contemporary, ostensibly modern urban setting:

¹⁹⁰ Filhoda being short for "filho da puta": son of a whore.

O disco recomeçou, misturado ao som do vento, de animais, de gritos, de cochar de sapos, buzinas de automóveis, apitos de fábricas, sinos, campainhas, bate-estacas, motoniveladoras, britadeiras. O som foi aumentando, aquela gente se lançou no chão, Rolando, batendo uns nos outros, seagredindo, sebeijando, alguns seencolhendo, tomando a forma de fetos no útero.

Os assistentes trouxeram espelhos grandes, velhos, a prata gasta. Cobriram toda a volta da sala e a sala se ampliou, se multiplicou, a multidão cresceu. A velha [the high priestess] manejava as cordas, dizendo palavras: e as cordas levavam Rosa para cima de outra mesa, aquela onde a menina magra se debatia, a boca espumando, o corpo furado, coberta de sangue.

PAM, PAM, PAM, PAM

crooooooooo, croooooo, riiiiimmm

Os barulhos do Metrô aumentavam e diminuía—serras, bate-estacas, tratores, betoneiras, caminhões.

Quando a morena estava em cima da outra, a velha manejou as cordas e Rosa desceu até ficar a três palmos do corpo da menina magra. No teto, os assistentes trabalharam rapidamente arrancando uma parte do telhado. O céu leitoso apareceu. A casa estava no algo de um barranco, inclinada. Através da abertura do teto se via a cidade, os luminosos, o relógio gigante, um anúncio gigante de coca-cola despejando refresco, interminável.

grum, grum, grum, grum, grum, grum (258, spelling anomalies in original)

The emphasis on the unevenness and clashing cultures within Brazilian modernity could not be clearer from this passage. While the urban setting can present the façade of “Ordem e Progresso,” with its westernized, neon advertising signs and heavy machinery, the flip side of the reality is that certain examples of pre-modern, and in western eyes particularly barbaric, “backwardness” still exists on a tangible level. The process that follows in the text of butchering Rosa’s body apart is also systematic and

recalls “modern” butchering techniques involving hangin the meat from pullies for easier access.¹⁹¹ For all the regime’s pretensions of modernity (within the novel and the context which spawned it), the pre-modern still rules amongst certain sectors that maintain their ways, though now in a hybrid, urban version with modern elements such as ritual music from a record, soft drink bottles as receptacles for the potions, and the clamor of the city in the backdrop.

This is the most striking of the many examples of contrasting elements of the contemporary postmodern reality with the brutality of the pre-modern barbarism within the novel. The irony expressed by the novel is that the postmodern Brazilian reality, for all its aspirations of transcending its premodern roots, is just as brutal and barbaric—perhaps even more so considering how hypocritically the moral, often Catholic, values they supposedly espouse are employed. The torturer Temurinha becomes hungry after a long morning of work and enjoys his steak at lunch with no semblance of guilt believing he is furthering the order and progress of the nation, while also knowing the complicit church will absolve him should they see any sin in what he does (which, of course, they do not). The *velha* (high priestess) of the cult consumes Rosa as part of the spiritual component of her existence that rejects modern values but operates on a clandestine level within modernity. The nihilistic, dystopian reality presented in *Zero* leaves no room for hope, it being that there is truly nowhere to turn, no authentic value to draw from and an insurmountable degree of absurd injustice to overcome. While the Tropicalist music does not reach the same levels of despair as that expressed in the novel, the temporary silencing of its two most important voices and the markedly different disposition with which they returned to Brazil is a stark reminder of how deep the effect of the fear instilled by the regime actually was.

Tropicalist Techniques In *Zero*

As we have seen, there are numerous direct connections between *Zero* and *Tropicália* and some of the songs produced in the same time and place as the novel. To those connections it is important to add a few other connections to Tropicalist aesthetic techniques and the points made by Bente that expand the

¹⁹¹ A diagram of the organs within the body on page 101 of the text perhaps foreshadows Rosa’s fate.

scope of the term. First we turn directly to the piece of art from which the name of the movement was drawn: Hélio Oiticica's *penetrável* "Tropicália." Early in the novel, José goes to see the public spectacle that is a fakir who is on a mission to go 111 days without eating. The irony of such a spectacle, a starving human being behind glass for all the public to see, in a nation that still suffered from malnutrition in many areas is particularly striking. Hunger is now turned into a televised entertainment commodity making it a direct component in the "Panis et circensis" of the viewing public—distracted from their own hunger by the presence of someone hungrier. It also brings together the contrast of the modern and premodern that is so characteristic of Tropicalism: the public entranced by the suffering of another, experienced through the medium of television. The description of José's entrance into the space not only addresses this aspect, but also shows a similar experience of walking through a *penetrável* while recalling the palimpsest of images from some of the aforementioned songs. The emphasis here, however, is more on the modern aspect, what would be found on the television at the end of Oiticica's *penetrável* more so than the context within which it exists, thus emphasizing the creation of a virtual reality designed to distract, the spectator devoured in a sea of disjointed images from the mass media:

[José] Pagou 1 cruzeiro (filhodamãe um cruzeiro prele comer depois), atravessou uma cortina de plástico verde. A urna estava num saguão caiado. Cartazes, fotografias, recortes de jornais, bandeirolas de papel crepom. Um cinegrafista de televisão estava acompanhando o recorde; um fotógrafo gordo, terno surradíssimo...Discos fanhosos de tango, bolero. O faquir, deitado nos pregos. Faixas azul-amarelo, uma bandeirinha num canto, cobras passeando pelo corpo macerado, a figura imitando Cristo. José raspou as unhas no vidro, não se perturbou. (15)

The same critiques put forth by the Tropicalists in "Panis et circensis" are echoed throughout the novel—observing the tragedy without getting involved, allegorically representing the public's apathy fomented by the mass media culture. There is even a vignette titled "Panis et circensis" which tells the tragic story of a father training his son to hold his breath five minutes underwater for a contest, after having killed two other sons in the process, precisely the type of story which is fodder for the sensationalist, unsubstantive yellow press.

The novel's fragmentary structure, of course, allows it to incorporate the free association of imagery so typical of the Tropicalist aesthetic throughout. Nonetheless, it is also a key component of specific fragments as well, which bring the quickly changing images and sounds found on radio and television, as well as Tropicalist records, to the fore. The following excerpt, found early on in the novel, recalls the layers of overlapped sound utilized in making some of the sonically densest Tropicalist songs, including radio static, news and advertisements, *musique concrète*, sentimental pop, the Beatles and a Jovem Guarda band, among other sounds and images—all blended into José's own train of thought:

Jag, jag, jii, looco, rorocola, baby, baby, love me baby, tak, tag, tak, buzina, buzina, meu amor, eu te amo, eu sou um negro gato, senhor juiz, pare, meu bem, la, luuuun, aí, eu, ôoooo, pílulas de vida, do doutor ross, fazem bem ao fígado e a todos nós, xiquitan, bum, bum, I want to hold your hand, beatles, porra, esqueci de falar com Átila sobre as ciganas, me dá um quibe frito, limão, uma Caçula, prato do dia: sopa de grão de bico, chinês foi preso porque fritava pastel com óleo diesel, grande liquidação de discos, e que tudo o mais vá pro inferno, amor, guarda bem este amor, novelas cada dia sensacionais no 9, pô, cada comerciária boa tem esta loja, deixa eu voltar, fingir que compro, que pernas a moreninha de sapatos vermelhos...(17)

The passage continues on for another whole page, with José following the moreninha, more interspersed sounds in the form of nonsense words and even a metafictional interjection about what is being recounted. This passage brings together several of the key language practices put forth by Bente in her assessment of Tropicalist techniques. We have the meta-language commenting upon how the story of the girl with the red sandals should or should not end, the fusion of different types of language (concrete, onomatopoeic, music, news, etc.), the collage element of the words and imagery evoked placed together, the polyphony suggested by the radio blended with José's thoughts as well as the metafictional comment, the camera-character's experience of the sights and sounds directly through the use of the onomatopoeic language and the addressing of the observer directly.

The carnivalization aspect mentioned by Bente which we can relate to the music in terms of its joyous aspects masking a darker reality are most clear in *Zero* with the presence of Boquerão. Boquerão

is a carnivalesque community that spontaneously establishes itself within the confines of São Paulo. It is there that O Homem resides as well as other individuals who come from all over the country who are best classified as “freaks.” The community, while offering itself as an entertainment destination and a place of employment (both José and Átila work there at different times in non-freak capacities), allegorically displays the city’s dehumanizing elements, drawing the most desperate individuals willing to do anything to survive:

? Do sertão.

? Como sabe.

. Já vieram oito bolas rodantes de lá

O homem tinha as plantas dos pés grudadas na cabeça, Seu corpo formava um círculo.

Foi contratado.

. A Firestone patrocina o show. Construíram um caminhão e vocês serão as rodas.

Obrigado, moço. Obrigado. Até que enfim arranjei um emprego e posso sustentar minha família, meus filhos. (71)

Gilberto Gil’s “Coragem pra suportar” (1968) also addresses this situation, though without the black humor involved here.¹⁹² Eventually, there is a quest in Boquerão to find the most unusual freak of all: the “normal” man. Boquerão also shows the regime’s hypocrisy as it turns a blind eye to certain activities within the community because it is frequented by wives’ of government officials and offers yet another “panis et circensis” type distraction—though without the bread.

Parody is another key element which Bente points out. There is a debate about whether Tropicalist incorporation of older musical styles is truly a parody or whether its use is sincere. The short answer to this question is that it is both: understanding certain aspects of musical and national history to be inseparable from a contemporary manifestation of identity and part of that contemporary identity make it sincere while the Pop Art mechanisms involved can certainly steer it towards parody. In *Zero*, parody

¹⁹² The lyrics towards the end of the song relate: Vai embora/ vai pra longe/ E deixa tudo/ Tudo que é nada/ Nada pra viver/ Nada pra dar/ Coragem pra suportar.

takes the form of mocking, as we have already seen, official government discourse expressed in the daily broadcasts. One particularly humorous example involves a government spokesperson that suffers from cirrhosis which leads to chronic flatulence—metaphoric of the actual message conveyed. Before delivering the news that every citizen will be obligated to contribute “dez dólares anuais para a manutenção das forças armadas” his flatulence was heard on the radio: “O peido forte foi ouvido em todo o país” (155). Of course, we have also discussed the Pop Art mechanisms in *Zero* which also parody the discourse of advertising.

Bente also lists shocking the audience as another key element in the wider spectrum of Tropicália. We have noted how the musical Tropicalists accomplished this through their incorporation of rock and avant garde elements into Brazilian music, their colorful, psychedelic clothes (including Oiticica’s parangoles) and their direct challenge to what they saw as antiquated artistic and social norms under the scrutinizing eye of a dictatorial regime. They managed to indeed create the possibility for an ever-evolving Brazilian music secure in its roots and open in its influences—foreign, historical, avant-garde and pop, erudite and popular. Socially, of course, the effects were less palpable due to the oppressive nature of the regime. With *Zero*, there is also an undeniable shock value in taking what seems at first to be a dark comedy and unleashing all of its dystopic nihilistic elements. In a very real sense, it is allegorical of reaction to the military regime itself, which at first no one expected to last as long nor be as oppressive and cruel. In time, the desperation and nihilism sank in as its grip tightened and the conditions for all but a few worsened. The shock for the reader of the horrifying violence, torture and nihilistic lack of hope serve to emphasize the desperation felt by so many and to chronicle the censored side of a hellish set of circumstances that was all too real.

Bente’s assertions about the wider scope of Tropicalism open the door for us to consider *Zero* as part of the larger movement though it is not directly involved with the musicians whose names are most often associated with it. Nonetheless, as we have seen, there are numerous other aesthetic, historical, and thematic connections that are directly discernible between the music and philosophy of the Tropicalists and the plethora of issues encountered in *Zero*. It is important to recall the shared influences of Brazilian

Modernism, Oswald de Andrade, the concrete poets, the avant garde of the 1960s, the mass media, Pop Art, postmodern articulations; all of which experienced in the same era creating a collective lens through which the times are chronicled, albeit from slightly different angles and foci. The criticism regarding *Zero* does not suggest possible connections between the novel and Tropicalism, instead rightfully linking it to the violent protest literature of the 1970s. Likewise, there are references to literature in criticism on Tropicália without any specifics beyond Agripino de Paula's *Panamérica*, which as Caetano Veloso explained, almost kept some of the movement's core principles from taking shape. All of these points notwithstanding, we have seen that a closer look at all the influences and mechanisms at work show these affinities more clearly and establish a new connection between the two. This connection is part of a bigger scheme which articulates the *zeitgeist* of one of Brazil's most creative and traumatic periods of recent history. Furthermore, it opens the possibility for further inquiry along these lines to make further cultural, historical and aesthetic connections that offer us greater understanding of those influential and tumultuous times.

Conclusion

While there is an abundant amount of texts relating the influence of mass media culture, globalization, hybridization and music related to Latin American literature, as of this writing, this is the first study of its kind to examine the relationship with rock, rock culture and its important role with a number of Latin American writers and some of their works. As such, it is important to reiterate some of the salient points I have attempted to make in the previous chapters while assessing where the research can go from here. As rock and rock culture have developed, a large number of subcultures within it have emerged since the era about which I write that distance them from many of the factors related to rock in the phase of evolution it found itself in the 1960s and early 1970s. Likewise, it is important to note that rock and its culture no longer carry the same weight culturally since the 1990s and the emergence of hip-hop, electronica and disc jockey dance culture which are the primary influences in the hybrid music styles that have emerged in the last decade and continue to evolve such as reggaeton, the various fusions of cumbia, or the incorporation of electronic dance beats into normally traditional forms like tango, among many others. Nonetheless, it is the entrance of rock and its multifaceted culture on the world stage that first opened the door for these latter cultural phenomena to develop and rock was the first to execute the process of asserting itself as an international musical and, more importantly, social phenomenon. By the same token, the effect of rock and rock culture and the contributions it made to the writers in this dissertation can be seen in hindsight as some of the first concrete examples of postmodernism at work with the greater importance popular mass media sources played in its creation and the audience it sought. As we have seen, an important result of this is that there is a conscious attempt on the part of the writers to destabilize long-held notions about cultural hierarchies, to pose difficult questions regarding national and individual identity, an innate instinct for applying the mechanisms of cultural hybridization brought about by globalization, as well as artistically documenting the intensity of the *zeitgeist* occurring in the 1960s and 1970s. This latter point is key in assessing the new cultural identities that emerge during this period and are seen both on an individual and movement level in the works I have analyzed.

New Cultural Identities

The clear importance of José Agustín as a figure in this study should go without saying at this point. As the most recognized figure of the Onda, Agustín distinguishes himself by attempting to present himself as an individual who is equally credible in the world of mass media culture and literature. Despite the many criticisms of his literary work through the years, it is safe to say that he has largely succeeded in doing so by virtue of continuing to be active in both realms as a novelist and as a screenwriter. He also established himself as one of the important voices articulating the development, influences and significance of the Mexican counterculture during and after the fact. While inserting himself into the conversation of the development of the Mexican counterculture generated criticism from Juan Bruce Novoa and Margot Glantz, among others, as being self-serving, Agustín's influence on the very counterculture he has written and lectured about is undeniable. This is due in no small part to his adoption of the rock ethos during his time of ascendance and his drive to integrate himself into the literary, rock and mass media scenes. He accomplished this both as an artist creating an aesthetic and a critic who helped shape the tastes of his audience—combining the roles in blurring the lines between art and life as we saw in our analysis of the first half of *El rock de la cárcel*. His youth and the direct appeal to his generation signal one of the key components of the *zeitgeist* of his generation in the 1960s in which no one over the age of thirty was to be trusted. Likewise, the conscious attempts to break with literary traditions, themes, national symbols and iconography, as well as other conventions manifest themselves in his work and point us to one of the key connections with the historical avant-garde.

Beyond that, Agustín serves as a model for writers after him as we noted with the discernible connections with Andrés Caicedo in the third chapter and the same can be argued about Caicedo “biographer,” Chilean writer Alberto Fuguet. Fuguet, like Agustín, is not shy in inserting his own name into discussions about the development of mass media influenced literature in Latin America, and has also been active in screenwriting. Furthermore, Fuguet has developed his own aesthetic drawing from what is the Onda ethos of breaking with assumptions of what Latin American literature should be in shaping his McOndo group and followed Agustín's model of drawing from various mass media sources contemporary to him as key cornerstones in his writing. Fuguet's 1994 novel *Mala onda*, though not included herein,

offers itself to a reading with the various theoretical principles which I establish in the introduction and pays homage to the Onda not only from its title, but by being a re-writing of Agustín's first novel, *La tumba* (1964), in a Chilean setting.

In 1914, Spanish philosopher and essayist José Ortega y Gasset proclaimed "I am myself and my circumstances." Though of course we are in a vastly different context of reference, the statement rings true in that the new cultural identities as represented by authors like Agustín and Fuguet, among others, are significantly framed and mediated by the sources from which they draw. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that these authors are "themselves and their very openly expressed influences". There is a point to be argued about this simply being an example of intertextuality. To be sure, intertextuality is a factor that must be considered, particularly with Marcelo Cohen, though I only elaborate upon that briefly in the chapter because of my different focus. Nonetheless, I believe there is a key difference in considering intertextuality once the *model reader* of the texts is considered. There are numerous examples in the texts of Agustín, García Saldaña, Caicedo, Cohen and even Fuguet of name-dropping that does not establish nor intend to establish a dialogue between texts or utilize other texts in their own work. The exception, of course, is rock lyrics either presented explicitly by quotation or implicitly by just naming the song—though those in themselves warrant a different type of intertextual consideration for being from a different cultural realm. Furthermore, I see the use of name-dropping as a different sort of expression: a dialogue established with the model reader that lays out with whom the author perhaps sees himself or would like to see himself associated. I make the case for this regarding Agustín's "¿Cuál es la onda?", but nowhere is it clearer than in García Saldaña's *Pasto verde* where numerous passages are dominated by name-dropping authors and musicians as well as the fact that the fictional representation of the author places himself *mise en scène* as a version of a Rolling Stones type musician, extreme beat writer or cursed poet.

García Saldaña, Caicedo and Cohen also focus on a key factor that not only affects youth: alienation. As we saw in the context laid out in the introduction, García Saldaña was an extreme example of a youth rejecting his given cultural pedigree on virtually every level: consciously adopting the opposite of the *buenas costumbres*, mocking national institutions and the governmental apparatus used to

perpetuate their myths, as well as his insulting behavior towards the Mexican literary and cultural elite in the *Pasto verde* text and in his public displays of obnoxious behavior (mostly directed at Carlos Fuentes, though there were other victims of this behavior). García Saldaña articulates the sense of alienation felt by a sector of youth unable to connect with the ossified, corrupted legacy of the Mexican Revolution pushed by the PRI's propaganda machine, the falseness he sees in adopting the commercialized values of the "American Dream" imported from the United States, and the exclusion of the language of youth in literature. The irony, of course, is that the model for García Saldaña is a group of British rockers who are part of the globalized cultural infusion that was fostered by the demands (as in supply and demand) of the social classes he openly rejects. This fundamental contradiction was not lost on the rockers themselves, including the Stones, who, while being examples of iconoclasm *par excellence*, existed and thrived thanks to the commercial context in which their product generated capital. There was no solution to this paradox as rock at the time both existed in the realm of idealism, helping fuel some of the social changes taking place in the late 1960s and as an undeniably profitable business generating, for the times, almost unheard of amounts of money. For a former Communist like García Saldaña who still maintained certain vestiges of those beliefs, this paradox is particularly powerful and could be seen as a factor in the nihilism expressed in both the text and in how the author lived out his brief existence.

Nihilism is also the result of the alienation felt by Caicedo as an individual and expressed in the text of *¡Que viva la música!* As we saw in detail in the chapter, music serves as a fundamental building block in the creation of identity for the young María del Carmen Huerta who abandons her place in upper-class Colombian society for the life of a party girl whose goal is to live in an eternal, hedonistic *carpe diem*. While rock is only part of the equation in her various transformations, it is the most significant as it opens the door for her to liberate herself from what she sees to be her own social and cultural shackles. Ironically, while rock is the emancipating factor in her breaking free from her initial underlying feelings of alienation in her comfortable upper-class existence, she eventually feels equally alienated once she integrates herself into the rock crowd. It is the beginning of a futile cycle in which María del Carmen never fully finds herself, becomes increasingly more isolated, and ultimately fades away into a life of

prostitution. In the end, it is a virtual suicide, not actually killing herself, but erasing all vestiges of her original self and social class—despite the irony of her being supported financially by her father until the end. Of course, María del Carmen makes a choice to follow this path abandoning her earlier plans to be an architecture student who meets with young students who study and discuss Marx in an extracurricular study group. The choice here is clear, she opts away from what was a typical choice of the Latin American intellectual in the 60s: following the examples of the Cuban Revolution, associating with ideas of the political left which reject the influence of imported culture products such as rock and Hollywood films—precisely the biggest influences in Caicedo as an individual and artist. Despite the path to ultimate perdition taken by María del Carmen, the critical point here is the availability of cultural models such as those drawn from rock culture to give the alienated youth a sense of belonging lacking otherwise. As I did with Agustín's *El rock de la cárcel*, following the section influenced by rock, *¡Que viva la música!* lends itself to a different focus. It is, albeit, still a musical one not unlike the approach taken by Juan Otero Garabís in *Nación y ritmo: descargas desde el Caribe* (Ediciones Callejón, 2000) which explores the connection between the musics of the different Caribbean islands as manifested in a varied literary oeuvre from the Spanish-speaking Antilles. Given the emphasis by Otero Garabís and other scholars of *salsa* as a pan-Caribbean music and culture with a diaspora that transcends clear geographical borders, as well as the importance of the *salsa* culture in Colombia itself, this offers another approach to studying the novel which distances itself from the author-centered criticism (like my own) that is so prevalent regarding Caicedo in recent years.

Perhaps nowhere is the adoption of the rock ethos, culture and full identity more prevalent within the text than with Marcelo Cohen's *El país de la dama eléctrica* and main character Martín Gomel. Written with the backdrop of exile, the Proceso de Reorganización Nacional which sought to socially re-engineer and re-invent the nation's culture (all the while backed by the iron hand of a ruthless dictatorship), Cohen addresses the alienation experienced by youth and by the intellectuals whose influence was quashed by the Junta. Martín's character personifies the new cultural identities in the novel by placing himself alongside the ghosts of several legendary rock figures, notably Jimi Hendrix, who

provide him the aplomb to withstand the numerous challenges he faces as an exile without any solid roots. Martín turns to rock, one of the very few avenues of rebellious identity available to youth in the era of the Proceso, to define himself in the wake of lacking parental models. While not needing to necessarily rebel from his parents for greater freedoms (they have for the most part left him to his own devices), Martín's character exemplifies the new reality of a changing cultural landscape shaped and guided by the media-driven world of the latter half of the 20th Century. The rejection of the cultural pedigree is not overtly stated as it is in the case of the Onda or Caicedo in his personal writings. Instead, through Martín we see it as a seemingly inevitable evolutionary step of the effects of mass media cultural products framing personal narratives for individuals and becoming a ubiquitous source of models for identity formation. The family's lack of concern for Martín not only shows us the generation gap dynamic which was so present in the 1960s and 1970s, but also allegorically translates into the relationship between the exile and the mother country. Martín's desire to reconnect with his mother is a failure and he remains adrift, exiled from his home country and family. Obligated to find another source upon which to rely for fully edifying himself as an individual, rock and the figure of perpetual outsider Jimi Hendrix provide him with a paradigm within which he can define himself in his itinerant existence—an existence in which he resides, in no uncertain terms, within an imaginary. Martín's character is presented in contrast to Gerardo, a former librarian and educator stripped of his posts by the dictatorship whose identity has little to no outlet in the context within which he lives, where the worth of what he has to offer has been systematically debased, devalued and practically erased by the dictatorship. As a recognizable cultural archetype (the well-read intellectual with the resources to opine on anything) from a previous generation, Gerardo, despite being only in his 30s, is an exile within the new imposed cultural reality of the dictatorship without even leaving the country. His misgivings with Martín not only exemplify the generation gap to a certain degree, but the tension between the traditional intellectual and the shifting cultural reality where his role as purveyor of trends and voice of authority has been diminished and replaced by the mass media informed and generated currents that are to a great degree personified by Martín. Taken one more step, it also illustrates the general misgivings of much traditional

criticism towards the type of literature and authors I have discussed and the inevitability of the evolution that a greater role played by mass media culture has brought about in many Latin American writers since the 1960s.

As we have seen in this brief overview, the new cultural identities are reflected both by the authors themselves assimilating key components of them in the case of the Onda writers and Caicedo, allowing the authors to authentically portray them in the texts. Though the case with Cohen's personal assimilation of a rock ethos and iconoclasm is not clear, the issues addressed in *El país de la dama eléctrica* regarding identity construction by Martín and the disconnect between the intellectual and the rocker are evident. Furthermore, as we saw in the chapter, Martín is a figure who is not only identifiable as a rocker, but specifically as an Argentine rocker addressing many of the specific concerns laid out by Pujol in *Rock y dictadura*. And while Cohen's career seems to display a notable absence of the iconoclastic, confrontational stance adopted by the Onda, there is clearly a new direction he sees necessary for literature to take in adopting the influences from mass media culture in this novel and others of his that followed.

Brazil: New Cultural Identities in Tropicalism

Brazil is a different case in the literary sense within this study from the fact that the author, Ignácio de Loyola Brandão is not influenced by rock in any sort of obvious manner and the links we found with the other four authors are not applicable to him. Nonetheless, the inclusion is merited when considering new cultural identities on a movement level when referring to Tropicália and the effects the movement's ethos, aesthetic and presence in both mass media and intellectual circles had on Brazilian culture. Furthermore, there are the key ties between the young Tropicalist musicians and the Brazilian avant-garde through the direct influence of São Paulo's concrete poets, the assimilation of Oswald de Andrade's *antropofagia* which connected them directly to the Brazilian Modernists of the 1920s that linked them philosophically with other avant-garde artists such as Hélio Oiticica, among others, as well as the influence of the filmmakers of Cinema Novo. The other part of the equation is the strong influence of rock on the Tropicalist musicians who themselves represent an important evolution in the breadth of

influence had by pop artists. Bob Dylan and John Lennon of the Beatles, among others, were perceived as the visionary voices of a generation whose words were the catalysts for change. The two most visible Tropicalists, Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil, understood this phenomenon and through their success were able to adopt it for themselves as well. Veloso and Gil were not only producing new cultural products through their emergent Tropicalist identities, but frequently were being quoted in the press on any number of topics during their heyday from 1967 until their exile in 1969.

Furthermore, the Tropicalists also eschewed the dichotomy of right and left in politics, rejecting the right wing dictatorship while also rejecting the populism that had characterized the Brazilian left in the years preceding the 1964 coup. This put them at odds with a considerable faction of Brazilian intelligentsia, including some of the academic elite who viewed the incursion of foreign cultural influences into the mainstream as a threat to Brazilian culture. It is here that the ties to the Modernists and the Tropicalist generation's understanding that the mass media's influence was an inexorable cultural component moving forward in the development/evolution of said culture. Veloso, who had studied philosophy, literature and aspired to be a filmmaker, had stated he wanted to participate in the evolution of Brazilian Popular Music, and the incorporation of rock as a sound and by extension an ethos through the anthropophagic process was an important component of Tropicalism defining itself as a movement and identity. An important difference we see with the Tropicalists in defining their identity, as opposed to the approach taken by the Onda in Mexico as far as it can be called a movement (or Caicedo as a follower of similar principles), is that the Tropicalists consciously engage their Brazilian cultural pedigree for all its virtues and flaws, shining the white light of modernity on the nation's anachronistic components as suggested by critic Roberto Schwartz in 1970. And while Christopher Dunn has argued that it is only after the fact that Tropicalism has come to be associated with other artistic expressions of the era, other critics like Ivana Bentes, Carlos Basualdo and Caetano Veloso himself see it as a more organic flow of ideas, mutual influences, aesthetic principles and discursive practices occurring in various intellectual and mass media circles simultaneously. Hence, my inclusion of Brandão falls into this latter category that continues to be debated. So while we have individuals within the Tropicália movement incorporating the

rock influence as part of their new cultural identity on a personal/artistic level, the effects of the movement and the changes in the discussion and practice of culture it brings about regarding one of the most tumultuous eras of recent Brazilian history offer potential new readings of cultural products of the era, including Brandão's *Zero*. In essence, I see a cultural ripple effect brought about by Tropicália and the new or revived elements that it brings into the discussion about cultural production and cultural identity—elements that are present in Brandão's work and yet to be explored from that perspective in other works.

The Avant-Garde As Common Thread

A recurring theme to varying degrees in the five works studied here is the links to the avant-garde both in its ethos (blurring the distinction between life and art, breaking with tradition, confronting assumptions, questioning notions of high/low brow art, etc.) and aesthetic principles and devices (the use of collage in the broad sense, drawing from a diverse set of influences, demanding the work be understood on its own aesthetic terms, expanding the artistic vernacular, etc.). While rock as a musical genre itself is not necessarily linked to avant-garde movements (save for Pop Art in the 1960s), in the era at hand (1960s and 1970s) the vast majority of the points addressed above are a part of the rock praxis and ethos. The Beatles experiments in the studio starting in 1966 opened the door for any number of artists to attempt similar techniques and expand upon them to broaden the sonic landscape of rock—which saw vast changes from 1967 onward. Agustín himself recognized this in his history of rock *La nueva música clásica* (1968) as it was happening and transposed it into his own writing. More than three decades after their deaths, the blurred distinction between art and life lived by Parménides García Saldaña and Andrés Caicedo is seemingly omnipresent in discussions of their lives and work. In García Saldaña's case it occurs through published reminiscences of his acquaintances that solidify the myth of the young writer as someone who lived and breathed the music and literature that defined him. In Caicedo's case, the posthumously published journals, movie and book reviews, and letters paint a clearer picture of an individual who arguably lived his life as a character in one of his own fictions. We also saw this to be the case with Agustín himself in how he presented himself in *El rock de la cárcel*. Lastly, we can note that

there practically is no distinction between art and life in the case of Martín Gómel in *El país de la dama eléctrica*, the character having internalized rock to the point that he personifies it. Caetano Veloso also makes the case that the Tropicalists also blurred this line in his autobiography.

Of course, Brandão is a different case, being of an older generation and having his own, separate ties to the avant-garde that inform his work. *Zero* is perhaps the most experimental and avant-garde of the novels included herein, making vast use of the widest range of techniques listed above and more. Brandão, as well as Agustín and García Saldaña, make creative use of collage in the broad sense: drawing from different linguistic vernaculars, engaging the reader visually with the placement of the typography and use of punctuation, as well as using techniques drawn from screenwriting and drama within the texts themselves. All these techniques, of course, remind us of Pop Art and how this literature can be approached from this theoretical perspective as well. Brandão's direct link with the concrete poets, also another key influence on the Tropicalists, links him to some of the same concerns of Pop as does his liberal use of the onomatopoeic words drawn from comic books which echo the paintings of Roy Lichtenstein and the popular Batman television series of the 1960s. Indeed, while Pop is often mentioned in passing as an influence on much literature of the era, more in-depth studies regarding the specifics of the connection are another avenue forward in research.

Final Thoughts

As we have seen in the preceding chapters, the influence of rock on new cultural identities takes shape in a variety of forms which in turn creates different ripple effects that link it aesthetically, socially, historically and politically to the works, authors and contexts researched herein. The research of Simon Frith and Peter Wicke, among others, has made clear that rock (and its subgenres) is different things to different people, a different concept in different contexts, an avenue for personal expression for both the listener and the musician, and also an evolving concept whose specific meaning changes over time. Part of the ripple effect we have seen herein is the notable effect on some writers whose palpable influence was not felt until decades later in the case of Agustín and Caicedo. The works herein all point to the inexorable influence of the mass media has had in shaping cultural realities and identities on social,

personal and aesthetic levels. My intention to reflect the diversity of rock and its varied modes of influence as a concept and social/aesthetic phenomenon is borne out by bringing in different critical approaches that nonetheless link it to overall continuum of literary and cultural history, manifested uniquely in each context to reflect the cultural and historical realities from which the works were created. Following the lines of the research I have begun here, there is more research to be done in Latin America itself as the strong rock cultures in both Perú and Chile are not investigated here—and each of which had their own emergent new cultural identities fomented by rock as an aesthetic, social and political presence.

Approaching new cultural identities is, furthermore, a topic that has and will continue to have an importance within all realms of cultural studies and its various branches, including literature. I have only begun here with rock, but as I mentioned earlier, this same general approach is viable regarding other genres of music and their effects of cultural identity and there is ample research to that effect in other realms. This is already the case in other lines of research drawing from other mass media and there is much research occurring today regarding the representation of violence, the graphic novel, and other multimedia studies studying the particular permutations that have taken shape in Latin America. There are ever-evolving cultural identities the globalized world is producing, hybrid subcultures everywhere the media can reach which produce art that will demand a multidisciplinary approach for a better understanding of them and to relate them to the overall historic and cultural continuum in their respective places of origin.

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