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Abstract

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This thesis attempts to define three discourses from the time period of the Argentine Dirty War. Where the Junta attempted to define Argentina in terms of who were, who were not, and who could be “good” Argentine citizens, their discourse was contested by several actors. The investigation focused on television and film propaganda presented by the Junta, the newsletters produced by the Madres de Plaza de Mayo, and songs by León Gieco. All sources were analyzed from discursive and performative perspectives. It was found that The Madres de Plaza de Mayo, an outspoken and reactionary human rights group, responded with a discourse of justice made applicable to all Argentines regardless of their conformity to the expectations and doctrines of the Junta. León Gieco, a musician of rock nacional, defined an “us” that included all Argentines and placed them in juxtaposition to the Junta. The results of the research indicated that the Madres and Gieco contested the Junta’s discourse and performance of exclusion with discourse and performance that served to represent all Argentines. Given these discourses of inclusion, a resistance was formed to the Junta, challenging the impression of a silent populace during that time.
I dedicate this work to the two groups of people without whom this thesis would not have been possible: my family and all my teachers - past present and future, from kindergarten on up. I also dedicate this work to all those who are fighting the good fight, wherever you may be.
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Introduction: A Dirty War to Clean to Nation

On March 24, 1976, the civilian government of Argentina, headed by María Estela Perón (Isabel), fell to a military coup. The Junta government, headed by Army General Jorge Rafael Videla, Navy Admiral Emilio Eduardo Massera and Air Force Brigadier General Ramón Agosti, in an attempt to solidify their power, began the Process of National Reorganization. Known simply as the Process or Proceso, it consisted of plans designed to eliminate a poorly defined subversion, radically transform political institutions, revive the economy, and, most importantly, form social behaviors and institutions on the basis on Western, Christian values.

The coup used the threat of subversion as its primary justification. Repressive tactics came into use under Isabel Perón, who authorized the military to eliminate subversive movements as a threat to national security, and to do so without following due process. In spite of the fact that guerilla movements were nearly completely destroyed by 1976, the military kept the threat going by manufacturing a perception of constant threat beyond the capabilities of allegedly incompetent democratic institutions and Isabel Perón’s weak leadership (Feitlowitz 6). The Dirty War consisted of widespread disappearances, torture, executions and kidnappings. Typically, a person would be seized at home or from work and then held in a concentration camp or detention center until executed. During their detention, the “disappeared,” as they came to be called, were denied due process, including access to legal assistance and humane conditions. Families received no information from the disappeared or from legal authorities, eventually causing relatives to form informal and then formal associations.

1 “Desaparecidos.” All translations in this thesis are mine unless otherwise indicated.
Some prisoners, referred to as, “detained,” would eventually be transferred to normal prisons, where conditions and access to help were much better. Estimations of the number of people affected by the operation vary. The Argentine National Commission on Disappeared Persons or CONADEP, the official investigative committee of the democratic government that followed the dictatorship, places the number of disappeared at approximately 9000 people. The most commonly accepted number for total disappearances among activists is between 15,000 and 30,000 (Brysk 678-686). The majority of the disappeared were taken during the first three years of the Proceso (de Becerra ctd. in Fisher 83).

The goals of the Proceso went beyond mere repression of subversion to a re-foundation of the Argentine nation. Under the leadership of the first Junta, control of the economy was given to José A. Martínez de Hoz, a prominent banker from an equally prominent family. He created programs designed to control hyperinflation and the deficit by attacking consumer spending and wages. Union leaders came to be considered subversives because they agitated for higher wages and better working conditions. Prices rose and wages fell under his administration. His programs of decreased market protection for domestic industries, increased foreign investments, and widespread privatization devastated the economic standing of most Argentines (Rock 1516-1987, 368-370) while producing the famous “sweet money” of the upper class.

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2 “Detenidos.”
3 “Comisión Nacional Argentina de Personas Desaparecidas” (Feitlowitz 13).
4 The number 30,000 is the brainchild of the Madres and is based on their belief that at least two other disappearances occurred and went unrecorded for every one that was recorded (Fisher 70).
5 “Plata dulce.”
In response to the failure of sweet money to trickle down past the upper class, the regime tried to mobilize the populace in other ways. One was by engaging in a conflict with Chile. Admiral Massera, realizing that support for the regime was crumbling with the economy, attempted to stir patriotic support for the regime by submitting to British mediation between Argentina and Chile over the Beagle Channel. The final agreement favored Chile, and Massera began to push for war. On the verge of armed conflict, both nations agreed to submit to mediation by the Vatican, a decision that postponed final resolution of the conflict for several years. As this conflict was resolved peacefully, Massera turned his sights to the British-controlled Falkland Islands (Rock 1516-1987, 370), known in Spanish as the Malvinas Islands. 1978 was also the year of the soccer World Cup, hosted and won by Argentina. While the festivities called international attention to human rights violations, it also gave the Junta the opportunity to bolster itself domestically. Pictures of a very enthusiastic Jorge Rafael Videla attending the games and rooting for the Argentine team received a vast circulation.

The dismally performing economy and the conclusion of Videla’s four year term as president gave rise to a crisis in 1981. Wages continued to fall and Martínez de Hoz’s efforts continued to impoverish the economy, and he resigned in that same year. In July of 1981, after the latest round of peso devaluations, the economic crisis acquired unprecedented proportions. In response, General Viola, who had assumed the presidency in 1981 at the expiration of Videla’s term, promised to begin dialogue with the political parties, a process called, “opening.”6 The hardliner General Leopoldo Galtieri pressured Viola into resigning the presidency. Reusing his playbook for the 1978 conflict with Chile, Galtieri eventually declared war on Britain over the Falklands.

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6 “Apertura.”
Argentina attacked on April 2 and surrendered to Britain on June 14.

The loss of the Falklands War was the straw that broke the regime’s back. Galtieri was forced to resign, and fellow hardliner General Reynaldo Bignone assumed the presidency. His job was to end the regime with open elections and without investigation into or consequences for the human rights violations that had been performed in the name of national security (Rock 1987, 383). As the ban on free speech and public gatherings was lifted, allegations of human rights violations began to be heard in public, and intellectuals and popular musicians were permitted to return and hold public performances. In December of 1983, the democratically elected Raúl Alfonsín assumed the presidency. The Proceso was over.

The Guiding Principles of the Proceso Government

Foundational to the Proceso were several ideas. First, the National Security Doctrine (NSD) played a crucial role in defining the Junta’s self-conception. Introduced in the 1950s by the French and elaborated on by the United States in the 1960s, it consists of an amalgam of ideas. There is no one document that defines it (Pion-Berlin 386), leaving much room for interpretation on the part of those who invoke it. However, it can be divided into three topics of address: counterinsurgency, geopolitics, and development-as-security. With respect to counterinsurgency, the doctrine holds that “subversive” or “terrorist” forces work from within society in a stealth campaign to advance their ends. They must be countered with both military action and social reform, with the aim of both actions being the prevention of the spread of their ideas. Military
action would stop violence while social action would convince the citizenry that the current system was acceptable (Pion-Berlin 387-388). Geopolitically, states must unite their populations through improved infrastructure and increased development (Pion-Berlin 388). In the NSD, “States are compared to living organisms situated in a competitive and sometimes hostile atmosphere where they must prevail over rivals in order to survive” (Pinochet, 1968 ctd. in Pion-Berlin 388). Thus state borders are able to grow and be penetrated by outside influences. Western nations are particularly susceptible to outside influences due to their emphasis on personal freedoms because, “These ‘invading microbes’...could not penetrate a more closed political system” (Pion-Berlin 389).

Finally, security and development are linked because “Only through economic and social progress could nations protect themselves against communist and noncommunist threats” (Pion-Berlin 391). Economic development becomes the basis for security because it eliminates the need for reform or revolution, thus leaving no target for subversives. According to Do Cuoto e Silva, the best tactic to promote national security, “is to fortify the Western way of life: to promote rapid increases in well-being, strengthen democracies, and promote Christian values” (Ctd. in Pion-Berlin 390). While the Junta obviously did not promote democracy, they did attempt to promote Western, Christian values as they understood them.

The emphasis on “Western and Christian values” by the junta was based on a nationalist, conservative and Catholic ideology that coagulated in the 1930s in response to liberalism and a rapidly-changing social environment that included urbanization, industrialization, immigration and socialist movements. As a result of and in spite of a
secularist liberal tradition, the 1930s saw an increase in the political power of the Catholic Church, considered a defensive pillar against liberalism, Protestantism, Judaism and Marxism (Romero 73). While not unique to Catholicism, the conservative reaction was founded on nationalistic and patriarchal principles. In defiance to women’s access to secular education under Education Law 1420 and the normal schools for women (Bonner 39) conservative Catholics attempted to relegate women back to the home, “emphasizing the ideal of women as mothers” (Bonner 45). Thus there is a rationale for the continued exclusion of women from political life so that the duties of motherhood would not be neglected in favor of the duties of citizenship, as well as a reinforcement of patriarchy. In spite of this, women en bloc were deemed by Perón’s “organized community” structure as one of the three representative branches of the people, along with business people and trade unions (Bonner 53). Under Perón, women achieved suffrage and saw the introduction of a quota system which required 30% of electoral candidates to be women. The line keeping women restricted to the home was not impermeable, however, as both of Perón’s wives came to hold powerful positions in the party.

Almost four decades later, the development of a differently-oriented Catholicism in the form of liberation theology caused Catholic nationalism to modify itself in response to perceived cultural threats to patriarchy and national identity. Stemming from Vatican II in 1968, liberation theology is summarized as an “option for the poor”7 by Pedro Arrupe (Hebblewhite 229). In general, it attempted to promote and diffuse a theology that would work, in real and practical senses, to change worldly circumstances

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7 “Opción por los pobres.”
to end the suffering of the poor and oppressed. It employed the Marxist concept of “praxis” to that end (Hebblewhite 229). While the Jesuits felt it was possible to use Marxist analysis of social and class realities without including Marx’s atheism, not all agreed, and there were many cautions issued by the Church against engaging in atheistic behaviors and/or revolutions (Hebblewhite 233). Pope Paul VI placed conditions on liberation theology in 1974 (Hebblewhite 233), three years after the Chilean Christian for Socialists (sic) had begun to make inroads into other Latin American countries, including Argentina (Tombs 147). In 1974, Father Carlos Mugica, one of the most recognized faces of liberation theology in Argentina, was killed by the right-wing paramilitary group AAA, signaling the decline of the movement in that country (Tombs 162). Several bishops from underdeveloped nations issued a letter that called for revolution and socialism while condemning classic, cultural and economic imperialism (Skidmore 229). In Puebla, Mexico in 1979, Pope John Paul II declared that the, “conception of Christ as political, revolutionary, as the subversive of Nazareth, does not complement the catechism of the Church” (Hebblewhite 233). While Hebblewhite argues that the Pope was trying to provide an alternative version of liberation theology, many took these words as a condemnation of liberation theology (Hebblewhite 233-234). To be sure, the Junta opposed and repressed liberation theology as a form of subversion, accusing it of endorsing violence, in spite of the fact that adherents of the movement consistently reject it (Tombs 132). The military rejected a praxis-based approach to the improvement of the lives of the poor, instead acting on an,

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8 The rejection of violence by adherents of liberation theology was known but disregarded. Father Yorio, during his detention was told by one of his interrogators, “We know you’re not violent. You’re not guerrillas. But you’ve gone to live with the poor. Living with the poor unites them. Uniting the poor is subversion” (Guest 36).
“interpretation that responded to the most conservative ideologues of the Church” (Filc 40). A torturer known as the Priest often said, “Religion is not supposed to modify the natural order, which by God’s will means that those born rich stay rich, and those born poor stay poor” (Feitlowitz 65). It is worth noting that Roman Catholicism also enjoyed the status of official religion of Argentina until 1994 (Walz 167).

Nationalism pervaded the Proceso. It appointed Nationalists to the supreme court, to high positions in the ministries of justice and education, the Central Bank and universities. Nationalism –“a group ideology...created by tradition and culture that leads to a psychology of loyalty to the nation as the supreme element in human affairs” (Skidmore 255) - also played a key role in the Junta’s beliefs. The common identity of Argentines was what the Junta was attempting to protect. Real or imagined, this identity came to represent the Junta’s ideal and they constructed their efforts around preserving, protecting, and strengthening it. Nationalism united the Junta around a love of an Argentina that existed prior to and independently of the state. All Argentines who accepted the values that the Junta described as Argentine were the only true Argentines in the Junta’s eyes. By its nature, however, nationalism, “leaves other people out” (Ward ctd. in Skidmore 267). By excluding others from the nation, nationalism leaves ample room for a perception of and an ideology against subversion to sprout. Similarly, a subversive is not simply a revolutionary but also someone who “has forfeited the right to call himself an Argentine” (General Ramón Camps ctd. in Rock, Authoritarian, 227).
Resistance to the Junta

Prior to the Falklands War, when a rapid defeat left no choice to the Junta but to permit free expression and open elections, the military dominated public discourse through violent repression, control of the media and indirect influence. In spite of the Junta’s omnipresence and the risks to dissenters, other actors managed to communicate a counterhegemonic discourse to the public. Most prominent of those who publicly disagreed with the Junta were the various human rights groups, such as the Madres de Plaza de Mayo, and popular culture icons, such as the artists of rock nacional,9 and particularly León Giceo.

Human rights activism was present in Argentina at this time. The Peace and Justice Service (SERPAJ) and the Ecumenical Movement for Human Rights (MEDH) had memberships consisting mostly of clergy. MEDH was connected to the World Council of Churches, a group which advocated radical economic and social reforms. The Permanent Assembly for Human Rights (APDH) also enjoyed Adolfo Pérez Esquivel’s presence (Lewis 185-186), who spent April of 1977 to May of 1978 in jail for his participation in SERPAJ, earning him the Nobel Peace Prize in 1980 for his activism. Emilio Mignone left the ADPH out of disappointment with their moderateness, particularly after the disappearance of his daughter Mónica in 1979. He founded the Center for Legal and Social Studies (CELS), which benefited from his personal contacts abroad, particularly in Washington. Additionally, there were the Argentine League for the Rights of Man, founded in the 1930 to defend communism, and its offshoot group Families of the Disappeared and Detained for Political Reasons. Originally, this group’s

9 “National Rock.” For this thesis, I prefer to leave this term in Spanish to mark its uniquely Argentine origins since “national rock” in English could refer to the rock of any nation.
purpose was to raise awareness of disappearances of members of the ERP and Montoneros. All the groups’ common tactics included collecting information about human rights violations from their victims and/or family members as well as witnesses, circulating that information to other groups and any media willing to publish it, including international media, helping families file writs of habeas corpus, and aiding the international fact-finding teams that came to Argentina.

An upstart group formed during the darkest years of the Proceso’s repression came to be the most visible and prominent director of public attention to human rights abuses: the Madres de Plaza de Mayo (Lewis 186). Called the Mothers of the Disappeared by Anglophones and referred to here as, “Madres,” they focused attention in Argentina and abroad to the thousands of disappeared with their weekly meetings\textsuperscript{10} in the Plaza de Mayo and their forceful public speech. While they participated in many of the same activities as the other groups, they were also, “offensive, rather than defensive” (Simpson and Bennett 167), an attitude that sometimes earned the criticism of other human rights groups (Simpson and Bennett 169). They were the only ones to lead regular protests during the dictatorship, though other groups participated in their rallies from time to time. In recognition of their national and international visibility, they were nominated for the 1980 Nobel Peace Prize and granted entry to the award ceremony.\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{10} “Rondas.”

\textsuperscript{11} I found contradictory literature on this issue, with Fisher saying that the Madres were ineligible for the prize because they were a group (111), and Bouvard saying that Esquivel won because he, “fit the male model of protest as opposed to the Mothers’ radical and collective model” (99). Amnesty International won the Prize in 1977 for its report on human rights violations in Argentina (Guest 86), so there appears to be some merit to Bouvard’s position. Whatever the case, the Madres received two tickets to Stockholm from the selection committee for the presentation ceremony (Bouvard 99) and the Peace Prize of the People, an award issued by the
In contrast to the strident protests of the Madres, a more subtle dissidence came from rock nacional. Similarly to what happened in Mexico, a youth counterculture coalesced in the mixture of rock, American popular music and Latin American rhythms. Representing what critics would call the “darker risks of rapid development,” rock musicians in Latin America suggested that, “the state has the obligation to safeguard the nation from unwarranted excesses of modernity” (Zolov 17). By the 1970s, artists of rock nacional were writing songs denouncing social conditions, political events, military repression and forced disappearances (Zolov 251). While many fled the country after the coup, some stayed in Argentina and continued to perform concerts and produce records. In spite of vetting by censors, they managed to retain a vestige of their core values - such as generational confrontation, the concern with widespread poverty and lack of opportunities, and, broadly, a criticism of a politically apathetic middle class culture - in their music and lyrics. Prominent among them was León Gieco, who in 1972 jumped to celebrity status with “Hombres de hierro,” a song critical of military repression against student movements.

**Focus of the Thesis**

In my thesis, I study the contradictory views of the Proceso time period of what was the ideal Argentine society. I focus on two dominant tropes or metaphors in particular that demonstrate the Junta’s ambitions to recast Argentina in their own image, as well as the resistance offered by the Madres and León Gieco. The first metaphor is that of considering Argentina pristine natural environment in danger of attack and

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Norwegian government to those who are nominated for but do not win the Nobel Peace Prize (Abreu-Hernandez 405).

12 “Iron Men.”
pollution by foreign ideas. It often showed up in references to Argentina as a body obliged to fight off invading microbes. Admiral Massera said, “The problem should be seen as an existential pathology. I have said it before: this is a fight between those of us who are in favor of life, and those who are in favor of death” (Massera ctd. in Cisneros 14). He defines those in favor of life as the military caught in a life-or-death struggle against others in favor of death: in medical terms, antibodies versus germs. This metaphor derives from the essentialist view that considers that the nation has existence beyond the individuals that compose it. It is a metaphor that was repeated often.

The second dominant metaphor was that of the nation-as-family (Filc 166). Based on the traditional and patriarchal Roman Catholic definition of a family as a married, heterosexual couple and their children, this allegory considered the government to be the father of the nation. Thus, defining Argentina as a family made power relations natural and divine (Filc 43). It also allowed an authoritarian government to flourish because it provided a justification for control over private as well as public life. As Filc explains,

The State-father-Armed Forces was the guardian of the borders of the Nation-family and the parents were responsible for preserving each family-cell from invasion-infection of ‘foreign’ - that is, subversive – ideologies. (135)

Both metaphors placed the Junta in the position of protector of the nation, and as such, it became the sole entity permitted to decide whom and what was dangerous and to
deal with them appropriately. Thus the Junta justified state terrorism and repression as part of a life or death struggle in which violence was acceptable.

In short, the metaphors provided an easily-recognized script with a powerful presence due to its repetition. The government used them to paint a representation of Argentina as a “traditional” family which was compelled to defend itself against foreign threats to its “Western and Christian” values. On the other hand, the Madres and Gieco subverted or rejected the Junta’s metaphors (and, more generally, their parent ideas of essentialist nationalism and patriarchy) as a way to communicate quickly and effectively with all those who were familiar with them.

In Chapter 1, I focus on propaganda produced by the military to construct the nation-as-body and the nation-as family. Specifically, I employ television and movie advertisements that have not been analyzed in other scholarly work to my knowledge. Through the use of images and explicit narration, they attempt to modify the beliefs and behaviors of individuals to conform to their own, traditional standards. It is a discourse that defines ideal Argentines and assumes patriarchal values while it tries to justify the removal of those who are not ideal from society. This is a central axis in advertisements addressing a broad range of issues, from economic policies to marking the anniversary of the coup.

In Chapter 2, I discuss the construction of justice by the Madres de Plaza de Mayo. While other works focus on the performative aspects of their activism and the ways in which they engage(d) the public, I study the Madres from an institutional perspective through their official newsletter from the time of its inaugural edition in 1980 to the restoration of democracy in 1983. As far as I know, these are the only documents
produced for publication by the Madres during the time of the dictatorship, with the exception of advertisements placed in regular newspapers. The principal pitfall to using them is that they start much later than the group itself, creating a gap in coverage. While often mentioned in passing in the literature, I found no scholarly article that examined the newsletters themselves. By using them, I was able to trace a belief that justice is the most important goal a society can have and that it is the foundation for any potential peace, both domestically in Argentina and in the world in general. Such a discourse includes all Argentines, regardless of their conformity to the rules of the Junta. Their discourse also defines justice and those actors responsible for it. By using a discourse of justice rather than a discourse of motherhood, the Madres reject the idea that beliefs and/or behavior are just cause for societal rejection in the form of state violence.

In Chapter 3, I examine the role of rock nacional, and specifically León Gieco, in the construction of an “us” that stands against “them.” I analyze the lyrics and to some extent the musical and performative aspects of the songs he wrote and played around the years of the military dictatorship. With limited exceptions (e.g. Russi, Vila), scholars have neglected the role of Gieco and rock nacional in the resistance against the Proceso. In contrast to the discourse of the military, which divided in spite of its alleged efforts to unite, and like the Madres, who emphasized a basic right of all Argentines to live, Gieco offered a more inclusive ideal of Argentine society in counterpoint to socioeconomic injustice.
Contributions of the Thesis

My thesis contributes to scholarship on the Dirty War in several ways. First, through my focus on the time of the Junta, I can trace the genesis of the narratives of physical and cultural violence and contestation that emerged during the years of the regime’s greatest power. I wished to go further back in time to discover why and how everything I had read about started. I feel that my approach enhances possible understandings of the Proceso years as well as the construction of memory in its aftermath.

Second, my forays into patriarchy in public discourse complicate the picture presented by some theories of gender roles in Latin America; specifically, that of the machismo/Marianismo binary defined by Evelyn Stevens. In Stevens’ binary, men treat of women is based on the role of the woman in question in the man’s life. They treat only their own mothers well while they treat their sexual partners with cruelty while women accept this treatment and use their acceptance of filial devotion and endurance of suffering to prove their femininity. While the Madres certainly employed references to pain, maternal suffering and the glorification of motherhood that Stevens considers to be the salient characteristics of Marianismo, it only served performative purposes. Their discourse was based on concepts of the universal value and applicability of justice, as I show in Chapter 2. Stevens’ binary further falls apart when applied to the Madres because it explains how and why women accept cruel treatment at the hands of their sexual partners as a way to validate their femininity. By contrast, the Madres reject the right of the Junta to inflict pain upon them, particularly through their children.
Instead of privileging the dominant ideology, my thesis privileges the competition and the dialogue (to the extent that such dialogue is possible under the harsh repression of these years) between several discourses. The dictatorship’s efforts to dictate did not go without dissenting response in the public sphere, despite their control of media, government, and even Argentine bodies. Patriarchal authoritarianism, as modeled by the Junta, was rejected by the Madres in favor of familial affection and the primacy of law. Gieco’s response was to signal abuses of paternal authoritarianism through the stereotypical construction of gender roles. Where the regime rejected corrupters of “Western and Christian” values as unworthy of citizenship or even inhuman, the Madres considered all people to have a fundamental worth and humanity. Gieco’s response was to point out exclusionary situations and call for solidarity to confront them. To borrow the Junta’s metaphor of Argentina as a family, the Junta played the role of a controlling father; the Madres, the role of the mother intervening on the child’s behalf; and Gieco, the role of the rebellious teen who rejects his father’s beliefs.

Each actor used the scripts available to it for its own purposes, creating, borrowing, or subverting as necessary. The regime used the two metaphors as justification for itself as well as to advance its own power. In both metaphors, they portrayed themselves as saviors of the nation. First, it cut out the “sick” parts of the national body: in a word, subversives. I say this in a literal sense because of the executions and torture of thousands of citizens. Second, it attempted to counter ideas it considered subversive and thus increase the Argentine body’s ability to defend itself. It was expected that Argentines would naturally reject subversion on their own if they
believed firmly enough in the junta’s ideals. The Madres and Gieco, on the other hand, advocated what might be called a holistic approach to health that advocated treating the causes of infirmity – human rights violations and economic disparities – and thus healing the body politic.

As for the nation as family metaphor, the regime can be summarized as taking a “conformity = safety” approach. By eliminating disagreement, it attempted to resolve political conflict and create unanimous support for its programs, much as an authoritarian father threatens to disown those who defy him. If parties disagree but do not speak up, their disagreement does not create public disturbances of any kind. Again, the sense here is literal because of the violence, but also because of all those who left Argentina in self-imposed exile. In contrast, the Madres and Gieco took a unifying approach that called for solidarity and equal rights for all, regardless of their political views. All three tried to mold Argentina into their own imaginary.
Chapter 1: Media and the Construction of Hegemony

The successful takeover put the generals in the enviable position of being able to project their worldview onto Argentine society. The Proceso was, in many ways, conceived by its ideologues as a return to Argentina’s roots, a way to fix the foundation to protect the rest of the building. The generals themselves, being members of at least the middle class and elite enough politically to be isolated from the rest of society, had little reason to think the system was fundamentally broken: after all, it had worked for them. From this bird’s eye view, it was easy to paint activists and reformers as subversive, evil people who rejected a perfectly good system. The Junta started from a conception of the nation that can be seen in the propaganda they produced. First, they identified a body politic based on the geographic and cultural values they considered pure. Foreign influences were suspect because they might not conform to established Argentine values, which were always “Western and Christian,” in keeping with the National Security Doctrine (NSD) as they understood it. In my reading, the regime defined itself as antibodies compelled to fight against pandemic subversion, and subversives as disease-bearing germs in the body politic. These germs had to be eradicated before they could fatally infect the Argentine body politic. Simultaneously, they also based their conception of Argentina on the heterossexual family structure, with the military as the father, the nation as a woman and subversives as children in need of discipline. The discourse based on these metaphors served to place the military as the rescuer of society. The advantage of having two metaphors was that hegemonic discourse could be structured around the themes of danger and of love, and each used when it was considered most apt.
From this viewpoint, in order to protect the body politic and/or the national
damsel in distress, it became necessary to define subversion and identify political goals.
In this section of my study, I will analyze materials from different media endorsed by the
government regarding subversion in order to show how the Junta codified behaviors
and values into a hegemonic discourse that addressed their key values, defined as
“Western and Christian.”

Specifically, I will use pro-military propaganda from film and television to show
how the military endorsed adherence to their values and prescribed behavior. From its
beginning, the Proceso assigned great importance to television and the media in
general, seizing control of television and radio stations on the day of the coup (Fisher
12). It divided Buenos Aires's five television stations like spoils, with each branch of the
military overseeing one station while the President had direct control over the remaining
two (Lavieri 193). Argentine television transitioned to color broadcasting during this time
period, and state-sponsored propaganda, in the form of commercials or documentaries,
was a regular presence.

In an attempt to establish lasting tropes in military propaganda, I include
commercials from throughout the period of 1976-1983. In all sources, the regime
endorses adherence to “Western and Christian” values and the NSD and their attendant
behaviors. These behaviors include capitalist economic practices, the performance of
traditional gender roles, and an active patriotic battle against subversion, among others.
I will divide my work into two sections. In the first, I will list and describe each document
in chronological order. In the second, I turn to a thematic approach to locate common
values in the documents.
It is necessary to address the issue of sources in regards to the issue of dating and media type. Most of the videos I use, I found on the website youtube.com. Some were posted by institutions, such as Resiste un Archivo or Canal 7 (Argentina’s public television station), but on youtube.com, anyone can post videos of any type. It is easy to find many representations of the Junta and/or the era of 1976-1983. Indeed, I found many more clips than I ended up using. However, I must rely on the information posted by those who posted the clips. As a result, the dates of the clips are approximate. Furthermore, no one specified if the clips in question had been written for play on television or as part of a “news reel” to be shown prior to the start of a movie in a theater. I will indicate which type of clip I believe each to be, but I lack the ability to guarantee if a piece was presented in public or broadcast into people’s homes. While I have posted several questions regarding this issue in the forum that accompanies each clip, I have received no response to date. Furthermore, the titles of the clips come from the titles given to them on youtube.com in some cases.

The Junta’s Worldview

After assuming office on March 24, 1976, the leaders of the coup decided to define themselves publicly in terms that resonate with the NSD. They released a document called, *Basic documents and political bases of the armed forces for the Process of National Reorganization*, in which they outlined core beliefs, main objectives, major outlines of plans to achieve those objectives, and set up or altered

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13 *Documentos básicos y bases políticas de las fuerzas armadas para el Proceso de Reorganización Nacional.*
existing institutional structures to meet their needs, eliminating them entirely where it saw fit. According to the Junta,

> Before a tremendous void of power, capable of submerging us in dissolution and anarchy;... before a total absence of ethical and moral examples that those who exercise the management of the State should give...all of which translates into an irreparable loss of the feeling of greatness and faith; the Armed Forces – in fulfillment of an unrenounceable obligation – have assumed management of the State.\(^{14}\)

(Junta 5)

In other words, the members of the Junta professed a belief that they were complying with their duties as defenders of the nation by ending the administration of Isabel Perón. It has been widely acknowledged that her administration was not up to dealing with the problems it was facing, but there were legal ways she could have been deposed. It is impossible to save a nation from bad politics by disregarding its constitution and laws. Philosophical issues aside of what constitutes salvation and what constitutes a nation, though, it is worth noting that one of the reasons cited for overthrowing the government was the loss of the feeling of greatness. Not the loss of greatness itself, but just of the feeling of greatness, was what pushed the usurpers into action.

According to their own words, the military took power for the purposes of,

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\(^{14}\) “Frente a un tremendo vacío de poder, capaz de sumirnos en la disolución y en la anarquía;...a la ausencia total de los ejemplos éticos y morales que deben dar quienes ejercen la conducción del Estado...todo lo cual se traduce en una irreparable pérdida del sentido de grandeza y de fe; las Fuerzas Armadas -en cumplimiento de una obligación irrenunciable- han asumido la conducción del Estado.”
reinstituting the essential values that make the fundamentals of the integral management of the State, emphasizing the sense of morality, competence and efficiency, indispensable to reconstitute the content and image of the Nation, eradicate subversion and promote the harmonious development of national life, basing it on the responsible balance and participation of the distinct sectors, for the purpose of ensuring, eventually, the founding of a republican, representative and federal democracy, adequate to reality and demands of the evolution and progress of the Argentine People.¹⁵ (Junta 13)

Thus the military saw themselves as purgers of Argentina’s problems, a stabilizing force that would enable a later democracy to function. In its own metaphors’ terms, they were the antibodies saving the body from disease or the father protecting his family. In this way, the members of the Junta presented democracy as unable to deal with the problems of economic underdevelopment and subversion. Democracy was so weak, in fact, that its failure was jeopardizing the actual “content and image” of the nation itself. It was not just failing from an institutional standpoint. Thus the Junta declared itself, “the

¹⁵ “Restituir los valores esenciales que hacen a los fundamentos a la conducción integral del Estado, enfatizando el sentido de moralidad, idoneidad y eficiencia, imprescindibles para reconstituir el contenido e imagen de la Nación, erradicar la subversión y promover el desarrollo armónico de la vida nacional basándolo en el equilibrio y la participación responsable de los distintos sectores, a fin de asegurar, posteriormente, la instauración de una democracia republicana, representativa y federal, adecuada a la realidad y exigencias de evolución y progreso del Pueblo Argentino.”
The Junta then proceeded to describe its goals and character, as well as its enemies. Here it drew again on the NSD. The two goals most relevant to this study are the, “Validity of the values of Christian morality, of national tradition and the dignity of the Argentine being”\textsuperscript{17} and the “Validity of national security, eradicating subversion and the causes that favor its existence”\textsuperscript{18} (Junta 13). Thus the Junta defines the nation as Christian and in need of defense from subversive movements. These are defined as “the international left and other related or anti-national interests”\textsuperscript{19} (Junta 18). Using such a broad definition of subversion enabled the Junta to include a wide variety of movements to eradicate on its list, including Marxism/communism, socialism and feminism, among others, as contrary to the “Western and Christian” values cherished by itself and by its interpretation of the NSD. It then declared that,

To that end it is necessary that the action of the Armed Forces facilitate in the future the formation of a movement of national opinion, vital and ample, that admits all those who desire the true greatness of the country.

\textsuperscript{16} “El órgano supremo del Estado encargado de la supervisión del estricto cumplimiento de los objetivos establecidos.”

\textsuperscript{17} “Vigencia de los valores de la moral cristiana, de la tradición nacional y de la dignidad del ser argentino.”

\textsuperscript{18} “Vigencia de la seguridad nacional, erradicando la subversión y las causas que favorecen su existencia.” Here, the Junta means the forces that enable subversion to exist as a movement, rather than political or economic policies that may inspire a person to favor alternate doctrines to the ones presented by the state. In other words, they strive to eliminate unions, for example, rather than the existence of poor working conditions.

\textsuperscript{19} “La izquierda internacional y otros intereses afines o antinacionales.”
and feel identified with the postulates of the national government.\textsuperscript{20} (Junta 16)

The stage was set for a propaganda campaign designed to elicit “correct” behavior and beliefs from the Argentine public while simultaneously describing the nation as in need of protection to be provided by antibodies and/or a father.

Declaring itself the supreme organ of the state served two purposes. First, the Junta placed itself in charge, above the legislature (which it suspended – Junta 9) and the courts, giving itself unlimited authority in all aspects of governmental life. This act placed it in a position to carry out the repression – both violent and otherwise – that has been documented extensively. A second purpose, according to Diana Taylor, was to gender the nation female. She says, “The word \textit{organ} indicates both the fetishistic quality of state power, an abstraction incarnated in the virile personhood of a few select men, and the explicit link between male sexuality and supreme power” (66, italics in original). Once the nation was gendered female, the government began a propaganda campaign designed to reinforce the definition of Argentina as a “Western and Christian” nation. “The military display acted, enacted, and reenacted the (new – now more than ever – always) social system: all male, Catholic, and strictly hierarchical” (Taylor, 67). This tactic enabled the regime to represent itself as a father protecting his family. The

\textsuperscript{20}“Para ello es menester que la acción de las Fuerzas Armadas facilite en el futuro la formación de un movimiento de opinión nacional, vital y amplio, que admita a todos aquellos que deseen la verdadera grandeza del país y se sientan consustanciados con los postulados del gobierno nacional.”
reinforcement of these values came in the form of propaganda designed to elicit the desired behavior on the part of those who saw it.\textsuperscript{21}

An Overview of Military Propaganda in Film and Television

The first piece of propaganda to be analyzed is the announcement on television of the takeover by the Junta,\textsuperscript{22} called simply “Communiqué Number One.”\textsuperscript{23} Broadcast against a backdrop of the Argentine coat of arms, it consists of merely the reading of the first communiqué released by the Junta. It reads:

\begin{quote}
It is communicated to the population that, from this date onward, the country finds itself under the operational control of the Junta of Commanding Generals of the armed forces. Strict adherence to the instructions and directives that the military Junta, security forces, or police issue is recommended, as well as extreme caution to avoid individual or group actions or attitudes that could demand drastic intervention from
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{21}] It bears mentioning that the Junta did not limit itself to propaganda for broadcast in the mass media. It also attempted to teach its beliefs directly to students. David Rock quotes a textbook of the time: “for psychological and physical reasons, the male should be acknowledged as the authority...By her nature woman represents kindness and love. Unless things are so, anarchy and dissatisfaction become a fact...To deny the father’s authority is to tear the family to pieces. The woman’s obedience to authority has a great educational influence on the family” (Rock, Authoritarian, 230). Thus girls were taught to accept both male authority as well as an essentialist definition of their nature. Simultaneously, because the nation was a family and the Junta was the father, citizens of all ages were taught to accept its authority.
\item[\textsuperscript{22}] While the audio is original, the youtube.com video uses its own images of the time period. According to testimonials of Argentines who lived in this period, the communiqués prominently displayed the coat of arms and other institutional symbols, such as the presidential chair (Challú, personal communication).
\item[\textsuperscript{23}] “Comunicado Número Uno.”
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Thus the news is broken and expectations are laid out. Because it is a newscast and it is black and white it seems apparent that this was a televised production.

“Fight against subversion”\(^{25}\) dates from either 1976 or 1977 (“Lucha”). Because it is in color, I believe it was played in theaters. It is a thirty-second long, animated, and allegorical story about Argentina and international subversion. In “Fight against Subversion,” a fat and content cow grazes peacefully in a field in front of a factory until she is attacked by a group of monstrous-looking people with sharp teeth, carrying buckets, all dressed in black and all opening and closing their mouths over and over, as though threatening to bite the cow. They milk her roughly, depleting her body until she becomes scrawny. The sky darkens and the factory collapses. There is a close-up of one of the people stroking one of the teats in what could be considered a sexual way as milk spurts out of it. Finally, the cow kicks away her attackers and chases them out of the field. She then runs to a nearby haystack, where a little boy dressed as a gaucho gives her a pitchfork full of hay. The sun returns, the factory is rebuilt, and the cow eats and fattens as a happy calf runs across the field to begin nursing.

\(^{24}\) “Se comunica a la población que, a partir de la fecha, el país se encuentra bajo el control operacional de la Junta de Comandantes Generales de las fuerzas armadas. Se recomienda a todos los habitantes el estricto acatamiento a las disposiciones y directivas que emanan de autoridad militar, de seguridad o policial, así como extremar el cuidado en evitar acciones y actitudes individuales o de grupo que puedan exigir la intervención drástica del personal en operaciones. Firmado, con el Teniente General Jorge Rafael Videla, Comandante General del Ejército.”

\(^{25}\) “Lucha contra la subversión.”
Figure 1.1: Screen shots of, “Fight against Subversion.” (from 24demarzo.gov.ar).
The word “LET’S UNITE” is written in the sky. The voiceover says,

Argentina: a land of peace and enormous riches. Argentina: state coveted by international subversion that tried to weaken it in order to be able to dominate it. It was a sad time of scrawny cows. Until we said, ‘Enough! Enough pillage and abuse and shame!’ Today peace returns to our land and that peace presents us with a challenge: that of knowing how to unite like brothers in the effort of building the Argentina that we want.”

(“Lucha”)

“We Earned Peace” is a short documentary of approximately thirty minutes in duration, played on television during 1977 and presently split in three videos of roughly ten minutes each. The documentary opens with a description of Argentina’s land and industries. It then moves to a historical discussion of the causes of the coup. While they are certainly biased and sensationalistic to the point of comparing subversive terrorism to, “implacable cancer that causes death” (“Documental 2”), praise for the Junta is almost completely withheld.

26 “UNÁMONOS” (original format)
27 “Argentina: tierra de paz y de enorme riqueza. Argentina: estado codiciado por la subversión internacional. Intentó debilitarla para poder dominarla. Fueron épocas tristes, y de vacas flacas. Hasta que dijimos, -Basta. Basta de saqueo y abuso y vergüenza-. Hoy vuelve la paz a nuestra tierra y esa paz nos plantea un desafío: el de saber unirnos como hermanos en el esfuerzo de construir la Argentina que deseamos.”
28 “Ganamos La Paz”
29 “Cáncer implacable que provoca muerte.”
The documentary justifies military intervention in the crescendo of violence, paired with the inefficacy of the civilian authorities. It shows Perón’s famous speech in the Plaza de Mayo, in which he condemned the radical Peronist youth and the Montoneros for their violent actions. This is followed by scenes of his funeral, complete with a grieving Isabel, followed by her ascension to the presidency. The voiceover then explains that Isabel Perón’s instructions to the military were to crush violent subversion that had established in stronghold in, “one of the provinces most beloved by Argentines: Tucumán” (“Documental 3”). From there, the voiceover and the images document terrorist activities on the part of subversives, complete with direct views of corpses, explaining that the terrorists move into the cities and universities after they were defeated by the Army in Tucumán. It says, “impotent now to attempt a territorial occupation, after the defeat in Tucumán, they want to destroy and terrorize” (“Documental 3”). There are clips from the funeral of the assassinated Federal Police Chief and from the sites of bombings. The voiceover says, “The people of the government itself start to rebel. The authorities shake and the void of power was being generated” (“Documental 3”). Next, there is a clip of the funeral of several subversives who were killed during an attack on a military base. The voiceover says,

“It is the beginning of the end for them (subversive forces). The government loses control of the situation. Politicians do not find solutions

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30 The Plaza de Mayo is the central plaza in Buenos Aires.
31 “Una de las provincias más queridas por los argentinos: Tucumán.”
32 “Impotentes ya para intentar el ocupamiento territorial, después de la derrota en Tucumán quieren destruir y amedrentar.”
33 “La propia gente del gobierno comienza a rebelarse. Las autoridades tambalean y se generaba el vacío de poder.”
to the void of power...The armed forces see themselves obligated to assume power...in order to preserve the integrity of the nation.\(^{34}\)

(“Documental 3”)

Here follows footage of shacks under the control of the military and the story of a soldier who was held hostage by subversives and escaped to return to his post and help the Army destroy subversion. The voiceover proceeds to talk about the restoration of order “by legal forces”\(^{35}\) as footage of troops conducting checkpoints and arresting “delinquents”\(^{36}\) plays. Next comes footage of confiscated weapons and underground newspapers revealing “the danger in which was the nation”\(^{37}\) and key players in the movement. The most drastic images are next: close ups of the faces of corpses and bleeding and burned bodies accompanied by the question, “What can peoples expect from those who offer a system founded on fear and disregard for human life?”\(^{38}\) (“Documental 3”). The clip closes with a man in a suit walking through a crowded street whose facial expressions and body language flow from an appearance of questioning to deep thought, to serenity, to joy to match pace with the voiceover. The man walks from a crowded sidewalk to a street-corner florist where he buys a dozen red roses. He proceeds to a park where he is greeted by his family. A small boy runs into his arms, whom he picks up and includes in an embrace with his young daughter and his wife.

\(^{34}\) “Es el principio del fin para ellas (las fuerzas subversivas). El gobierno pierde el control de la situación. Los políticos no encuentran soluciones al vacío de poder...Las fuerzas armadas se ven en la obligación de asumir el poder...para preservar la integridad de la nación.”

\(^{35}\) “Por las fuerzas legales.”

\(^{36}\) “Delincuentes.”

\(^{37}\) “El peligro en que estuvo la nación.”

\(^{38}\) “¿Qué pueden esperar los pueblos a los que ofrecen un sistema fundado sobre el miedo y el desprecio para la vida humana?”
The man and his wife kiss each other’s cheek in greeting, and then she smells the flowers. The family is frozen in a snapshot upon which is superimposed the words, “WE EARNED PEACE”\(^{39}\) (“Documental 3,” capitals in original). The narration for his walk and his reunion with his family is as follows:

The time has come to earn peace and to ask ourselves: First, in the name of what cause did the heroes and martyrs of that struggle fall? Well, they fell in the name of God, who gives us life; in the name of the country, which provides us everything in order to live in peace at work and at home. And the time has come to also ask ourselves, who were the intended recipients of that victory? They will be the millions of Argentines who look for a cause founded on love, on justice, and on liberty. A cause which, with the invincible strength of the noblest ideals, defeated violence, extremism and hate. Thus peace will have been earned for the Argentine people. People will have contributed to formulating a better world and, upon giving thanks to the Lord for those achievements, exalting images of life and love, we will be able to exclaim with emphasis, ‘WE EARNED PEACE!’\(^{40}\) (“Documental 3”).

\(^{39}\) “GANAMOS LA PAZ.” (capitals in original)
\(^{40}\) “Ha llegado el momento de ganar la paz y de preguntarnos: Primero, ¿en nombre de qué causa cayeron los héroes y mártires de esa lucha? Pues, cayeron en nombre de Dios, que nos da la vida, en nombre de la patria, que nos brinda todo para vivir en paz en trabajo y en hogar. Y ha llegado el momento de preguntarnos también, ¿quién eran los destinatarios de esa victoria? Serán los millones de argentinos que buscan una causa fundada en el amor, en la justicia y en la libertad. Una causa que, con la fuerza invencible de los ideales más nobles vencieron sobre la violencia los extremismos y el odio. Se habrá ganado así la paz para los argentinos. Se habrá contribuido a formular un mundo mejor y al darle gracias al Señor por
To commemorate the third anniversary of the coup, “Remember and Compare” was televised around March 24, 1979. Set to music reminiscent of a horror film, it features a series of individual, white words written across a black screen and images of the aftermath of violence. The words are shown alternately large and medium across the screen, with the large writing giving the viewer the impression of immediacy.

Following the words, images of the aftermath of violence are featured. The words read, “STAGNATION. SPECULATION. TERRORISM. DISORDER. STAGNATION.” (“Recuerde,” capitals in original) They are followed by a voiceover that says, “Disorder. Speculation. Terrorism. Loss of prestige. Stagnation. This happened before March 24, 1976.” Finally, written words and a voiceover appear together. “You lived it. REMEMBER AND COMPARE.” (capitals in original), after which the words, “Third anniversary of the Process of National Reorganization” appear under the national coat of arms.

“Dollar/Costs,” according to youtube.com forum postings, was produced in 1976, but aired on television in 1980 (“Propaganda 3”). It is approximately one minute in length and in color. In it, a group of six businessmen are trapped between a ceiling labeled “Dollar” and a floor labeled “Costs.” There is not enough room between them for the men to stand upright, and the men are all shouting things like, “Raise the ceiling!”

esos logros, exaltando las imágenes de vida y de amor, podremos excluir con énfasis, ‘¡Ganamos la paz!’

41 “Recuerde y Compare.”
42 “ESTANCAMIENTO. ESPECULACIÓN. TERRORISMO. DESORDEN. ESTANCAMIENTO.”
44 “Usted lo vivió. RECERDRE Y COMPARE.”
45 “Tercer aniversario del Proceso de Reorganización Nacional.”
46 “Dólar/Costos.”
47 “¡Suban el techo!”
The ceiling and the floor move toward one another, and the businessmen push against them trying to make some room. The voiceover says, “Do they raise the ceiling? Let’s see.” As they do manage to raise the ceiling, the men stand upright and sigh collectively with relief. At that point, the floor begins to rise. The men yell and begin to push against and jump on the floor, trying to lower it. “Immediately the floor will rise. I will explain it to you: everything would end up as before. Then, what did the government do with its new measures? It lowered the floor,” says the narrator as the floor sinks and the ceiling rises. “There’s the secret. These measures should be complemented by the same type of action as in official and private sectors. The secret is in lowering the floor, and not in raising the ceiling” (Pigna).

“Argentina on the move,” from the year 1981, was produced as support for the dictatorship was winding down and economic problems were increasing. I believe it was a television commercial due to its brevity and lack of story-telling. It was designed to appeal to patriotism and garner support for the Junta. It opens with a shot of a satellite radio detector spinning, with barely enough time for the viewer to make out the words, “Air Force” on it. The speed with which the image passes may indicate that the beginning of the clip was cut off. Next follows a scene of a jet taking off. The voiceover says, “These are some of the examples of the much that we did. There still remains

48 “¿Levantan el techo? Veamos.”
49 “Inmediatamente se levantará el piso. Se lo explicaré: todo quedaría como antes. Entonces, ¿qué hizo el gobierno con las nuevas medidas? Bajó el piso.”
50 “Allí está el secreto. Estas medidas deben ser complementadas por una acción en el mismo sentido de los sectores oficiales y privados. Bajará aun más el piso. El secreto está en bajar el piso, y no en subir el techo.”
51 “Sí, Argentina camina.”
52 “Fuerza Aérea.”
53 Aerolíneas Argentinas was the state-owned national airline, and the government bought the private airline Austral in 1980 (Simpson and Bennett 195).
much to do, although, as a result, we can say that we Argentines live in one of the best
countries in the world. Yes, Argentina is on the move (literally, ‘is walking’). As the
voiceover moves into the word “Argentines,” the view of the plane disappears into a
view of the national flag fluttering in a clear blue sky. The flag nearly fades into the sky,
but then is background for the phrase, “Argentina on the move.” The words are written
in such a way that the vertical bar of the “t” in Argentina carries an upward-pointing
arrow, emphasizing Argentina’s rise.

“Argentines, to Victory!” was played during the Falklands War in 1982. It
praises the war effort and encourages citizens to do the same. Its message is especially
important to the regime because the Falklands War was a last-ditch effort to hold on to
power by a government that was losing it. Recovering the Falklands would boost the
prestige of any government able to realize that achievement because it would “restore”
the missing parts of the political Argentine land mass as well as prove Argentina’s
power against Great Britain, a nation whose standing and power in the world are and
were at a high level.

The commercial itself opens with the same image of the Argentine flag flying
against an endless blue sky as “Argentina on the move” uses as a closing. About
halfway through the commercial, the image of the flag is replaced by a close-up of a
hand giving a “thumbs up” sign. The hand is against a black background and lit from
behind so that it is framed by light, almost as though it were wearing a halo. The words,
“Argentines, to victory!,” written in white, appear on the hand where the index finger

54 “Éstos son algunos de los ejemplos de lo mucho que hicimos. Aún queda mucho por hacer,
aunque, como resultado, podemos decir que hoy los argentinos vivimos en uno de los mejores
países del mundo. Sí, Argentina camina.”
55 “Argentinos, a vencer!” (sic)
touches the base of the thumb. They hover for a moment, and then slowly move toward
the viewer, growing as they do so. This commercial, as opposed to the others in my
study, is not spoken, but sung. Set to a military sounding musical arrangement, the
chorus sings, “We are Argentine. We are going to win. The future is on its way.
Argentines, to victory! Argentines, to victory! Argentines, to victory!”

In the following table, I summarize the salient aspects of the propaganda pieces I
have described in order to facilitate the reader’s ability to follow my analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commercial Title</th>
<th>&quot;Plot&quot;</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Likely presentation mode</th>
<th>Key Images</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Communiqué Number One”</td>
<td>Announcement of coup.</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>television</td>
<td>coat of arms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Fight against Subversion”</td>
<td>Attack on a cow.</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>movie</td>
<td>cow, factory, monsters/germs, gaucho</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“We earned peace”</td>
<td>Man walks to park, meets family.</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>television</td>
<td>violence, family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Remember and compare”</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>television</td>
<td>violence, black and white, coat of arms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Dollar/Costs”</td>
<td>Businessmen are being squeezed.</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>television</td>
<td>businessmen, floor, ceiling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Argentina on the move”</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>television</td>
<td>satellite receiver, jet, flag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Argentines, to victory!”</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>television</td>
<td>flag, thumbs-up</td>
</tr>
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56 “Somos argentinos. Vamos a vencer. El futuro sigue su camino. ¡Argentinos a vencer, Argentinos a vencer, Argentinos a vencer!”
It is interesting to note repetition of images of violence in “Fight against Subversion,” “We Earned Peace,” and “Remember and Compare.” The use of national symbols – specifically, the coat of arms, the gaucho, the military communication receiver and the flag – is worth noting as well. Clearly, the presence of violent images can be construed as a threat about the danger of not supporting the Junta while the use of national symbols serves to legitimize the regime. In this way, the Junta ties its propaganda into the NSD by calling on love of country as well as fear for the country. It is also interesting to speculate as to why the Junta chose the presentation venue of each commercial. Were theatric presentations chosen for longer films because the Junta believed its audience to be captured in that venue? Or were they designed to address a more middle-class audience, one that could afford to go to the movies?

**Defining Enemies and Establishing Argentine Purity**

In this section of the chapter, I will analyze each source in search of recurrent themes and the use of the metaphors of the nation-as-family- and the nation-as-body. I find that, in addition to the metaphors, the Junta used these pieces of propaganda to demonstrate strength, demonize subversion, endorse traditional gender roles, promote “Western and Christian” values, and praise its own successes and policies.

In “Communiqué Number One,” there appears to be little more than simple communication. A closer look, however, reveals the performative value of the announcement itself. Diana Taylor insightfully notes that, “The display of military might was just that: a show, a ritualistic declaration of a ‘new beginning’...The military demonstration of strength was necessary for performative effect” (Taylor 61). First, the
use of a national and historic symbol suggest continuity and a return to all the things that were good about Argentina prior to Isabel Perón’s bungling. It seems to be an appeal to love of country, faith in the government and a vindication of the system. Second, the warning tone of the communiqué itself is revealing. It seems intended to strike fear into citizens at the power of the military. The idea of “drastic intervention” and the inclusion of the police in operational forces is a frightening thing. “Drastic intervention” is a broad term that implies the possibility of violence. Furthermore, if the police now work for and/or with the military, it suggests that they are no longer available to help citizens if violent action is taken against them. The message scares and isolates its listeners. A contributing factor to this effect is the narrator, who speaks with little inflection and reveals no emotion. That the narrator is male also serves to reinforce the patriarchal conception of society. Finally, the message of the announcement is serious. Its overall tone is rigid and no-nonsense. Mere attitudes are listed explicitly as potential just cause for intervention. In my opinion, the strong tone of this clip supports the rescuer role of the Junta in both metaphors: the Junta represents a strong body capable of fighting off infection as well as a strict father capable of managing the affairs of his family. Argentina has been put on notice: the Junta means business.

The same idea of a show of strength occurs in “Remember and Compare.” The frightening music, the dramatic graphics and the piteous images of violence, all able to be stopped at the end of the word, “1976,” seem to profess the military’s victory over violence and chaos. The control necessary to accomplish that feat is, by implication, the literal control had by the military. The commercial suggests that the military had only to will the problems out of existence. The soft piano music that accompanies the final
scene suggests comfort and safety. The use of black and white emphasizes strength. It leaves no room for doubt, no shades of gray. There is a feeling of safety in following someone who can see things so clearly. The colors reinforce the military’s confidence in its own solutions. The narration by a male voice, again with no inflection, further demonstrates the idea that the military is the patriarch of the Argentine nation-family. Again, as mentioned by Taylor, the performative value of a display of strength is used by the military to reinforce itself as in control. In my mind, the military body again shows its vitality in its fight against subversive invaders as well as its firm leadership of the Argentine family.

Might is again the topic of “Argentina on the move.” It begins with a display of military force in the Air Force satellite dish, followed by a modern jet. Both are signs of might: the first, military, and the second, economic. The jet is a symbol of economic might because it is a passenger plane, which, obviously, would not be flying unless there were enough paying passengers to fill it. Both objects are also symbols of modernity and imply sound infrastructure and all that which it requires. Combined with the male voiceover, they also demonstrate - at least, to me - the government’s ability to provide for its family. That these symbols represent the Junta refers to the NSD because it implies control over the economy as well as the military. Finally, the flag is a blatant appeal to patriotism. Placed against a sky of almost matching color, it turns the idea of the Argentine nation into something natural rather than constructed. The blending of the sky with the flag also suggests the eternity of the Argentine nation, something not possible without the strength previously demonstrated in the commercial.
Additionally, because the family structure was perceived as natural, the Junta seems to repeat its rightness in assuming the role of protector of the nation.

The inevitable triumph predicted in “Argentines, to victory!” is another demonstration of might. By predicting victory, the government represents itself as mighty against external foes and willing to defend its sovereignty, just as a healthy body is able to defend itself from invading microbes. Because victory is guaranteed – at least discursively - it is a call to patriotic support of the war effort. After all, few are those who would back a loser. Argentina, by being the predicted winner, deserves support for its power. By extension, supporting the war means supporting the government. The government, which has styled itself as based on traditional Argentine values, is thus calling for support of those values as well as for support of the conflict while simultaneously proclaiming might. The triumphant tones of the music, in addition to the lyrics, suggest to me strength as proven by Argentina’s upcoming victory. In this clip, the choral group consisting of men and women’s voices can be read as a call to family unity as well. Because the family unites behind the military, the military becomes the father providing for his loved ones. Because this provision calls for a recuperation of territory, the nation can also be seen as a fully functional body in the absence of subversive influences.

The problem of subversion was one that had to be constructed and maintained by the Junta. Subversion, then, is portrayed in a number of ways, starting with its long history. “We Earned Peace” opens with Perón’s denunciations of the subversives in his movement and a history of terrorist violence, as I have already explained. This serves to
legitimate or prove the existence of subversives because the Junta is claiming that they are recognizable even to Perón and his movement, not just to the current government.

An additional reading provided by the Junta is that subversion came from Perón’s movement, which the military and conservatives had for years attempted to keep out of power. Such a reading locates subversion outside the military body, and seems to declare the military as vigorous and healthy. An anti-Peronist reading of this clip implies that Perón was not a good leader, since subversion started in his movement, while the military can be seen as a good leader for stopping it. The clip thus provides the Junta’s version of the history of subversion, showing it as a long-standing problem. This historical background of subversion helps to establish the strength of the threat they pose: after all, they have stood the test of time. They have adapted, moving to the cities and universities after their defeat in Tucumán, and employing new tactics: assassinations and bombings. Their adaptation calls to my mind the metaphor of germs because germs mutate in order to be able to survive attacks by antibodies. Civilians have died in the bombings, but subversives have also killed a police chief, thus proving that no one is safe from them.57 The deaths of civilians, in the Junta’s discourse, also prove that subversives are enemies of the people, not just the state. By proceeding to highlight their attacks against the Army base and their loss in that confrontation, the military makes two points. First, they establish that the subversives are after the people by attacking those whose job it is to defend the populace. Second, they show that the

57 The historical inaccuracies contained in the Junta’s statement must be pointed out. Despite the Junta’s claims to the contrary, no more than approximately 2000 individuals were involved with violent leftist groups, even at their zenith in 1974-1975. No more than 400 ever had access to weapons. The left only killed 697 people during the entire decade of the seventies. The threat posed by the left was thoroughly trounced by the end of 1976, “a reality the authorities hid so they wouldn’t have to soften” (Feitlowitz 6). Perpetuating the claim of the existence of a (violent) subversive threat became a standard trope in military propaganda.
military can handle subversives when given the chance to do so. Their ability to handle subversion again suggests to me the metaphors of body and family: body, because the military is intended to represent an immune system capable of suppressing an aggressive infection, and family, because the father's traditional role as protector is best performed by the military.

In “Fight against Subversion,” the representation of subversives as attacking monsters is significant. It dehumanizes subversives, thus suggesting that people who disagree with the Junta are not really “people” at all. This reading is reinforced by the fact that the subversives are shown attacking in a pack, as packs suggest animals. It also portrays subversives as followers who are only doing what the rest of the subversives do, like animals in a pack, rather than thinking for themselves. By extension, the piece suggests to me the Junta opined that people who disagree with the government are non-thinking. Alternatively, the monstrous-looking people could call to mind the idea of germs attacking the body politic. Germs, after all, also attack bodies in groups and, in cases of severe illness, cause the body’s condition to deteriorate. In this case, the dehumanizing evaluation of subversion is somewhat different and stronger. The representation of subversives as germs professes more strongly the idea that they do not think and are not human, but it also makes subversives appear more dangerous, in my opinion. Germs are invisible to the naked eye and can be anywhere. They can even spread from person to person, with those people infecting others without the knowledge of either party. It is impossible to defend against them until signs of infection appear. The only way to prevent infection is to sterilize, which the Junta attempted through its violence. The violent removal of the germs by the cow then suggests that
violence is an acceptable and justified measure against subversives: Argentina must be sterilized of subversives and their ideas lest it become sick. In Cisneros’ words, “Disease becomes the signifier by which the signified of sin can be equated with subversion” (28). The commercial can also be interpreted as a patriarchal allegory in which the father-state must protect the defenseless cow – the female of the species - against subversion.

Finally, the content of the voiceover in “Fight against Subversion” is a blatant song of praise for Argentina’s worth. The land is enormously rich and covetable. This harkens back to the Junta’s belief in the excellence of all things Argentine and speaks of a patriotic love for the land. This is seen again in the use of the gaucho as a reinforcement of traditional Argentina and its values. The use of the term “covet” is also relevant because it seems to me to be a reference to the Ten Commandments. Subversion, by coveting Argentina, sins against it while Argentina, by not coveting, remains morally justified. The inflections and emotional tones in the voice of the narrator, who is again male, also reflect a fatherly attitude. The tone is appropriately sad or happy to match the events in the film, just as a father would be delighted or pained at the suffering of his family. The body metaphor works here too, in my opinion, because sickness and health cause sadness and happiness respectively. While it is hard to imagine a “happy” immune system, it is easy to imagine a person restored to happiness after regaining health.

“We Earned Peace” defines the recipients of the great gift of the coup and their responsibilities and, in doing so, repeats the construction of subversives as enemies of the people. In answer to the question of who will receive the benefits that the regime
provides, the voiceover says, “They will be the millions of Argentines who look for a cause founded on love, on justice, and on liberty. A cause which, with the invincible strength of the noblest ideals, defeated violence, extremism and hate.”\textsuperscript{58} The use of the future tense here reveals the Junta’s intention of permanently solving the problem of subversive violence because the recipients exist not only now, but in the future. Those who accept the military, it seems to say, do so in benefit of all Argentines who want and will want to live in love, justice and freedom, rejecting violence and hate for all time. Furthermore, by implication, the subversives were those who wanted to live in violence and hate. Again, the use of the future tense implies a potential for a future threat. Subversion must always be fought, and the military will always do it, just as the immune system is always ready to defend the body and fathers are always ready to defend their families. This is in keeping with the idea of permanent war from the NSD as the military understood it. Safety is permanent for those who accept the values of the coup. By accepting the military and its values, each Argentine has the ability to earn peace and make a better world. Through the definition of the recipients of peace as the children in the clip, the Junta repeats the metaphor of the nation-as-family, with itself as a benevolent father and good provider.

**Reinstating Patriarchy**

The values endorsed in “We Earned Peace” include a traditional definition of gender roles, as can be seen through the powerful, although subtle, imagery of the clip. The man returns to his family after a day at the office. Judging from the fact that his

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\textsuperscript{58} “Serán los millones de argentinos que buscan una causa fundada en el amor, en la justicia y en la libertad. Una causa que, con la fuerza invencible de los ideales más nobles, vencieron sobre la violencia, los extremismos y el odio.”
children, a boy and a girl, are with their mother at the end of the professional day, there is a strong implication that she is not gainfully employed. With this image, the military again reiterates the value of motherhood and the job of father to provide for their families, just as the government does. Furthermore, in my interpretation, by portraying a heterosexual and married couple, the sexual mores and values of the Catholic Church are privileged. The appearance of the people themselves is also telling. She is wearing a dress and high heels, with her hair done and her face painted. This type of appearance is very feminine and its usage reifies femininity as a virtue. Lastly, with respect to the wife, there is the gift of the roses. The flower and color most associated with romantic love, his thoughtfulness and her acceptance of the gift show that those who accept the values of the coup are destined to be happy. Moreover, by providing a gift for his wife, the man invokes the idea of providing for his family, a job that requires economic independence and control on his part, rather than on hers. Just as the body can flourish in a healthy environment, so can the family. Just as a father provides for his family, so does the government for the Argentine people. Thus, in my interpretation, the body and family metaphor both apply. The theme is repeated in “Dollar/ Costs.” The exclusion of women from the group of businessmen reinforces the traditional gender roles of “Western and Christian” society: man as breadwinner, provider, and member of the public sphere; woman as homemaker, excluded from gainful employment and the public sphere. At the same time, the fact that businessmen need the help of the government portrays the government as a rescuer, a role also assigned to fathers. The Argentine family of government as father and people as children dependent on it is clear, in my opinion.
In the next phase of the documentary “We Earned Peace,” the narrator repeatedly uses the phrase “void of power” to refer to Isabel Perón’s presidency, the same phrase cited by Taylor as proof of a feminine gendering of Isabel Perón’s government as well as the Argentine people before a masculine military. The nation and its power, embodied in the person of Isabel, are presented as at risk. Therefore, the military must assume control over her – and through her, the state –, “in order to preserve the integrity of the nation”59 (“Documental 3”). To my ear, this phrase carries similar overtones to the talk of a man who “preserves the integrity” of a woman by keeping her from sexual activity, be it voluntary or not on her part. Again, the father-government protects the female nation. Furthermore, this type of thinking ignores the potential agency of the woman in question as a man steps in to make her decisions for her, just as the Junta declared in textbooks that women should accept male authority (Rock, *Authoritarian*, 230). Thus both the president and the archetypal “woman” are removed from power by force, not allowed to step down or resign, with the military stepping in to fill the void. Again, my interpretation of the phrase “fill the void” recalls intercourse and thus continues to imply control by the father-state because the military seized control over the “void of power” with a coup. They further portray themselves as a father protecting his daughter or a husband protecting his wife, consistent with the metaphor of the nation-as-family. By painting their actions as a form of protection, the Junta establishes a discursive space to receive and accept the praise and gratitude of the Argentine people. Their actions are represented as part of earning peace. For this discourse, the definition of “peace” is an absence of subversive violence, as the military is presented as only taking actions against subversives. Military violence is portrayed as

59 “Para preservar la integridad de la nación.”
heroic and in defense of the people, targeted specifically and exclusively to terrorist subversives. In my view, this recalls the nation-as-body metaphor because, much as a healthy body’s immune system targets only perilous germs, the military only targets subversives. It also suggests to me the nation-as-family metaphor because the military was again acting as a protector of the vulnerable, female, Argentine nation as it was at risk of subversive penetration. (Predictably, no references to violence against non-subversives exist in this commercial, nor do references to the disappeared. The military is strictly heroic.) Thus, after March 24, 1976, “error has been left behind”\(^{60}\) (“Documental 3”) and it is time to earn peace.

In “We Earned Peace,” the children provoke an additional interpretation. The boy runs to his father and greets him with a hug. His father picks him up and includes him in an embrace with his wife. His daughter, on the other hand, receives only an arm around the shoulders, which he then removes to embrace his wife. Because both children are dressed in gender-appropriate clothes, in mimicry of their parents, they represent to me the continuance of the values established by the coup. Furthermore, the father, by favoring his son with extra affection, designates the son as the primary “intended recipient” of the world the father is helping to establish by accepting the coup and its values. In this scene, the metaphor of the family seems to apply because the son receives the extra attention, as though he were being groomed to perpetuate the father role. I see the body metaphor here as well, because the healthy – that is, compliant to the values of the Junta - family, as a cell of the Argentine body, is free of subversive infection.

\(^{60}\) “El error ha quedado atrás.”
In “Fight against Subversion,” the fact that Argentina is represented by a cow as opposed to a bull again enforces traditional gender roles. While she did not examine this piece of propaganda for her book, it supports Taylor’s idea that the state gendered themselves masculine and the people feminine. The quasi-sexual close up of the milking process turns the scene into a threat of rape: the rape of the Argentine people by subversion. Rape, of course, implies feminine vulnerability and feminine need of protection. By providing the protection she (Argentina) needs, the state assumes a patriarchal role in the construction of nation as a family. Additionally, I believe that the nation-as-body metaphor is present in the cow, which becomes sick when attacked by germ-y-looking subversion.

It is interesting to note here that, in “Fight against Subversion,” the calf turns to the cow, not to the gaucho, for nourishment. This can be construed as an additional reminder to mothers to be good caregivers for their children. Indeed, the role of mothers had been used as a political trope in Argentina since independence (Bonner 39-55). Isabel Perón continued with motherhood rhetoric in 1973, saying that, “a woman, in her being as a mother, has the sacred mission of forging the essence of nationality” (Perón, 61). Liberals felt that women’s “natural” tendencies toward barbarism could be mitigated by public education and/or volunteer work outside the home, and motherhood came to be conceptualized as an issue of social, not just private, importance. Following this line of thought, Bernardino Rivadavia, president from 1820-1829, founded The Beneficent Society in 1823. This social welfare charity was run almost entirely by upper-class women and was supported by monies from the Church and the state. In effect, women’s role as mothers of individual families was expanded to include caretaking of society as a whole. This was the first time that women’s position as mother was used as a potential political activity (Bonner 39).

The use of the trope idealizing women as mothers continued during the Perón years. Indeed, women en bloc were deemed by Perón’s “organized community” structure as one of the three representative branches of the people, along with business people and trade unions (Bonner 53). Eva Perón herself came to be described as, “the childless mother who became the Mother of all the descamisados, the Mater Dolorosa who ‘sacrificed’ her life so that the poor, the old, and the downtrodden could find some happiness” (Navarro 1982, 62, ctd. in Bonner 55).
Thus motherhood as a responsibility to the nation was firmly established in hegemonic discourse by 1976. Indeed,

The military attempted to capitalize on women’s traditional duties and exploit them further by pressuring mothers to police their children.

Through the media, they reminded the women repeatedly that it was their patriotic responsibility to know where their children were, who they kept company with, and what they were doing: Do you know where your child is? How did you bring up your child? (Taylor 198)

Being a good mother was, in fact a patriotic act, and bad parenting created subversion, according to General Ramón Camps. He said, “Subversive parents educate their children for subversion. This has to be stopped” (quoted in Fisher 102). This rationale was used to justify the trafficking in babies and children in which the Junta participated. Thus good mothers protect their children from subversion through good nurturing and introduction to Argentine values, a duty not automatically or equally assigned to fathers, who carry out good parenting by being the head of household and provider. It is important to note that the mothers’ individual feelings of maternal responsibility compelled participation in the movement but were not the major recipient of discursive emphasis, as I explain in Chapter 2.

It is interesting to note that the Junta limited its definition of good parenting to the keeping of children out of subversive activities. By doing so, it denied the other aspects typically associated with parenting, such as nurturing, providing for material needs, and
protection. For the Madres de Plaza de Mayo, the alleged or actual involvement of their children in subversive activities was beside the point. As mothers, they felt they had an obligation to protect their children no matter what. That feeling of responsibility compelled the mothers who made and make up the Madres to participate in the movement. Their conceptualization of motherhood thus made alleged subversive activities a family matter, rather than a national one, “because the military had blurred private-public distinctions by raiding homes and snatching children in the dead of night” (Taylor 198). Later, the Madres would socialize the idea of motherhood (Taylor 188), but even then their emphasis on nurturing those in pain or in need regardless of their beliefs or activities revealed an emphasis on parental nurturing rather than on parental dominance. Videla, speaking through a press release, commented on the issue of disappearances and the Madres, saying, “This is a matter of no concern to us. These women are mad” (ctd. in Simpson and Bennett 152), disregarding them as credible and rational interlocutors and their cause as irrelevant.

**Conclusion**

As does any leader, the generals of the coup attempted to define themselves and their vision for the country in their propaganda. They did this first by documenting their values and goals, which can be summarized as a “return” to “Christian” and traditional Argentine (“Western”) values as they interpreted them, again, in keeping with the NSD. Their next step was a propaganda campaign designed to convince Argentines that their actions were not only necessary, but beneficial to the public at large. Simultaneously, it
attempted to encourage “correct” behavior and support for the government on the part of the citizenry.\textsuperscript{62} I found that the military attempted to establish a number of tropes.

In all seven pieces, the military displayed itself as a necessary remedy to the problems of the times. Military propaganda elicited public support for itself by displaying its own strength and maligning subversives as monsters or germs to be abhorred even by God. Might was right, in other words, in military propaganda. The military also attempted to reinforce traditional values through its films by praising traditional, patriarchally-defined gender roles, “Christian” morals and capitalism. The tie between these themes was the idea of “good” Argentine men as patriarchs of their families, whom they protected, provided for, and treated well. In none of the pieces that I examined, however, was there any reference either to disappearances or human rights violations of any kind, or to any negative consequence of any government policy at all. Thus it can also be seen that the propaganda I examined was an attempt to cover this aspect of the Junta’s administration. It, as all propaganda is by definition, a self-

\textsuperscript{62} While the purpose of this thesis is not to gauge the effectiveness of military propaganda, it seems worthwhile to quote Elsa de Becerra, a Madre de Plaza de Mayo, on the matter: “The military’s propaganda was put out constantly in the newspapers, on the radio, on television. You switched on the TV and it said things like, ‘Do you know where your child is at this moment? Do you know what he’s doing?’ and they showed sinister figures and blown up cars and then, ‘Denounce him because here is a subversive who is about to plant a bomb.’ People believed this, so when they heard that your child had been taken, they asked what he had been involved in, that they must have done something. So people distanced themselves. When they broke into my house and took my daughter, in spite of the violence of the attack and the in spite of the cars and the noise, my neighbors acted like they saw and heard nothing. They considered it dangerous for their own children to associate with us. Most people avoided speaking to us” (Fisher 26).

Carmen de Guede, another Madre, says: “The television was making everybody afraid. It used to say that the people who had disappeared were all terrorists, that the army was cleaning the country of terrorism. They showed horrendous films of people blowing up cars or putting bombs in colleges and blamed it on our children. People saw that and believed it was true, that everyone who had disappeared was a terrorist. The only people who really knew what was happening were the people it was happening to” (Fisher 26).

Thus, not only did the military’s construction of Argentina reject those it considered undesirable, it encouraged citizens to do the same.
aggrandizing discourse designed to garner support for itself and its beliefs while
directing attentions away from its faults.

The use of the two metaphors was also part of the propaganda campaign. In
one, the military defined itself as the father figure for the Argentine family. It played to
this theme with words and images that endorsed traditional gender roles in the
economic sphere as well as in that of the individual family by portraying itself as a
provider. The near total exclusion of women from the majority of the clips I analyzed
reinforces this patriarchy. When women were included, it was to show the value of
motherhood and its role as a perpetuator of the Junta’s desired status quo. More subtly,
though, the Junta invoked this role every time it showed itself as a rescuer or controller
of the Argentine nation or fate. In the other metaphor, the Junta represented itself as the
remover of undesirable foreign influences in the body of the nation. This metaphor was
more subtly applied, but still present in the tying of the Argentine state to a natural entity
capable of health. It was also visible in the designation of duties to various parties. The
healthy body existed best under capitalism, again recalling the idea that organisms
require certain environmental factors if they are to thrive. Both metaphors served to
place the Junta in a position of power over the Argentine people, as was their purpose,
and attempted to give that power a natural benevolence designed to calm the public’s
fears and garner its support. By using such quotidian objects as the family and the body
as representations, the Junta projected its power onto the lives of citizens in a visceral
and pervasive way.
Chapter 2: The Madres de Plaza de Mayo

In the painful national scene of state repression, a group formed to demand the liberation of the victims of the war against subversion. The mothers of the victims of forced disappearance came together to confront the government and obtain the return of their children - safe and sound. Because they hold their marches and protests in the Plaza de Mayo, Buenos Aires’s main square, they are called the Madres de Plaza de Mayo. In the English-speaking world, they are known as the Mothers of the Disappeared. This chapter originally attempted to analyze the discourse of this group in order to determine how the identity of “mother” was used to justify their confrontation of the government. I argue instead that a discourse of motherhood was passed over in favor of a discourse of justice.

Before beginning such a project, it is necessary to define the key terms of the work. First is the most obvious: mother, which I use in its most basic sense of a woman who gives birth to and/or raises a child. I use the term “Madre,” to refer to a member of the group Madres de Plaza de Mayo. Other key terms are “disappeared” and “disappear.” In the context of the Dirty War, “disappear” refers to the military or police act of kidnapping and detaining a civilian deemed subversive by the government. This act includes violence and imprisonment while excluding access to or the successful functioning of legal recourses for the victim of his/her family.

Estimations of the number of people affected by the repression vary. The CONADEP, the official investigative committee of the democratic government that followed the dictatorship, places the number at approximately 9000 people (Brysk 685). It is difficult to calculate the exact number for many reasons. Among them is the mere
fact of the difficulty in tracing disappeared people in the first place: they have, after all, disappeared. Traditional contacts and means of communication no longer work in such a situation. Other factors include the guerrilla violence that took place in the months before the coup, the political importance of the final estimate, the specific tactics of the regime such as the illegal adoption of babies and children, the determination of the actors in a particular case (Normal criminal? Guerrilla? Military personnel?), survived temporary detention, problems of access to or the destruction of relevant documents, human error in the testimony of witnesses, a lack of witnesses to a particular event, and the lack of response to requests for information. The most commonly accepted number for total disappearances among activists is between 15,000 and 30,000 (Brysk 678-686), even though “we see that there is no clear way to determine definitively how many people disappeared permanently in Argentina or who they were” (Brysk 682).

I proceed now to a brief history of the group, followed by an analysis of the performative aspects of their protests. My next step will be to contextualize the Madres’ newsletters. I close with the analysis of the newsletters themselves. My decision to utilize this order is based on the chronological history of the group, as protests predated the newsletters.

**A Brief History of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo**

The mothers – not formally Madres until 1979, as I explain below - came together during their search for their children, meeting in lines at police stations, churches, hospitals and wherever else they could think to look. At first, there was little organization and no formality of any kind, only promises to pass along any information they acquired
to each other. They met in church basements and cafés and secretly signed petitions and sent letters asking for information about the disappeared or assistance in acquiring that information. Many of these letters went to embassies and prominent people in foreign countries. Eventually, they came to realize that they were more likely to achieve the return of their children if they worked as a group. The mothers looked to Videla for an answer because they believed, at first, that he was not the one responsible for the disappearances and that he was probably ignorant of the dimension the repression had taken on. Their first attempts were interrogative in nature, rather than demanding (Gorini 65). As time passed, however, and their requests for information and help went unanswered, the tone of their protests changed and demands for answers replaced questions. Credited with founding the group that would become the Madres while she was searching for her son Néstor, Azucena Villaflor de De Vicenti⁶³ was the first to suggest that the time had come for a more direct approach. She said,

Mothers, we’re not getting anything like this. They lie to us everywhere, they close all doors to us. We have to leave this infernal labyrinth that takes us to travel through official offices, quarters, churches and courts uselessly. We have to go directly to the Plaza de Mayo and stay there until they give us an answer. We have to come to be a hundred, two hundred, a thousand mothers, until they see us, until they all understand and Videla

⁶³ De Vicenti was disappeared in December of 1977 for her actions. A body was found and confirmed to be hers in 2005. At the request of her surviving children, her ashes have been buried under the obelisk in the Plaza de Mayo (Keve).
himself finds himself obligated to receive us and give us an answer.\textsuperscript{64}

(Gorini 63)

Thus began the weekly, illegal marches (Fisher 52). As previously mentioned, Videla’s public statement in response was, “This is a matter of no concern to us. These women are mad” (ctd. in Simpson and Bennett 152). The decision to perform weekly protests in the Plaza de Mayo was thus inspired by desperation rather than pragmatism (Fisher 52). The first protest took place on April 30, 1977 and boasted fourteen mothers in attendance (Taylor 186). There were more than 50 mothers by September of that year, all of whom had enjoyed a relative measure of safety during a few months because the military, “do[es] not know what to do with us”\textsuperscript{65} (Bonafini, \textit{Historias}, 137). The December disappearances of several mothers and a pair of French nuns\textsuperscript{66} who had been assisting them ended the relative safety the mothers had experienced up until then (Taylor 187). Hebe de Bonafini, who would eventually become president of the group, took the arrests as an admission of guilt on the part of the Junta (Bonafini, \textit{Historias}, 153). In 1978, the World Cup gave the women the opportunity to access international press without leaving the country, and they did so at every available chance, in spite of the fact that they

\textsuperscript{64} “Madres, así no conseguimos nada. Nos mienten en todas partes, nos cierran todas las puertas. Tenemos que salir de este laberinto infernal que nos lleva a recorrer inútilmente despachos oficiales, cuarteles, iglesias y juzgados. Tenemos que ir directamente a la Plaza de Mayo y quedarnos allí hasta que nos den una respuesta. Tenemos que llegar a ser cien, doscientas, mil madres, hasta que nos vean, hasta que todos se enteren y el propio Videla se vea obligado a recibernos y darnos una respuesta.”

\textsuperscript{65} “Ellos no saben qué hacer con nosotras.”

\textsuperscript{66} The nuns were later given, “the name of ‘the Flying Nuns’ because they were killed by being thrown into the sea from a helicopter after being tortured. The other women kidnapped with Doña Azuzena [sic] were finally released after an international outcry, organized by the United Nations” (Agosin 20).
were rebuked for harming the international ‘image’ of the country during the World Cup, held in Argentina. During that event, the scene of the Madres’ marches denouncing the disappearance of their children was seen as something close to treason. (Malamud Goti 194)

During 1979, the Plaza was under such tight control that the mothers were unable to march and had to run across the Plaza, stand in front of the obelisk, and flee as police approached (Taylor 187-188). On August 22 of that year, they incorporated as a civil association and elected Hebe de Bonafini president (Bouvard 94-95). In 1980, the Madres purchased a building to house their offices and dubbed it, The Mothers’ House (Filc 63). During the rest of the dictatorship, the Madres continued to visit dignitaries in their own homes and in Argentina, protest weekly, send letters and petitions to everyone they could think of, interview survivors of disappearance, and collect reports of disappearances from anyone who cared to give them. In 1981, they organized their first March of Resistance, a twenty-four hour march around the Plaza that became an annual tradition (Taylor 189). Although now divided into two groups, the Asociación still led by Hebe de Bonafini and the Línea Fundadora, they still protest weekly and promise to do so until all the guilty are punished.

**Performative Aspects of Marches as Discourse**

The protests, as I have said above, predate the newsletter and are the most recognizable aspect of the group’s activism. Therefore, it seems logical to me to begin

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67 La Casa de Las Madres.
with an analysis of the performative aspects of the Madres’ protests. Originally, the Madres met in the Plaza with attempts at inconspicuousness, but the police soon realized what was happening and ordered them to disperse. As a result, the Madres began to walk in pairs around the obelisk, but near enough to each other that they could still speak and carry on conversations and be visible (del Rosario ctd. in Fisher 53-54). The result was the now famous “rounds”\textsuperscript{68} or “marches”\textsuperscript{69} of women that circle the obelisk continually every Thursday at 3:30 in the afternoon. The marches became one of the most recognized aspects of their strategy. It was and is, “like the military junta’s...performative and communicative” (Taylor 186). The marches are performative, because they mimic the rounds that the Madres had made while searching for their children, and communicative because they challenge visibly the Junta while also informing the public of their plight. By telling their own stories and those of their children, the Madres contested the Junta’s propaganda by presenting an alternate version of reality and human relations.

Instead of the military’s performance of hierarchy, represented by means of rigid, straight rows, the Madres’ circular movements around the plaza, characterized by their informal talk and pace, bespoke values based on egalitarianism and communication. (Taylor 199)

Thus, the marches are a contestation of the metaphor of the state-as-father because they reject the power that position implies in the Junta’s use of the metaphor, instead

\textsuperscript{68} “Rondas.”
\textsuperscript{69} “Marchas.”
calling for equal power between the people and the government. Furthermore, the marches as I read them fit into the later-established discourse of justice. Egalitarianism and communication are parts of justice because they involve respect for rights by all parties. The circle represents continuity between the disappeared and the Madres, as well as the rounds made between police stations and other places during the initial search (Foss and Domenici 245). Because the circular direction of their marches prevents arrival at any particular destination, the marches also signify the limbo in which the disappeared and their families remain: many have not been declared dead, and many families have been denied a body to bury or information about the fate of their loved ones (Foss and Domenici 249). Additionally, the carrying of photos of the disappeared humanizes them and shows them alive, testifying to their existence even as it is denied by the government (Foss and Domenici 250). The photos thus serve to emphasize the similarities between the disappeared and the rest of the population, including them in the national body from which the Junta sought to eject them. In this way, the Madres challenge the state’s right to decide who belongs and who does not. Thus, in my interpretation, the disappeared are maintained in the national body by the Madres in direct contestation to the military’s attempts to remove them.

Another performative aspect of their protests is the equally famous white headscarf. Originally proposed by De Vicenti as an identifier for the 1977 pilgrimage to Luján to honor Mary (Fisher 54), it has become an international symbol of their movement and has been painted onto the pavement in the Plaza. At first, the scarves were actually diapers belonging to the disappeared. The fear of wearing out an item of sentimental value compelled the Madres to make scarves of white material and
embroider them with the name of a disappeared and the date of disappearance. The scarves, when they first appeared, invited questions from passers-by and other onlookers, giving the Madres a chance to explain their cause and keep awareness of it up (Foss and Domenici 244). The scarves were performative and communicative, as Taylor says. They further symbolize the nurturing aspect of maternity and remind viewers of the adults the disappeared had become (Foss and Domenici 245). That reminder of nurturing against the military’s emphasis on discipline, in my opinion, contests the nation-as-family metaphor in two ways: first, because the Madres protest the father-nation’s right to discipline with disappearances, they challenge the father-nation’s right to rule unilaterally; and second, because the Madres demanded the inclusion of the disappeared in the Argentine-nation-as-family, they argued for love rather than conformity as the defining element of the nation-as-family.

As a final performative and communicative strategy, the Madres also wore nails tied to the backs of their purses or jackets, to remember the sacrifice of Christ, nailed to the cross...We also have our Christ, and we live Mary’s pain, but we are not allowed to even try to console him with our presence. We are also Christians, the same as those who proclaim themselves the servants of Christianity and who are nevertheless our executioners. (unspecified Madre ctd. in Bousquet 47)

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70 After 1984, scarves also included the slogan, “Return Alive” (Fisher 54) in contrast to “the military’s ahistorical forgetting” (Taylor 199).
71 “Para recordar el sacrificio de Cristo, clavado en la cruz...Nosotras también tenemos nuestro Cristo, y revivimos el dolor de María, pero no se nos permite siquiera intentar consolarlo con nuestra presencia. Nosotras también somos cristianas, al igual que aquellos que se proclaman como servidores del cristianismo y que sin embargo son nuestros verdugos.”
By doing so, the Madres subverted the Junta’s conception of religion as a tool of the powerful and, in keeping with the spirit of liberation theology’s basic tenets, presented an alternative construction of religion to the regime’s normative view of “Western and Christian” civilization. They accomplished this by tying the suffering of the disappeared and their families to religious symbols. This contradicts the religious basis that the Junta used when excluding subversives from society. It is my opinion that the reference to pain can also be linked to the nation-as-body metaphor. The pain response of the body is a warning that something is wrong in the body. By referring to the pain caused by the disappearances, the Madres point out that the disappearances are wrong.

In sum, the Madres contested the exclusionary view of the Junta, which saw their children as a foreign threat and were deprived of the rights of citizenship and contested the patriarchal order through their protests. By using hegemonic images in counterhegemonic ways, the Madres expanded the Junta’s qualifications for citizenship and demanded political participation by broad sectors of the populace while subverting the regime’s own scripts.

The Newsletters

The Madres’ newsletters were, in many ways, unique during the era of the dictatorship.

During this well-organized and disciplined political purge, the Argentine press was, at first glance, strangely silent. With two notable exceptions,
the English-language *Buenos Aires Herald*, not deemed a threat because of its small circulation and foreign-language, and *La Opinión* of Jacobo Timerman until his arrest in 1977, the print and electronic media simply did not report what was going on. (Knudson 94)

Most newspapers, rather than being censored, practiced self-censorship out of self-interest.

Although fear and indifference were part of the equation, most of the Argentine press remained silent out of sheer self-interest. They were shielding their own social and economic flanks, whether protecting government advertising revenues or simply not wishing to disturb the social structure of which they were a part. (Knudson 95)

Under Isabel Perón, the 117 morning dailies, 54 evening newspapers, and 500 magazines (Graham-Yooll, 1984: 157 ctd. in Knudson 97) were warned to ignore or minimize reports of terrorist activities. Meanwhile, publications by the ERP and the Montoneros were often the targets of forced closings (Knudson 98). The close ties between the mainstream press and the Junta can be seen in the fact that the fourth generation owner of *La Prensa*, Máximo Gainza, co-authored *Caso Timerman: Punto Final* with Ramón Camps in 1982 (Knudson 99). Because the government agency Papel Prensa distributed paper to newspapers, the press had a vested interest in complying with the Junta’s wishes (Knudson 100). As Graham-Yooll has said, “The
immorality of self-censorship became less reprehensible with the growing number of journalists killed” (1981: 93, ctd. in Knudson 101). These kinds of conditions prohibited the Madres from being able to access the media, with the exception of advertisements – often accepted only at above-normal rates - placed in various papers, and kept the media from covering them and/or their activities (Fisher 66), with the exception of The Buenos Aires Herald (Filc 63).

The newsletter began to be published in June of 1980 in order to, “explain their organization and its goals, and to reach an international audience” (Bouvard 100). The first editions were produced by hand in the home of Hebe de Bonafini in La Plata (Bouvard 100). They bear the group’s insignia as well as quotes from the Bible and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They spread reports on the activities of the Madres and brief poems and essays in homage to the disappeared. When the police found out about the existence of the publication, they visited Bonafini’s home. She gave them a few copies of the newsletter and continued printing (Bouvard 100). Given the lack of additional information about the origins of the newsletter, I contacted the Madres by e-mail on June 20, 2010 for printing and distribution information. Hebe de Bonafini tells me through her secretary that, for each edition, the Madres, “[we] made 500 newsletters and we sent them to solidarity groups in the country from hand to hand and by word of mouth”72 (Bonafini, personal communication). Because the Madres produced a very limited number of newsletters that were distributed hand to hand and not on a subscription basis, it seems logical that they would have had little to no problem with censorship or interference with their newsletter. After all, the Buenos Aires Herald was

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72 “Hacíamos 500 boletines y los mandábamos a los grupos de solidaridad y en el país mano a mano boca en boca.”
deemed non-threatening in part due to its small circulation (Knudson 94). Rather, the repression the Madres experienced was a result of their marches and other protests. Furthermore, the Madres still depended on newspapers when they wanted to address the public at large. Although the press refused to cover them, they were still able to publish advertisements from time to time in various newspapers, which they later copied and included in their own newsletters.

The newsletter is an ideal source of discourse because it is produced according to a fixed and pre-determined schedule. Given the frequency and the repetition of the appearance of a newsletter, it can respond much better to the historical context of each issue. This fact makes possible an analysis not only of the development of the discourse, but also the discourse unique to a given moment. Additionally, the selection of the newsletter of the Madres is valid and useful because the institutional evolution of the group as well as its growth can be seen in it. Such a view is impossible to obtain in the frozen image of a book or other source. Finally, because the Madres publish and published the newsletter themselves, it is relatively free of outside considerations, such as the appearance of advertisements, quotas and/or limits on the permissible number of words, the layout of the page, the censoring of content by editors, etc. A publishing company would not provide the same amount of freedom of expression to the Madres as they can have publishing themselves. Furthermore, editorials by definition represent opinions. Because they are published in the names of the Madres, they represent the official opinion of the Madres as an institution. The main drawback to using the newsletters is that they did not begin to be published until June of 1980. Therefore, there is close to a four-year gap in coverage from the time that the Madres started
meeting each other in 1976; a gap of just over three years from the first march in April of 1977; and a gap of approximately one year from the time of the official incorporation of the group in August of 1979.

I also saw an evolution of the newsletter itself. In the 1980 issues, the newsletter consists of copies of articles cut out of established newspapers, short essays and poems on the theme of the pain caused by the absence of the disappeared, tributes to disappeared children and Madres – all in different typesettings – and hand-rendered drawings. They are not printed in the same sense that a book is, where everything that is on a page appears to have originated on that page. Rather, they are photocopied from a page created by hand, literally cut and pasted together and lacking page numbers. In the 1982 issues, the Madres have written the articles themselves, and they are all in the same typesetting. The only reproductions from other papers are reprints of the Madres’ own advertisements. The general appearance is much more professional: there are numbers on the pages, there are photos instead of drawings, and it looks printed rather than copied. There is also a reduction in the amount of sentimentalism, although it is still present. In the 1983-1984 issues, the appearance has been

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73 Here I say “sentimentalism” to refer to an emphasis on some emotional aspect of the situation of the disappeared and/or their families. In the short essay, “There are mornings...” (“Hay mañanas…”), there is an example: “There are mornings that upon waking I say to myself: ‘He must be somewhere, he must be alive’. But the next day, with horror I imagine all the opposite. And so I live tortured, maddened, thinking of him all day, seeing him in every boy I meet, shivering every time the phone or the doorbell rings, thinking I hear his voice” (Madres, Jun 80, n.p.). The essay continues with the effects of the disappearance of the older son on his seven year old sister with a similar emphasis on the emotional pain they both suffer. (“Hay mañanas que al despertar me digo: ‘Tiene que estar en alguna parte, tiene que estar vivo’. Pero al día siguiente, con horror me imagino todo lo contrario. Y así vivo torturada, enloquecida, pensando en él todo el día, viéndolo en cada muchacho que cruzo, estremeciéndome cada vez que suena el teléfono o la puerta de la calle, creyendo oír su voz.”)
Table 2.1: Transcription of the table of contents of the issues examined in this study.

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Source: Madres de Plaza de Mayo newsletters. Translations of titles by the author.

completely professionalized. The pages are printed, not copied, and sentimentalism is limited only to an occasional phrase and obituaries. The numbering system of the
newsletter has been almost completely finalized and it is published more regularly. I summarize in the previous chart the content of the newsletter based on the list of titles provided in the table of contents of each issue that I analyze.

The Discourse of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo

For this chapter, I base my analysis on the editorials that appear in the official newsletter of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo, which bears the same name. Specifically, I have selected the editorials from the following dates: June and September 1980, which are the first two issues of the newsletter; March, May and September of 1982, which are the issues published before, during and after the Falklands War; and finally, November and December of 1983 and January of 1984, which are the dates that surround the first democratic election after the regime. These dates represent key moments in the early history of the organization. The founding of the newsletter is important for being the debut of it, but also because it indicates a significant growth of the group in many ways; first, because it indicates that the group has survived the worst years of the repression; second, because it indicates that the group is spreading its social and/or political network enough to need to keep its members informed through a publication; and third, the publication of a newsletter implies that there is a desire to be known to the public in general, which makes possible the inclusion of people who are not mothers. The Falklands War is important to the group for many reasons too. Since the declaration of war was the last effort to stay in power of a failing government, it presented an opportunity to show the duplicity of the government in other matters: specifically, the disappeared. It also served as a theoretical background against which the value of life
could be discussed in relation to the rights and power of the government. Finally, the transition to democracy is important because it constitutes the best possibility of success that the Madres had yet had. Success during the time of the dictatorship is, for the Madres, the receipt of legal processes by the disappeared or the receipt of information about the whereabouts of the disappeared, or their bodies. After the restoration of democracy, success includes prosecutions of those involved in the perpetration of the repression.

As I stated previously, upon undertaking this study, I expected to find that the Madres frequently used their maternity as a rhetorical tool that justified their activism. This expectation was based on three observations. First, the name of the group is the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo. They identify themselves as “mothers,” not as “relatives” or “families” or “concerned citizens.” Even though they are human rights activists, they do not include such information in their name. Strangely, they do not even mention the disappeared, in spite of the fact that they came together to demand their return. By implication, motherhood seems to be the seed of their identity.

Secondly, the literature about the Madres is somewhat misleading, for lack of a better word. For example, Ulises Gorini’s book is entitled, *The Mothers’ Rebellion*, and Marguerite Bouvard’s bears the name *Revolutionizing Motherhood: the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo*. Both titles focus on motherhood before activism. Additionally, on referring to the Madres, many authors engage in a degree of sentimentalism. Susana Kaiser refers to them as, “The courageous women of Las Madres” (477). Romero says,  

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74 As mentioned previously, the Madres were originally one group which split in January of 1986 over various issues, what to do about bodies being one of them. (See Bosco for a more complete discussion of this theme.) Because my focus is the dictatorship era, the split is not relevant to my study and I can accurately refer to the Madres as one group.

75 *La rebelión de las madres.*
By demanding an explanation from the government, combining the painful personal display with an ethical claim on behalf of principles such as motherhood, they ensured that their motives were not questioned by the military, nor could they be linked to ‘subversion’. “(Romero 239)

In this quote, there is an emphasis on the pain of the Madres and their immunity from persecution...an immunity that did not exist. They experienced repression and fourteen of them disappeared in December of 1977, including the leader and founder of the group Azucena Villafor de DeVicenti. Bonafini says, “It wasn’t less dangerous for women but perhaps a mother is prepared to take more risks”76 (ctd. in Fisher 58).

Observe also the assertion in Romero’s quote and the implication in Bonafini’s that motherhood is an ethical principle. Maternity begins with biology and it is the decision of the individual mother to perform the role of a “good” or a “bad” mother that determines the ethical value of motherhood.77

Finally, there are quotes from the Madres themselves that create the impression of a group based on maternity. For example, Burchianti quotes unnamed Madres as saying, “I think the fact that each of us carried a baby for nine months is what made us go out to search for our children,” and “Everything came from motherhood. There was nothing else that could have made us do what we did, we were going on instinct, it was

76 Other Madres disagree with Bonafini on the point of the amount of danger they faced (Fisher 59).

77 This comment should not be taken to disparage legal adoption (as opposed to the illegal adoptions perpetrated by the junta), the women who give up their children, or the families who adopt them. Rather, the decision of adoptive mothers is, in general, a decision to perform the role of the “good” mother. However, biology remains the starting point of motherhood; else there would be no adoptable children and no parents who needed to adopt.
not rational, it came from motherhood” (142). In another quote that privileges maternity, another unnamed Madre says, “We are mothers, not women” (Schirmer 1988 pg 68, ctd. in Foss and Domenici, 240). Hebe de Bonafini herself says,

We were fighting for life and for freedom. It was our resistance, our refusal to give up, which made us effective. Women, because we are stronger, and mothers, because we give life and we will defend life as many times as is necessary. (ctd. in Abreu-Hernandez 401)

The logical conclusion is that the Madres base their activism on maternity.

On the contrary, I discovered that maternity served a different purpose: that of raw material for the movement, but not its primary justification. While the individual Madres were compelled to participate in the movement because of their motherhood, because it was her child/children who was/were taken, the justification of the collective activism they carried and carry out, as a movement, is based on justice. I found that the mention of maternity in the newsletters I examined is scarce to the point of near total absence and that, in its place, a discourse of justice is used. This discourse has three phases that coincide with the historic moments in which it is used. In the newsletters of 1980, the most evident aspect is the establishment of a definition of justice. In the newsletters of 1982, the focus is the role of justice in society and finally, in 1983-1984, the focus is the identification of people/entities responsible for justice and the articulation of those responsibilities.
The Definition of Justice

"Who We Are,"\(^{78}\) the foundational document of the Madres for their official incorporation on August 22, 1979 was printed as the editorial of the first edition (Bouvard 94). In it, the discourse of justice is launched and the group defines itself in terms of identity, values, and objectives. (In this, as in all citations in this chapter, I have preserved the original format of the newsletters in my quotations.) It says,

> We are mothers of detained-disappeared people…For that reason we have decided to unite and form a civil association that carries the name 'MOTHERS OF THE PLAZA DE MAYO', in memory of the fact and the place that brought us together the first time.\(^{79}\) (*Madres*, Jun 80, n.p.)

In these simple and direct sentences, the Madres identify themselves first as mothers, and then as a civil association whose members have joined together based on the legal situation of their children. The fact that they identify themselves first as mothers is important because it implies the importance of motherhood to the Madres on both personal and political levels.

> When the mothers decided to go beyond their individual search for their children and politicize motherhood, that decision was a *conscious political*

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\(^{78}\) “Quienes Somos.” (sic)

\(^{79}\) “Somos madres de detenidos-desaparecidos...Por esa razón hemos decidido unirnos y formar una asociación civil que lleva el nombre de ‘MADRES DE PLAZA DE MAYO’, en recuerdo del hecho y del lugar que nos reunió por primera vez.”
choice - they could have (for example) performed as women, wives, sisters, or human rights activists. (Taylor, 204, original format)

Personally, it emphasized the individual motivation of the Madres for their activism. Politically, the Madres were attempting to exploit the already established trope of the value of motherhood. The fact that they identify themselves as mothers of disappeared people is also highly significant. This group is not for mothers of any children, just for those whose children have been disappeared. It is important to note also the differences in the discourse of the Madres and the Junta. Where the Junta designates those who disagree with it as non-Argentines, as previously explained, the Madres claim the disappeared as their children, thus including them in the Argentine nation, regardless of their political beliefs or legal status.

Another important aspect of the above quote is that they have formed a civil association. The formation of a civil association is significant because it binds its members together in the eyes of the law. That binding implies the permanence of the group, and hence their mission. That status also suggests a family of sorts. The Madres refer to each other as sisters and, as time went on, began to feel that all the disappeared were theirs (Filc 70), thus extending the definition of “family” from one of relations created by biology and/or marriage to all Argentines. “Sick” in the eyes of the Junta or not, all Argentines were family for the Madres. The Madres did, at first, try to change the public perception of their children by insisting that they were “normal” people, not subversives, thus removing the question of their own fitness as mothers and as citizens. This “need that the families of the disappeared had to ‘clean’ the image of
their children...[is] a product of the coexistence of resistance practices with the dominant ideal of the family, demonstrating the penetrative power of the latter” (Filc 71). Later, their discourse changed to reflect acceptance of the disappeared’s political activities as performed by idealists and politically engaged citizens. Hebe de Bonafini’s case is rather representative of the scenario.

Ms. Bonafini long believed that her two sons, who disappeared during military rule, were innocent of wrongdoing, in any sense of the term. They were merely idealists, she said, hopeful for a better world. She thus defended their name, in travels across the globe, against the insinuations of military rulers to the contrary. In 1979, however, she publicly adopted the view that her sons were indeed ‘revolutionaries’ and that their name should best be defended by embracing their cause. (Osiel 127)

In my reading, this contests the exclusionary view of Argentina presented by and insisted upon by the Junta.

To return to the above quote from the newsletter, it is the status of their children as “disappeared” and the fact that it is their children who are in question that form the base of membership in the group. However, one must note the expression, “in memory of.” That expression carries several implications. First, it indicates the value that the Madres place on their maternity: it is important enough that it deserves to be memorialized in the group’s name. Secondly, however, it also implies that maternity does not constitute the most important aspect of the movement. That is, the group does
not focus on maternity itself, but rather on the legal status of their children. Just as the Plaza de Mayo is important for the group without being the main focus of it, and is also memorialized in the name Madres de Plaza de Mayo, maternity forms a fundamental part of the group without being its principal focus.

With respect to the political values of the group, the editorial says, “We long for the presence of a democratic system that is respectful of the fundamental rights of the human person in Argentina”\textsuperscript{80} (Madres, Jun 80, n.p.). In other words, the Madres privilege a governmental system of participation and inclusion that is based on rights. These rights include, “[a rejection of] injustice, oppression, torture, murder, kidnappings, arrests without due process, detentions followed by disappearances, persecution for reasons of religion, race, ideology or politics”\textsuperscript{81} (Madres, Jun 80, n.p.). While the Madres make no mention of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in this editorial, the rights they define are congruent with the rights denominated as human rights by the United Nations, a document they often quoted (United Nations). That the universal exercise of these rights is, for the Madres, justice will be seen in the conclusion of the editorial, as I explain below.

Finally, the Madres define the three principal objectives of their group. “[O]ur first objective is to obtain from the civil, military and judicial authorities of the country an answer to our anguish: Where are our children? What has become of them?”\textsuperscript{82} (Madres, Jun 80, n.p.). This is the obvious objective of any group formed under such

\textsuperscript{80} “Anhelamos para la Argentina la vigencia de un sistema democrático, respetuoso de los derechos fundamentales de la persona humana.”
\textsuperscript{81} “[Un rechazo de] la injusticia, la opresión, la tortura y el asesinato, los secuestros, los arrestos sin proceso, las detenciones seguidas de desapariciones, la persecución por motivos religiosos, raciales, ideológico o políticos.”
\textsuperscript{82} “Nuestro primer objetivo es lograr de las autoridades del país, civiles, militares y judiciales una respuesta a nuestra angustia: ¿Dónde están nuestros hijos? ¿Qué ha sido de ellos?”
circumstances and for such reasons, but the inclusion of, “the country’s civil, military and judicial authorities”\textsuperscript{83} is worthy of mention because it makes those authority figures responsible for the disappearance and subsequent treatment of the disappeared. Again the Madres attempt to exploit the political value of motherhood by pointing out that the detained-disappeared are “our children” (italics mine) while simultaneously pointing out the disappeared are “our children,” (italics mine) not the governments’. Ironically, by arguing that the state has a responsibility to treat “children” well, the Madres not only employ but reinforce the metaphor of the nation as a family on the one hand, while arguing that the father-state has no legitimate right to the disappeared because they are “our children” (italics mine) on the other. The emphasis on “children” seems to me to also contest the nation-as-family metaphor by pointing out the familial relationships of the disappeared to the rest of the country in spite of the fact that the Junta has, by disappearing them, expelled them from the national family; at the same time, it displaces power from patriarchal structures.

The second objective of the Madres is, “to help each other among ourselves and lend assistance to the victims of the summarized facts”\textsuperscript{84} (Madres, Jun 80, n.p.). Although “ayudar” (“to help”) and “prestar asistencia” (“to lend assistance”) are synonyms, the inclusion of the two expressions implies more than mere repetition or emphasis. According to the Royal Academy of Spanish, “asistir” (“to assist or attend”) means, “Serve or attend to someone, especially in an eventual way or performing specific tasks” (Real Academia Española). The implication of the utilization of the two terms is that the Madres not only help each other in the search for the disappeared, but

\textsuperscript{83} “Autoridades del país civiles, militares y judiciales.”

\textsuperscript{84} “Ayudarnos entre nosotras y prestar asistencia a las víctimas de los hechos reseñados.”
also in specific tasks in daily life and for the long term, which has been complicated by the absence of the disappeared person. Furthermore, the expression “prestar asistencia” is somewhat more formal than the expression, “ayudar” (Challú, personal communication). Thus the choice to include both words implies that the Madres succor each other individually among themselves as an institution, but also that the institution of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo will succor all those affected by disappearance. In my reading, where the Junta claimed that subversion necessitated the elimination of foreign germs and a reinforcement of the heteronormal family, the Madres claimed that the circumstances necessitated solidarity and inclusion.

Finally, the third objective is,

> to work to build an Argentina where justice exists. Where no one can be arrested and made to disappear like has happened with our children. Where the law is in effect and people can live in a climate of liberty, of tolerance, [illegible] of respect.\(^8^5\) (*Madres*, Jun 80, n.p.)

This goal reveals that the Madres opine that justice does not exist in the Argentina of that time, but also that the universal exercise of rights constitutes justice and that the systematic disappearance of persons by the government represents an injustice. Examined together, the declarations of the values and political objectives of the Madres reveal the definition of “justice” that the Madres have: the universal exercise of individual rights. Here, it seems to me, the Madres reject the paternal authoritarianism

\(^{8^5}\) “Trabajar para construir una Argentina donde exista la justicia. Donde nadie pueda ser detenido y hecho desaparecer como ha ocurrido con nuestros hijos. Donde tenga vigencia el derecho y se pueda convivir en un clima de libertad, de tolerancia, [illegible] de respeto.”
of the father-state in favor of family relations based on compassion, thus offering a counter-hegemonic view of what it means to be a national family.

In the next issue of the newsletter, from September of 1980, the Madres continue defining the rights the universal exercise of which constitutes justice. In an editorial entitled, “On justice and peace” the author, who signs the article under the byline, “Una esposa,” accuses the government of declaring the existence of justice and peace in society because there is a lack of them. She opens by quoting a passage about the lack of camels in the Koran in an unspecified Borges book. Based on that quote, she refers, “to a mechanism of the mind that, in effect, makes one talk much about what one lacks and little or nothing about what one has” (Madres, Sep. 80, n.p.). Having established appropriate quantities of speech for what abounds and what lacks, she asks rhetorically,

the thousands and thousands of DISAPPEARED people…DON’T THEY ALSO FORM A PART OF THE SO OFTEN MENTIONED ATMOSPHERE OF JUSTICE AND PEACE, REPEATED DAILY BY THE GOVERNMENT? (Madres, Sep 80, n.p.)

Note that the author denies the validity of the claims of the government about the improvement of life in Argentina after the coup. The claims of the elimination of violence

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86 “Sobre justicia y paz.”
87 “A un mecanismos (sic) de la mente que, en efecto, lleva a hablar mucho de los que se carece y poco o nada de lo que se tiene.”
88 “¿Las miles y miles de personas DESAPARECIDAS…NO FORMA PARTE TAMBIÉN, DEL TAN MENTADO AMBITO DE JUSTICIA Y PAZ, REPETIDO DIARIAMENTE POR EL GOBIERNO?”
as presented by the Junta in “Remember and Compare” and “We Earned Peace” are denied by the author’s mention of continued disappearances. Where the Junta tried to reject the importance of the suffering of the disappeared, this author reaffirms it. The rhetorical nature of her question, of course, reveals that the author is of the opinion that the government knows that there is no justice in Argentina at that time and that it excludes the disappeared from society. Thus this editorial repeats the definition of justice as the universal exercise of rights. Additionally, it is worth noting that the tone of the accusation is slightly different here. Where previously the Madres asked for, “an answer to our anguish: Where are our children? What has become of them?” (Madres, Jun. 80, n.p.), in “On justice and peace,” “our children” have become the “thousands and thousands of DISAPPEARED people.” The Madres are beginning to expand their conception of the disappeared. They are valuing citizenship over the Junta’s idea of an “Argentine being.” They are losing the individualistic nature of concern for “my child” and acquiring a concern for all disappeared, no matter whose children they are.

Although the author does not refer to the document, she later, invokes a right that does not appear explicitly in the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man (United Nations): the right to know the status and situation of a person in judicial custody of a government. The ability to add to the list of rights is an impressive accomplishment. She again asks rhetorically,

The desperate anguish of the relatives of those disappeared, who are not receiving the most minimum response to their claim, DOES IT ALSO

89 “Una respuesta a nuestra angustia: ¿Dónde están nuestros hijos? ¿Qué ha sido de ellos?”
By including the lack of a response to their inquiries about their children in her comments, the author defines the receipt of information about prisoners by their families as a right. Furthermore, to my way of thinking, by pointing out the pain of the families of the disappeared, the author contradicts the assertion in official propaganda that the Argentine national body is a healthy one when subversives are gone. Additionally, pointing out the pain of the families of the disappeared argues against the stand taken in official propaganda that the father-state has taken care of the Argentine family. In so doing, the author again rejects the Junta’s assertions, presented in “Remember and compare” and “We Earned Peace” that the Junta has eliminated all problems of violence and argues that there is no peace for the disappeared or their families.

**The Role of Justice**

During the Falklands War, from April to June of 1982, the Madres move to the second phase in their discourse of justice: its importance. In the editorial, “Project Latin American Federation of Relatives’ Associations: FEDEFAM,” the Madres announce the creation of FEDEFAM and their participation in it. Two aspects of this text stand

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90 “La desesperada angustia de los familiares de esos desparecidos, que no obtienen la respuesta mínima a sus reclamos ¿TAMBIÉN SE ENMARCA DENTRO DE LA JUSTICIA Y LA PAZ EN QUE VIVIMOS?”

91 “Proyecto Latinoamericano Federación de Asociaciones de Familiares: FEDEFAM.”

92 FEDEFAM is an international association of groups of NGOs who work on the problem of forced disappearance. The Madres joined it in 1982, its second year.
out: the effect of the forced disappearance on the legal entity of “person” and the role of justice in the establishment of peace. Because it violates,

the right to life, to physical and psychic integrity, to liberty, to be safe from tortures and bad deals, to be judged by independent and impartial courts...The disappearance of the person...[transforms the person] into a ghost that fluctuates between being and not being.93 (Madres, Apr. 82, 6)

This quote does not refer to the literal existence of a person, but rather to the legal status of a person. The disappeared person does not exist before the law due to the clandestine nature of forced disappearance: because the law denies the aforementioned rights to the disappeared – and the existence of crimes against him/her. On the other hand, because there is no verification of his/her death, the person does exist before the law for other purposes. For example, the disappeared remain owners of their homes and/or businesses, impeding the right of present –that is, non-disappeared-family members to sell and/or assume ownership of the property in question or operate them in the disappeared’s absence.94 Thus the legal entity of “person” does indeed,

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93 “El derecho a la vida, a la integridad física y psíquica, a la libertad, a estar a salvo de torturas y malos tratos, a ser juzgados por tribunales independiente e imparciales...La desaparición de la persona...[transforma la persona] en un fantasma que fluctúa entre el ser y no ser.”

94 The family of María (Pinina) Esther Ravelo, whose mother Alejandra (Negrita) Leoncio de Ravelo founded the local chapter of the Madres in Rosario after the disappearance of Pinina and Pinina’s husband Emilio, had to wait until 1995 to recover Pinina’s house. From the moment of the disappearance, the house belonged to Iván, the three year old boy who witnessed the disappearance of his father and the murder of his mother. Feitlowitz explains the reason for the passage of so much time: “Unless Pinina was alive, the house legally belonged to Iván. But no authority would declare her dead or living. The surest way to recover the house was for Negrita...
“fluctuate between being and not being” (*Madres*, Apr. 82, 6). These impediments can interfere with the rights of the families affected by disappearance, not just those of the disappeared.

More importantly, in the discourse of the Madres, justice is a prerequisite for peace. The Madres say that they have, “the convinced belief that only through truth, justice and Liberty, will peace be able to be achieved”\(^\text{95}\) (*Madres*, Apr. 82 7). By establishing justice as a prerequisite for peace, the Madres suggest that the violence in Argentina or anywhere cannot end without the establishment of justice. Note that where the Junta claimed that Argentines had “earned peace” by choosing the Junta’s values, the Madres argue that the Junta itself is hawkish. True peace exists only when *all* experience it in citizenship, not when some experience peace at the cost of another’s suffering. In another definition, peace consists of a lack of armed conflict between nations. Under this definition of peace, forced disappearance is a threat to the entire world because, as an injustice, it fails to create the necessary preconditions for peace. (Indeed, some FEDEFAM members’ countries experienced civil wars which included disappearances, thus providing the opening for discussions of world peace.) The Madres, seen in this light, are not just activists for human rights, but for peace, and their membership in FEDEFAM transforms this group into an international peace activist group. Where the Junta saw the international community as a source of competition, the Madres saw it as a potential source of solidarity and strength.

to declare that her daughter is deceased. But true to the ethic of the Mothers of the Plaza, she refused. ‘It’s not for me to declare her dead.’ she wept, ‘if they killed her, then they have to say so. For me to say she’s dead would mean that I have killed her” (175-178, original format).

\(^{95}\) “El convencimiento de que sólo mediante la verdad, la justicia y la Libertad, podrá lograrse la paz.”
In May of 1982, the next issue of the newsletter was released, commenting for the first time on the Falklands War. In this conflict, the Madres see an opportunity for a practical demonstration that justice contributes to peace. In the editorial, “April 2“

the Madres say, “From the specific point of view of human rights we must say that the problem of our detained-disappeared children remains in play with the same force that we raised when forced disappearances of people began to occur”

(It bears mention that this is the first use of the term, “human rights” in the newsletters in my sample.) In other words, for the Madres, not even the importance of the war trumps the importance of justice. It is a strong statement because the emphasis on patriotism that accompanies a declaration of war can cause an impression that it is unpatriotic to criticize the country. Indeed, the Madres were harassed by their fellow citizens at their protests during the war, including children, who “said that we were unpatriotic and that we were being paid by the English, that because we were opposed to the war we supported the English” (de Guede, ctd. in Fisher 116). The Madres issued a statement of solidarity with the mothers of the soldiers (de Jeger ctd. in Fisher 117).

Furthermore, the Madres challenge the right of the government to declare war in the first place. The first ontological step in this process is to establish a right to life, which I have already explained. Having defined the right to life, the Madres argue that even in, “the dramatic time of the start of a war...[]...Above all the claims, above all the geographic reasons, human life is at stake”

96 “El 2 de abril.”
97 “Desde el punto de vista específico de los derechos humanos debemos decir que el problema de nuestros hijos detenidos-desaparecidos sigue en pie con la misma fuerza que los levantamos cuando empezó a producirse la desaparición forzada de personas.”
98 “La hora dramática de la iniciación de la guerra...[]...Por encima de las reivindicaciones, por encima de las razones geográficas, está en juego la vida humana.”
to life during wartime, as well as political and geographic motives for fighting, the Madres argue that life still remains the ultimate value. By so arguing, they reject the nationalistic discourse that the nation’s body had suffered an amputation of the Falklands. That is, they value life and the right to it more than political motives for war: hence the use of the expression, “above” and its repetition. Because life is a right, “life...cannot and must not be broken off by the will of individuals nor the decision of governments”\(^9\) (Madres, May 82, 5). Said another way, the Madres argue that the right to life surpasses the capacity of the government, any government, to declare war. The Madres place justice above not only war, but above the authority of a government. This is particularly important because in “Argentines, to victory!” the Junta had completely eliminated violence from its mention of war. In direct contradiction to the Junta, the Madres place the individual’s body above the national body and point out the dangers to it. Here again, if the military justifies the extermination of the lives of individuals deemed a menace to the nation’s health, the Madres instead insisted that the individual’s right to life always trumps the nation’s right to life.

Furthermore, the Madres argue against dropping issue of the disappeared during wartime. They say,

The procedures, the characteristics of the kidnappings, the executed violations, are not erased by the present state of war. With it, one has tried

\(^9\) “La vida...no puede ni debe troncharse por la voluntad de las personas o la decisión de los gobiernos.”
to silence them, but the defense of human rights does not give in. On the contrary, it rises and survives.\textsuperscript{100}  \textit{(Madres, May 82, 4)}

Working for internal justice, for the Madres, must continue in spite of the war because justice is so important. The war is seen as a diversionary tactic designed to protect the injustice of disappearances. In this case, according to the Madres, a lack of justice has caused the government to declare war in order to hide that same lack of justice. Justice becomes all the more important as a prerequisite for peace.

The theme of the importance of justice continues in the next issue of the newsletter in September of 1982. It is the first published after the Argentine defeat in the Falklands in June of 1982. After the defeat, the regime promised to hold elections for a democratic government. The Madres highlighted the role of justice in the events to come in the editorial, “The Problem of the Problems”\textsuperscript{101} This editorial focuses on the Madres’ responses to one, “of three\textsuperscript{102} fundamental problems...peace, bread and work and questions about the disappeared”\textsuperscript{103} \textit{(Madres, Sep. 82, 4). They say,}

In every one of them the government must express itself with absolute sincerity and assume its responsibility. Thus the practice of the truth and

\textsuperscript{100} “Los procedimientos, las características de los secuestros, las violaciones ejercidas, no se borran por el estado de guerra actual. Con ella se ha pretendido silenciarlos, pero la defensa de los derechos humanos se yergue y subsiste.”

\textsuperscript{101} “El problema de los problemas.”

\textsuperscript{102} Although it may appear the four problems are listed, “work and bread” should be read as part of the same economic problem.

\textsuperscript{103} “De tres problemas fundamentales...paz, pan y trabajo y pregunta por los desparecidos.”
its corresponding justice will allow the establishment of the paths (literally, “railroad tracks”) for the exercise of democracy. ¹⁰⁴ (Madres, Sep. 82, 4)

Said another way, the Madres consider justice an essential condition of authentic democracy. ¹⁰⁵ (This statement is in keeping with the discourse established in the newsletter of June 1980 when they say, “We long for the presence of a democratic system that is respectful of the fundamental rights of the human person in Argentina.”¹⁰⁶) Instead of only repeating the importance of justice, however, the Madres address the universal responsibility for it, saying, “Justice imparts the same rules for everybody. No one can omit it, especially those who have the enormous responsibility of power”¹⁰⁷ (Madres, Sep. 82, 5). This is in keeping with their argument of June 1980 that “civil, military, and judicial”¹⁰⁸ are responsible for the disappeared and their treatment.

In the editorial, “The Problem of the Problems,” however, there is an addition to the definition of “justice.” Declaring that, “There has begun to be talk of a possible amnesty law”¹⁰⁹ the Madres affirm that, “If our children had been exterminated...we would find ourselves before a genuine GENOCIDE, which is a crime against humanity,

¹⁰⁴ “En cada uno de ellos el gobierno deberá expresarse con absoluta sinceridad y asumir su responsabilidad. Así la práctica de la verdad y su correlato de la justicia permitirán establecer los andariveles para el ejercicio de la democracia.”
¹⁰⁵ In fact, the Madres distinguish between an authentic democracy and an electoral democracy. The former includes the existence of justice – that is, the universal exercise of rights – and the latter is limited to an elected government that does not necessarily respect rights.
¹⁰⁶ “Anhelamos para la Argentina la vigencia de un sistema democrático, respetuoso de los derechos fundamentales de la persona humana.”
¹⁰⁷ “La justicia imparte normas iguales para todos. Nadie puede omitirla y menos quienes tiene la enorme responsabilidad del poder.”
¹⁰⁸ “Civiles, militares y judiciales.”
¹⁰⁹ “Ha comenzado a hablarse de una posible ley de amnistía.”
that cannot prescribe nor be pardoned”\textsuperscript{110} (\textit{Madres}, Sep. 82, 6). In spite of the appeal to motherhood inherent in the phrase, “our children,” the capitalization of the word “genocide” implies that human rights are now at the forefront of the Madres’ thoughts and that the socialization of motherhood is complete. Where before the exercise of the rights of all was referred to in the discourse, it now includes punishment for those who have violated the rights of others.

\textbf{Defining Responsibilities and Responsible Parties}

The editorials that appear between November 1983 and January 1984 enter into the final phase of the discourse of justice covered in this chapter: the assignment of responsibility and the inclusion of punishment. In the editorial, “Exhortation to the New Government”\textsuperscript{111} the Madres repeat that justice includes respect for rights and punishment for those who violate them, declaring, “The Armed Forces without Law and without Justice, kidnapped, tortured and killed. Regardless of circumstances, these are crimes that deserve condemnation in Argentina and in any other country in the world”\textsuperscript{112} (\textit{Madres}, Nov. 83, 23). In their search for justice, the Madres have three demands: “LIVE RETURN OF THE DETAINED-DISAPPEARED/FREEDOM FOR POLITICAL PRISONERS AND UNION LEADERS/JUDGEMENT FOR THOSE RESPONSIBLE”\textsuperscript{113} (\textit{Madres}, Nov. 83, 23). Note that there is no appeal to motherhood in this quote at all.

\textsuperscript{110} “Si nuestros hijos hubieran sido exterminados...nos encontraríamos ante un verdadero GENOCIDIO, que es un delito contra la humanidad, que no puede prescribir ni ser amnistiado.”

\textsuperscript{111} “Exhortación al nuevo gobierno.”

\textsuperscript{112} “Las Fuerzas Armadas sin Ley y sin Justicia, secuestraron, torturaron y asesinaron. Esos son crímenes sin atenuantes que merecen condena en la Argentina y en cualquier país del mundo.”

\textsuperscript{113} “APARICION (sic) CON VIDA DE LOS DETENIDOS-DISAPARECIDOS/LIBERTAD A LOS PRESOS POLÍTICOS Y GREMIALES/JUICIO A LOS RESPONSABLES.”
The socialization of motherhood is complete: all the Madres are working for all the disappeared. That is, the Madres demand the fulfillment of the right to life, to liberty, and punishment for the perpetrators of genocide: in a word, justice as they define it. They proceed to call for the creation of,

a bicameral parliamentary commission with full powers and attributes in which the Madres of Plaza de Mayo and other representatives of organizations of Human Rights have a voice. This commission must investigate all cases of violations of the rights of the person...it must be permanent.¹¹⁴ (Madres, Nov. 83, 23)

The Madres do not explain why the commission should be permanent. However, permanence implies two key points. First, by having a permanent commission, investigation into human rights violations could occur at any time, eliminating the possibility that a perpetrator escapes justice simply due to a statute of limitations. Second, it serves to help ensure that future human rights violations do not occur by keeping the threat of consequences in play. The suggestion of the inclusion of the Madres in the commission is also reasonable because the Madres and the other human rights groups spent the years of the dictatorship collecting information on the disappeared and the survivors of disappearance. They have the information that the hypothetical commission would need. Moreover, the Madres soon clarify that they want

¹¹⁴ “Una comisión parlamentaria bicameral con plenos poderes y atribuciones en la que tengan voz las Madres de Plaza de Mayo y demás representantes de organizaciones de Derechos Humanos. Esta comisión deberá investigar todos los casos de violaciones a los derechos de la persona...debe tener carácter permanente.”
another group to conduct the trials. “Let the Congress pass immediately the Law of Installation of Trial by Juries for the determination of the sentences for crimes committed, trials that must not submitted to common penal law”¹¹⁵ (Madres, Nov. 83, 23). In other words, the Madres are seeking justice through institutions, not through sanctioned vigilantism. This act of delegating to entities responsible for justice is consistent not only with the aforementioned discourse of 1980, but also with the presently discussed discourse of December 1983 and January 1984. The calling for a congressional commission and, later, for civilian courts to deal with perpetrators of human rights violations calls to my mind a rejection of the nation-as-family metaphor as described by the Junta. In the Junta’s metaphor, the father-government reigns supreme. This power structure is contested by the Madres’ call for other entities to take power over the military. I interpret this as a rejection of the roles assigned by the Junta to itself and others on the part of the Madres.

The December 1983 edition of the newsletter coincides with the election of Raúl Alfonsín and the transition to democracy. As such, it represented the most likely moment when the Madres could receive information about their loved ones and advance the cause of the disappeared in general. The December 1983 newsletter does not contain an editorial designated as such. However, the discourse contained in “Anniversary”¹¹⁶ advances the establishment of the entities or persons responsible for justice. Specifically, it designates the Madres and groups like them – that is to say, groups of human rights activists – and youth as actors for justice. According to it, the

¹¹⁵ “Que el Congreso reglamente de inmediato la Ley de Instalación del Juicio por Jurados para la determinación de las condenas a los crímenes cometidos, juicios que no deben someterse al sistema de derecho penal común.”
¹¹⁶ “Aniversario.”
Madres have the responsibility, “to inform all the Madres in particular and the people in
general of the activities that the Madres of Plaza de Mayo organization develops and of
other facts and important news in Human Rights”\textsuperscript{117} a task which they carry out through
the newsletter itself (\textit{Madres}, Dec. 83, 19). The Madres are aware that the newsletter
represents a singular contribution to the human rights movement and proudly declare
that,
\begin{quote}
this INFORMATIVE NEWSLETTER is sent to the interior and abroad, to
Embassies, Libraries, Academies, political parties, unions, professional
institutions, celebrities...so that the aberrant repression that we suffered all
these years under the military dictatorship is diffused and not forgotten.\textsuperscript{118}
\end{quote}
(\textit{Madres}, Dec. 83, 19)

In other words, the Madres opine that pro-human rights groups have the responsibility
to continue in their activities to contribute to the general knowledge of the status of
rights – justice, to use another term – and participate in the construction of memory.
Finally, the Madres address, “our people and above all the youth...an alert that by being
victims of fear we strengthen the enemies of the democracy that we Argentines so long

\textsuperscript{117} “Informar a todas las Madres en particular y a todo el pueblo en general de las actividades
que desarrolla la organización Madres de Plaza de Mayo y de otros hechos y noticias
importantes de Derechos Humanos.”
\textsuperscript{118} “Este BOLETÍN INFORMATIVO es enviado al interior y al extranjero, a las Embajadas,
Bibliotecas, Academias, partidos políticos, sindicatos, instituciones profesionales,
personalidades...para que se difunda y no caiga en el olvido la aberrante represión que
sufrimos estos años bajo la dictadura militar.”
for” (Madres, Dec. 83, 19). Said another way, citizens in general and young people especially have a responsibility for justice through their activism and participation in democracy lest, by not supporting democracy, they support dictatorships. The call to the body politic in general and to youth in particular represents to me yet another implicit alteration of the Junta’s two metaphors. By calling to citizens in general and youth in particular, the Madres include all citizens in the body politic, showing again a rejection of the Junta’s idea that only certain people can be cells in the national body and that the others are invasive bodies. Additionally, by placing the responsibility for democracy into the hands of the people, the Madres, in my reading, replace the father-state as the “head of household.” I see this particularly in the call to youth, who stand to inherit from their father-state the power of the system the Madres call on them to change.

The Madres did not limit themselves to addressing the Argentine people, however. They also directed their comments to the new democratic government. In January of 1984, the newsletter included the editorial, “Open letter to the Country.” In this letter, the Madres condemn the destruction and removal from Argentina of official documents as well as the easy exit of several key military officers of the dictatorship from the country. Seeing these facts, the Madres speak about each branch of the democratic government. They praise the moral condemnation of human rights abuses from the executive branch first. They then declare that, “It corresponds to the Legislative Power to determine the political condemnation of these crimes and the perpetrators” and they reiterate their demand for “the formation of a bicameral investigative

119 “A nuestro pueblo y sobre todo a la juventud...un alerta de que siendo víctimas del miedo reforzamos a los enemigos de la democracia que tanto ansiamos los argentinos.”
120 “Carta abierta al país.”
121 “Al Poder Legislativo corresponde determinar la condena política de esos crímenes y sus responsables.”
Commission that leads to that definition”¹²² (Madres, Jan. 84 n.p.). In other words, the Madres charge the Argentine congress with the responsibility of articulating appropriate punishments for those that violated human rights. Again, in my interpretation, they challenge the unilateral power of the father-state by designating other authorities as valid.

Lastly, it is the Judicial Branch, through its Ordinary Courts, which must affect that penal sentence by sentencing the guilty, who cannot be judged by court martial. This mechanism would be contrary to the spirit of the National Constitution which does not admit irritating privileges that, as in this case, could lead to impunity and to a true mockery of justice.¹²³ (Madres, Jan. 84 n.p.)

That is, the Madres recommend that the courts make themselves responsible for administering punishment. These recommendations are not surprising because they match the respective functions of each branch. What is unusual about this recommendation is that the Madres recommend civilian courts for military personnel. They have done this because they do not trust the military as an institution to impartially judge its own members. The concern is valid and in keeping with their discourse that

¹²² “La formación de una Comisión bicameral investigadora que conduzca a esa definición.”
¹²³ “Por último, es el Poder Judicial, mediante sus Tribunales Ordinarios, el que debe efectuar la condena penal, sentenciando a los culpables, quienes no pueden ser juzgados por un tribunal militar. Este mecanismo sería contrario al espíritu de la Constitución Nacional que no admite privilegios irritantes que, como en este caso, podrían conducir a la impunidad y a una verdadera burla de la justicia.”
multiple actors, including the various branches of the government, are responsible for justice.

**Conclusion**

I have utilized the discourse of justice of the Madres to determine what their ideology consists of with respect to that issue. I examined the discourse of three distinct time periods and I have been able to detect and articulate an evolution centered around concepts of justice. To found the newsletter, they began with a declaration of their beliefs in which they defined justice as the universal exercise of human rights, as defined by the United Nations. They even expanded on those rights to create the right of relatives’ access to information about prisoners. During the Falklands War, the Madres first used the term “human rights” and emphasized the importance of justice to the point of considering it superior to governments and they used the injustice of war to demand an end to the violence. Finally, in the era of the transition to democracy, the Madres assign the responsibility for justice, articulating the specific responsibility of each entity they address. Through the discourse of justice, it can be seen that the Madres did not utilize maternity as an explanation for their activism at the level of group discourse, even though they used its strong emotional thrust in performances of their marches. On the contrary, they used a discourse applicable to all Argentines to explain their activism. Through their discourse of justice and their position as mother-activists, the Madres turned the nationalistic and patriarchal tenets of military propaganda upside down.
In my opinion, this discourse is more useful than one based on maternity for two reasons. First, motherhood as a base of discourse would have excluded everyone who was not a mother. To demand the safety of the disappeared for maternal reasons implies that other people – wives, daughters, sisters – do not have the same right to demand safety for their loved ones. Moreover, by rejecting motherhood as a base for their group activism, the Madres reject the idea that only mothers are responsible for the security of their families. Utilizing a discourse of justice, the Madres created a universal definition of justice that all may invoke in spite of being, for example, an orphan or the child of a single father. Second, if the Madres had depended exclusively on motherhood as the basis for their activism’s discourse, they would have valued motherhood above any other feminine role, thus devaluing other contributions of women to society and implying that only men’s work was important. Such an attitude could easily be appropriated and prostituted to reinforce patriarchy or to limit social, political and legal options for women. At the same time, by acting politically, the Madres show that motherhood is just one valid option for women, and that, even when one is a mother, one does not have to stop being something else or performing another role. In spite of the fact that the Madres do not consider themselves feminists, “we point a way forward for the liberation of women” (Bonafini ctd. en Fisher 158) through their activism and through their ideology of justice for all – men and women.
Chapter 3: León Gieco: The Construction of an Ideal

During the 1970s, Argentina experienced an upsurge in violence, social, economic and political chaos that were almost unprecedented in the world. The various sectors of society tried in different ways to respond to the situations they confronted. As discussed previously, the dictatorship tried to control the chaos – and thus society – through political means including violent repression, forced disappearances, censorship and propaganda, while human rights groups formed and argued for the construction of a peaceful society based on the universal exercise of and respect for human rights. In this chapter I explore the León Gieco’s presentation of an alternate view of national identity and social order that challenged the Proceso’s discourse.


A third movement, uniquely directed to a youth counterculture (Mejías ctd. in Zolov 65), evolved that shared similar values to those of the human rights movement: rock nacional.

National rock, strictly speaking in musical terms, is a music of Argentine fusion...[which] has established variable relations (depending upon the period and the musician) with rock ‘n’ roll, blues, pop, symphonic rock, punk, jazz, jazz-rock, country and folk music from the United States, heavy metal, new wave, reggae, ska, rockabilly, classical music, Latin American new song, la nueva trova cubana, bossa nova, samba, tango and Argentine folk music...among others. (Vila, “Género” 233-234)
The very term “rock nacional” implies the music’s foreign and domestic origins, and disputes the idea that Argentina has a pure national identity, free of all outside influences. Thus it is difficult to precisely define a genre in which to place rock nacional, and Vila himself argues that rock nacional may best be considered, “an anti-genre or a non-genre, since there are no defined rules about what is or is not rock nacional” (“Género” 235). However, because my focus is the years 1976-1983, those of the dictatorship, it is possible to narrow the definition of rock nacional to music based on, “[the identification of the musician]...as belonging to the movement...to its social practice and its ideology” (“Género” 239). The movement, its social practice and its ideology consist of permanent key factors such as, “the struggle against the establishment, pacifism, environmentalism, etc.” and “the authenticity...that joins the musician to the ideology” (“Género” 241, original format). Authenticity is defined as, “the authentic expression of something...it is thus that which guarantees that rock resists or subverts market logic” (Frith ctd. in Vila, “Género” 241). Plainly, there can be any number of definitions of rock nacional and those musicians who constitute it in the eyes of any given fan. León Gieco is, however, universally accepted as one of the giants of the movement and is commonly referred to as the Argentine Bob Dylan (Frías n.p.). In fact, “If in Argentine rock there is a Holy Trinity, its members are Charly García, Luís Alberto Spinneta and León Gieco” (Polimeni 105).

But if rock nacional is difficult to define as a genre, is it possible to designate it a movement? If a movement is defined as the mobilization of large amounts of people, then the answer is yes. More than half a million Argentine youths attended concerts
annually between 1980-1983 (Vila, “Crónicas” 83). As the dictatorship collapsed Argentine civil society onto itself and into silence under penalty of violent repression, “the rock nacional movement establishes itself as the constitutive field of an ‘us’” (Vila, “Crónicas” 85). Furthermore, during the dictatorship, the musicians of rock nacional became, “the music of resistance”\(^\text{124}\) (Gieco ctd. in Russi 212). The ideology they constructed, already described as pro-pacifist and anti-establishment, was one that spoke to many and encouraged the development of social networks, as demonstrated by the magazine *Expreso Imaginario*.\(^\text{125}\) For adherents, rock nacional, “tries to rescue the feelings of the people”\(^\text{126}\) (Sosa 49:50).

Rock nacional under the dictatorship had its ups and down, as it peaked and dipped in its popularity as it tried to survive. In 1976-1977, from the solidarity created among audiences at concerts, arose the aforementioned magazine *Expreso Imaginario*, which created a forum for young people to discuss their values and fears through anonymous letters to the editor during the worst years of the repression (Vila, “Crónicas” 88-89). From 1978-1979, rock nacional fell into a sort of crisis caused principally by two factors: repression tactics aimed directly at concertgoers at the concerts themselves and the introduction of disco. Concertgoers were stopped before and after concerts at checkpoints at the locales, searched for drugs and generally harassed, while tear gas was, on some occasions, shot into crowds as music was playing. Between the treatment of concertgoers and the advent of disco - with its emphasis on dancing and the club scene, as opposed to concerts - rock nacional fell out of fashion and, “The sensation that seize participants of the movement, is that rock

\(^{124}\) “La música de la resistencia.”
\(^{125}\) *Imaginary Express*
\(^{126}\) “Trata de rescatar los sentimientos del pueblo.”
nacional is dying” (Vila, “Crónicas” 91). From 1980-1981, rock nacional revitalized itself as the Argentine economy fell and recreated an identity for and modeled after Argentine youth. Furthermore, with the ascent of Viola to power, there was a small opening of society as he tried to regain public support for the regime. In rock nacional, he saw a potentially co-optable demographic: youth (Vila, “Crónicas” 99-100). Ultimately, musicians and adherents of rock nacional proved uncooperative in this regard. A common crowd chant of the time was, “It’s going to end, it’s going to end: the military dictatorship” and a common call for audience participation was, “Whoever’s not jumping is a soldier” (Vila, “Crónicas” 101). In 1982-1983, as military hardliners came back to power and Argentina fought Great Britain for the Falkland Islands, musicians of rock nacional refused to give up the opening they had been granted. In response to a military invitation to host a concert in support of the war, the movement hosted instead the, “Festival of Latin American Solidarity” on May 16, 1982 (Finkelstein 73), a concert whose dual purpose was, “to ratify a will for peace and to lend some type of help to the young men stationed in the South...to collaborate with sweaters, handkerchiefs, cigarettes, winter clothing, etc.” (Vila, “Crónicas” 104). León Gieco’s “Sólo le pido a Dios” was sung by the entire crowd, and it and Porchetto’s “Algo de paz,” became tied to the pacifist movement (Vila, “Crónicas” 104). The Falklands War ended the military’s discourse of the suspect youth and permitted the mass diffusion of rock on a national scale (Vila, “Crónicas” 104). Despite rough moments, overall

127 “Festival de Solidaridad Latinoamericana.”
128 “I only ask of God.”
129 “A little bit of peace.”
The rock nacional movement has performed a supremely important role in the socialization of wide sectors of youth during the Proceso government, restoring truthful communication about the real country, rescuing the sense of life in a context of lies and terror, consolidating a collective actor as a way to counteract an individualistic model of life, opposing unified action to the primacy of the market and to a project of universal transformation of collective actors in Argentina. (Vila, “Crónicas” 145)

León Gieco

Born Raúl Alberto Antonio on November 20, 1951, Gieco hails from Cañada Rosquín in Santa Fe Province, Argentina. He grew up surrounded by extended family and watched many of them migrate to Rosario in attempts to better their economic situations, Gieco himself moving in 1957 at age six. Their economic situation was so severe, in fact, that food was in short supply, and the family sometimes went hungry (Gieco ctd. in Schapira 59). A year later, he decided to seek employment to help support the family and was hired by a neighbor to run errands and do odd job. In 1959, at age eight, Gieco bought his first guitar on credit. He played his first gig at age ten at a local party with his father’s band, after which he began to experiment with new types of music. At age fifteen, in 1965, Gieco went to Bolivia as an exchange student, having been selected partially due to his musical abilities. In fact, part of his travels included playing concerts at local festivals. This trip inspired what would later become the De Ushuaia a La Quiaca project (Gieco ctd. en Finkelstein 25). Upon returning to Argentina, he connected some cables incorrectly in preparation for a concert and
caused a city-wide power outage. His uncle laughed and called him, “the king of the animals” and he began to go by the name by which he is known globally and for the rest of his life: León. After graduating from secondary school, he went to Buenos Aires to try his fortune as a full-time musician. Gieco found a job as a telex operator at Transradio. From there, he sent messages to other operators in other parts of the world when work ran out on the night shift (Gieco ctd. in Schapira 58). In mid-1971, Gieco decided to take guitar lessons. This proved to be a fated decision, because the instructor turned out to be Gustavo Santaolla, the singer-songwriter of the band Arco Iris. Santaolla proceeded to introduce Gieco to the musical community of Buenos Aires, which would later include such greats as Miguel and Eugenio Pérez and Charly García, and would enable Gieco to record his first album under Oscar López and join the band Sui Generis. He continued to work in the local scene, increasing his professionalism and impact on other musicians, and eventually performed “Hombres de hierro” – a song with evident melodic influence from Bob Dylan’s “Blowing in the wind” (Marchini 176) - at the “Acusticazo” concert on June 16, 1972. This concert was a portion of the B.A. Rock concert series dedicated to folkloric-style music. His performance at “Acusticazo” was reviewed in the newspaper “La Opinión,” where he was described as, “the most politically defined songwriter and the most visceral musician” (Andrés ctd. in Finkelstein 38). In 1973, Gieco released his first album, “León Gieco.” (See Table 1 for a complete list of Gieco’s music recordings from 1972-1983).

130 “Lion.”
131 Rainbow.
132 “Iron men.” In English, an “iron man” is strong, but in Spanish, an “iron man” is better construed as heartless or cruel (Challú, personal communication).
133 “Acoustic Strike.” Here, strike means a blow or a hit.
134 “The Opinion.”
Table 3.1: List of Gieco’s releases from debut album to *De Ushuaia a La Quiaca I*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Song/Album</th>
<th>Translated Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Band or Solo</th>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Song(s) analyzed (if applicable)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>León Gieco</td>
<td>León Gieco</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Solo</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Hombres de hierro&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Acusticazo: Hombres de Hierro&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Hombres de hierro&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Band of Tired Horses</td>
<td>Band of Tired Horses</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Solo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Fantasma de Canterville</td>
<td>The Ghost of Canterville</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Solo</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Señora de los llanos&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porsuigieco</td>
<td>Porsuigieco</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Band</td>
<td>Sui Generis, Raúl Porchetto, León Gieco</td>
<td>&quot;La mamá de Jimmy&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV LP</td>
<td>IV LP</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Solo</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Canción de amor para Francisca&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siete Años</td>
<td>Seven Years</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Solo</td>
<td>(compilation album)</td>
<td>&quot;La Navidad de Luis&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pensar en Nada</td>
<td>Think of Nothing</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Solo</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Pensar en nada&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Mercedes Sosa en la Argentina: Sólo le pido a Dios&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Mercedes Sosa in Argentina: I only ask of God&quot;</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Duet</td>
<td>Mercedes Sosa</td>
<td>&quot;Esos ojos negros&quot; &quot;Yo vendo unos ojos negros&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De Ushuaia a La Quiaca I</td>
<td>From Ushuaia to La Quiaca I</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Solo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compiled from Finkelstein, 139-143.
Shortly after its release, he met his wife Alicia. His career continued to yield successes, and those successes sometimes attracted the undesirable attention of the government (Finkelstein 10-40).

Gieco’s first run-in with the law came as the result of a strange coincidence. On October 25, 1974, he had recorded “Quizás le danzan los cuervos”\textsuperscript{135} for broadcast on the television show “Arrímate”\textsuperscript{136} on November 4. On November 1, the police commissioner of Buenos Aires was assassinated by Montoneros. After the show was broadcast on November 4 as scheduled, Gieco was arrested for praising the killings in his performance of “John, el cowboy.” (The song is actually about John Lennon). He spent eight days total in a permanently lit cell. At first, he communicated with his neighbor by knocking on the wall. On the second or third day, he heard a struggle and then received no further responses to his knocking, leading him to believe that his neighbor had been killed. On the fourth day, he was permitted visitors and an attorney. On the eighth day, he was released (Marchini 182-183).

Gieco’s problems with the government continued during the Proceso. In 1976, the government forbade him and his record company to release, “La historia ésta”\textsuperscript{137} “Canción de amor para Francisca”\textsuperscript{138} and “Tema de los mosquitos”\textsuperscript{139} and ordered them to alter the lyrics for “Señora de los llanos”\textsuperscript{140} and “Los chacareros de Dragones.”\textsuperscript{141} This last song was, unbeknownst to the censors, about the death of Chilean singer-

\textsuperscript{135} “Maybe the crows will dance for him”
\textsuperscript{136} “Come closer.”
\textsuperscript{137} “This history.”
\textsuperscript{138} “Love song for Francisca”
\textsuperscript{139} “Song of the mosquitoes”
\textsuperscript{140} “Lady from the plains.”
\textsuperscript{141} “The farmers of Dragones.” Dragones is a street in Buenos Aires.
songwriter Víctor Jara. Had they caught the song’s actual meaning, it is likely that censorship of it would have been much more stringent (Marchini 186).

Gieco’s experiences with censorship did not result in additional actions being taken against him at that time, but a few years later there would be a threat of much more violent events. On December 20, 1979, the Minister of Education announced the closing of the Luján National University. In response, the students and faculty mobilized to protest the closing, and Gieco participated in a concert/rally in their support. There he sang, “(culture) only cries in a country where people can’t choose it / it only cries its sadness if a minister closes a school / it cries for those who pay with banishment / or die for it (culture)” from his song, “La cultura es la sonrisa.” Gieco was arrested and taken to the First Regiment of the Infantry of Patricios in Palermo, where he was threatened with death if he were to sing “La cultura es la sonrisa” again. The unnamed officer in charge also chastised Gieco not to sing, “Sólo le pido a Dios,” advising him that, “These are not the times to sing songs of peace.” The censored verse of “La cultura es la sonrisa” was never heard again, although “Sólo le pido a Dios” was played repeatedly, largely due to audience demand (Marchini 193-194). In 1980, Gieco was arrested again for singing the prohibited song, “Canción de amor para Francisca.” This time, the colonel in charge reviewed the lyrics, decided the song was acceptable and went so far as to discipline the arresting officer. On his way out of the prison, a guard told Gieco that the arresting officer’s girlfriend was a fan of Gieco’s and that jealousy over her affections had been the motive for the arrest (Marchini 195), showing that many officers, not just, “High-ranking generals and admirals were free to target their

142 “Sólo llora (la cultura) en un país donde no la pueden elegir / sólo llora su tristeza si un ministro cierra una escuela / llora por los que pagan con el destierro / o mueren por ella.”
143 “Culture is a smile.”
civilian competitors in sexual rivalries and to settle private grudges” (Osiel 126). This is consistent with Osiel’s argument that the repression can be read as “deliberately arbitrary” and that this arbitrariness served to keep Argentines guessing as to what was safe and what was not and thus fearful and “in line” (126).

In 1978, after his first experience with censorship, Gieco found his artistic energies to be waning. He decided to travel and stopped in several countries for concerts on his way north to Los Angeles. He stayed there with family friends Gabriela and Edelmira Molinari for about a year, attending concerts and trying to find work of any sort. He was turned down for a gardening job because the placement agency he was using felt that a successful musician would only take a gardening job if he were hiding a criminal record (Marchini 189-190). Broke, the Giecos decided to send León back to Buenos Aires for a short concert tour for the Foundation for Human Genetics. Ironically, and unbeknownst to Gieco, one of the organizers of the Foundation was the wife of Jorge Rafael Videla, who received a payout from the tour. After completing the tour, Gieco returned to the United States, where he performed at the Ann Arbor Arts Festival and was recorded for broadcast in Chicago, Detroit and Arizona by the University of Lansing. From there, the Gieco family went to Europe, not returning to Argentina until November of 1978 (Marchini 190-191).

On June 19, 1981, Gieco began the *De Ushuaia a La Quiaca* tour. The tour was named for the travel involved in it: Ushuaia is the southernmost city in Argentina and La Quiaca is the northernmost. This tour is unique in Argentine music for several reasons. First, it was not conducted for profit. Rather, Gieco and his associates

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144 From Ushuaia to La Quiaca
accepted invitations to play at any locale, with schools given first priority, for only a percentage of ticket sales. The rest, financially speaking, was up to Gieco.

Our idea is not to charge a set fee in each place we go but rather to negotiate a certain percentage so that the people who hire me don’t lose money...The idea is to play everywhere, then come economic concerns...The intention is not just to take my message, but rather to take the message of all Argentine rock, so as to demonstrate that it is a ‘folkloric’ movement.\(^{145}\) (Gieco ctd. in Frías, n.p.)

In this quote can be seen a definition of nationality as stemming from rural or popular classes as well as the more affluent. The second reason the tour was unique was, “because we traveled to experiment with people who, we knew, we going to enrich us artistically”\(^{146}\) (Gieco ctd. in Russi 202). In other words, Gieco traveled to play for himself and his own musical improvement, not for the profits a regular tour could bring. Third, Gieco realized,

that there is not a single Argentine folklore but a series of regional folklores...I began to imagine myself...listening to a record that made you

\(^{145}\) “Nuestra idea no es cobrar un cachet fijo en cada lugar donde vamos sino tratar con cierto tipo de porcentajes para que la gente que me contrate no pierda dinero...La idea es tocar en todos lados, después viene la preocupación económica...La intención no es sólo llevar mi mensaje, sino llevar el mensaje de todo el rock argentino, como para demostrar que es un movimiento ‘folklórico.’”

\(^{146}\) “Porque nosotros viajamos para experimentar con tipos que, sabíamos, nos iban a enriquecer artísticamente.”
travel all and every single province of Argentina through its songs.\textsuperscript{147} (Gieco ctd. in Finkelstein 74)

Leda Valladeres summed it up nicely: “‘León,’ Leda said to me, ‘what you want to do is make a musical map of Argentina’”\textsuperscript{148} (Gieco ctd. in Finkelstein 74). Gieco recorded local bands and artists from different styles of music, including indigenous forms, and played their music alongside them. The result of this tour was the three album set of the same name which documents musical and dance styles from all over Argentina, including indigenous forms.\textsuperscript{149} While parts of it were recorded after the fall of the regime, I have included songs from the first album in my study because the tour itself took place under the dictatorship. The first leg of the tour itself was interrupted only by Gieco’s car accident on July 28, 1981, from which he took until November to recover. His first concert upon resuming the tour was a benefit for the hospital where he and his crew were treated after the crash (Frias n.p.). In February of 1982, Mercedes Sosa included Gieco in her concerts in Argentina, and the second leg of the tour began in September of 1982 (Frias n.p.).

Gieco has continued to give concerts and produce albums, both domestically and internationally, through the restoration of democracy and beyond. He participated in a concert in support of the Nicaraguan revolution in 1984, a benefit concert for the Tobas

\textsuperscript{147} “Que no hay un único folklore argentino sino una serie de folclores regionales...empecé a imaginarme a mí mismo...escuchando un disco que lo haga recorrer a través de las canciones todas y cada una de las provincias argentinas.”

\textsuperscript{148} “León – me dijo Leda – vos lo que querés es hacer un mapa musical argentino.”

\textsuperscript{149} In 2004, a commemorative photo album of the tour was released under the same name, and the newspaper Página/12 arranged the re-release of the album on CD, including a fourth disc of unedited music (Russi 202). Interestingly, the fourth disc includes a Quichua version of “Sólo le pido a Dios.”
Indians in 1985, and the Amnesty International tour in 1988, which included Sting, Peter Gabriel and Tracy Chapman. It included a performance at the ninth annual March of Resistance, led by the Madres (I was unable to determine which group). In 1989, Gieco and Pete Seeger gave a joint concert at Luna Park. He offered music clinics in the early 1990s, using film, music and instruments from the De Ushuaia a La Quiaca tour to educate his audiences about Argentine music. He remains active in the human rights movement to this day, supporting the Universidad de Las Madres (“Derechos” VIII), Greenpeace and Los Sin Tierra de Santiago de Estero (“Ecología” VIII). Hebe de Bonafini, president of the Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo, comments,

León Gieco composes his songs from the conviction of one who knows that commitments to the people are stamped from the same place where one stands firm and does not retreat, does not break, does not negotiate, does not surrender. (Bonafini, “Compromiso” 5)

From this quote, Gieco’s jump from youth culture icon to pundit for the nation in general can be seen. His latest project, Mundo Alas, released in March of 2009, incorporated musicians, dancers and artists with different handicaps who, after touring Argentina, gave a performance at Luna Park. Artists with no arms painted with their feet or their mouths onstage, while mentally challenged musicians played alongside Gieco for dancers facing their own mental and physical challenges (Mundo Alas).

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150 World of Wings.
The Construction of “Us” and “Them”

During the dictatorship, the musicians of rock nacional, “were the music of resistance” (Gieco ctd. in Russi 212). As music of the resistance, then, it was necessary to construct an identity of “us” to resist the “them” as described earlier. Gieco participates in the construction of “us” by creating music reflective of the experiences of those oppressed by the hegemonic order. As Josefina Russi explains, “Gieco will show countrysides, towns, customs and he will likewise manifest the injustices that are discernable in these postcards: inequality, oppression, marginalization and obscurity” (196). By analyzing Gieco’s lyrics from 1973’s album León Gieco to 2005’s Por favor, perdón y gracias she finds that Gieco achieves this by featuring the marginalized in his songs. He calls attention to them by denouncing historical events and calling for solidarity on the part of those confronted by them, with an emphasis on events prior to the transition to democracy (Russi 203–214), and by condemning hypocrisy and calling for fidelity to one’s identity, with an emphasis on neoliberalism and human rights in the period since the 1990s (Russi 214-219). Although I believe her arguments to be correct, arguing that the marginalized are included in his music does not explain how that “us” is constructed, rather only who that “us” is.

I argue that, during the dictatorship, Gieco functioned as a sort of pundit, and that that punditry served as a launch point for the construction of an anti-hegemonic “us,” one that responded to and defied the Junta’s construction of national identity based on the NSD and “Western and Christian” values. To do that, I am limiting my study to songs whose lyrics were written by Gieco between 1976-1983 with the exceptions of

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151 Please, excuse me, and thank you.
“Hombres de hierro,” “Esos ojos negros,” and “Yo vendo unos ojos negros.” I include “Hombres de hierro” from 1972 because it is in this song that Gieco begins his construction of “us.” I opt to include “Esos ojos negros” from 1984 because it refers to specific events from the era of dictatorship. Lastly, I include the traditional “Yo vendo unos ojos negros,” recorded in 1984, because I believe it was included on the album to juxtapose “Esos ojos negros” as a sort of reprise. I argue that the construction of “us” began by including disaffected youth and culminated in the inclusion of all Argentines.

**The Development of “Us”**

“Hombres de hierro” was inspired by the mendozazo of April 3, 1972. The mendozazo was street protests against the violent police repression of workers marching against a rise in the cost of electricity. Between April 4 and April 7, several deaths resulted from continuing confrontations with police. The song debuted at Acusticazo, a concert dedicated to folk music during the B.A. Rock concert series sponsored by the magazine Peló. Following this concert, Gieco went so far as to join the Montoneros and Canto Urbano Popular, although he abandoned both groups in early 1973 as they radicalized (Marchini 176-178). Thus, Gieco’s construction of “us”

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152 “Those black eyes.” It is important to note that “black eyes” here refers to the color of the eyes rather than to an injury. This is true also for “Yo vendo unos ojos negros.”

153 “I’m selling some black eyes.”

154 For two reasons, I am also willing to speculate that “Yo vendo unos ojos negros” perhaps inspired “Esos ojos negros.” First, “Yo vendo unos ojos negros” is a traditional song, one that Gieco had probably heard before or during the De Ushuaia a La Quiaca tour. Second, due to their similarity of content, I speculate that “Esos ojos negros” was a response to the traditional tune. I have no evidence supporting this idea, however.

155 Mendoza strike.

156 *Hair.*
actually begins before the dictatorship and includes those young people who oppose
the violence of the government.

Raise up, young man, your young voice / Like the sun releases the light /
Even though it has to crash against a wall / Even though it has to crash, it
will split in two [will multiply] // Launch (or release), boy, your thoughts /
like the wind is free / You are the hope and the voice that will come / to
flourish in the new land // Men of iron who don’t listen to the voice // Men
of iron who don’t listen to the scream // Men of iron who don’t listen the
pain / People that march can be killed / But thoughts will remain // Sharp
spears soil the sky / Like blood on the earth / Tell those men to try to use /
Instead of weapons their head\(^{157}\)

It is interesting to note that, although the better part of a decade separates these pieces,
in “We Earned Peace,” the government offers the contrary idea that killing the people
does indeed kill their ideas. Gieco, with long hair and a beard, was dressed in a fringed
leather vest, a white t-shirt with the sleeves torn to fringes, jeans, and necklaces that
appear to be made of hemp as he performed this song. He played the song with no
accompaniment by other musicians, using only his guitar and harmonica. The tone of

\(^{157}\) “Larga muchacho tu voz joven / como larga la luz el sol / Que aunque tenga que estrellarse / contra un paredón / Que aunque tenga que estrellarse / se dividirá en dos // Suelta muchacho tus pensamientos / como anda suelto el viento / Sos la esperanza y la voz que vendrá / a florecer en la nueva tierra // Hombres de hierro que no escuchan la voz / Hombres de hierro que no escuchan el grito / Hombres de hierro que no escuchan el dolor / Gente que avanza se puede matar / pero los pensamientos quedarán // Puntas agudas ensucian el cielo / como la sangre en la tierra / Dile (sic) a esos hombres que traten de usar / a cambio de las armas su cabeza.” Translation by Amílcar Challú.
the lyrics changes from beginning to end, starting with a tranquil tone in the lyrics and ending with more volume and a higher pitch as the line, “But thoughts will remain” is repeated several times. The tone of voice, were he writing, would require exclamation points. The emphasis of the song is clearly on thoughts and their value, even over the risk of death and the call to act (“B.A. Rock”). It seems to declare the victory or primacy of thought over all else.

On the whole, though, the song itself is a call to arms for all those who do not support the government, and especially to those who oppose violence. The arms in this case are clearly protests rather than violence because of the repeated references to voices. Gieco is constructing an “us” of politically committed youth. Furthermore, “we” include thinkers whose ideas cannot be killed, as opposed to “them” who use violence rather than their heads. The song is a call for solidarity in the face of violence and debate instead of repression. It seems that addressing the song specifically to “young man” is more a by-product of the Spanish language’s grammatical gender system than a deliberate exclusion of women from “us.” Rather, the direction of the lyrics to, “muchacho” should be read as personalizing the lyrics to the listener individually, regardless of the sex of the listener. Again, “Hombres de hierro” predates the Junta and is only examined here as the beginning of the construction of “us.”

In “Señora de los llanos,” construction of “us” expands to include the disaffected in general, rather then merely the disaffected youth.

For a while I have tried / To stop listening to this lamentation / Of the people who walk / Like the bear from the circus / Jumping and jumping

\footnote{158 Muchacho.}
and not going far / White angel from heaven / Because the draftsman wasn’t gloomy / So much accumulated error / On the corners and in the mud // And there go far some flowers / Hung in the beaks of birds / And there go far some flowers / Hung in the beaks of birds // Great lady of the plains / Four kids and a horse / Her dreams go with the wind / And leave her a wounded memory / We are still too equal / To endure unequal prices / So much accumulated error / On the corners and in the mud // And there go far some flowers / Hung in the beaks of birds.159

In this song, Gieco talks openly about trying to ignore the suffering of the poor and the economically disproportionate cost of living for them. While the cost of living is, in raw terms, the same or approximately the same for people in a given area, the percentage of income spent on such necessities as food and shelter varies according to one’s or the household’s income. It is that kind of situation that maintains poverty and the suffering of those who live in it. Furthermore, by presenting poverty as belonging to the city and to the country, he identifies it a universal problem. He exposes the marginalization experienced by the poor: a situation which, as discussed earlier, he has himself lived, and a situation ignored in such propaganda as “Dollar/Costs.” By highlighting the suffering and efforts toward economic and material survival being

159 “Hace tiempo que pretendo / Dejar de escuchar este lamento / De la gente que camina / Como el oso de los circos / Salta y salta y no va lejos / Ángel blanco de los cielos / Porque el dibujante no era negro / Cuanto error acumulado / En las esquinas y en el barro // Y allá lejos van colgadas unas flores / De los picos de los pájaros / Y allá lejos van colgadas unas flores / De los picos de los pájaros // Gran señora de los llanos / Cuatro hijos y un caballo / Su ilusión la lleva el viento / Y le deja un recuerdo lastimado / Todavía somos demasiados iguales / Para soportar precios desiguales / Cuánto error acumulado / En las esquinas y en el barro / Y allá lejos van colgadas unas flores / De los picos de los pájaros.”
experienced by many Argentines in 1976, “we” are constructed in opposition to the few who benefited from the economic reforms put in place by the Junta under Martínez de Hoz. I believe that this song can be read as a subversion of the Junta’s nation-as-body metaphor because Gieco is pointing out that not all Argentines benefited from the Junta’s economic reforms. If the poor are indeed part of the Argentine national body, then there should be benefits to national economic programs for them as well. If the poor do not have an equal share in the benefits of economic policy, then there are two possible implications, in my reading. First, either the Junta does not concern itself with the entire national body, as it claims to, or the Junta has created a national body that excludes many Argentines. In either case, their rhetoric is false.

As the Junta’s propaganda praised capitalism as an ideal economic system, many Argentines struggled to make ends meet. Members of the oligarchic upper classes who could afford to frequently traveled and spent large amounts of money easily, but the era of “sweet money” left behind the majority of Argentines (Feitlowitz 154). Worse, union activity was considered subversive, thus hamstringing those workers who, under other conditions, would have worked to change such things as hours, working conditions and pay rates to the benefit of employees. Gieco expanded on the Junta’s definition of participants in capitalism as businessmen to include working women and those not benefiting from government economic reforms and control. By doing so, he rejects the limitation of legitimacy to the wealthy. “We” becomes the struggling majority, and “they” are those who benefit from “our” struggles. At the same time, the decision to see the poor includes even those who are not poor in the construction of “us,” even if that decision was previously resisted. Lastly, in my
interpretation, Gieco challenges the metaphor of the nation-as-family in “Señora de los llanos” by rejecting the idea that the Junta is a reliable, fatherly provider by pointing out that it does not provide for all. It is interesting to note here as well Gieco’s restatement of the general thrust of the ideas behind liberation theology.

The song itself is slow in places and faster in others, but the general tone is sad. The faster music coincides with the lyrics about birds carrying away flowers in their beaks, and because of this, the song emphasizes the speed at which the poor move toward despair. That despair is then reflected in the reduced pace of the music. During the verses, the music is as loud as or louder than the lyrics. My interpretation of the difference in volume during the verses is that Gieco is constructing “us the poor” as positioned under everything else. Because it takes paying attention to focus on the lyrics of the verses, and even just to hear them in some places, “we” are also constructed as those who decide to see the poor. Thus this song constructs multiple “us-es.”

In, “La mamá de Jimmy,” there is a repetition of some of the same theme. “Jimmy’s mom is an English woman who criticizes this land...But she doesn’t realize that her sheep are in the south.” Here we see a foreign woman who criticizes Argentina at the same time she earns her livelihood from it. Again the theme of inequality is present as Jimmy’s mother criticizes the land – and by extension, the people who live in it – whose products and work pay for her material life. The implication is that Jimmy’s mother is separated from the workers in a way that permits her to feel superior to them, a situation that can be attributed to exploitation of the workers by

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160 “Jimmy’s mom.”
161 “La mamá de Jimmy es una inglesa que critica esta tierra...Pero no se da cuenta de que en el sur están sus ovejas.”
Jimmy’s mother. By featuring the separation between the workers and those who profit, Gieco again constructs an “us” who suffer at the hands of the economically thriving majority. He also seems to employ a challenging version of the metaphor of the nation-as-body, pointing out that it has been invaded by foreign investors. His usage is challenging because the Junta insisted that foreign invaders were subversive, where for Gieco they are exploitative. Furthermore, given the fact of Martínez de Hoz’s encouragement of foreign investment and imports, Gieco seems to imply that the Junta and the elite are feeding on the Argentine national body. As foreign investors “flock” like sheep throughout Argentina, they literally hurt the real bodies of Argentines who suffer long hours for little pay at their hands. By drawing attention to the fact of the suffering of many Argentines, Gieco also challenges the Junta’s metaphoric version of itself as a fatherly provider. Jimmy’s English mother can, in this reading be seen as a mistress whom the father-state maintains at the expense of the national family.

Gieco goes further in the last verse by saying, “A very fat man asked me one day / If I wasn’t embarrassed to be dressed like this / And I told him to make be quiet / All the worms in his belly.” Several items in this verse point again to a condemnation of the disparity between the classes. First, the man is fat, and his weight can be construed as a sign of gluttony. Gluttony, of course, implies greed for food and hoarding. The ability to be fat, moreover, implies access to food in large quantities as well as a sedentary lifestyle. Thus the fat man can be read as a symbol of laziness and greed in the classes who can afford it. Furthermore, his questioning of the narrator’s appearance, with its condemnation implied in the reference to embarrassment,

162 “Un señor muy gordo un día me preguntó: Si no me daba vergüenza estar así vestido / Y yo le respondí que hiciera callar / Todos los gusanos de su panza.”
suggests a position of power and of disrespect for others. It is a rude question, and rudeness can be afforded by those who cannot be reprimanded for it in some way. Thus the question itself can be read as coming from a person in a position of power and economic security. The narrator’s response that that fat man has worms in his belly is, in my interpretation, a clear sign of perceived corruption on the part of the fat man and, by extension, his class. By telling him to make his worms be quiet, the narrator defies the fat man’s rebuke and points out his corruption. Bearing in mind that the Junta’s economic policies provided advantages to the elite, the tie between the wealthy and the Junta is here implied. I read this as a challenge to the idea of the fatherly government. If the fat man can be seen as a symbol of the Junta, then this song can be read as a challenge not only to the idea that the Junta is working for the benefit of all as would a father, but also as a challenge to the Junta’s right to assume that role. Thus Gieco challenges the Junta’s metaphor of nation-as-family metaphor on several levels.

In “La mamá de Jimmy,” the construction of an “us” is again based on economic hierarchy. The narrator’s appearance signals his exclusion from the economic system. Because the business world expects short hair, suits and a clean-shaven appearance, rather than “long hair, a beard and glasses” (Clarín 2006 ctd. in Salermo 41), the dress of the singer rejects that world. Because dress is deliberate, the song constructs a “we” consisting of those who reject the business world and seek their living in other pursuits. “We” are those who work hard and do not act greedily. The reference to worms in the belly also can be read as a use of the metaphor of nation-as-body. If the most financially successful people in Argentina are worm-ridden and corrupt, then the Junta is not doing its job to protect the national body. This is, as I see it, also a challenge to the definition
of the national family because the Junta excludes certain people from that family. Ironically, the music itself is very upbeat and catchy. It seems to laugh at those who do not know that they are corrupt or that they are living off what they criticize.

“Sólo le pido a Dios” is a much more pensive song. Written in 1978 as Argentina and Chile nearly went to war over the Beagle Channel, “Sólo le pido a Dios” became Gieco’s best known work. Gieco himself was not impressed with it, and had decided not to record it at all until Charly García convinced him to do so. It appears on IV LP, released in August 1979. The magazine Pelo honored both the song and the album as best of the year in December (Marchini 192). “Sólo le pido a Dios” is Gieco’s biggest hit. The song, at its peak, “is heard almost to the point of surfeit in the most unsuspected environments” (Finkelstein 85). Partially, that surfeit was the result of an attempt at co-optation of the song by the Junta. During the Falklands War, the magazine Somos published a report of the Festival de Solidaridad Latinoamericana and included a picture of a soldier stationed at the front above the caption, “I only ask of God that I not be indifferent to war,” conveniently excluding the next line which contains Gieco’s comparison of war to a monster and passing the peace anthem off as nationalist and hawkish (Marchini 198). The government then declared it, “a song recommended to be broadcast, to the point that some broadcasters were led to understand that they must play it obligatorily” which “made Gieco feel used by the military regime” (Marchini 199-200). Despite the attempt of the military to appropriate the song, it stood and still stands as, “a call to form part of history, to get involved, to not be insensitive to the pain of

\[163\textbf{We Are.}\]
\[164\textbf{“Sólo le pido a Dios que la guerra no me sea indiferente.”}\]
others” (Russi 207). After having constructed an “us” based on economic problems, the construction of “us” is based on compassion and solidarity. It is a call for all Argentines to act as one. Such an inclusion again defies the Junta’s limitation of citizenship to a select few.

The stanzas performed at the Festival de Solidaridad Latinoamericana are quoted below (“06 León Gieco - Solo le pido a Dios” [sic]):

I only ask God that I not be indifferent to pain / That parched death does not find me empty and alone without having done enough // I only ask God that I not be indifferent to injustice / That they don’t strike my other cheek / After a claw scratched this luck on me // I only ask God that I not be indifferent to war / It is a big monster and it tramples the poor innocence of people / All I ask of God is that I am not indifferent to war / It is a big monster and it tramples the poor innocence of people.  

By asking God not to leave him indifferent to involvement and the pain of others, Gieco constructs a vision of national belonging that is different from that of the Junta. The Junta, through its actions regarding economics and human rights, has established an “us” that disregards the well-being of others. By contrast, the song establishes an “us”

165 “Un llamado a formar parte de la historia, a involucrarse, a no ser insensibles frente al dolor ajeno.”
166 “Sólo le pido a Dios que el dolor no me sea indiferente / Que la reseca muerte no me encuentre vacío y solo sin haber hecho lo suficiente // Sólo le pido a Dios que lo injusto no me sea indiferente / Que no me abofeteen la otra mejilla / Después de que una garra me arañó esta suerte // Sólo le pido a Dios que la guerra no me sea indiferente / Es un monstruo grande y pisa fuerte toda la pobre inocencia de la gente / Es un monstruo grande y pisa fuerte toda la pobre inocencia de la gente.”
based on compassion and solidarity. In this song, “we” are constructed as those who witness the suffering of others. Not personally affected by pain, war, and exile, “we” are the lucky ones, if only by comparison. That unaffected-ness is the defining factor of “us” in this case. As witnesses, however, “we” are affected and “we” have a choice about whether to intervene on behalf of others. The position of witness can serve as a wall that separates the witnesses from the suffering, but it can also serve as a motivation to address the suffering of others. “We,” in this song, are potentially powerful because “we” are not directly affected by the suffering going on around “us.” Its inclusion in the Festival de Solidaridad Latinoamericana, the audience response to its performance, and its ties to the pacifist movement (Vila, “Crónicas” 104) further construct this “us” by uniting those who actually participate in intervention on behalf of those who are suffering. “We” becomes stronger through action. It is my opinion that the two metaphors appear again in this construction. When “we” reach out to others in solidarity, “we” do in fact become one metaphorical national body. In this construction, however, the body is sick from the abuses of the government: a sort of autoimmune disease that must unite Argentines if the national body is to survive. Thus the exclusion of certain Argentines from the national body is rejected. I believe that the nation-as-family metaphor is challenged by these lyrics as well because, by calling for solidarity among all Argentines, Gieco usurps the “right” of the father-state to decide who belongs to the family.

The song itself as performed at the Festival de Solidaridad Latinoamericana became a unifying hymn for those opposed to the Falklands War. I use the term “hymn” because the music after the opening bars sounds less like a rock song and more like a
hymn, complete with the religious overtones that word implies. The music is a mite slow and free of the rock sounds of drums or electric instruments, making it sound folkloric and almost gentle. Combined with the lyrics, the religious overtones serve to construct an “us” who favor the peace and compassion of Christianity over other aspects. (Again, note Gieco’s nod to liberation theology’s basic premises.) The crowd sang loudly enough that they can be heard as a distinct voice in the film of the performance. Played by Gieco as a solo of only three stanzas instead of six, the crowd clapped in rhythm to the opening bars of music, creating a feeling of unity and “we-ness” that encouraged participation in the peace and/or support for the soldiers movement and not just the concert (Sólo le pido a dios” [sic]). Indeed, as mentioned already, many in attendance participated by donating comfort items for troops stationed in the Falklands, and the song became did in fact become tied to the pacifist movement from then on (Vila, “Crónicas” 104).

The emphasis on economic marginalization continues in “Canción de amor para Francisca.” Originally recorded in 1975 and censored, it appeared on IV LP (1979) on the condition that it not be played by mass media (Marchini 188, 191). It also contains a strong discourse of class whose expanded aspects include a discussion of the effects of poverty on the family.

In a house in the neighborhood of San Pedro / Francisca shows her whole body / They put money between her breasts / They drink black wine and some gin / She dresses in green, she dresses in pink / And she gets undressed very silently // On Mondays when Francisca isn’t working / With
Francisca is an apparently single mother who earns her living and provides for her daughter through stripping and prostitution. As a member of the lower class, she faces poverty and economic hardship, an aspect of her life that includes her in the marginalized of society. She further enters that group by being a sex worker, something that falls far outside the “Western and Christian” construction of a “good” woman. Gieco includes her in “us” by highlighting her struggles to survive and the extreme measures she has had to take to live and provide for her daughter. I believe that Gieco subverts the Junta’s claims that it is a provider for all Argentines by pointing out Francisca’s

167 “En una casa del barrio San Pedro / Francisca muestra todo su cuerpo / Ponen dinero entre sus senos / Toman vino negro y algunas ginebras / Viste de verde, viste de rosa / Y se desviste muy silenciosa // Los lunes que no trabaja Francisca / Con una canastita con flores y su hijita / Van a correr por el monte, los caminos y los campos / Ella dice que los besos, los gorrones y las flores / Los lunes tienen más perfumes // En una habitación del fondo de la casa / Los hombres pasan, los hombres pasan / Nadie le ofrece algún trabajo / Porque tienen miedo de quedarse sin ella / Piel de canela, ojos de pasto / Cabellos largos y aliento a trigoal // Los lunes que no trabaja Francisca / Con una canastita con flores y su hijita / Van a correr por el monte, los caminos y los campos / Ella dice que los besos, los gorrones y las flores / Los lunes tienen más perfumes.”
economic struggles in this song. Moreover, Francisca’s agency and independence – she, after all, does manage to make a way for herself in the world – challenge the father-state’s right to control private aspects of life and its implicit claims of exclusive ownership of agency and independence. I can also see a contestation of the nation-as-body metaphor here because the national body was portrayed as pure until it became corrupted by subversion. For the “Western and Christian” construction of “woman,” the term “pure” implies virginal. Francisca is clearly not virginal, and is therefore, impure, but her impurity is caused by an economy that leaves her with no other options for earning an “honest” living. Thus the song portrays the Junta as the ultimate source of national impurity.

In spite of Francisca’s extreme measures to secure a living, Gieco also manages to include her in an “us” based on family. She and her daughter go on excursions together and the joy of those excursions causes her Mondays to be sweeter than the rest of her life. Love of family as a source of joy is a universal ideal, and the song manages to include all families in “us.” This directly opposes the Junta’s construction of the heteronormative family that consists of an employed father and a stay-at-home mother. Francisca is portrayed as a good mother, in spite of being a sex worker, because she loves her daughter, enjoys her time with her and takes her on sweet excursions away from the city. It is worth noting especially that these excursions are away from the city, including the country and, by extension, those in it, in what is good and sweet in Argentina. (“Pensar en nada”168 will return briefly to the idea of the city as dangerous.) Indeed, one might argue that she is an excellent mother because she is even willing to perform sex work to guarantee the well-being of her daughter, a task that

168 “Think of nothing.”
would require extreme amounts of dedication to motherhood and its value and to the child(ren) in question. There is likewise a reference to an abusive father in the persons of the men who refuse to lend aid to Francisca.

Overall, the song itself sounds different to match the two themes of the song. There is a key change from the verse to the chorus, as well as a directional change. The key change makes the music accompanying the chorus sound warmer and happier than the music that accompanies the verses. By directional change, I refer to a general tone in the verses and chorus. While both parts of the song contain peaks and dips internally, there is an overall progression to the notes in the verses and chorus. In the verses, the lyrics start on higher and louder notes and follow a general trend of becoming lower and quieter. In the chorus, the notes begin lower and quieter and end higher and louder.

The themes of family and class in a construction of “us” can be found again in the short but powerful song, “La Navidad de Luís.”

Here, Luís, tomorrow is Christmas / Take a sweetbread and a little wine / Since you cannot buy them / Here, Luís, take this to your house / And you will be able, together with your father / To celebrate Christmas / Don’t come to work tomorrow / For the town will be on holiday / And there won’t be sadness // Ma’am, thank you for what you are giving me / But I can’t take this / Because my life is not Christmastime / Ma’am, do you think that my poverty / Will come to an end by eating bread / On Christmas day? /

169 “Luís’s Christmas.”
My father will give me something better / He’ll tell me that Jesus is like me
/ And then, like that, I will be able to go on / Living, living.¹⁷⁰

The song itself is slow, with quieter music during the first verse. The pitch, volume and tempo of the music in both verses are strikingly unique to portray the voices of the lady and the child and the change between them. This technique creates two separate identifications. Slow, deliberate and soft music introduces the first “us,” represented by the employer. She is either a kind but ignorant person that seeks to help without really understanding the situation of people like Luís. Alternatively, she may be read as a cruel person whose act of kindness functions as a kind of cover for her exploitation of Luís. The subdued tone supports either reading, but the change in volume, pitch and instrumentation that mark the beginning of Luís reply sound triumphant and festive. The new tone inclines the listener to identify with Luís reply, and by extension, those who are struggling economically, but who struggle with and for their families.

Gieco transports the listener from the first to the second identity, and in so doing causes her/him to see the injustice carried in the socioeconomic order and normative religion. Christmas festivities, while breaking from quotidian routine, cease, becoming instead an occasion for pondering Luís’s own situation and directing his energies to defiance of the system. Here we see another nod to liberation theology’s praxis-based approach. Furthermore, the comparison of Luís to Jesus paints him (now “us”) as

¹⁷⁰ “Toma Luís, mañana es Navidad / Un pan dulce y un poco de vino / Ya que no puedes comprar / Toma Luís, llévalo a tu casa / Y podrás junto con tu padre / La Navidad festejar / Mañana no vengas a trabajar / Que el pueblo estará de fiesta / Y no habrá tristezas // Señora, gracias por lo que me da / Pero yo no puedo esto llevar / Porque mi vida no es de Navidad / Señora, cree que mi pobreza / Llegará al final comiendo pan / En el día de Navidad / Mi padre me dará algo mejor / Me dirá que Jesús es como yo / Y entonces así podré seguir / Viviendo, viviendo.”
morally superior to the woman, exposing either her ignorance or her mean-spirited participation in oppression. It helps to construct the “us” in a way that appeals to a now morally justified majority. The fact that the interaction between the employer and Luís centers on bread and wine (the same items consumed during the Last Supper) provides an additional usage of religious symbolism. Luís-Jesus’ rejection of the offering of bread and wine from a business owner is a strong condemnation of the extant socioeconomic order and, by extension, the military regime, on religious grounds. In Gieco’s construction of Christmas, faith cannot be separated from the reparation of socioeconomic inequalities: from praxis, in other words. Given the insistence in official discourse on “Western and Christian” values, articulated to include capitalism, this condemnation extends to the military regime. Lastly, the fact that Luís finds his father reliable and comforting, as well as critical of the socioeconomic system can be juxtaposed to the paternalism presented in televised propaganda.

The theme of chosen blindness is introduced in “Pensar en nada.” Diana Taylor refers to, “the self-blinding of the general population” as “percepticide” (Taylor 123). “In order to qualify as ‘good’ Argentines, people were forced to focus on the given-to-be-seen and ignore the atrocities given-to-be-invisible, taking place around them” (Taylor 120). This chosen blindness is a variation on the idea of, “Silence is health,” a campaign slogan used to help combat noise pollution from traffic in Buenos Aires that later seemed representative of the idea that making no waves was the safest behavior when faced with the Junta’s violence (Feitlowitz 34).
How people think / Sometimes the difference / Is so great that they seem / To be beings from some other earth // And what do they tell me about that lonely house / That you see form a plane / Maybe in solitude there is no pain / From thinking of nothing // At the office / As New Year’s arrives / Everybody fights over / That damn promotion // With the quota of frustration / Some live it up / The city’s getting bigger / And ever more dangerous // And what do they tell me about that lonely house / That you see form a plane / Maybe in solitude there is no pain / From thinking of nothing.¹⁷¹

By stating that people seem different because of how they think, Gieco argues that it is the thought process of individuals that enables them to behave in certain ways – in this case, in selfish ways that benefit them while hurting others. Chosen blindness permits a person to be alone and think of nothing. The solitude resulting from not seeing others creates a barrier between people that makes empathy difficult, if not impossible. That is why being alone and thinking of nothing is pain free: empathy causes the suffering of others to hurt those who have that empathy. Not feeling the pain of others enables a person to be concerned only with their own situation, regardless of its impact on others, which permits a pain free existence. “We,” then, are those who suffer invisibility and

¹⁷¹ “De cómo piensa la gente / A veces la diferencia / Es tan grande que parecen / Seres de alguna otra tierra // Y qué me dicen de esa casa sola / Que se ve desde un avión / Quizá en la soledad no haya dolor / De pensar, en nada // En la oficina del trabajo / Llegando el Año Nuevo / Todos se pelean por / Ese maldito ascenso // Con la cuota de frustración / Algunos la viven de rosa / La ciudad se pone grande / Y cada vez más peligrosa // Y qué me dicen de esa casa sola / Que se ve desde un avión / Quizá en la soledad no haya dolor / De pensar en nada.”
invisibly while supporting the pain-free existence of others, while “they” are those who think of nothing.

Musically, the song sounds generally upbeat, with a driving rhythm and electric instruments. Coinciding with the lyrics about the house and thinking, there is a change to a slower music and an increased emphasis on vocals, as though gentleness is required when talking about homes and their implied residents, i.e., the families who dwell in them. It is important to be clear, however, that the gentle sounding performance ends at the word, “to think” and does not continue to “of nothing.” The original driving rhythm returns with the words “of nothing.” In this song, Gieco constructs a “we” that feels tenderness toward those suffering from poverty and a “they” that is upbeat and benefiting from their economic position and the chosen blindness that permits it to continue.

Chosen blindness is an especially apt metaphor for the events surrounding the World Cup. During the Cup, there were prepared publicity campaigns designed to enhance Argentina’s image internationally, including the campaign during which, “the military urged and coerced women (many of them government workers) to wear signs” sporting the slogan “We Argentines are right and human” superimposed on the Argentine flag (Taylor 78). Feitlowitz describes the experience of chosen blindness in this way:

\[I \text{ WAS THERE; I SAW IT; I couldn't have known a thing.}\] To my surprise, this paradox emerged as a significant pattern in my interviews...Who intrigued me were those who simultaneously saw and didn’t see;
understood and didn’t know...I am not referring to ardent supporters of the generals. But, rather, to individuals with no taste for politics, who simply wanted to raise their children and live their lives. More is at play here than denial. (Feitlowitz 151, original format)

Chosen blindness affected the country, but, according to “Esos ojos negros” (written and recorded during the first few months of 1984, after the transition to democracy) did not effect the government. Rather, the state sees but does not correctly interpret what its eyes reveal. This selective interpretation of “Esos ojos negros” is a specific reference to Videla because of his habit of wearing black sunglasses while attending the World Cup (Santaolla ctd. in Gieco, Ushuaia 25).

Those black eyes that saw / the little bit of hope of the country / Also took advantage of faith / And the will to live // Those black eyes that watched / how the World Cup was won / Were weaving onto their retinas / A forbidden story / What a shame that people are not wise enough / To only look into each other’s eyes to know the truth / And take away popular support / If nothing else can be done / The people take some time to open the door / but when they do they lock you in.  

172 “Esos ojos negros que miraban la poca esperanza del país / también se aprovecharon de la fe y la voluntad de vivir / Esos ojos negros que miraban cómo se ganaba en el Mundial / estaban tejiendo en su retina una historia prohibida // Qué lástima que la gente no es tan sabia de mirar sólo a los ojos para la verdad saber / y quitar respaldo popular si otra cosa no se puede hacer // Tarda un tiempo el pueblo para abrir su puerta / pero cuando la abre pone llave y te encierra.”
Thus Videla, who saw, “the little bit of hope of the country / Also took advantage of faith” during the games. Taking advantage, to my ears, sounds underhanded and implies that both the misinterpretation of sight and the taking advantage were part of the same plan. That Videla took advantage of “faith,” specifically, can be read two ways. First, it can be interpreted as the “faith” of the country in its government. While it cannot be assumed that all Argentines had faith in their government, the Junta did have supporters and a massive propaganda campaign on its side, so “faith” in the government on the part of at least some did exist. Alternatively, it can be taken in a religious sense. The Junta’s version of “Western and Christian” values has already been rejected by Gieco as he hints at the tenets behind liberation theology, but the cultural presence of Catholicism cannot be denied. Thus the Junta can take advantage of the Catholic faith to advance its own ends, as Gieco here implies that they did.

The emotional tone of the song is angry. The lyrics are sung quickly, almost to the point of unintelligibility in some places, with an abrupt outro that ends the song almost immediately after the final lines. It gives an impression of someone walking away in disgust and no longer wanting to speak. Gieco’s “us” in this song are those who have faith, little hope, and the will to live. It includes all Argentines who wanted to enjoy the Cup. “Them” is the Junta in the person of Videla, those who participate in the “forbidden story” of the government. The underlying strings and tambourine create an impression of tension that runs throughout the song. The “we” it constructs is tense, angry, and disgusted with the chosen misinterpretation that supported the Junta.

The album *De Ushuaia a La Quiaca I* opens with “Esos ojos negros” and closes with, “Yo vendo unos ojos negros.” It is the only song I included in my study whose
lyrics were not written by Gieco himself. It is a traditional song whose selection for and placement on *De Ushuaia a La Quiaca I* seems deliberate and declarative because Gieco seems to imply that sight, as well as blindness, can be chosen.

I am selling some black eyes / Who wants to buy them from me? / I am selling them because they are captivating / Because they have paid me badly / Traitorous black eyes / Why do you look at me like that? / So happy for others / And so sad for me.¹⁷³

While black eyes were a stand-in for Videla in Gieco’s song, “Vendo unos ojos negros” is a traditional song whose lyrics cannot automatically be assumed to refer to Videla. Instead, I believe Gieco incorporates this song to contrast the angry, stern tone of “Esos Ojos Negros” with a fast-paced, happier sounding song to mark the close of the dictatorship and its deceit and violence. Performatively, the folk-genre (as well as the entire *De Ushuaia a La Quiaca* tour, with its collaboration with musicians form all over the country) is one that includes all Argentines and offers a final contestation to the divisive discourse of the Junta.

### Conclusion

As the Junta government was born of and in response to situations that predated it, so was rock nacional. A music and a movement which grew out of foreign and domestic influences, it needed to identify itself through the construction of an “us,” a

¹⁷³ “Yo vendo unos ojos negros / quién me los quiere comprar / Los vendo por hechiceros porque me han pagado mal / Ojos negros traicioneros por qué me miran así / Tan alegres para otros y tan tristes para mí.”
process which predates the military government. For Gieco, that process began in 1972 with “Hombres de hierro” and continued throughout the military government. For Gieco, “we” passed through various stages of specificity. Beginning with an individualized appeal to any youth who opposed the state, Gieco proceeded to identify the traits with which he aligned himself. He always returned to the marginalized as the basis for his construction of “us” while also including universal aspects of the human condition in the form of family and dominant cultural aspects in the form of religion. Eventually his return to the marginalized became literal in the De Ushuaia a La Quiaca tour. “We,” for Gieco, progressed from specifically positioned members of Argentine society to Argentine society in general.

In spite of the growing numbers of people for whom Gieco constructed a viable “us,” the overarching tone of his music is emotional in nature and based on compassion in his lyrics. Gieco’s version of “us” turned on a constant axis of respect for fellow Argentines in their person and in their social positions. When seen in this light, Gieco’s ongoing concern for the treatment of others in his construction of “us” becomes the most salient attribute of “us.” “We” are not only the marginalized, but also those who object to that marginalization on behalf of any and all who experience it. By including all Argentines in his “us,” Gieco rejected the father-government’s right to dictate who constituted Argentina. He also used the body metaphor to point out that the national body is a single unit, and that when one part of the body is affected, the whole body feels it. Repression, not subversion, was the sickness. In doing so, he suggested that the Argentine body was capable of taking care of itself without an imposed sterilization
process. In this way, Gieco survived the authoritarian backlash of the Junta and evolved into “the owner of the social conscience” (Polimeni 105), a musician who speaks to and for the population in general.
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175 In this thesis, I refer to this clip as “Dollar/Costs.”

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