

On the Peruvian Reality of a Punk Mode of Underproduction

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****NOTE: This is still – VERY MUCH – a work in progress (and also the first of seven essays in a book project). That means, in effect, the writing here is not as polished as I'd like. And I'm missing a section toward the end (specifically on the ambiguity between "underground" production of punk music/art/fanzines and "underground" subversive political propaganda in the context of Peru's war) as well as a concluding thought. But since I'm familiar with the Chicago workshop model, I also know that it's a great space to talk about ideas/works in progress and that's what I'd love to do.**

The Material Semiotics of Underproduction

I begin this first of seven essays from an unlikely starting point: the 2008 US financial crisis that sparked a massive downturn in the global economy. In fact, I watched these events unfold from Lima just as I began to get interested in the complex history of underground punk, revolutionary ideology, and political violence in Peru. To be more precise, I start with David Harvey's (2010) take on the crisis. He asks us to look beyond the short-term explanations that economists love to give to big issues. Crises can and do of course emerge from different sectors of the global economy, reflecting the specific contours of a particular place and time. The most recent was the direct result of the flagrant risk-taking rampant in the elite financial sector. Yet, Harvey's main point is to suggest we revisit Marx and recognize that what Marxism allows us to

do is identify deeper and longer term systemic dynamics rather than simply the immediate symptomatic dimensions of a particular crisis moment. This also entails focusing out to identify some of Marx's broadest points rather than obsessing over some of the more technical analyses and specific examples he gave. After all, Marx starts his 19th century critique of *Capital* by taking apart commodities like wool, corn, and iron! How outdated does that sound amid an early 21st century economy of transnational immigrant labor, I-gadgets, and federal insurance bailouts?

Amid capitalism's many contextual twists and historical turns, Harvey reminds us that one of Marx's most insightful ideas has to do with capital's systemic refusal of limits. "The circulation and accumulation of capital cannot abide limits. When it encounters limits it works assiduously to convert them into barriers that can be transcended or by-passed" (Harvey 2010, ASA meetings keynote). The tendency toward infinite self-expansion is thus less historical than it is histrionic, not so situated and contextual as systemic and cyclical. It constitutes an inherent contradiction that capitalist societies repeat amid all the fine details of the way that contradiction manifests in contextualized historical situations.

By focusing attention on capital's infinitely self-expanding logic, I want to return to another of Marx's most critical and related concepts: the idea of over-production. My proposal is to broaden rather than focus on its more narrow and technical interpretations (of which there are many in the tradition of Marxist political economy).¹ Instead, we might think of over-production in a more universal light, as a way to think about capitalist society as "a social formation in which the process of *production* has mastery *over* man, instead of the opposite." (Marx, 1867:100; my emphasis). In short, the idea is that capitalist modes of production are forms of social organization that systematically value expanding *productivity* (of capital, of

commodities, of consumptive possibilities) *over* the conscious realization that it is human creativity that makes production (or consumption) possible in the first place.

The problem is much larger than the fact that qualitative creative labor is quantified and alienated into an abstract form *ad infinitum* in capitalist societies. Marx's broader point is that there is a constant push towards a hypothetically limitless mode of production - production for its own sake. Indeed, one merely need pause and reflect on myriad ways in which "being productive" is valued *over* "being creative" within capitalist societies. This irrational, systemic drive to over-produce is not only present in the sphere of commodity production. It is present in every sector of capitalist economies: in the constant search for greater profits; the desire to produce endless consumptive "choices"; the use of growth indicators (everything from corporate "bottom lines" to GNP and stock levels) as the means to measure the "health" of any particular economy, etc. The implication here is *not* necessarily that there is some sort of structural limit to human creativity per se in capitalist societies (in fact, capitalism unleashes unprecedented new levels of creativity in Marx's understanding). Rather, the point is that this drive toward endless productivity - being productive for its own sake - is deeply fetishized. Hence, the system we inhabit disallows for a conscious realization, and thus a full social (as opposed to "economized") valuation - of human creativity.

Even while there are class-specific forms of alienation that are central to capitalist relations - primarily the working class via the alienation of labor and thus the indirect relation that direct producers have to the commodities they create - there is always a broader systemic and deeply symbolic form of alienation shared by everyone. The most important one that Marx identified was the fetishism of commodities. It is in fact from the section on fetishism in Capital that I take the above quote about production having the mastery over man. *This is not an*

accident on my part. This is precisely the place where Marx – too much of a material determinist we are told – goes quite *queer* and suddenly *semiotic* on us. “A commodity appears, at first sight, a very trivial thing, and easily understood. Its analysis shows that it is, in reality, a very queer thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties” (Marx, ???). He implies directly that emergent capitalist society brings with it a new kind of theological doctrine – let’s call it liberal political and economic philosophy for short - replete with divine entities (e.g. “the invisible hand”) and even pagan-like belief systems in unexplainably powerful supernatural entities (e.g. “market forces”).² By exploring this broader, deeply fetishized, idea of over-production then I am not simply defending the idea that materiality really does matter. I am eager to explore some materially interpretative possibilities, approach material forms as abounding in semiotic subtleties, confess and then profess that material *things* really are a little bit queer.

My next concern is how to tie this broad Marxian understanding of over-production to the particular modes of musical and artistic production through which punks tend to creatively express themselves. Luckily, there is a secondary meaning to the term “over-production” on which we might draw. Following a more explicitly economic one, the second definition of “over-produce” in the Oxford English Dictionary is to “record or produce (a song or film) in such an elaborate way that the spontaneity or artistry of the original material is lost” (OED Online:). Again, one might start by recognizing this as having more technical dimensions and then work to broaden the concept. Over-produce is often used to refer to specific kinds of technical interventions that occur in the studio (e.g. in the case of music pitch and error correction, endless overdubs, editing out errors, excess adornment or special effects etc.).

Yet, let's pause and take the latter part of the OED definition seriously, considering the possibility that over-production in this aesthetic sense refers to something much more complex. What we might summarize as aesthetic commodities (i.e. musical pieces, visual and plastic arts, film and media, etc.), when subjected to too much "elaboration" result in a product whose aesthetics hide the original grit and grime, spontaneity and humility, associated with their production. Representing an intention toward perfect planning and masterful execution, over-produced art forms take on qualities of the unreal and the unachievable. They represent themselves as part of an aesthetic metaphysics of artistic virtuosity or impossible to reproduce technical sophistication. There is more involved here than the implied denial of artistic errors. There is also an active devaluation – an alienation from - the rawness, the spontaneity, the fleshiness, even the total mediocrity, of human creativity. All things that are historically denied in the canonical notions of what counts as "art" or "music" or "film" in the first place.

In short, unlike perhaps more explicitly "functional" commodities (say, the latest Oral B toothbrush), over-produced aesthetic commodities are fetishized in highly particular ways, especially since the nature of aesthetic commodities is, after all, to buy, sell, and exchange "creativity" overtly. The everyday human creator can't even fully conceive of how an overproduced aesthetic commodities was made, much less aspire to "create" something similar. They are thus left with little choice but to become enchanted by their creative "magic," perhaps even "actively" consuming them, as Miller (1998) might suggest, to actively "produce" a social identity around the consumptive habits, choices, and possibilities the particular commodities signify.

I want to expand on this notion of aesthetic over-production a bit further however. We might consider the likelihood that there is an indirect relation between aesthetic over-production

and degree of intimacy between producer and consumer (e.g. large stadium show versus small club venue; blockbuster movie versus independent documentary; glossy magazine versus DIY fanzine). This usually implies greater involvement of various kinds of third parties. The more aesthetic “experts” involved (e.g. editors, producers, managers, directors, industry executives, studio engineers, sound guys etc.) the more likely one is prone to end up with an over-produced aesthetic commodity. The logic continues as part of a complex and relative continuum rather than a simple or fixed contrast: big to low budget conditions of production; large corporate management to more independent, or DIY, forms of distribution; the fetish of virtuous artistic perfection to rawer, more immediate creative output.

In short, one might think of this relation of over to under production by revisiting Simon Frith’s (1981) sociological history of rock-n-roll. For example, the contrasts in rock from commercial to independent, or mainstream rock to underground punk, are not based on *absolute* but *relative* differences. Indeed, many of the main sentiments of rebellious freedom, individualism, emotive authenticity, and leisure are shared by most rock genres. So too are many of the basic musical structures (4/4 time; riff driven, etc.), forms of instrumentation (guitar, bass, drums, singer), and conditions, if not necessarily “quality” or scales, of production-circulation-consumption. Again, it’s a matter of relative degree rather than absolute difference. The relation of rock to punk and mainstream to underground – like that of over to under production - is built on an evolving series of relational inter-dependencies and interpretative maneuvers. They are in effect always locked in an on-going conversation with one another, defining and being defined against one another. Thus, according to Frith, one of punk’s primary missions has been to ask a central question of rock: “What is the *risk* of this music?” (1981:??). To this provocative framing, I suggest that punk also answers the question, albeit in different ways at different

contextual moments, with the following: The risk is giving in to the drive toward over-production instead of pushing back with a mode of under-production.

We might see in this analysis both an inspiration from and a corrective to Benjamin's (????) famous analysis of the work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction. Like the other Frankfurt school theorists, Benjamin was preoccupied with the apparently dwindling fate of the artistic aura amid the emergence of mass culture. Unlike Adorno's denouncement of mass culture as an emergent form of mass deception, Benjamin saw something politically useful in the proliferation of the means of mechanical reproduction. Massification also allows the masses to possess the basic tools to appropriate art as politics, rather than revel in its ritualistic magic. The needed corrective here is the following. Aesthetic over-production also relies fundamentally on the mechanical means of reproduction, since it clearly targets a mass market of aesthetic commodity consumers. Yet, it does so in ways that are largely inaccessible, indeed almost inconceivable, from the everyday aesthetic consumer's point of view. The fetishistic and metaphysical aura of art, traditionally associated with ritual and religion, does not simply fade away amid the proliferation of mass culture as Benjamin suggests. Instead, it gets repackaged in highly commercialized, high-tech, special-effect form as over-produced aesthetic commodities that we, as average human creators, can only aspire to consume rather than create for ourselves. In short, few people can actually imagine that they could produce a Spielberg movie or Pink Floyd's "The Wall" (to give just a couple of examples). And certainly nobody thinks they can do so in a garage or a single jam session.³ One of punk's central challenges then has been to suggest other alternatives, that one can produce meaningful, indeed creative things by appropriating the mechanical means of reproduction and being content with a mode of aesthetic under-production.

To the representation of music and art as overly conceptual or highly cultured, punk asks for a return to rawness, profaneness, and the spontaneity of the creative act. To the emergence of a highly corporate and managerially controlled atmosphere of artistic production, punk presents a material DIY alternative in do-it-yourself activities. Form your own band. Record in your own garage. Release your own recordings. Start your own label and release your friends' recordings. Establish your own social network by creating and distributing your own fanzines and flyers. Organize your own shows, in your basement, at a party, or whatever local venue proves willing to embrace your under-produced creativity. In short, the identification of punk with an underground is not an inherent one or a fixed one. Rather, the identification depends on an evolving tension, open to interpretation, between the underground and the mainstream; an opposition between appropriated means of under-production and overall trends of over-production, a contrast between subcultural spaces and dominant cultural dynamics.

As a result, the question of punk semiotics is also not a matter of set values or fixed meanings. There is no single punk vocabulary or repertoire of punk gestures that one needs to learn. At stake is the relative contextual opposition implied in underness – hence the “sub” in subculture – and thus the intent to disrupt mainstream cultural discourse, signs, symbols, and values. The relation of the “under” depends necessarily on the “over” - at any given moment and in any given context. For example, to the appearance of all that is held sacred in modern capitalism's pursuit of progress, punk continually calls attention to modernity as a dissent into a dystopian “no future” degeneration. To the emergence of virtuous aesthetic forms (in music, art, etc.) punk represents the practical possibility of a music that almost anyone can play, collages that anyone can try to put together: poor quality by creative design. To the emergence of smoother, cleaner styles of modern dress and appearance punk offers what Bakhtin describes as

the grotesque body, in the guise of the pierced, tattooed, thrift-store outfit of the urban primitive. In short, the risk that punk presents is an assertive form of raw, creative simplicity.

The symbolism of punk's underness then is always dialogically emerging, trying without necessarily succeeding to find a way to symbolically disrupt, semiotically irrupt, provocatively interrupt normative discourse. One can think of it in the terms Warner (????) proposes for the relation of modern publics and counterpublics, inspired of course in significant part on Bakhtin's dialogism. Warner's idea is of continually emergent spaces of circulating discourse that operate on the basis of voluntary association with strangers, in effect a kind of social experience and discursive construction that is less fixed than other social categories allow (race, class, nation, gender, etc.). For my purposes, he identifies the relation of publics to counterpublics as one of constant friction. "The discourse that constitutes it [i.e. a counterpublic] is not merely a different or alternative idiom, but one that in other contexts would be regarded with hostility or a sense of indecorousness" (Warner, 2002: 82). A counterpublic is irruptive, meaning its entrance into the public is perceived as hostile, irrational, not neutral, unwelcome. It is also transformatively disruptive, meaning its emergence reveals the prescriptions of normativity and thus privilege that underlies any particular public. Counterpublic discourse refuses to express itself "correctly," meaning in the enlightened, rational, and sensical terms assumed to define public discourse. A bit like Bartleby, counterpublic expressiveness simply prefers not to. As a result the real measure of a counterpublic is its awareness of its own marginality and the sense of risk it poses to the normative discursive stance constituted by a public. Punk counterpublics have long been involved in this by posing one central question again and again: How might we symbolically undercut something the public values and force it to take offense this time around?

Punk under-production in this sense of a public under-cutting relies heavily then on counterpublic acts of symbolic appropriation. Punks engage in an undertaking to symbolically undercut icons, symbols, and discursive bits that the public takes too seriously. To subvert, to invert, to pervert: these are punk's semiotic intentions. Even the presumably most punkish of symbols, say the Mohawk, the garage band, or the fanzine collage, always contain other referents: indigenous tribalism, a popular digital recording software released by the Apple corporation, modern art techniques developed in the early twentieth century. Nothing is inherently part of punk discourse, nor necessarily constitutive of an underground aesthetic. As Warner suggests it depends largely on the "uptake" – on how a particular symbol here or bit of discourse there is appropriated and then its meanings undercut in a particular moment, in a given text, in a specific performance.

In the end, this all means a couple of important things. First, punk is less a resistant "subculture" in the overly bounded sense than it is a daily struggle. That struggle is to rediscover a means of semiotic and a mode of material under-production. Hence, punk's internalized self-critique, its cycles of death and resurrection. Punk dies; then declares itself not dead; then finds new ways to go on living. It does this because particular punks constantly seek new ways to disrupt a public that has grown stale with its own normative assumptions or already accommodated past punk disruptions.

Second, and finally on this first matter of material semiotics, I think punk less as a subcultural style than as a mode of under-production. By now, the careful reader will have raised an objection that I have been studiously avoiding any mention of all that's already been written, published, and thought about punk, in particular under the rubric of youth subcultures and the question of style, long associated with the emergence of Birmingham Cultural Studies. I

have much more direct things to say about such matters elsewhere (see Chapter 2). For now, I would suggest that reader take note that my choice of mode as a means to talk about punk under-production is an indirect signaling of my intervention into precisely that Cultural Studies tradition. This is a self-conscious attempt to return to a “classic” Marxian formulation while exploring other modalities of insight into punk’s materially semiotic matters. In the end, or as part of this particular beginning, the Oxford English Dictionary also allows us to think of a mode as both “a way or manner in which something occurs, is expressed, or is done” and “a fashion or style in clothes, art, literature etc.” If I choose then to think in terms of a punk mode of under-production I do it in a bid to produce things my way rather than to reproduce them, a bit too mechanically, via the over-produced style of others.

On the three propositions of Peruvian Reality

José Carlos Mariátegui, one of the great leftist thinkers of the twentieth century, left us with many ideas. There is one in particular for which he is probably most well known. When left in the abstract or allowed to become too dogmatic – tantamount to the same thing – Marxist theory loses both all sight of context and its essentially creative spirit. Marx’s critique of capital, his concern with labor and value, and his understanding of the role of class formation in world history are most useful when we apply it to particular problems analyzed from the standpoint of a concrete set of historical and social circumstances. Rather than some sort of symptom of a strict adherence to a national context, or a nationalist philosophy, this was what Mariátegui had in mind when he persistently made reference to *la realidad peruana*.

Peruvian reality was simultaneously a theoretical standpoint, a creative impulse, and an affective stance. He had a feeling that at the moment he was involved in the creative act of writing, lecturing, and organizing, Peruvian society was going through extraordinary, indeed potentially revolutionary, times. This is evident from the Introduction to the first issue of *Amauta*, the interdisciplinary journal he launched in 1926 where many of his most notable essays first appeared. “For quite a while in Peru one feels a trend of renewal, everyday more vigorous and defined.” A few paragraphs later he clarifies *Amauta*’s mission:

The objective of this journal is to formulate, to know, and to clarify Peruvian problems from scientific and doctrinarian points of view. But we will consider Peru always from within the world’s panorama. We will study all the great political, philosophical, artistic, literary, and scientific movements of renewal. Everything human is ours. This journal will link the new men of Peru first with the other peoples of America and then with other peoples of the world.

Mariátegui’s point then was to learn something about the creativity of being human by taking account of the reality of living life in the given context and moment that was Peru in the 1920s.

My appropriation of mariateguismo (a term used to refer to his way of thinking) departs from this basic premise. I search for a creative means to contextualize this otherwise abstractly Marxist theorization of punk’s mode of under-production. I do so by inflecting it with a feeling I have about Peruvian reality, the feeling that there is another moment in Peruvian history no less, and probably more, extraordinary than the one Mariátegui lived through. The historical moment I refer to spans roughly 1980 to the mid 1990s when Peru was in the thick of a war between an ostensibly democratic state and two militant subversive organizations that proposed a communist

revolution as the solution to Peru's social problems. It was during this period that three different presidents – Fernando Belaunde Terry (1980-1985), Alan García (1985-1990); Alberto Fujimori (1990-2001) – sought to “defend” Peru's fragile return to a democratic system after the 1970s military dictatorship and reform period. The Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA), infinitely more marginal in the war, relied mostly on Cuban-inspired guerrilla tactics. The organization that proved to be the real contender for state power, and to evolve towards a highly fundamentalist form of violent Maoism, was of course the Peruvian Communist Party (PCP), commonly known as Sendero Luminoso (“Shining Path”). Sendero was not only moved by Maoism but also deeply involved in an appropriation of mariateguismo, violently working out a feeling and an analysis of Peruvian reality. That symbolism is made most obvious by the very appropriation of Mariátegui's reference to Marxism as a “shining path towards the future” from which the political nickname derives.

I propose to develop this affective and analytical stance by proceeding directly to three central propositions about Peruvian reality. The first proposition is that there is something really Peruvian about punk's mode of under-production. The second proposition is that there is something really punk about José Carlos Mariátegui. The third proposition is that propositions one and two only fully make sense when we realize that their condition of possibility emerges in the context of something called “*rock subterráneo*” (underground rock) born amid Peru's tumultuous 1980s political violence. This is to say amid this most extraordinary moment in Peruvian history.

Proposition one – **PUNK IS REALLY PERUVIAN** – is not as novel as it might sound to those who think punk is mostly, perhaps even essentially, a British-American phenomenon. As of May 27th 2008 there is a commemorative plaque on a busy street corner in the Lima

neighborhood of Lince that reads, “In this place the world’s punk rock movement was born.” The plaque, funded by Lince’s local municipal government, honors a rock band called Los Saicos that existed from 1964 to 1966 and whose members grew up in Lince. At the global level the claim that punk originates in Peru reflects an increasingly transnational circulation of Los Saicos’ music following the 2002 rerelease of their 1965 singles in Spain. In addition to a 2011 documentary film and a few reunion shows with the remaining members, this re-edition of Los Saicos’ singles led to a global debate about what they represent. It is not just Lince’s municipal authorities then but multiple press articles, punk encyclopedias, and punk blog posts all over the globe that declare them the first punk band in the world (see ?????).

Needless to say, this is a highly disputed title for which other 1960s bands are routinely in contention, at least since histories of punk now include the “proto-punk” period in their temporal horizon. This entails a double displacement. Not only does it take the title away from bands like The Sex Pistols or The Ramones that were actually operative in the mid 1970s context when the label punk began to circulate. It also steals the prize from proto-punkers like The Stooges, a band that came after Los Saicos, or MC5 or The Sonics, essentially their mid 60s contemporaries. The debate centers fundamentally on the musical aesthetic that emerges in classic Saicos’ singles like “*Demolición*” (Demolition) and “*Salvaje*” (Savage). Primitive instrumentation, amateurish song construction, aggressive lyrical content, and Erwin Flores’ shouted vocal style places them squarely in what is often termed 1960s garage rock but also considered the direct precursor to what punk would then become in the mid 1970s.

Enticing things happen when one takes apart what’s behind the global trend to take away the first punk title from bands in the US-UK rock nexus and relocate it to Peru. In 2010 a Spanish news outlet published one of the many declarations of Peru’s global punk victory with

the headline, “Peru, the cradle of punk.” Multiple punk “authorities” from the US and the UK offered opinions. Don Letts, Iggy Pop, and Lux Interior reportedly concluded Los Saicos were “definitely a punk band,” “true pioneers,” and, even less hesitantly, “the best band in the world.”⁴ This, they said, while acknowledging they had only heard of Los Saicos recently, and decades after each of them has already benefitted from the globally visible punk pioneer status that being part of the Anglo US-UK rock nexus affords them. Meanwhile, in the very same article Erwin Flores, the vocalist of Los Saicos who has lived in the US for decades, evoked a much more skeptical tone, “Sincerely, we never related our stuff with the punk that came later. In 1977 I was playing salsa.” Also, we should not overlook the first line of the article which, translated from the Spanish, reads, “Punk rock was not born English-speaking....”

The problem goes beyond the anachronisms – i.e. moving punk’s origin points around in time from the retro-perspective of a backward-looking moment. However, the anachronistic thinking does point to the inherent ambiguities between history (Los Saicos really did exist in the mid 60s), myth (being an early punk is the stuff of legends), and ideology (being the “first” punk is major bragging rights). Quite explicit in this discussion of Los Saicos is the globe’s musical geopolitics. Language and genre – along with how they are presumed to relate – are crucial here. Singing rock *not* in English is about as natural as singing salsa *not en español* from the perspective of such musical geopolitics. Singing rock in Spanish has been a long-standing struggle, precisely since the time of Los Saicos, to undercut rock’s presumed natural belonging to an Anglo mode of musical or artistic expression. In other words, whatever other elements of punk might be involved in the musical style of Los Saicos, the mere fact that they composed garage rock mostly *en español* and from Peru involved them in a mode of expressive under-production. Who is to deny that geopolitically speaking virtually all the mainstream histories of

rock-n-roll start with this one basic assumption – that it is fundamentally an Anglo mode of musical expression, a product of the US-UK nexus?

If we consider music's global geopolitics in light of Peruvian reality, however, something even more complex occurs. We confront the fact that the idea of Los Saicos as the first punks has been around since the 1980s and never required the global punk commentary offered following the 2002 rerelease of their music *outside* Peru. In the Peruvian context, the idea emerges amid the 1980s rock scene in Lima that began calling its music “rock subteraneo” (underground rock) in the mid 1980s. That idea of an underground rock derives from a 1984 show flyer with the tag line “Rock Subteraneo Ataca Lima” (Underground Rock Attacks Lima) designed by Leo “Escoria,” the bassist of the rowdy rock band Leusemia. The idea of a youth phenomenon called rock subteraneo, and the subsequent idea that those belonging to it were “subtes” (unders), became the primary way to talk about punk's Peruvian reality in the Lima of the 1980s.

In a 1986 article in the weekly magazine *Oiga*, Roger Santivañez chronicles the emergence of Lima's underground rock movement. He locates its most immediate origins in 1978 when, “there existed in Lima a mini-group of rockers that demanded at concerts that people sing in Spanish. Among them: Daniel F...who knew the history and music of the most famous English punk group, Sex Pistols.” This is an explicit recognition of the fact that rock in Latin America has long struggled with the question of language – with a notably very long trend of bands composing originals or playing covers in English while others demand to “domesticate” it by composing in Spanish.

Santivañez goes on to detail what he identifies as the milestone moments in Lima's underground rock history: the formation of bands like Kola Rock and Leusemia (with Daniel F at the head) in the early 80s; the release of a demo cassette titled "Primera Dosis" (First Dosage) by the band Narcosis in early 1985; the emergence of other bands like Zcueta Cerrada, Autopsia, and Guerrilla Urbana with provocative, anarchist inflected lyrics *en español*; the appearance of fanzines with titles like "Alternativa" (Alternative) and "Fosa Común" (Mass Grave). Finally, we get back to where we began. The article also mentions that at a concert called "Rock in Rimac River II" in early 1986 Kilowatt (of Kola Rock fame) sang a cover of "Demolición" by Los Saicos. Described as "the mythic group with a long life in the national tradition of rock and roll," Santivañez cites a Lima poet of the 60s generation that considered Los Saicos "the first punks in the world." The article then concludes that rock subterráneo represents Lima's artistic vanguard and appears in the 1980s to offer a radical proposal in the form of a song:

A song that is black and damned, that elevates itself into the sky above the city and its dark alleys, with the flag of liberty lashing about, such that change becomes a necessity within our shaved heads. (Santivañez, 1986:??)

Proposition two – **MARIATEGUI IS PUNK** – might seem difficult to substantiate. The perceived difficulty lies in searching for correspondences that appear natural rather than forced. The timing, the context, and the referents appear to all be wrong. Punk is presumed to represent a mid 1970s youth music and subculture that emerged in the UK and the US - and then quickly went global inspiring other appropriative acts of symbolic undercutting, other adapted modes of under-production. Mariateguismo, the term used to refer to his thought, is presumed to have emerged in the 1920s amid Mariátegui's most active intellectual and political period following his three-year "scholarship" to Europe (which was really an exile) and upon his return to Peru in

1923. We might consider briefly that there is a logical correspondence that does not depend on timing, context, or referent. For example, we might consider the possibility that even if Mariátegui is not punk in any obvious sense, surely he qualifies as “punk as fuck” according to the metrics of certain street definitions. The first and most popular definition of “punk as fuck” on urbandictionary.com is “Not giving a fuck if you are punk or not.”⁵ I interpret this as taking a stance that is so eager to offend the status quo that, really, dressing the part or listening the music is rather secondary. What matters, urbandictionary.com users goes on to suggest, is “knowing that punk is an attitude.” Mariátegui had the right attitude. More than simply a punk, he was punk as fuck.

By other means, however, this first proposition - **MARIATEGUI IS PUNK** - is quite easy to substantiate. It follows logically from proposition one. If **PUNK IS REALLY PERUVIAN** then there should be no necessary resistance to the idea that **MARIATEGUI IS PUNK**. After all, we encounter no resistance to the idea that Mariátegui really is Peruvian. Transitive logic would apply. When we descend from the lofty clouds of logic into the social murk of Peruvian reality there too we find plenty of room for correspondence if we look to the right times and places. If we look to Lima in the mid 1980s, for example, we find ephemeral plastic artists like Herbert Rodriguez with something to say, visually speaking. Rodriguez came of artistic age in a late 1970s collective named “Taller E.P.S. Huayco,” an effort he describes as more “communitarian” and “leftist-socialist.” By the mid 1980s, he was central to the small group of plastic artists developing a visual aesthetic (in his case most often via ephemeral stage design at shows) to accompany Lima’s emerging underground rock movement.

Some of Rodriguez’ less ephemeral works include desacrilizing acts of iconic appropriation, like the two pieces grouped under the title “Mariátegui pankeke” (see Figures 1

and 2). In contrast to his previous experiences in the 1970s, his punk appropriation of famous portraits of Mariátegui - done at the time he says “with no other finality than to paint” and “have fun” – turned out in fact to mark a kind of aesthetic practice and implicitly a kind of underground politics. Done in the context of involvement with the burgeoning Lima underground rock movement, the Peruvian iconicity of Mariátegui become quite clearly wrapped up in the more anarchist and punk-inspired DIY ethos. In retrospect, he thinks of it as art intended to “generate an ethical, creative, ludic, transgressive response, emerging from a consciousness of the absurdity of an everyday reality that was charged with contradictions, inertias, and lies. So, ‘Mariátegui pankeke’” (Rodriguez, personal communication).

This informal title that he gives the piece already implies all this. Pankeke = punk because in Peruvian Spanish punk = pank. One could point to the phonetic ambiguities from the Spanish speaker’s point of view (the problematic English “a” versus “u”) to explain such associations. But that would only miss the larger point about disassociation. The work suggests a reflection on the *absurdity* of Peruvian reality at the time it was produced – *this extraordinary moment of creative disassociations amid Peru’s exploding historical contradictions* – as heard and visualized from the point of view of Lima’s underground rockers. Engaging in an act that symbolically undercuts something so iconically Peruvian as Peru’s famed Marxist thinker from the early twentieth century was about as punk as it gets. Rodriguez’ transgressive vision of Mariátegui, as the pankeke, appeared in a period that was dominated by Sendero’s own appropriation of Mariátegui, based on a political proposal to lead Peru down the “shining path” toward communism that Mariátegui prophesied. This aesthetic gesture of punkish provocation, via a mode of creative disassociation, assured that Lima’s particular modes of punk under-production, represented through *rock subterráneo*, could never represent the same thing as

Sendero's subversive proposal for a revolutionary "people's war" but would always be locked in a critical dialogue with it. This too is why **MARIATEGUI IS PUNK.**

The circulation of punk's under-productions in Peru

Once entertained the above propositions, punk's modes of under-production take on more particular dimensions of Peruvian reality while of course never losing their universal punk sensibilities for seeking out underground spaces, circulating subversive possibilities, circumventing status quos. That reality emerged within a 1980s Lima youth movement that began calling itself underground rock in 1984. Yet, it clearly had deeper and always globally-inflected roots that go back to the 1970s. In the early 1970s the term punk was circulating among music writers to describe 1960s garage rock bands. In 1975 the term punk really started to circulate around several New York acts like Patti Smith, The Ramones, and The New York Dolls. In fact, at the very beginning of 1976 John Holmstrom decided to title a NY fanzine with the simple and straightforward title "Punk." Starting at the end of 1976 and throughout much of 1977 London's Sex Pistols, with the help of fashion guru Malcolm McLaren, proceeded to provoke massive public outrage along with public demand for their music in response to their various high-profile antics: using "rude words" in the famous Bill Grundy TV interview, insulting Queen Elizabeth with the "God Save the Queen" single, triggering a censorship response from music industry and radio executives, etc. All of the above led to the now familiar idea that 1977 was the year that punk broke. This refers essentially to the idea that this was the historic moment in which the term punk crystallized and became firmly attached to particular bands, iconic figures, and a particular subcultural "style" that was no longer being played in

“garages” or talked about only in the “underground.” This is the moment that punk surfaced into the global mainstream.

As a result, in the Lima of the late 1970s one also finds mainstream press articles announcing the birth of a youth movement called punk in the UK and the US. An August 1977 article in the Peruvian weekly magazine *Oiga* displays the headline “Punk Rock Comes to Conquer America.” A couple of months later in the October 1977 issue of Peru’s “people” magazine *Gente*, there’s an image of a young woman, eyes painted black, lipstick painted to mimic a bloody face, and an upside down cross adorning her cheek. The headline declares, “PUNK. A new youth movement emerges. Are we dirty? Are we ugly? We are punk.”

Mainstream magazine coverage thus marks one, but only one, route by which punk in its globally iconic Anglo form arrived to and begin circulating in Peru. There were also other more underground means of arrival, and more locally meaningful means of material diffusion, that fed into the formation of Peruvian punk’s mode of under-production. For example, a Peruvian named Martín Berninzon remembers buying single 45s by The Ramones, The Sex Pistols, and Blondie during a trip to Los Angeles and taking them back to Lima in December of 1976. José Eduardo Matute remembers listening to a copy of the Sex Pistols’ “Never Mind the Bollocks” in 1977 when Berninzon came back from another trip abroad with the LP in tow. These two figures represent only two, but certainly two crucial, actors for Peruvian punk’s mode of under-production. Berninzon became the drummer in a band called Anarkía in 1978 that performed in various clubs and bars around Lima, playing covers of The Jam, The Stranglers, The Sex Pistols, The Dead Boys, and The Ramones. Matute and a few others (Wicho García, Fernando Vial, Daniel Valdivia etc.) that were also part of this small circuit of Peruvian rock fans soon felt inspired by the sounds, images, and ideas surrounding punk. No surprise then that many of them

went on to form the primary bands associated with the emergence of “underground rock.”

Valdivia formed Leusemia in 1983. By 1984, Matute had formed Guerrilla Urbana and García and Vial began playing as Narcosis. Several more would soon follow.

In this sense, the expansion of a Peruvian awareness about punk, and its material transformation into a Peruvian mode of punk under-production, is better explained by something other than a few mainstream magazine articles with recycled pictures and news stories focused on the US and the UK. It is explained primarily by the material culture of piracy, becoming widespread in urban Third World settings as a means to diffuse various manifestations of popular culture, along with the technologies necessary for its expansion. Certainly, as many scholars have already noted, the cheap audio duplication possibilities of the cassette tape played an absolutely crucial role in this regard (see Manuel, 1993). In the case of punk so too did other piracy-friendly technologies emerging in Third World urban centers at the time. The photocopy machine was an exceedingly necessary element to diffuse the means of punk under-production, especially considering the degree to which text and visual art (via fanzines, cover art, and show flyers) factor so centrally into the underground punk aesthetic. Indeed, the fact that punk art is as likely to be a collage of compiled images taken from elsewhere as it is original artistic designs not only makes photocopiers an essential material element. It also subjects mainstream publications (like magazines, newspapers, etc.) to constant subversive acts of appropriation and recirculation in punk’s underground networks.

It should almost go without stating that the contrast I draw here between First and Third Worlds as regards the role of piracy is also relative rather than absolute. The point is not that pirated cassettes and photocopied fanzines did not circulate in the First World “centers” of punk production. They of course did, and particularly so in conjunction with the cultures of

underground and DIY production that punk inspires. Yet, in relative terms there is also no question that the geopolitical differences in access, income, and local conditions of production were, and still are, quite pronounced. The likelihood that a punk living in Peru could produce or acquire the punk goods in their most authenticating “original” formats – vinyl in the case of sound recordings; offset-printed material in the case of text and visuals – was substantially lower than for a punk living in the US for example.⁶ My point is that the primary and “original” material referent – in the pre-digital era this means associated with material formats that are not easily reproducible by the average consumer-producer (vinyl, off-set gloss, etc.) – is largely lost in the case of a Third World context like Peru. Instead, Peruvian punk emerges only in order to *disassociate* itself – semio-materially - with the various authenticating, and often over-produced, logics of such formats. Instead, the expansion of punk in Lima is thus also a Peruvian story about the embrace of the dominant material mode of cultural diffusion at the Third World’s disposal: pirated cassettes and poor-quality photocopies. Again, the point is relative. It’s not as though there were no Peruvian punks with access to either consuming or producing vinyl – but they clearly constituted the exception. Indeed, there are only three examples of Peru’s “underground rock” produced on vinyl in the 1980s, and only two of them are domestic.⁷ Similarly, vinyl records (almost all of which were foreign imports in the case of punk) and record players were not only hard to come by. They were universally regarded as status goods of the upper class – and still are.

In this sense, rock fans from Peru’s wealthy families – and Berninzon is in fact the most frequently cited example - exhibit the necessary privilege to access foreign markets via family trips or by virtue of possessing enough income to purchase the high-priced foreign imports that trickled into Lima’s select record stores.⁸ Yet, the purchasing power that class privilege affords

for leisure commodities like vinyl is by far the exception in Peru, not the rule. In fact, elites like Berninzon almost immediately factored themselves into Lima's economic logics by facilitating local piracy. Berninzon portrays himself as one of the main distributors of underground rock sounds, rather than simply a record collector (at least until he moved permanently to the US in 1981). "I basically had an unofficial underground record store in my house." In fact, although he says "record store," he means that he became well-known as a source for providing cheap cassette copies based on his record collection to friends, acquaintances, and even total strangers who heard about it via word-of-mouth. Other punks of economic privilege in Berninzon's crowd engaged in similar practices. For example, Fernando "Puppy" Vial, before he formed Narcosis in 1984, was advertising pirated cassettes of his record collection in his fanzine *Costra* and calling this underground operation *Pasajeros del Horror* (Passengers of Horror) (see Figure ?). The very fact that Berninzon thinks of pirated cassette distribution as a "store," or that Puppy gave his operation a name, reveals what's really going on. First, they were involved in a sizeable enough operation to include relative or total strangers and thus extending beyond the familiar circle of friends trading copies back and forth. Second, and more importantly, it revealed an underlying logic about the primary means of access to such musical culture in a place like Lima, Peru in the late 1970s and early 1980s. For the vast majority of Peruvians at the time, including even a large portion of the urban middle class, this was the main way to get access to rock music, even more so for something still as obscure as punk. The point then is that Lima's rich punks not only knew this to be the case. Fully conscious that they were among the few who could afford vinyl, they actively engaged - indeed promoted in an organized form - Peru's piracy-based economy to allow others access to it.

Insert Figure 2 (pic of Pasajeros / Costra)

There is, however, another crucial element to the story of how pirated musical commodities proliferate in a Third World context like Peru. It was not simply a matter of Lima's rich punks helping start underground means of distribution. Lima's second-hand markets and the broader informal street economy of which they are a part played an equally integral role. Here, the more iconic underground rock figure is Federico Vicente Aguirre, better known by his street name "Paco Kerouac." Not a black sheep son of one of Lima's well-to-do families, like Berninzon or Vial, Paco represents something else. He emerges from a different intersection of Lima's material and social realities of the time. Paco is from El Agustino, one of Lima's oldest Andean migrant neighborhoods, located just northeast of historic downtown and quite the contrast to the upper class districts of Miraflores and San Isidro where most of the rich punks grew up. Indeed, most of the dominant markers of social, ethnic, and economic difference operative in Lima's urban space are already written into this contrast of neighborhoods. Paco is the grandson of working-class migrants from ????? province, thus part of Lima's large *cholo* (Andean migrant) sector. His particular role in the underground rock scene is associated directly with the history of informal street entrepreneurialism, heavily associated with particular urban spaces (primarily the areas in and around downtown Lima) and the ethnicized (mestizo/cholo) forms of lower-class street labor that thrive there. Unlike his wealthier, whiter punk counterparts in the more "residential" parts of the city, who were selling pirated cassettes out of their homes, Paco took the underground rock message literally onto downtown Lima sidewalks.

Paco got his start in the early 1980s as an employee of a small leftist bookstore called *El Caballo Rojo* (The Red Horse), located near the famous San Martín Plaza in downtown Lima. The owner allowed him to place a small stand in the store where he sold pirated cassettes mostly of rock and folk genres. Although he was selling pirated cassettes the same as the rich punks, his

methods for doing so were notably divergent on two important counts. He typically paid for access to the piracy technology (i.e. underground service vendors in downtown Lima that transferred to or duplicated cassettes for a small cost) rather than possessing it in his home. In addition, virtually all of the vinyl he worked with he found in second-hand markets: a rather obvious contrast to the trips abroad and high-priced import store method used by people like Berninzon. Paco was thus one of a handful of micro-entrepreneurs that realized used vinyl was available and relatively cheap at Lima's black and second-hand markets, particularly if one crafted a business of selling pirated cassettes with the vinyl acquired.

Unquestionably, the most symbolic of these markets is *La Cachina* – a place he once referred to as “the hen that lays the golden eggs.” *La Cachina* and markets like it reveal the specificity of how urban Limeños think about thrift, micro-entrepreneurialism, petty street crime, and a vast urban culture of commodity recycling – all quite explicitly at the core of Lima's informal street market economy. Indeed, the word *cachina* kind of says it all. A Quechua-influenced term for a cheap wine liquor, Limeños employ it in innumerable ways: as a noun generalizable to all informal markets; as a verb connoting a crafty form of shopping; as an activity that in essence becomes an occupation for lower class micro-entrepreneurs.⁹ In essence, the word and the particular market it refers to have become iconic of a range of associations in Lima's urban imagination: informal thriftiness and the inevitability of theft; one part junk and one part stuff that can still be used; lower class and migrant ethnic vocations; the brilliant ingenuity involved in just getting by.

Following a change in management at the bookstore where he initially sold cassettes, Paco quit and decided to set up a sidewalk stand, specializing in counter and subcultural material. Like many other street vendors looking for prime sidewalk real estate, he set up shop

on *La Colmena*. This avenue near the Villareal University was once one of downtown Lima's most popular sites for informal vendors, at least until the late 1990s when mayoral politics led to a campaign to "clean up" downtown Lima by forcing vendors into indoor spaces.¹⁰ At his stand, Paco sold countercultural literature (i.e. the likes of Kerouac, and hence the nickname), locally produced underground fanzines, and both foreign and domestically produced rock cassettes. His stand was particularly well known for its selection of punk and metal. Eager to make his particular material livelihood also a symbolic statement, he constructed a stand that was meant to look (vaguely) like a pirate ship, complete with a black anarchist flag flying above it. He christened it *La Nave de los Prófuagos* (Ship of Fugitives) (see Figure ???).

Insert Figure ??? (Nave de los Profugos)

By the mid 80s Paco's Ship of Fugitives had emerged as much more than simply the place to buy cheap cassettes of hard to access rock genres like punk and metal. It became in essence a punk hang-out, and thus a key nexus point for Lima's "underground rockers" to meet each other, exchange ideas, form bands, and begin circulating their own musical expression. Indeed, it played a crucial role not only in the circulation of underground music recordings and underground art via fanzines. In fact, it served as the place where members of some of the most memorable bands, Leusemia for example, initially heard about or met each other.¹¹ Peruvian punk's mode of underproduction then was interwoven with its various modes of under-circulation from the start.

The "First Dose" of Peruvian punk's global under-production: The Story of Narcosis

Another emblematic example of punk underproduction, inflected through the framework of Peruvian reality, appears with the formation of the band Narcosis in 1984. Narcosis is more than merely a seminal and oft remembered band. They were also one of the most ephemeral punk bands since they broke up about half way through 1985, the entire effort lasting a whopping eight months. In a certain sense, Narcosis is iconic of the entire history of underground rock, only one part but a crucial part that in certain ways stands in for the whole of punk underproduction in 1980s Lima. Fernando “Puppy” Vial, the guitarist, and Jorge “Spiked Hair” Madueño, drummer, began playing around with basic riffs and lyrics in 1984, eventually incorporating Alvaro Carrillo on vocals. By the end of 1984 Puppy was eager to start playing live at local bars and clubs, mostly in the well-to-do district of Miraflores. Carrillo announced he couldn’t make one of the early performances due to a church obligation – um, not a very punk move. At that point Puppy called on Luis Donaldo (“Wicho”) García to stand in for him. Not only do Wicho show up to substitute for Carrillo for that particular show, soon after he simply replaced him permanently as lead vocalist. Thus, the contingent formation of what became one of Lima – and indeed one of Latin America’s - most infamous ‘80s punk trios. One might say that Narcosis’ under-produced genius lies precisely in a unique combination of super-fuzz guitar riffs, punchy one-liner lyrics, savage but still whiny vocals, and tin-can sounding drum beats – no bass-line required.

That said, none of this would be at all apparent were it not for the way in which Narcosis committed itself to materially under-producing its sound and provocatively attaching it to a host of subversive ideas. The punkish devil is in the peculiarly Peruvian details. Those details consist largely in the fact that Narcosis pioneered a form of musical under-production, indeed a material mode that soon became dominant in Lima’s punk scene, while creatively offending as

many “core values” of Peruvianness they could find. In early 1985, they produced and began circulating what is widely recognized as the first underground rock *maqueta* – the Spanish word used to refer to an amateurishly engineered demo cassette - called “Primera Dosis” (First Dosage). In fact, given their short eight month life as a band, this was the only significant recording they ever released (aside from a recording of a live show from 1985).

On the cassette are twelve original songs. Puppy came up with the guitar riffs and many of the lyrics. Wicho helped further craft some of Puppy’s lyrics and proved central to the DIY recording techniques. Peruvian punk favorites – often referenced as “classics” in Lima’s underground scene, occasionally covered by contemporary bands, and rather influential on punk scenes elsewhere in countries like Colombia and Mexico - include songs like “Sucio Policia” (Dirty Policeman), “Represión” (Repression), and “Destruir” (Destroy). The demo also contains “Quiero Ser tu Perro,” a cover once removed, since it is Narcosis’ 1985 version of Parálisis Permanente’s 1982 version of The Stooges’ 1969 classic “I Wanna Be Your Dog.”

Wicho says his initial interest in Narcosis - and music in general since he later went on to build a career in sound engineering by allying with the mainstream pop musician Miki Gonzalez - was directly related to his constant tinkering with electrical gadgets. He didn’t just want to play in a band. He wanted to produce music – a neither predictable, nor likely to be successful, nor very well received idea by the parents that pressured him to study electrical engineering. Disappointing the family expectations, he dropped out of every post-secondary institution he enrolled in and spent most of his time toying with whatever musical technology he could get his hands on (radios, hand-held recorders, etc.). Thus, if Puppy was the primary songwriter for Narcosis, Wicho became the central figure in producing their “Primera Dosis” *maqueta*. Started in early 1985 and finished by February, Narcosis’ demo cassette went on to become legendary

within and well beyond Peru's borders. In fact, the release of the demo had a notable impact at this still early point in the emergence of an "underground rock" movement that had only taken on that name in late 1984 via the scene surrounding a handful of other punk-inspired bands (Leusemia, Guerrilla Urbana, Autopsia, Zcueta Cerrada). The release of "Primera Dosis" in February of 1985 directly inspired efforts of these other emerging bands to find their own means to record the music they were composing, and thus spread the news of Lima's "underground rock" scene.¹² The point, however obvious now, was not necessarily obvious at all in the 1980s. It is worth reinforcing. Lima's underground rockers sought to prove that punk is not only consumed, but also *produced* in Peru. The further point worth analyzing is how these particular punks living in Lima began to under-produce their sounds, images, and ideas in a mode that really is queerly Peruvian.

To explore this dimension of punk's Peruvian reality we have to entertain more deliberately the conditions under which Narcosis recorded and began circulating "Primera Dosis." To say that it was released as a demo cassette, a maqueta, is also to say that it responded directly to – and thus become iconic of - the prevalence of Peru's Third World cultural piracy. The entire effort operated on an explicit understanding that DIY in a place like Lima was meant to be synonymous with production and consumption via cheap pirated cassettes – with ambitions to produce to vinyl representing only the rarest of exceptions. Eager to enact his incipient musical engineering talents, Wicho went in search of a used shoebox-style Sony cassette recorder. Tellingly, he found it at La Cachina, that very same second-hand black market that punk-cholo-street-entrepreneur, Paco Kerouac, loves to call the "hen that lays the golden eggs." The recorder Wicho bought had one external microphone input. So, Narcosis got together one day in early 1985 in Wicho's garage and laid down an initial track of essentially a live practice

session – guitar, drums, and main vocals done in one go. Yet, the shoebox recorder also had a line input and this inspired Wicho to start thinking in terms of what else was possible with this act of musical underproduction. Bricoleur style, he built a simple two-track recorder by connecting the shoebox recorder to a Sony Walkman that, conveniently enough, had a line output. The result was a primitive two-track recording device - homemade, primitive, and either second-hand or possibly stolen. Technological under-production and punk ingenuity rolled into one.

Wicho designed the primitive two-track recorder precisely because he was interested in something more than a straightforward recording of a live practice session. He thus worked for several more weeks to convert the initial recording into something more elaborate, a musical production with several other tracks layered into it. On top of the original guitar, vocals, and drums track, he dubbed several additional guitar parts, a few back-up vocals, and even a couple of samples taken from other analog recordings. Essentially, this meant taking each new track recorded to a new cassette, playing it on the Walkman while the input fed into the shoebox recorder, then pressing record at the approximate correct moment to insert a track onto the cassette in the shoebox recorder. By engaging in this repeated overdubbing he thus also had to work with multiple, successive master tapes (each with one new track added in) rather than a single master.

This recording method necessarily implied “losing generations of fidelity,” as Wicho noted in an interview. It resulted in a musical product that does not arrogantly announce its “originality” but rather – by virtue of the method of production itself - creatively contemplates its own banality. Indeed, I believe “Primera Dosis” compels us to take it seriously on precisely those ironic grounds. Its aesthetic beauty is contained in its artistic banality. Indeed, the

particularity of the mode of underproduction involved in this now legendary, once quite everyday, demo cassette is also deeply iconic. It denies its originality by constantly pointing to its existence as always, already a copy, one that is also ready and willing to enter an established circuit of other pirated cassettes. There is a punk kind of comfort in generations of lost fidelity. There is a punk kind of point to be made here, as when Wicho describes Narcosis' original demo as nothing more than, "a copy of a copy of a copy of a copy."

Another way to approach the issue of multi-layered copying is to take apart Narcosis' song "Yo Quiero Ser Tu Perro." At first glance it appears to be simply a cover of a Stooges' classic from the late 60s garage band era. In reality, the version Narcosis recorded – and the version that most younger punk bands still play in Lima - is based on a translated version that was recorded by the Spanish post-punk band Parálisis Permanente on their 1982 LP, "El Acto." Although all the members of Narcosis had been listening to The Stooges since the 1970s, it was Parálisis Permanente's slowed-down, proto-Goth version that really fascinated them (Puppy in particular).

Here we should stop to take note of the particular global pathways of punk circulation. Rather than constituting a US-UK-Peru triad, the pathways of punk influence are actually much more globally diffuse. By the early 1980s when Lima's underground rock scene started to surface Peruvian punks were listening to as much Spanish, Brazilian, and Argentinian rock as they were anything else. Indeed, their attention to the newest musical trends emerging from the US-UK rock nexus, the presumed global origin point for rock genres, was always necessarily divided by an inherent cultural and linguistic affinity for rock sung in Spanish or Portuguese and reflective of a broad reaching Iberian influence. Neither pretense to originality - nor anything so clearly derivative - Lima's underground rock scene was in essence regenerative. The copies of

copies of copies were indeed copies, but they contained crucial and creative modifications amid truly diverse, and globally quite diffuse, influences. There was nothing so simple as North-South or Anglo-Latin directionality here, but something much more complex.

Narcosis' "Yo Quiero Ser Tu Perro" is only one example of this. The point was to take stock of this proto-punk classic and not Latinize it per se – that had already been done by a Spanish band. Rather, as Wicho insists, they wanted to "narcosify it." One need only listen to the Narcosis version to conclude that, sonically speaking, that's exactly what they did. The simple but incredibly catchy guitar riff that drives the song is consistent across all three versions. Narcosis sped the song back up from the slowed-down gothic ethos created by Parálisis Permanente's version. Faithful to Puppy's guitar sound, and an Arion fuzz pedal set at maximum, they also hyper-fuzzed the riff way beyond The Stooges' more treble-sounding imagination (and likely their 1960s technological capacities). Puppy's hyper-fuzz approach to guitar was also a creative way to work with his explicit limitations. Not only did Narcosis lack a bassist to balance out guitar textures and help establish rhythms, Puppy typically never played with more than the bottom two strings. In fact, Wicho was usually in charge of tuning the five and six strings to a "D" chord so that Puppy (who also wasn't very good at tuning) could form power chords with one finger.

Another provocative gem on "Primera Dosis" is the opening track "Intro/La Peste": one part testament to Narcosis' peculiarly Peruvian style of symbolic subversion, another part techno-punk ingenuity. In addition to a few other dubbed samples (i.e. a barking dog on "Quiero Ser tu Perro" and a siren sound on "Sucio Policia"), the cassette opens with a long one taken from an old 45 record Wicho found lying around. It was a promotional recording titled "The Voice of Luis Banchemo Rossi" released by the National Society of Fisheries (Sociedad Nacional

de Pesquería). Banchero Rossi, a second generation son of an Italian immigrant family, is well known for several things in Peru: emerging as one of the wealthiest entrepreneurs of the 1960s within the fishing industry; transforming into a national spokesperson of all things business and banking, progress and patriotism (as President of the National Society of Fisheries and Director of Peru's Banco de Credito); and eventually as a large, physically imposing man that was somehow overpowered and then murdered by a barely post-adolescent boy of less than five feet stature named Juan Vilca Carranza (the son of Rossi's gardner).

Rossi's murder in January of 1972, to which Vilca Carranza confessed, citing motives of theft, provoked a national mystery. The mystery required, at least implicitly, a racialized reading of the two men's bodies. The press, and most Peruvians, simply refused to believe a tall, white man could be physically undone by this small, i.e. more Andean, man with merely blows and a knife. Conspiracy theories soon followed. Maybe it was actually the leftist-nationalist military government of General Velasco that took power in 1968, since Velasco did after all nationalize Rossi's private fishing companies shortly after his death (although it did so in many other sectors of the Peruvian economy). Rossi's secretary, a former lover apparently working in cahoots with Vilca Carranza, had something to do with it. Or at least she did get sent to prison for five years. Maybe even the Nazis were somehow involved, since it was later discovered that Banchero Rossi had identified a Nazi war criminal named Klaus Barbie who was apparently passing through Peru shortly before the assassination.

Whatever the case, by the time Narcosis was recording "Primera Dosis," Banchero Rossi no longer symbolized Peru's modernist pretention toward capitalist progress but rather some sort of strange underside of Peru: its deeply racialized forms of class conflict; deviously authoritarian forms of statecraft; a haven for international war criminals and mistreated secretarial mistresses.

Hence, the punkish beauty of Narcosis' symbolic undercutting of this bizarre little relic of Banchemo Rossi's recorded speeches. Working with his garage two-track Wicho not only samples the recording but directly intervenes into it, subverting its intent to spread Banchemo Rossi's message about the natural link between patriotism, capitalism, and modernity. He does so by inserting a series of dubbed voice-overs, overlaying his own post-adolescent voice atop that of the deferential voice of whatever anonymous underling at the National Society of Fisheries was assigned the task of introducing the recording of Banchemo Rossi with tale-tell Peruvian formality. Thus, the Intro to "Primera Dosis" begins as a bizarre sonic hybrid of disjunctive voices:

Ladies and Gentlemen, please welcome [the group Narcosis], whose unique merits are plain to see in their magnificent works, which constitute the best example of what love of country, the entrepreneurial spirit, and faith in our own destiny are capable of producing. Thus, it is for me a distinct honor that [this group] has asked me to introduce this recording that compiles [a few tunes] that allow us to appreciate the exceptional personality of [a trio], which in its own right stands as the maximum expression of a Peruvian [group], projecting an image that provides a model for present and future generations. With that, let's listen to our dear friend forever [Narcosis]. (Wicho García's voice-overs appear in bracketed text)

The "Intro" barely concludes and Puppy's simple, three-note, fuzzed-up guitar riff intrudes into the sonic space. Seconds later, Spiked-Hair Madueño enters with a series of more-or-less well-timed symbol crashes, and Wicho starts to shout the repetitive one-liner lyrics of "La Peste" in this one minute and eleven second masterpiece of Peruvian punk:

The pestilence surrounds your head and won't leave you be.

Sex. Religion. Too much repression.

The pestilence surrounds your head and won't leave you be.

Panic. Terror. Destructive terrorism.

The pestilence surrounds your head and won't leave you be.

By stealing the voice of Banchero Rossi's ingratiating Introducer – and then hybridizing it with “The Voice of Narcosis” in this “First Dose” of Peruvian punk's under-productions – Wicho refocuses our attention on the larger question Narcosis was posing at the time. Following the demise of Banchero Rossi, and his “magnificent” modernist proposals, what has become of Peruvian reality really? The answer was not intended to be metaphorical. Peru is full of terror, destruction, and repression. Peru is a place of pestilence. Peru's sickness surrounds you. It won't leave you be.

To conclude this account of Narcosis' “Primera Dosis,” we must first consider its on-going lives in and well beyond Peru some twenty plus years after its release. This is, after all, a story of punk's global under-production as refracted through a particular Peruvian reality. By multiple accounts, Narcosis' demo circulated north to Colombia fairly soon after it was released via a Peruvian punk that emigrated sometime around 85 or 86. Lima legend has it that the impact of “Primera Dosis” circulating within Medellin's incipient punk scene was enormous, producing a lasting influence on some of the most famous Colombian bands like I.R.A. (which also got its start in the mid 80s). I have no testimonial accounts from the Colombian side. Yet, there is good evidence in the fact that Colombian punks arranged a Narcosis reunion tour in 2007

in Bogotá and Medellín to celebrate their importance (and, in fact, members of I.R.A. hosted Narcosis during their stay in Medellín). Also telling – at least in terms of demand and emotional reaction - is the fact that the Medellín show provoked a small street riot. An underestimation in venue size resulted in Colombian punks flooding the show and being refused entry. An angry mob took to parading down the street and smashing stuff which then resulted in a clash with police and one fatality. In effect, this young punk died after having been set off by missing a chance to see this legendary band of “unders” from Lima, Peru (look for ref).

Narcosis has other global lives via these small-scale but amazingly far-reaching underground punk circuits that extend throughout Latin America, Europe, and the United States. In 2011 two small labels (one in Peru, one in the US) collaborated to re-release “Primera Dosis” in a limited-edition vinyl format (500 copies). The initiative was that of the labels, not the members of Narcosis. It is thus testament to the fact that it was a question of international underground “demand” for an LP version of “Primera Dosis” rather than a nostalgic whim of the ageing band members. Soon after the vinyl version was released, it was Martín Sorrondeguy - famous in punk circles as the Uruguayan-born-but-Chicago-bred vocalist of Los Crudos (a pioneer Latino punk band in the US) and later Limp Wrist (a queercore band) - who placed the “legendary” importance of Narcosis precisely in the context of global underground circuits of pirated cassette tapes. In a 2011 review of the LP version of “Primera Dosis” published in the legendary punk ‘zine Maximum Rock’n’Roll, he writes:

This is a legendary Peruvian punk band from the early to mid ‘80s. When I say legendary, I don’t mean they played a bunch of shows with the right bands or had their t-shirts sold and worn by mall punks all over the globe. I mean legendary in a ‘I was given a tenth-generation copy of their tape that smuggled its way up from Peru to Colombia,

dubbed a bunch of times, then sent over to some punks in Mexico and they dubbed and passed it on to me, when I got away from my folks while vacationing in Mexico and got my ass to the Chopo [a street market in Mexico City that specializes in subcultural goods].’ This is the legendary I speak of. (Sorrondéguy, 2011).

What are the implications of the Narcosis story for a theory of punk’s global modes of under-production? First, we should take seriously the issue of scale of production, circulation, and consumption here. Narcosis is not and will never be considered of the same global rock-n-roll stature of say, The Stooges, The Sex Pistols, or The Ramones. These bands, along with others within the hegemonic US-UK rock nexus, have become global punk icons and as a result are symbolically if not materially over-produced. We might substantiate such a claim by merely thinking how often they are over-played.

Narcosis has not and will never be canonized with an induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame or, for that matter, given the chance to reassert their snotty punkishness by snubbing the offer the way the Sex Pistols recently did.¹³ Yet, despite this the story of Narcosis can also not be confined to the category of the “local” – that anthropological trash bin of everything “exotic” or “not yet European” in Chakrabarty’s (1999) sense. Narcosis is also global, simply on a different scalar plane and via different modalities of international circulation. The story of “Primera Dosis” takes place over decades and implicates countries all over the globe: starting in Peru but including a cover of a band in Spain that was covering a band in the US; expanding to Colombia, then Mexico, then the US, via a punk singer who was born in Montevideo but grew up in Chicago.

Perhaps it is worth remembering in this context that we are dealing with a band that, before the last few years of occasional reunion gigs, lasted a whole eight months between 1984 and 1985. And released precisely one musical “production” done in a garage with a shoebox recorder, a walkman, and a couple of mics. All of this was made possible not simply by Narcosis’ incredible punk ingenuity and regenerative Lima underground sound. It was made possible by successive generations of punks networking globally – and sometimes diffusely; not necessarily by the expected North to South vectors - via underground circuits: exchanging music, art, and ideas across national borders, across continents, over various oceans, all over the globe.¹⁴ There have always been underground means for the circulation of under-produced forms of material subculture. It’s not a question of global versus local – where the former implicitly means “everywhere” and the latter “only in this place.” It’s a question of multiple scales and particular means of getting from here to there.

There is also the not so small matter of the music’s material forms and the work of indexicality they perform. The two small labels that released “Primera Dosis” on vinyl did so at least in part by adopting one of the original “gringo” logics that Narcosis’ Peruvian standards of under-production stood against. First, there is the relative inaccessibility of vinyl for Peruvians – its implication in a large degree of wealth and cultural snobbery in an overwhelmingly poor country where music is predestined to circulate primarily in some pirated form even among considerable portions of the middle-class. The fact that most punks are more likely to listen to Narcosis in the currently dominant digital piracy version (i.e MP3); the fact that the vast majority of the vinyl copies were sold in the US; the fact that the LP sells for as much as thirty dollars in a country where the minimum wage is less than three hundred dollars a month: This all makes it

clear that a vinyl collection continues to be, much as historically it always has, a mark of social and economic exclusivity in a country like Peru.

Second, in a more general sense, vinyl hides an authenticating logic implicit in the material form regardless of the context. Vinyl obviously does not “resist” being copied but it does “suggest” – magically as it were – an aura of authentic “originality” in the musical format itself. Vinyl retains certain fetishistic qualities that reside centrally in its material format. While the musical content is highly piratable, the format itself is ultimately unreproducible except through purchase to a vinyl printing company. The means of vinyl musical production are thus exclusive in a way the means of pirated cassette reproduction are not. And hence the idea of possessing an “original” LP as opposed to cassettes that represent “a copy of a copy of a copy of a copy.”

Indeed, the means of vinyl production are always “hidden” from view, meaning in a more Marxist sense owned and operated by someone other than the artist in search of a mode of and material format for aesthetic production. This magical element of vinyl’s purported “originality” – nowadays often talked about in terms of analog’s supposed “superior sound” compared to digitally produced music, except that a similar logic already applied to the sound difference between vinyl and cassette (both analog formats) – helps explain the resurgence of subcultural interest in vinyl amid the absolute dominance of the MP3 and the global proliferation of digital piracy (cf. Sterne, 2012, Dent, ???).

In other words, the recent release of “Primera Dosis” on vinyl produces a dilemma that goes well beyond an apparently misplaced form of nostalgia in Peru where vinyl was always mostly inaccessible by the vast majority of musical consumers, even those in the middle class.

The central dilemma is whether “Primera Dosis” appearing on vinyl in 2011 – marking it much more clearly as an upper-class, status-oriented punk product in a more-gringo-than-not musical format - makes Narcosis suddenly into an over-produced punk band due to its new “elitist” format. The answer is never simply yes or no, the same way there should be no simple answer to whether something simply *is* or *is not* punk. It’s always a relative matter, something to argue about or to agree on. In other words, returning to Warner’s (2002) notion of the relativity of public to counterpublic discourse, it depends a lot on the uptake: on how, to whom, and in this case in what format, expressive ideas circulate. The existence of an exceedingly limited LP version that most Peruvian punks can’t afford, or frankly that almost no one can even find a copy of, does allow a select few to “feel special,” as if by possessing a Narcosis LP they have acquired a magical kind of punk commodity. But from another perspective the existence of “Primera Dosis” in this (at least symbolically) over-produced format does *exactly nothing* to deny other punks material access to the beautifully primitive sounds and provocatively snotty ideas of Narcosis from early 1985. Consider simply how much easier it is to find “Primera Dosis” in a materially under-produced, i.e. pirate-friendly, format (these days MP3; those days cassette tape).

In fact, I would argue that both the band, which had a hand in design issues for the LP, and the punk labels that released it, are actually quite aware of these multiple levels of irony and anachronism. In order to produce a vinyl in 2011 they necessarily had to work with Wicho’s old “master” cassette from 1985 - that *original* “copy of a copy of a copy of a copy” that he used to dub other copies in order to begin distribution in Lima’s informal street markets and underground rock circuits (like, for example, Pack Kerouc’s Ship of Fugitives!). Rather than reveal ignorance of the anachronistic irony, there is an artistic expression of it literally *on* the

vinyl record. The image used for the sticker that sits in the center of the LP is a cassette with the classic “Narcosis” logo on it. Thus, this symbolic version of the demo cassette spins around at 33.3 rpm, ironically and indexically, always pointing back to Lima’s “underground rock” at a specific moment: back when the maqueta was Lima’s global standard and when, in Peru, the pestilence surrounded your head and would not let you be.

¹ In short, over-production in Marx’s view has to do with a correlation of historical tendencies that inevitably lead toward repeated crises: the historical drive towards technological efficiency in commodity production; the increasing disproportion of dead (i.e. mechanized) to living (i.e. human) labor; and the tendency for profit rates to fall.

² Marx takes similar steps in various places (Theses on Fuerbach, Manifesto, Manuscripts, Capital, etc.) by drawing out linkages between capitalist-induced alienation and that of religious or spiritual forms of human alienation. In effect, the fetish of over-production like the fetish of commodities results in a new theological doctrine. The logic of limitless self-expansion becomes shrouded in notions of a sacred, transcendent authority beyond human control.

³ NOTE on garage rock as punk pre-cursor. For starters, one quick way to think about this is to simply contemplate the entanglements implied in the simple idea of doing it in your garage. In the first instance the term is meant to denote the phenomena of 1960s “garage rock,” named retrospectively as such in the 1970s precisely amid the emergence of punk and thought of as a precursor to punk (hence the other label proto-punk). The label connotes both the literal and the figurative. The fact that the music was amateurish reflected the fact that it was likely just a few amateur musicians playing poor quality instruments in a garage. The fact that the lyrics explored more aggressive themes expressed itself viscerally in more aggressive sounds (as if it wasn’t obvious already the sound of music is a deeply material experience). This in turn reflects the symbolic or real “dirtiness” of a garage and all those possible things it is tied to (the street, the gutter, the basement, etc.): in short, the symbolic and material spaces where punk finds itself at home. Thus when the term garage rock is mentioned a US punk is most likely to think immediately of The Sonics’ “Strychnine” (1965) or The Stooges’ “I wanna be your dog” (1969). By contrast a Peruvian punk, quite likely to think of these same songs, will also immediately think of Los Saicos’ “Demolición” (1964). The fact that the Peruvian punk makes an additional association to Los Saicos where a US punk is unlikely calls attention to the way that punk is also globally hierarchal and again to what I call global punk’s Peruvian reality.

The fact that Apple released a home recording software named “Garage Band” also serves, inadvertently, to make the same point. Home recording in an age of digital music production and reproduction is up to date is thus not an accident in an age where digital music is dominant. It is intended to represent precisely that ever-present tension between over and under production. It is intended to represent an always evolving mechanical universe of do-it-yourself possibilities.

⁴ For the uninitiated Letts is the legendary UK punk-reggae icon from The Sex Pistols era, Pop is the famously self-destructive vocalist of The Stooges, and Interior is the now deceased, always mysterious leader of psycho-billy punk band The Cramps.

⁵ See <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=punk+as+fuck>.

⁶ That said, there is no assumption that the disparities are comparable across every format. This logic holds pretty well for the contrast between vinyl and pirated cassettes. However, my guess is that in the pre-digital era punk fanzines and flyers would have been almost universally photocopy-oriented despite geopolitical context. There are no doubt notable exceptions that might still indicate the point about a relative contrast in printing production possibilities, like the fact that Maximum Rocknroll, the US “premier” punk fanzine, has in fact been published on off-set newspaper print since its earliest inception in the 1980s.

⁷ Amid much controversy over its morally offensive content and the initial surge of “underground rock” in the Lima press, the Peruvian label Virrey released Leusemia’s self-titled LP in late 1985. The IEMPSA, the only other major label during the period released Eructo Maldonado’s “Rómpele la pechuga” LP in 1988. Otherwise, Ataque Frontal’s E.P. from 1987 was released in France on the New Wave label.

⁸ Note on Velasco ban on rock and other North American “cultural” goods. Promotion of folklore (cite Torres Redondo)

⁹ *Cachineros* are “professional” recyclers, typically of lower class mestizo or Andean migrant (i.e. cholo) background, that roam the streets, typically of more middle to upper class neighborhoods, in search of everything from household items to cultural consumer goods being thrown out. They then resell these items themselves or to other informal street entrepreneurs at rock bottom prices in second-hand markets, like la cachina, or on the sidewalks of downtown

Lima. Furthermore, *cachina* can be both insult and compliment. Making fun of someone for buying something in *la cachina* is to implicitly mock their class status but to say someone performed a good “*cachineada*” is equivalent to calling them crafty and quick in a kind of streetwise sense.

¹⁰ Note on how Alcalde Alberto Andrade made “clean up Lima” his priority and involved forcing street vendors out or into established indoor markets.

¹¹ Dozens of interviews attest that the 1980s generation of Peruvian punks routinely remark on the importance of La Nave as a “punto de encuentro.” Famously, the legendary band Leusemia was in some senses formed thanks to the existence of La Nave according to Leopoldo de la Rosa. Better known as Leo “Scoria” (“Scum”), he was of Italian descent and more part of the upper middle class black sheep crowd. But when he met Paco at La Nave, Paco told him he needed to meet Daniel Valdivia, from a much more solidly middle class neighborhood. This is how Leo went on to become bassist for the original Leusemia trio, headed by guitarist and singer Daniel “F” (the “F” is for *feo*, ugly).

¹² Note on other recordings: Vol. I; Autopsia, Leusemia, Vol. II, etc. etc.

¹³ Footnote on Ramones 2002 induction, Stooges 2010 induction, and Sex Pistols 2012 offer which they rejected.

¹⁴ Note on various kinds of things that would evidence global circulation; letter from Australia, France, etc. Note from Tim Yo to Nossar.