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Mexico’s Broken Heart: Music, Politics, and Sentimentalism in the Bolero

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Mexico's Broken Heart: Music, Politics, and Sentimentalism in the Bolero

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

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in Ethnomusicology

by

León Felipe García Corona

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Mexico's Broken Heart: Music, Politics, and Sentimentalism in the Bolero

by

León Felipe García Corona

Doctor of Philosophy in Ethnomusicology

University of California, Los Angeles, 2015

Professor Steven Loza, Co-Chair

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This dissertation examines the connections between music and sentimentalism in Mexico, particularly as expressed in the popular songs known as boleros, and it considers how the genre developed in conjunction with Mexico's recording industry from the 1930s onward. The bolero became a crucial element in the formation of an imagined community, particularly for those in urban areas, and the preferred musical packaging in which sentimentalism was commercialized, circulated, and consumed. I examine the bolero, and the sentimentalism associated with it, as a "field of cultural production." In its simplest terms, this dissertation is about the connections between music and sentimentalism in the middle of the twentieth century, and how these connect with socio-political and economic events. I explore how musical sentimentalism is the deep

expression of societal disappointments and at the same time a means for social mobility through the competition for symbolic capital.

Analysis is centered on the following groups, chosen for their popularity and their unique positions in the field of bolero: Los Panchos, Los Tres Diamantes, Los Ases, Los Caballeros, Los Tecolines, Los Dandys, Los Santos, and Los Tres Reyes. In providing a contemporary reading of the bolero, I also assess a recent bolero revival as a possible indicator of Mexicans' optimistic attachment to a political project yet to be realized.

The dissertation of León Felipe García Corona is approved.

Helen Rees

Randal Johnson

Steven Loza, Committee Co-Chair

Timothy D. Taylor, Committee Co-Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2015

For Lev and Steph

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation would not have been possible without the help of numerous generous people, from those who granted me access to their private collections to those who have guided me over the years and who have supported me in many ways.

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For information about Los Tres Diamantes, I was very fortunate to meet Maestro Saulo Sedano, the sole surviving member of the original trio. I am grateful to his son, Saulo Sedano, Jr., for allowing me to interview his father at his home, surrounded by his instruments and photographs of his days with Los Tres Diamantes. Mr. Sedano graciously performed some of his famous songs and some more recent material for me. Now in his nineties, he offers a truly inspiring example to follow.

I am also in debt to Ms. Alicia Luna, widow of Hector Gonzalez, one of the founding members of Los Tres Ases. She welcomed me into her home and delighted me with conversation about what it was like to be the spouse of an icon of Mexican popular music for more than forty years. She put many photographs and files at my disposal and showed me her husband's guitars. Her story as a dancer in some of Agustín Lara's productions is part of an important history that awaits telling.

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I would like to thank the generosity of musician and philanthropist Herb Alpert, whose scholarships supported my doctoral education. Additionally, I would like to thank the Department of Ethnomusicology and the UCLA Graduate division for their support throughout my course work and fieldwork. The Dissertation Year Fellowship provided me with the resources to devote my time to writing. Additionally, I am thankful to the UCLA's Department of Ethnomusicology staff, especially Sandra McKerroll for her help navigating forms and bureaucratic requirements.

Throughout the years I have been very fortunate to make friends and meet scholars who have influenced and guided my academic path. I am thankful to Dale Olsen who first believed I would have a bright future in ethnomusicology and who supported my application to Florida State University. Without his faith in me I never would have become an ethnomusicologist. I would also like to thank Daniel Sheehy, who has been my friend and mentor for many years, teaching me the ins and outs of the non-profit world, supporting my academic endeavors and inspiring me to earn a PhD at UCLA. Patricia Campbell supported my application to UCLA and has been an inspiration to work in ethnomusicology and music education. Alejandro Madrid has graciously advised me in several steps in my career.

Having joined the ethnomusicology program at UCLA I have been very fortunate to work with outstanding scholars, and choosing a committee was a difficult task. I would like to thank the members of my committee: Helen Rees for her feedback and her indefatigable will to see students succeed; Randal Johnson for his advice and constant feedback about my dissertation and other projects; Steve Loza for his support, mentorship, and the many hours of fruitful

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I owe thanks to Miguel Agustín Corona Ortega for introducing me to the world of boleros and trios.

I want to thank Tatiana Flores and Allegra Tocata, who accompanied me for many years along sinuous roads from Mexico to the United States. For that they will always live in my heart.

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Lastly, I want to express my deepest gratitude to my one-year-old son, Lev Augustus, for providing me with an innocent smile every day that pushed me to keep working, and for sleeping on my chest while I was writing. Also to my lovely wife, Stephanie Stallings, for her immeasurable faith, kindness, and support. These pages and this beautiful life would not exist without her.

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PUBLICATIONS

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2011	"Los Tres Reyes." CD liner notes co-authored with Daniel Sheehy, Washington, DC: Smithsonian Folkways.
2010	"Los Tres Reyes." in *Grove Dictionary of American Music*, 2nd edition. Oxford University Press.

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2007 "*Bésame Mucho*," a big band arrangement performed by the Florida State University Big Band

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LANGUAGES

Spanish, English, and Portuguese

Introduction

Sentimentalism, Music, and Boleros

When I was in the seventh grade in Mexico City I used to go to school by taking the 72A bus to Villa Coapa. The ride was usually uneventful and fairly comfortable. One day, during my ride home, I heard the song "Motivos" for the first time—it was performed by a strolling musician working for tips on the bus. The song resonated with me at the time because I was infatuated with Maribel, a beautiful young girl with green eyes. The lyrics are:

Unos ojos bañados de luz	Eyes bathed in light
son un motivo,	are a motive,
Unos labios queriendo besar	Lips wanting to kiss
son un motivo de amor.	are a motive of love.

The unabashed display of emotions in the musician's performance produced in me the mental image of Maribel's beautiful eyes showered in light, which made me feel like the song had been written for us. As I listened to this and similar music ubiquitous in public places in Mexico, I began to notice the sentimental nature of the music. I heard romantic songs at family gatherings, and a family member told me they were called "boleros." This was before the Internet, so I browsed local music stores looking for the bolero section or asking the attendants about the music. I soon realized that the repertoire and performers were quite varied. Having studied the guitar from an early age I was naturally drawn to learn the songs. I discovered the universe of musical elements, approaches, and discourses, and the contradictions associated with them.

As a teenager, my friends knew about my skills and asked me to deliver serenades to their would-be girlfriends. My sympathy for romantic music made more than one

person curious; family and friends would ask, "Why is someone so young interested in *música de abuelitos*?" (grandparents' music). As time went by, however, I noticed that older and newer generations usually gathered around when I performed—and they all knew the songs and sang along. A flow of sentimentalism and nostalgia invaded the air as I sang the heart-drenching lyrics of famous boleros. A question formed in my mind: Why do Latin Americans continue to sing boleros? Do they have a set of standard musical elements (i.e., tempo or meter)? Or is bolero a term associated with a specific social experience? What are the connections between sentimentalism as expressed in the bolero and sociopolitical and economic events? Why does this music, which was widely popular during the forties and fifties, continue to have relevance to younger generations? I explore these questions in this dissertation.

Contributions to Bolero Scholarship

The bolero has been the subject of many studies that aim to understand its origins and transformations. A genre widely accepted as originally Cuban, the bolero has been treated by a number of Cuban scholars, most notably in the work of musicologist Helio Orovio and Alicia Valdés Cantero. Orovio traced the bolero's origins to the *trova tradicional* from Santiago de Cuba and in particular to the work of composer Pepe Sánchez (1856-1918), who is credited with composing the first bolero, "Tristezas" in 1885. Orovio examined different incarnations of the bolero in Latin America in his book *El Bolero Latino* (1995). More recently, the work of Valdés Cantero has helped spark conversations about the subject through several symposia held in Cuba; the resulting academic exchanges have been captured in the book *Nosotros y el Bolero* (2000). In it,

Valdés Cantero traces the development of the bolero in three main stages: its origins, followed by a period in which it was influenced by *son*, and its reformatting in a Mexican context. According to her, bolero has its roots lyrically in the eight-syllable Spanish poetry and rhythmically in the Cuban *cinquillo* at the end of the nineteenth century (Valdés Cantero 2000:20). By the beginning of the twentieth century, the genre was transformed by mixing with the Cuban *son*. This was the version of the bolero that arrived in Mexico, where composers and performers reformatted it for Mexican audiences. Over time many of the songs that were originally conceived as boleros eventually became to be perceived as "Mexican boleros." The lines of demarcation around bolero's national origins began to blur. Mexican scholars have not been short on comments in defending the bolero as part of a uniquely Mexican cultural heritage or as a genre that owes its development to Mexican musicians, most notably in the works of Pablo Dueñas and Rodrigo Bazán Bonfil.[1] In Dueñas's *Bolero: Historia Gráfica y Documental*, the prologue's author, Juan S. Garrido, entreats the Mexican reader to "defend what is yours; Mexico has many beautiful things in the arts" (Dueñas 2005:2).[2] Along the same lines, Bazán Bonfil (2001) reminds his readers that the Cuban song "Tristezas," which is considered to be the first bolero, incorporates the *pasacalle*, which was already present in the early *son yucateco* at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Additionally, he asserts that the first recording of "Tristezas" took place in Mexico on 5 July 1907 by the duo Abrego y Picazo. Finally, he invites his readers to consider, "isn't it

[1] I include in this brief survey just a few of the books dedicated to the study of bolero in Mexico, but there are other essay compilations that have resulted from symposia such as *El Bolero, Historia Musical, Estructura y Discursos Performativos*, edited by Arturo Chamorro (2002), which among many other things includes a cantometric analysis of the song "Sin Ti" as perfomed by Los Panchos.

[2] Dueñas's book overall, however, offers a historical account of the bolero's journey from Cuba to Mexico and has become a point of departure for anyone wanting to know more about the subject.

better to talk about bolero as a Caribbean genre and leave to the ocean the decision?" (18).[3]

More recently, however, an increasing number of Latin American scholars are being trained to look beyond nationalistic discourses, and research about the bolero and its transnational social and cultural implications have emerged, most notably in the work of sociologist Carmen de la Peza (2001), Daniel Party (2006), and Carolina Santamaria (2014).

De la Peza is not concerned so much with producing a monograph on the bolero as exploring it as a social phenomenon. In her book *El bolero y la educación sentimental en México*, her main objective is, as she writes, "to contribute to [the bolero's] destruction as a device of submission of women and men and to a deplorable relationship model" (2001:8). She constructs her argument based on her own interpretations of bolero lyrics and by administering surveys and conducting focus groups on bolero consumption, participation and meaning-making. Though a great resource, De la Peza's book focuses less on the dialectical process in which consumers are not static receptors of an imposed model of personal interrelations but rather active producers of discourses. Daniel Party's dissertation on bolero and *balada romántica* offers an updated, transnational approach to the study of bolero and its repercussions on cultural production throughout Latin America. Party studied the bolero and balada as guilty pleasures, an innovative lens through which to examine these musics. Carolina Santamaria explores the bolero through recent Euro-Amerocentric scholarly and theoretical frameworks but also offers a

[3] All translations are by the author unless otherwise indicated.

refreshing synthesis of Latin American scholarship, theory, and literature that provides a step forward in the exploration of the bolero.

Other scholars have contributed to our understanding of the bolero. Most notable is anthropologist Mark Pedelty's historical grounding of several Mexican musics in his book *Musical Ritual in Mexico City: From Aztec to NAFTA* (2004). He focuses on the social shifting in the post-revolutionary period, on issues of class, race and ethnicity, and mass media production.

Scholarship on Trio Style

Bolero as a musical genre has encountered many ensemble configurations: orchestral, solo, small combo, and trio, among others. In this dissertation I explore bolero in its most popular configuration during the 1940s, 1950s, and early 1960s: the trio style. I have been fortunate to conduct this research at a time when a fair amount of research on the trio style has started to emerge from both academics and aficionados. This dissertation has benefited greatly from these accounts. Fernando Rios's study of trios in Bolivia (2010) examined the trio style's connections with social and political events and was an inspiration to look beyond the musical elements to explore the ways in which the music participates dialectically in the political life of a country. Leal Benavides, a lawyer in the state of Monterrey, Mexico, has been an avid collector, archivist, and researcher of the trio style who has produced several books on trios and compiled hundreds of recordings that he has made available online. His study on trio Los Tres Reyes (1996) has been invaluable. Pablo Marcial Ortiz Ramos has also diligently researched trios, particularly their development in Puerto Rico. He interviewed many of the most

important performers and produced an invaluable ethnography (1999). Research exploring the connections between the bolero and other genres has also been useful, such as Samuel Araujo's work on bolero in Brazil (1999) and a book on bolero in the Dominican Republic (Veloz Maggiolo, Delgado Malagón and Castillo 2009).

Although scholarly works have increased our understanding of the music as a social phenomenon, these approaches fail to disclose other important social, economic, and cultural aspects of the music. First, focusing on its urban qualities inevitably directs our attention to a binary opposition between rural and urban, which is usually associated with class division and distinction between social groups. Second, focusing on its transnational characteristics usually points to its globalized origin and provides a reductivist approach that responds to global theories of mass competition and production driven by the free market. Lastly, the bolero's sentimentality has rarely been theoretically explored, and when scholars have treated it they tend to focus on textual and/or poetic analysis.

Sentimentalism in Academic Discourse

In most of the contemporary academic system, sentimentalism is considered to be a vice rather than a virtue, an obstacle that prevents us from advancing our knowledge through reason. Though there is a long dialectical epistemological tradition between sentiment and philosophy (including Aristotle, Plato, Kant, Rousseau and others), sentiment and sentimentality are to be avoided both in general society and in academic discourses. The display of emotion is frequently equated with femininity, a characterization that is often intended as a diminutive or even as an insult (Solomon

2004). Emotions, however, are essential to life, and underneath attacks on sentimentalism lurks an attack on sentiment and most emotions, which philosopher Robert C. Solomon deems unacceptable (2004). Understandably, the most basic concern about emotions, especially negative ones like jealousy, is that they undermine our status as rational agents and interfere with the deliverance of reason (Bagnoli 2011). These are considered detrimental to the human condition, but others, such as love and compassion, are deemed to live at the heart of human morality. Emotions are diverse and it is difficult to establish generalities around them (Griffiths 1997, Panksepp 2000). Even emotions we consider negative can speak to the voice of moral consciousness and supply motives and reasons for action, such as blame or shame. These serve as sanctions against moral transgressions (ibid). Additionally, emotions are culturally mediated, in part by the nation-state, by officialdom and nationalistic discourse, and by late capitalism through mass media.[4] Emotions, however, are also an ontological reality in people's lives and they exist within a larger moral frame. In exploring sentimentalism in music in mid-century Mexico, I aim to unveil a few of the connections between social injustice and the production of sentimental music.

In its simplest terms, this dissertation is about the connections between music and sentimentalism in Mexico as expressed in popular song in the middle of the twentieth century, and how these connect with socio-political and economic events. I explore how musical sentimentalism is the deep expression of a societal disappointments and at the same time a means for social mobility through the competition for symbolic capital.

[4] The nation-state and capitalist forces are part of the field of power that affects cultural production.

Theoretical Framework and Orientations

Bolero as a Field of Cultural Production

I explore the bolero, and the sentimentalism associated with it, as a field of cultural production. Bourdieu began developing the main arguments in his theory of fields as early as 1966. Around the same time, the concept of the field was in common use in physics, philosophy and mathematics (Hilgers and Mangez 2014). A field is a structure of relative positions within which agents and groups think, act and take positions. These relative positions are defined by the volume and structure of their capital. In their position-takings, agents and groups—sometimes without realizing it—pursue interests linked to their relative positions in the field, which may consist of preserving or transforming the position they occupy and the resources associated with it (10). Without necessarily being aware of it, an agent may "achieve the objectives inscribed in the logic of a particular field, at the lowest cost" (Bourdieu 1990:50). Intellectual or artistic position-taking are also semi-conscious strategies in the quest for cultural legitimacy and connects the role of culture in the production of social structures. As Johnson has noted, it reveals the ways in which unequal power relations, unrecognized as such, are accepted as legitimate and embedded in the system of classification used in everyday life and in perception of reality (Johnson 1993:2).

Field theory is useful in this context because it privileges the structure of the relations between the individual and the environment; in other words, the social field is a relational space. It allows the identification of forms of "specific capital that operate within it, and to construct the forms of specific capital one must know the specific logic of the field" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:98, 108). Field theory also includes the

principle of contemporaneity—that a situation at a given time includes the "past-as-remembered-now" and the "future-as-anticipated-now," and that these are part of the field in the present (Hilgers and Mangez 2014:4). It assumes that circumstances are never the same for different agents, and that each agent has a different perspective. And finally, the field is constructed and reconstructed moment by moment; nothing is ever fixed or static.

In the field of bolero, agents are composers, performers, artistic directors, producers, poets/lyricist and in some cases instrument makers, all of them competing for symbolic capital that in turn is converted into economic capital and ultimately social status. In Bourdieu's exploration of symbolic capital, cultural capital consists of knowledge accumulated during a person's upbringing and/or through institutionalized experiences such as education, which confer social status. In the field of bolero I identify two main forms of capital: cultural/educational capital and sentimentalism.

For many of the musicians in the field of bolero, institutionalized experiences of education were not available or were out of reach for economic reasons. The incorporation of innovative musical elements facilitated the position-taking process in the field. During the first decades of the field of bolero, musical innovation meant incorporating musical elements associated with society's elites, such as the use of the piano and the incorporation of classical and baroque melodic figurations. Capital in the field, however, is always in flux, and new forms of capital developed through the years with new position-takings. Eventually, jazzy harmonic progressions and other transnational musics were positions musicians took to demonstrate their urbanity and worldliness. As we will see, musicians were also careful to display their classical training

in their music and in formal interviews. The complex melodic arrangements, ever more difficult to perform, demanded technical skill that only those performers with classical training were likely to have.

Sentimentalism was a form of emotional capital that circulated in the field, and those with the ability to convey it assumed an advantaged position. Musicians carefully chose songs with poetic lyrics onto which they added mellifluous melodies and striking vocal harmonies. These choices, when commercially successful, resulted in the accrual of economic capital. Musicians who successfully combined sentimentalism with new musical configurations (voicing, harmony, melodic arrangements, ensembles) enjoyed the benefits of recording contracts, regular live performances, and national and international tours.

Field theory conveniently accounts for cultural production within the field of power. As in Bourdieu's discussion of literary and artistic production in France, the production of romantic, sentimental songs in mid-century Mexico City is part of the "field of cultural production," which is in itself a component of the "field of power" (Bourdieu 1993:38). Two key social agents in the field of power have played an important role in the field of cultural production, particularly in the production of sentimental music: 1) the nation state and its nation-building processes and agendas; and 2) private capital investment through the development of a consumer society in which commodities such as music recordings played a fundamental role.[5]

[5] Bourdieu recognized certain groups and institutions as social agents, which, he acknowledged, "might be isolated individuals, groups or institutions" (Bourdieu 1993:29).

Bolero and the Imagined Nation

In considering the importance and convergence of the nation state and mass media in cultural production, I use Benedict Anderson's idea of "imagined communities." The influence of scholarly work based on Anderson's theory and others, such as Eric Hobsbawm's *The Invention of Tradition*, have helped produce music scholarship that examines the construction and invention of nationalism in academic and popular discourses (Santamaria Delgado 2014:26). Anderson's theory provides a frame of reference to look into how the idea of a nation comes to be. In Anderson's view, the nation is an imagined political community—imagined because members of the community will never be able to meet all of their fellow countrymen face to face, and yet members of the community are confident of their place within the nation. As he explains, "Regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (Anderson 2006:6). Ideas such as "the nation" and "nationalism" are abstract concepts that are shared through the development and consumption of media products. Anderson cites the emergence of printing press capitalism as a fundamental factor in the development of national movements during the Industrial Revolution.

In the present study, the emergence of broadcasting, film, and recorded sound in the early twentieth century complemented print media and were fundamental in creating the Mexican imagined nation. People in the interior learned what was taking place in the city by reading newspapers such as *El Universal* and *Excelsior*, and they heard the voices of politicians and musicians though *repetidoras*, radio receivers that amplified and re-transmitted content from the Mexico City-based XEB, XEQ, and XEW stations. Mass

media was fundamental in the creation and maintenance of the abstraction of the Mexican nation and contributed to social interaction among members of this imagined community.

Within the national imaginary, nationalistic discourses were articulated through musical genres such as mariachi and son jarocho. One genre, however, captured Mexicans' imagination about love, moral, and economic struggle in light of modernity—all pressing matters in the mass consciousness of this imagined community: bolero. The bolero became a crucial element in the formation of the imagined community, particularly for those in the city, and the preferred musical packaging in which sentimentalism was commercialized, circulated and consumed.

In Anderson's view, concepts and ideas such as nation-ness are *cultural artifacts* whose meanings change over time, conveying emotional legitimacy with deep attachments. These artifacts constitute the elements of the imagined community (2006:4). I place bolero along the same lines of study, as a cultural artifact that continues to change over time, conveying emotional, social, and cultural legitimacy, and with deep attachments. These cultural artifacts, or *imaginaries*, are the result of complex crossings of historical forces and that have become modular, able to merge and be merged with a wide array of political and ideological constellations (Anderson 2006:4). In other words, several individual imaginaries have to take place for the whole community to exist. If one is to imagine a nation, then one imagines several other things that constitute that nation, for example, the army that protects the nation, the political apparatus that one trusts to move the country forward. When one thinks about an imaginary, one is necessarily thinking in an optimistic way. Imaginaries represent the way members of a group wish things were. In this dissertation when I refer to bolero as an imaginary I am referring to a

transforming and transformative cultural artifact, crucial in the construction of the imagined community, with a deep optimistic attachment formed around the set of values, institutions, and symbols playing a leading role in Mexican social constructions of structures of meaning. More specifically, bolero connected Mexico's imagined national community with the discourse of unfulfilled love.

Love for the Nation

In writing about love and the nation, Sarah Ahmed reminds us that the impossibility that love can reach its object of desire makes love a powerful and multidimensional narrative (Ahmed 2015:130). As we will see in the following chapter, the creation of a discourse of unfulfilled love at the beginning of the twentieth century persists into the present and conceals deep emotional issues regarding the individual's relationship to the nation. As Ahmed writes:

> Love may be especially crucial in the event of the failure of the nation to deliver its promise for the good life. So the failure of the nation to "give back" the subject's love works to increase the investment in the nation. The subject "stays with" the nation, despite the absence of return and the threat of violence, as leaving would mean recognizing that the investment of national love over a lifetime has brought no value. One loves the nation, then, out of hope and with nostalgia for how it could have been. One keeps loving rather than recognizing that the love that one has given has not and will not be returned (131).

Ahmed's assessment is particularly instructive in evaluating the time in which bolero was most popular and crucial in the development of an imagined community that, though disenfranchised, kept loving rather than recognizing the futility of that love attachment. This is evident in some of the newspaper opinion pieces of the time. In his weekly

"Sunday Reflection," Fernando Díez de Urdanivia, cultural commentator and editor-in-chief of *Excelsior*, Mexico's leading newspaper, reminded his readers that:

> While some are overwhelmed with wealth, close to their dazzling mansions moans a hungry multitude…the dislocated modern civilization prides itself on a progress cemented over the bleeding misfortune of the enormous human masses. Let's quickly take a look at misery. The femininity of woman overshadowed by the incessant fatigue that bitters her mood and casts away her sweetness and her smile; the man coarsened by the sterile job, by the useless fight, by the stabilized adversity, by the alcohol that consumes his little resources and his wasted energy, but that serves him as sedative for his pain. The children—oh, the children of misery!—childhood without joy, lives without light, prematurely withered countenances, eyes saddened by the everyday drama, broken-winged souls, inherited proscription, repressed hunger, fermented dissatisfactions that look for an outlet in the sinuous roads of evil. A whole world apart full of denial, resented while amazed by the unreachable splendors, eager to find residues of happiness in the dumpsters (Díez de Urdanivia 1952:18).

Boleros captured and contributed both to the creation and exploitation of this reality. Bolero as imaginary represented Mexicans' love for their nation, which only seemed to grow more insistent through periods of economic and political turbulence. In order to explore the connection between bolero and social, political, and economic struggles I follow several steps.

First, I deconstruct what has been written about the bolero and the types of analyses to which it has been subjected over time both in popular culture and in academic discourse. For decades the bolero has been considered a musical genre, so I explore it through the process of genre creation. This exploration has led me to conclude that the bolero is far from being a set group of rules and/or musical conventions but is rather a social imaginary through which Mexicans imagine their nation, the result of the nation-

building processes during the first half of the twentieth century in which media played an important role.

Second, having established the bolero as crucial element of the "imagined nation," I explore how bolero and the sentimentalism associated with it provided the basis for a "structure of feeling," a concept of Raymond Williams (1977) that is useful because it removes feeling from the personal and psychological and places it in the realm of the social. Third, after exploring the "feelings" of the social and discovering their connections with mass media and an uneven distribution of wealth, I embark on an exploration of the ways in which boleros simultaneously express deep social "feelings" while providing a sentimental currency spent in the search for social mobility.

Lastly, in providing a contemporary reading of the bolero, I explore a recent bolero revival as a representation of Mexican society's optimistic attachment to a political project that never came to fruition. I do so by referring to recent theoretical approaches to affect, particularly Lauren Berlant's concept of cruel optimism (2011), which explains why people remain attached to an idea regardless of their own worsening economic conditions. The concept is useful as it expands on Williams's approach in understanding in what ways people are affected by their social structure.

Research Methodologies

This dissertation is the result of several years of fieldwork, undertaken via standard techniques such as participant observation, conducting interviews, note-taking, and so on. It is also, however, an exercise of reflecting upon my own upbringing. I grew up in Mexico City, listening to family members talk and perform boleros during informal

gatherings; in fact, I received my first guitar in order to participate in the social music making of *domingos con la abuela* (Sundays with grandma). Both of my grandfathers played guitar and performed boleros. Having moved to the United States and being trained as an ethnomusicologist has put me in an interesting position. Conducting research in the city where I grew up, among some of the people I know, and in a culture with which I am familiar, posed a particular challenge. As Mexican sociologist Angela Giglia (2003) has noted:

> The conditions under which we work (those who work in Mexico City) in the proper spaces of globalization—[experiencing both] the strangeness and familiarity, [having] free access as a city dweller and [yet] asking for permission as an anthropologist, observing as a passerby or consumer [yet] making an effort to observe "objectively"—mix in a *sui generis* way but above all reflexively, taking distance from our usual use of the places and assuming an ambivalence as user and observer (2003:98).

The research presented here constitutes years of this *sui generis* observation of public and private performance of sentimental music in Mexico; from the intimacy of a serenade to an informal gathering where the food, drinks, and music combine to form a social experience. And from the casual conversations that wind from the state of politics and the current devaluation of the peso to the latest *telenovelas* and recent reinterpretations of boleros by pop artists.

Much of traditional ethnomusicological research has been based on moving to a far-flung location and observing and asking questions of a specific group of people who make music. In producing an ethnography of a time long gone, I had to come up with resourceful ways of "traveling" in order to provide my reader with a sense of what it was like to be in Mexico City during the first half of the twentieth century. I did so through a

combination of field and research techniques. To start, I invested several months reading newspapers at the Hemeroteca Nacional at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM). This provided me with as clear an initial picture as possible of what it was like to live in those days, what concerned people, what were the forms of entertainment and the latest trends in fashion and consumerism in general. I have used most of these materials in chapter two. I also explored the many photograph collections of the Instituto Nacional de Investigaciones Estéticas at UNAM, which provided many of the photographs used in this dissertation. Additionally, I saw the large collection of Agustín Lara documents at the Archivo General de la Nación (AGN), which provided material for my exploration of his music. The Biblioteca Lerdo de Tejada in downtown Mexico was a great resource whenever material was not available at the Hemeroteca Nacional. In addition to archival research in print media, I found audio resources at the Fonoteca Nacional de México in Coyoacan, including interviews with musicians who have now passed away.

In this dissertation I examine the music of trio ensembles performing boleros in order to illustrate my points. I have been very fortunate to get to know some of the founders of famous midcentury trios and their relatives. I focus my analysis on the following groups, which I chose as case studies based on their popularity and their unique positions in the field of bolero music: Los Panchos, Los Tres Diamantes, Los Ases, Los Caballeros, Los Tecolines, Los Dandys, Los Santos, and Los Tres Reyes. I gathered several hours of interviews with each of the survivors and family members, which has provided me with firsthand accounts of what it meant to be part of the cultural production of that era. In summary, I have tried to weave all these resources together to provide my

reader a window into the music making of people in Mexico City during the 1950s in Mexico. The accompanying historical record and ethnographies aim to lay bare the social, political, and economic struggles of the time.

Outline of Dissertation

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. Chapter one introduces sentimentalism as a seminal concept in the development of the Mexican social fabric and national imaginary; it explores sentimentalism's connections with capitalist enterprises and the culture industries, disclosing its convergence with mass media and the Mexican state. It deconstructs previous historicizations of the bolero and its genre formation, following the bolero from Cuba to Yucatán and Mexico City, examining the work of Guty Cárdenas and Agustín Lara. The chapter concludes with a brief exploration of how boleros in films established a discursive space for the articulation of love and longing for the nation.

Chapter two resumes the narrative by offering a picture of mid-century Mexico's political and economic landscape. It explores foreign and domestic policies that influenced cultural production and that contributed to the formation of a structure of feeling based on unrequited love for the nation. Additionally, it locates the nation-state and private investment as social agents in the field of power that, in Bourdieusian terms, affected the field of cultural production. It explores the nation-state and capitalist interests as foundational elements of this structure in which actors enacted, negotiated, and contested the social. Chapter three explores how musicians exercised intentionality in their music. It examines how the idea of bolero as a field of cultural production provided

the musical and discursive space for position-takings and the circulation of capital among trios. It also examines more closely what constituted capital in the bolero field and in what specific ways musicians contested that capital. Chapter four continues the examination of bolero-as-a-field and describes a musical and social transition in the second half of the 1950s due to a shifting political landscape and rougher economic waters. Ornamentation and experimentation ramped up in the field as trios competed for available positions. Chapter five fast-forwards to the 1990s because the mid-century structure of feeling was triggered by a powerful nostalgia that renewed the bolero and opened up positions for younger performers.

Chapter One: Love and the Nation

Serenading

We arrived to a modest neighborhood in the small town of Poza Rica in Veracruz around midnight. We parked two or three houses away from the place we were going to serenade, as *trovadores* usually do in order to preserve the element of surprise. My friend and interlocutor, Miguel, got out of the car first and silently gestured for me to grab the camera and the tripod, as he wanted to have a record of what he believed was the beginning of a lifetime together with Carmen. He went to the back of the car to get his *requinto* and my guitar as I started setting up the video camera quietly in the dark of the night. We put our straps on our instruments and confirmed the instruments' tunings as quietly as possible. As we got ourselves ready, we approached the window behind which we hoped his beloved Carmen was sleeping. A dog started barking, momentarily distracting us from our task, but we were ready. We opened with the song "Muchacha Bonita" (Beautiful girl), Miguel singing gallantly and expressively with a passion fueled by his love for Carmen.

Miguel was a business administrator by training and had been working as a financial auditor for *Teléfonos de Mexico*. The nature of his work required him to travel extensively throughout Mexico. A few days before our serenade, he called me from Poza Rica and told me that he had met the woman of his life, "a beautiful blonde with light-colored eyes," and that he wanted to woo her by singing her some boleros. Miguel and I had been playing boleros together for many years, so we had some numbers ready. He mailed me the keys to his apartment and asked me to bring his guitars and get on the first bus to Poza Rica. When I arrived at the hotel where he was staying we practiced the

songs we were going to perform: “Muñequita Linda,” “Muchacha Bonita,” “Gema,” and several others. As we began to sing we approached the window, and after two songs Carmen appeared with a shy smile. The event turned out to be of great importance in Miguel’s life, as that night represented the convergence of the fulfillment of his romantic interest, his peak financial success, his optimism for the future, and his love of sentimental song.

Sentimentalism in Mexico

Public performances of sentimentalism are ever-present in Mexican society, and they are frequently bound up in economic enterprises. They are literally in the streets, where people routinely buy roses and chocolates for loved ones from roving vendors while waiting for the red light to change. They are in restaurants, where strolling musicians come to diners’ tables to serenade them with sentimental lyrics from the standard bolero repertoire. They are in public transportation, where a single guitar player or an entire ensemble jumps from one metro car to the other, or from one microbus to another, playing for tips.

Sentimentalism is also present in churches, where images of flagellated saints evoke real tears from parishioners during Sunday mass, or in the street re-enactments of Christ carrying his cross during *semana santa* (holy week). Other public performances of sentiment in life-cycle celebrations include the *quinceañera*, where the father of a girl gives an emotional (sometimes alcohol-fueled) speech about his daughter becoming a woman and joining society; or during funerals where paid crying women called *lloronas* provide a soundscape for the departure of the deceased. It is also present in the

nationalistic celebrations of independence, where Mexican citizens exercise themselves in a cathartic public display of their conflicting emotions of pride and embarrassment about the country's political and economic situation.

Since their introduction, Mexico's mass media industries have provided citizens with a sentimental education. Social patterns of everyday life and appropriate corresponding emotional responses have, for generations, been inculcated through the film industry. Today, there are many *telenovelas* (soap operas) for children, who learn how to respond to certain situations in accordance with rules set by Mexican society—for instance, when (and for whom) crying or an emotional outburst is an appropriate response.

Sentimentalism in the Imagined Nation

Connections between sentimentalism and the culture industries can be traced back to the early twentieth century, particularly when these coincided with post-revolutionary nation-building processes. This convergence helped produce what Benedict Anderson famously coined an "imagined community." In this chapter, I explore how the imagined nation and sentimentalism contributed to the creation of a musical genre known as bolero. I begin by exploring the historical and social origins and development of the bolero; in doing so, I use theorizations about genre and the construction of meaning from Ortner (1996), Frow (2006), Holt (2007), and Hesmondhalgh (2007). I argue that heretofore what has been considered bolero is not a musical genre with a defined set of musical elements but is closer to a social construction through which members of Mexican society articulate deep social and economic concerns, often couched in themes of

romantic love. I do so by exploring the lives and musical production of two seminal "bolero" composers: Guty Cárdenas and Agustín Lara, and I conclude by focusing on the impact of Lara's compositions through the incorporation of his music in the nascent film industry.

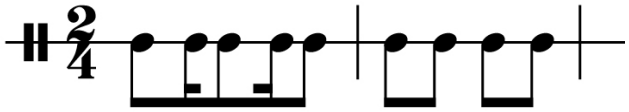
Bolero and Genre Formation

Frow and Ortner, writing separately about genre, both remind us that poststructuralist analysis of these concepts gravitate around the fact that "subjects are constructed by and subject to the cultural and historical discourses within which they most operate" (Ortner 1996:1).[1] Frow, quoting from Foucault (1989:49), reminds us that genre-like discourses are "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak (Frow 2006:17). Additionally, Frow suggests that genre (artistic, literary or musical) is not a fixed form or a set of rules; rather, it actively shapes the way we understand the world, is central to the social organization of knowledge, and contributes to the social structuring of meaning, producing a universe by which discourse is structured (Frow 2006:10). In other words, discourses create the realities they attempt to describe.

Perhaps nowhere is this maxim truer than in the historicization of the bolero, which usually begins in Spain during the eighteenth century in dances that were part of larger theatrical dramas (Kahl and Katz n.d.). This dance has been considered unrelated to the sentimental bolero because of its triple meter. The sentimental bolero, which

[1] The connections between the bolero and its contribution to the development of a structure of meaning that gravitates towards the definition and re-definition of gender roles has been covered by the work of Carmen De la Peza and continues to be an important aspect of this social phenomenon; however, it is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

concerns us here, has its origins in Santiago de Cuba during the second half of the nineteenth century. Scholars generally agree that the first bolero was the song "Tristezas" composed by José "Pepe" Sanchez in 1883. This bolero takes a binary form, with eight-measure phrases that combine to create sixteen-measure periods. Its melodic tendency is to begin in a higher register and gradually descend. Harmonically, the Cuban bolero is sung in two voices accompanied by two guitars, sometimes a *tresillo*,[2] maracas and clave. Rhythmically, it has a simple duple meter in which a *cinquillo* often spans the first half of a two-bar pattern (Example 1.1). Additionally, bolero has its roots lyrically in eight-syllable Spanish poetry (Valdés Cantero 2000:20).



Example 1.1: *Cinquillo* rhythmic pattern (first measure).[3]

This definition from the outset would eliminate many of the songs that musicians today consider part of standard bolero repertoire, songs like "Farolito" and "Noche de Ronda," triple-meter waltzes by renowned composer Agustín Lara. Over many decades, though, and through a complex intermingling of different musical genres, bolero has become a catch-all term akin to "classical music." It often includes musical elements from other genres and idioms (Peruvian waltzes, *pasillos*, *guarachas*, jazz, and an operatic style of singing, as well as harmonic sequencing and melodic ornamentation

[2] A small guitar-like instrument used for melodic ornamentation.

[3] All musical examples in this dissertation are transcribed by the author unless otherwise indicated.

from the High Baroque). Although a formal musical definition of bolero exists (stated above) and a "birthplace" of the music can be established, in practice, bolero is today a complex concept to which academic research has contributed. Scholars interested in the subject have focused on three distinguishable elements of the bolero: its urbanity, its transnational nature, and its sentimental and textual characteristics.

None of these approaches, however, explores the process of genre creation in depth, its transculturation and its essential role as an emotional currency. Take, for example, Rodrigo Bazan Bonfil's book, *Y si vivo cien años: Antología del Bolero* (2001). Although a great historical resource needed for any serious research about bolero, the book encompasses many songs that do not fit the historical definition of the bolero, such as the canción yucateca "Nunca" by Guty Cárdenas, the Peruvian waltz-inspired "El Andariego" by Alvaro Carrillo, or Rafael Otero's "Ódiame," all of which, though popular during the bolero epoch, do not conform to the formal musical elements of the bolero as defined above. In my exploration of this musical genre I wonder: Can we define it as being based on a duple or triple rhythm? Is it from Cuba, or because it was so popular in Mexico (where the mass media revolution took place), does that make it a quintessentially Mexican genre? Can it be located in a certain time as well as a place, for example the 1930s, 1940s or 1950s? Or can the songs recorded in the 1990s under the label "bolero" by popular artist Luis Miguel be considered boleros as well?[4] Is there an instrumentation that defines its sounds, like the *bandoneon* in Argentinian tango? Is it defined by a characteristic singing style or by its poetic themes?

A good starting point to untangle some aspects of this web of inquiries would be to consider how the bolero developed in conjunction with the recording industry, which

[4] For a full exploration of this, see the last chapter.

relied on genre creation for marketing purposes. Genre is a way of formatting cultural products in order to minimize the danger of commercial misses. The genre concept provides the consumer with an explicit use and association with a particular pleasure (Hesmondhalgh 2007:23). Bolero was associated with sentimentalism from its beginning, and the genre provided a perfect packaging for musical products that could not otherwise be categorized easily on the basis of rhythm, tempo, harmonic progression, or instrumentation. Instead, what they shared was a rhetoric of romance, sentimentalism and nostalgia. In order to understand the connections between these rhetorical elements and the bolero, as well as the genre's transcultural transformations from a localized musical expression into a global social phenomenon, we have to go back to Cuba.

Historical Considerations of the Bolero

Bolero, nostalgia, and sentimentalism were born in conjunction with important political and economic shifts on the island. With slavery abolished in 1886 and with the death of writer, patriot and political leader José Martí (1895), musicians composed against the backdrop of the Spanish-American War and the fight for independence. Singers and composers such as Pepe Sanchez (1854-1918), Sindo Garay (1867-1983), Alberto Villalón (1882-1955), and Rosendo Ruiz, Sr. (1884-1983) were at the forefront of what was later considered the *vieja trova*, a genre originally intended to be listened to instead of danced, and performed at informal gatherings by small groups of people, usually members of the urban poor through whom the music conveyed emotional messages (Moore 2003:5) and expressed the vulnerabilities of a country immersed in political turmoil. Spanish poetry and the Cuban *cinquillo* provided the perfect

combination of romantic lyricism and musical accompaniment that articulated sentimentalism driven by social and political concerns. The song texts, inspired by revolutionary ideals of cultural transformation in the arts, showed up in early musical compositions expressing libertarian ideas about the nation, the independence, love for other, and love for the nation. During this time the bolero acquired its roots connecting strong emotions about love, nationalism and justice with sentimental lyrics and music. Notably, during this period misogynist rhetoric, which is now often associated with the bolero, was avoided, as it did not conform to the poetic tradition.

In Mexico, however, the bolero was reformed through exchanges between musicians in the Yucatán peninsula and Cuban musicians who traveled across the Caribbean spreading their music and artistry through theatrical plays called *bufos-Cubanos* (Dueñas 2005:14). The small distance between Yucatán and Cuba represented a cultural as well as a geographical closeness. *Danzones, guarachas, puntos cubanos* and rumbas were highly welcome in Yucatán, to the point that several Cuban musicians, including Ramón Gasque, Benito Pañalver, and Cayetanos de las Cuevas Balán, migrated there (Moreno Rivas 1979:103). This exchange increased the confusion about the authorship and nationality of many boleros. The song "Ansias locas" (Crazy Desires) from Cuban composer Eusebio Delfín was considered for many years a Yucatecan song. Another example is the song "Guarina y la tarde" by Cuban composer Sindo Garay, which has been part of the standard repertoire of the *trova yucateca*.

Bolero and Yucatecan Trova

Yucatán, like many other states in the Mexican republic after the end of the revolution, underwent a political reconstruction process. The defeat of Porfirio Díaz, who served three and a half decades as President of Mexico, left a power vacuum that competing ideologies attempted to fill. Felipe Carrillo Puerto (1874-1924), a young journalist from Yucatán, became governor of the state in 1922. Carrillo's government encouraged libertarian ideals of landowner, gender, and ethnic equality. He supported and sponsored the development of the radio industry in the state, establishing station XEY, "the voice of the great socialist party," and was an avid follower of sentimental music (Bazan Bonfil 2001:28). Carrillo is also known for his affair with American journalist Alma Reed. The scandal caught the attention of Yucatecan society when Carrillo divorced his wife in order to be with Reed, and he commissioned a song from composer Ricardo Palmerín in her honor. The event was captured musically in the song "Peregrina," composed by Palmerín (1887-1944) and with lyrics by poet Luis Rosado Vega (1873-1958). "Peregrina" is a poetic exaltation of the physical beauty of a woman who has left her home to live in a tropical place. It is in 4/4 and uses the *habanera* rhythm. Interestingly this composition does not show the Cuban *cinquillo*.

Peregrina de ojos claros y divinos	Sojourner with light and divine eyes
y mejillas encendidas de arrebol,	and blushed lit cheeks,
mujercita de los labios purpurinos	little woman with purple lips
y radiante cabellera como el sol,	and hair shiny like the sun,
peregrina que dejaste tus lugares	sojourner who left your place,
los abetos y la nieve, la nieve virginal,	the firs and the snow, the virgin snow,
y viniste a refugiarte en mis palmares	and came to shelter under my palm trees
bajo el cielo de mi tierra, de mi tierra tropical.	under the sky of my land, of my tropical land.
Las canoras avecillas de mis prados,	The birds of my meadows
por cantarte de tus trinos si te ven,	sing you trills if they see you
y las flores de nectarios perfumados	and the flowers with perfumed nectars

te acarician en los labios	caress you on the lips
en los labios	on the lips
en los labios y en la sien.	on the lips and on the temple.
Cuando dejes mis palmares y mi tierra	When you leave my palm trees and my land,
peregrina de semblante encantador,	sojourner of charming countenance
no te olvides, no te olvides de mi tierra,	don't forget, don't forget my land,
no te olvides, no te olvides de mi amor.	don't forget, don't forget my love.

Carrillo did not serve out his term as governor; his administration was perceived by the central government in Mexico City as an early socialist threat to capitalist interests and they suppressed it. Carrillo was incarcerated and executed in 1924.

Yucatecan song and the Cuban bolero share the sentimentalism, politeness, and celebration of love that stemmed from Spanish poetry and later from Latin American cultural movements. Musically, however, they differed in their time signature (6/8 and 2/4, respectively). As the mass media industry grew and musicians traveled extensively between Cuba, Yucatán and Mexico City, musical ideas mixed, creating new interpretations of sentimental music that did not conform to a set of rules yet provided a new way of understanding the rapidly globalizing world. Musicians following these social, political and economic transformations moved physically (towards the city) and symbolically (to fields of cultural production) in order to position themselves advantageously in order to compete in those fields. They found original positions by distinguishing themselves through musical elements, for instance in instrumentation (piano, single guitar, and/or orchestral arrangements) or in rhythms and rhythmic patterns like the *habanera* and the *cinquillo*.

The Teatro Lírico was the place where many seasoned and upcoming artists spent their formative years, and the impresario Jose Campillo was the visionary and savvy businessman behind it. In 1927, Campillo organized a musical contest outside the theater

where *fritangas* (fried food), candy and merchandise were sold. The contest was a marketing ploy to promote the all-female Trio Garníca-Ascencio (Dueñas 2005:24). Naturally, many people entered the competition, but one young man stood above the rest; his name was Augusto ("Guty") Cárdenas.

Cárdenas (1905-1932) was born in Mérida, Yucatán. He learned to play the guitar when he was a child from Palmerín, the influential composer of "Peregrina" (De Pau Canto and De Pau 2004:7). As the son of an upper middle class family, he studied briefly at Williams College in Mexico City but abandoned his studies in favor of his artistic endeavors. He returned to Mérida, where he worked for his father while composing and performing. His shy personality was an obstacle in the beginning, but his poetic lyrics, combined with fashionable Cuban and Yucatecan rhythms, earned him success with an audience that was already predisposed to sentimental music. In 1927, Cárdenas returned to Mexico City to take advantage of the music and media revolution in the metropolis that had become a melting pot of people from different nations, cultures, and musical ideas.

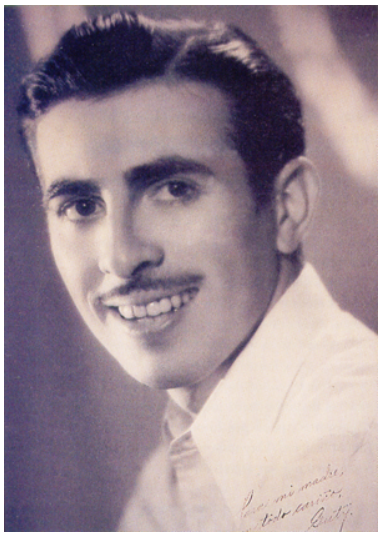


Figure 1.1: Guty Cárdenas (circa 1931) (Photo: <www.trovadores-yucatecos.com>, accessed 21 January 2015).

Cárdenas entered the Teatro Lírico competition with his song "Nunca" and was awarded second place. The song, following the Yucatecan tradition, was in 6/8, and it became extremely popular. Cárdenas's successful positioning allowed him to enter the mass media and music industry while proposing a new approach to sentimental music and poetry. Many of his compositions were in 6/8, accompanied by a single guitar, and full of elegant lyrics, songs such as: "Yo pienso en ti" (I think about you), "Golondrina viajera" (Messenger pigeon), "Peregrino de amor" (Sojourn of love), "Rayito de sol" (Little ray of sun), "Ojos tristes" (Sad eyes), "Dios te bendiga" (God bless you), among many others. He did, however, experiment with the incorporation of different musical elements and themes.[5] The song "Si yo pudiera" (If I could) follows in the tradition of the Cuban bolero in the sense that it is in a simple duple rhythm that makes use of the cinquillo. Others, such as the song "Quisiera" (I would like), follow the instrumentation and rhythmic pattern of the Cuban danzón. An interesting case in which he combines the Cuban influence with his Yucatecan background is the song "Y mientras más" (And the more), which starts in a 6/8 slow tempo that switches to 2/4, incorporating the Cuban *cinquillo* for the rest of the song. This song is complemented by a small percussion section of claves and drums. Cardenas's experimentation contributed to the melting pot of musical genres and further obscured the distinguishable elements of the Cuban bolero.

Along with a transformation in the music came a shift in the poetic discourse. Soon sentimentalism was not only about celebrating beautiful "pure" love associated with the innocence of virginal women from rural settings; it began to include themes of jealousy and betrayal perpetrated by "looser" women of the city and prostitutes. Poetry

[5] Including music associated with Mayan themes, where he expresses ideas about nature and love of the land. Songs such as "Caminante del mayab" and "Yucalpeten" are good examples.

took a turn from elegant and polite toward misogynist and accusatory. We can observe this transformation in the work of Guty Cárdenas and musicians who came after him. Although Cárdenas's 1927 song "Nunca" contains some of the quasi-masochistic rhetoric that would permeate much Mexican romantic music during the twentieth century (expressed here in the sentiment "I know I will never kiss your mouth…but I love you"), the song is still based in a polite lyricism and elegant poetry, avoiding explicit description and using figurative speech such as "apasionada fuente de tu vida" (the passionate fountain of your life). This would change, as we will see shortly, as the music was increasingly produced and consumed by and for urbanites. The following are the lyrics of Cárdenas's song "Nunca":

Yo se que nunca besare tu boca	I know that I will never kiss your mouth
Tu boca de purpura encendida	Your mouth turned purple
Yo se que nunca llegare a la loca	I know that I will never reach the crazy
Y apasionada fuente de tu vida	And passionate fountain of your life
Yo se que inútilmente te venero	I know that I uselessly worship you
Que inútilmente el corazón te evoca	That uselessly my heart evokes you
Pero a pesar de todo yo te quiero	But above all, I love you
Pero a pesar de todo yo te quiero	But above all, I love you
Aunque nunca besar pueda tu boca	Even though I might never kiss your mouth

According to Bazan Bonfil, "Nunca" was one of the first boleros to bridge the first radio experiments and the fully developed radio industry (2001:26, 28), but it shows no trace of the 2/4 meter or the cinquillo. Musicologist Daniel Party adds that "Nunca" is one of the most famous boleros today and calls Cárdenas one of the "most important early Mexican bolero composers" (Party 2006:23). Whether described as bolero or canción yucateca, "Nunca" flung open the doors of the music industry to Cárdenas, who became the Latin-American artistic director for Columbia Records in New York City and

one of the most influential singers and composers in Mexico before his death in 1932 at the climax of his career.

By the time of Cárdenas's death, Mexico was immersed in a political and economic renovation. The country had experienced the devastation of the interior and the rapid growth of cities populated by those displaced by the revolution (1910-20) In fact, Mexico City grew from 350,000 people at the beginning of the twentieth century to 1,750,000 by the 1920s (Aura 1990:27). In other words, the lack of economic opportunities in the interior propelled the centralization of Mexico. Demographic concentration and improvements in the economy—primarily in the cities—fueled the demand for products and services that represented a new urban life, from household appliances to fashionable clothes to the development of an entertainment industry, movies, theater, nightclubs, and music. The increasing numbers of people arriving in the city enjoyed the pleasures it offered while confronting an economic system that in reality benefited only a few. City dwellers negotiated feelings and emotions that stemmed from inequality. Additionally, the newly developed nightlife challenged conservative Catholic morals. All these feelings were masterfully captured, articulated, produced and consumed through the emotional currency that sentimentalism provided, most notably in the works of Agustín Lara (1897-1970).

Bolero in Mexico City and Agustín Lara

Lara was a singer, composer, pianist, film actor, and one of the first radio hosts. His show on radio station XEW, *La Hora Azul* (The blue hour), was one of the first to feature the new urban, sentimental song. Lara was born in Mexico City in 1897 and came

of age during the most fervent period of Mexico's nation building. He was the son of a doctor and grew up among a rapidly ascendant middle class. Having been raised in a middle class family, Lara had access to piano instruction, with several piano teachers, most notably pianist Ricardo Castro, one of the most important representatives of Mexican romanticism of the late nineteenth century (Wood 2014) and an elitist, who rejected national traditional forms in favor of European ones. Although a brief experience in Lara's young life, his study proved to be an influential stage in his personal and musical development, as he would eventually reject music associated with the nation-building process (e.g. mariachi and son jarocho, among others). Additionally, Lara attended a religious school for his elementary education, *Colegio de los Hermanos Maristas* (Marist Brothers school),[6] which influenced his discourse, as sin, good and evil, would persist in his songs. Many of Lara's lyrics show the class, gender and power relations as well as the concern about moral transgression that pertained to that time in Mexico's history, and linked to sentimentalism. Lara became part of Mexico City's nightlife, which at the time consisted primarily of bordellos (Taibo 1985). Politicians, artists, impresarios, and people of power formed the frequent clientele of these businesses. It was there that Lara was able to show his musical talents, found the raw material from which he drew inspiration for many of his songs, and moved forward in the field of bolero.

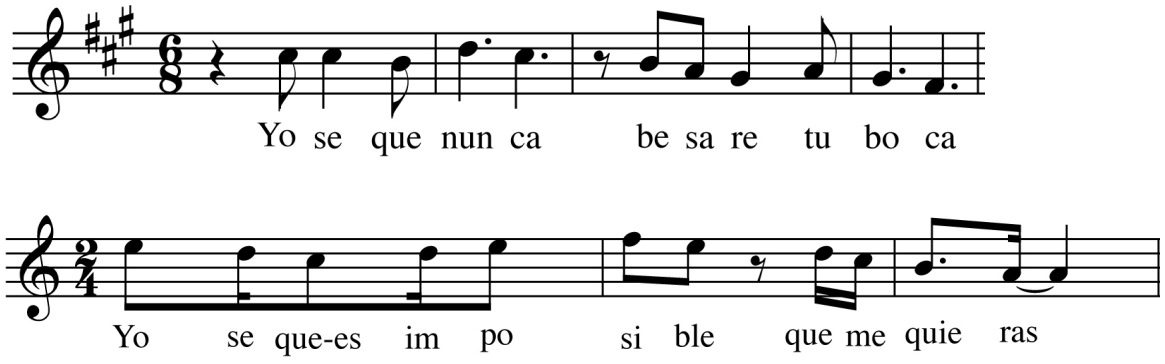
[6] Lara also attended the French Fournier School (Wood 2014) and throughout his life was proud that he spoke perfect French (Taibo 1985).

Figure 1.2: Agustín Lara, photo by Armando Herrera. (Photo credit: Sociedad Musical "Agustín Lara" A.C. <www.smlara.com>, accessed January 24, 2015.)

Lara, through the construction of the bolero genre, showed how, both musically and discursively, people experience emotions such as jealousy, unrequited love and personal and social disillusionment. Genre is a fundamental structuring force in musical life, according to Holt (2007). It has implications for "how, where, and with whom people make and experience music…Genre not only appears in many areas of musical life; it also has the *capacity to connect them.* Genre is always collective, musically and socially…Conventions and expectations are established through acts of repetition performed by a group of people, and the process of genre formation is in turn often accompanied by the formation of new social collectiveness" (3).

Lara connected Mexican society through his presence and influence in the mass media. He drew from a plethora of popular music genres: tango, boleros, foxtrots, waltzes and even blues. He was abreast of musical trends around the world and was successful in using them in his own production. At the beginning of his career, however, Lara followed the path paved by Cárdenas, who experimented with different rhythms, forms, and

ensemble configurations. Lara positioned himself in the field by adopting the already popular sentimental Cuban bolero and performing it at the piano. While the guitar—Cárdenas's instrument of choice—had perceived associations with the provinces, the working poor and the peasantry, the piano gave Lara highbrow associations. The combination of an iconic instrument of the elites with the rural-derived *cinquillo* from Cuba and Yucatán rallied people from different backgrounds and positioned him at the forefront of cultural production. One of Lara's first compositions, "Imposible," (1928) drew both thematically and harmonically on Cárdenas's "Nunca" (1927). Both start with the phrase "Yo sé que" (I know that). The first line of "Nunca" is: "I know that I will never kiss your mouth," while "Imposible" beings: "I know that is impossible that you love me." Both songs start in a minor key that modulates to the relative major. The contours of the melodic lines are similar (Example 1.2). Rhythmically, however, the songs are completely different. While "Nunca" is in 6/8, "Imposible" is written in a simple duple meter.[7] Most notably, Lara's song uses the Cuban *cinquillo*. The following are transcriptions of the initial song texts and their rhythmic setup.



Example 1.2: Opening of the songs "Nunca" (top, Guty Cárdenas, 1927) and "Imposible" (below, Agustín Lara, 1928).

[7] The song can be probably also be transcribed in a 4/4 tempo, but for the purposed of identifying the cinquillo as explained before, it is transcribed in 2/4 here.

"Nunca" and "Imposible" share the public display of an emotion of the unreachable, unfulfilled desire of and in an "imagined community." Mexicans who were invested in the political project of the nation expected a return—a fulfillment of the promise of "the good life" and economic and political stability. As increasing wealth disparity showed the failure of the new government to deliver on that promise, song lyrics gravitated towards the effects of economic peril. This is how sentimentalism became simultaneously an emotional currency worth fighting for and the artistic expression of profound disappointment.

According to De la Peza, around this time boleros also became an instrument of submission for both men and women to a deplorable relationship model (2001:8). Lara, given his prominent position in the field, could be seen as almost single-handedly responsible for this discursive construction. One of his primary contributions was his morally challenging poetry and more sharply delineated gender roles and moral codes. Rhetoric about the purity and honor of women in Lara's songs simultaneously concealed and promoted the socially enforced control over behavior, especially sexual behavior (Ortner 1996:43). In "Imposible," though Lara does not specify the gender of the lover the narrator addresses, it is clear that he or she "exchanges kisses for money." The narrator imagines that God will decide the lover's punishment:

Yo se que es imposible que me quieras,	I know that is impossible that you love me,
Que tu amor para mí, fue pasajero	That your love for me was fleeting,
Y que cambias tus besos, por dinero	And that you exchange your kisses for money,
Envenenando así, mi corazón.	Poisoning my heart.
No creas que tus infamias me perjuran	Don't think that your infamies perjure me,
Incitan mi rencor, para olvidarte	They incite my rancor, to forget you.
Te quiero mucho más, en vez de odiarte	I love you much more instead of hating you,
Y tú castigo, se lo dejo, a Dios	And your punishment I leave up to God.

Lara's first important compositions coincided with important economic and historic events such as the U.S. stock market crash in 1929 and the economic strategies to counteract it—such as the New Deal—which adopted Keynesian policies of fiscal and monetary interventions by central governments. By the 1930s, Mexicans were preoccupied with the economic news coming from the north and were eager for entertainment that would give them an escape. Lara was well known for his musical compositions and worked regularly in the most prominent nightclubs of the city and started composing and performing for the popular *teatros de revistas* or revues, theatrical plays with musical performances and sketches similar to early Broadway follies. He wrote and performed for the most important theaters such as the Principal, the Lírico, and the Iris. For the Iris he composed musical numbers such as "La señorita emociones" (Miss Emotions) in 1930, "Alma cancionera" (Musical Soul) in 1931, and "Amor de mis amores" (Love of My Loves) in 1935.[8] Although successful in this popular theater, Lara's real mass media impact came with the radio.

Though radio broadcasting took place in several Mexican provinces during the early 1920s, it was not until the establishment of the XEW radio station in September 1930 that the radio became a truly mass medium in Mexico (Wood 2014). With heavy investment of private capital from the United States, the XEW became the leading radio station in the nation and a factory for artists from Latin America and the world. Lara's new sentimentalism filled the airwaves of the early radio broadcastings. His radio shows *La hora azul* and *La hora intima* featured poetry and musical performances by himself and guest artists such as Toña la Negra and Pedro Vargas. Such radio programs in the early 1930s established the importance of sentimentalism and emotions at the core of

[8] For a compilation of the revue numbers that Lara composed, see Wood 2014.

cultural production. Lara's positioning in the field and his proposed sentimentalism was privileged in the growing media industry. His career trajectory shows skillful transitions from bordellos and revues to radio shows, and ultimately to the film industry.

Lara composed for films starting with 1932's *Santa* (Saint). The plot of *Santa* followed rhetoric similar to that of much of Lara's music. A young woman from the interior provinces falls in love with an army man visiting her hometown. After succumbing to his charms she is cast away in shame, ending up working in a bordello in the city. A blind pianist who works in the establishment falls in love with the young prostitute and composes and performs the song "Santa" for her.

Starting in 1936, the film industry acquired Lara's songs to be used regularly in movies; in fact some of his compositions were featured in the US film *Tropic Holiday* of 1938 (Taibo 1984:12). By the time the Second World War began in 1939, a strong feeling of economic, political and social vulnerability had overcome Mexican society. The idyllic life of the provinces—the good life—seemed to be even farther away. Ideas of modernity connected with nostalgic representations of the life left behind and modern warfare. The film industry was instrumental in the negotiation of many of these aspects of social life. By the 1940s, the effects of the New Deal had energized the American economy, and its development reverberated in Mexico. The upturn of the economy was later tagged the "*El milagro mexicano*" (The Mexican miracle). The film industry flourished and sentimentalism was expanded and repackaged in full audio and video features. Lara became the preferred composer of the nascent Mexican film industry. His songs complemented the melodramatic angle of many of the most popular plots. Lara directed his efforts towards providing his audience not only an aural imaginary produced

by his syncopated rhythms and moralizing lyrics, but a full experience of what it meant to be a citizen of the new world. His songs became film features, in many cases forcing the lyrics onto a not-very-interesting movie plot, as in *Noche de ronda* (Night Out, 1943) (Taibo 1984). This song is good example of Lara's experimentation with other rhythms, as it is constructed as a waltz but is nevertheless considered a bolero. In the 1940s, Lara became an actor and producer in what were known as the *cine de cabareteras*, which dealt primarily with plots of female characters who, due to bad luck, ended up working as prostitutes in the big city.

The end of the war in 1945 brought mixed feelings of vulnerability and optimism. Mankind's capabilities for destruction had been laid bare, but the war had energized the US economy—and by extension the Mexican economy—fostering hope for economic growth and social mobility. Mexican president Miguel Aleman, who took office in 1946, embarked on an ambitious project of infrastructure investment with US support. The US government identified the importance of economic, political and media alliances with its neighbors to the south. Along with the investment in infrastructure came a strong influence on cultural production.

While some in the elite classes established profitable and sustainable industries in the 1930s—the XEW radio station would eventually become today's Televisa, for example—the vast majority of the population was left in poverty. Paradoxically, sentimentalism simultaneously articulated emotions stemming from unequal access to wealth while directly profiting the growing industries that would monopolize media and telecommunications in Latin America.

In this chapter, I have shown the importance of sentimentalism in Mexico and how musical sentimentalism has been articulated through bolero. Furthermore, I have explored bolero first as a musical genre, and unveil its ambiguity and its transforming and transformative characteristics. Most importantly I have explored bolero as a cultural artifact/imaginary crucial in the development of an imagined community, as it articulated social, moral, and economic concerns. The bolero, as a discursive space, contributed much to the articulation of certain aspects of a national imaginary in Mexico. The following chapter delves into the Mexican experience at mid century, showing how the bolero continued to articulate feelings of love and longing, and how, through repeated collective loss and disappointment, that longing became solidified into a structure of feeling that informed future patterns of bolero production and consumption.

Tu me ofreciste el cielo y la luna, todo en la vida,
pero en verdad, no veo cosa alguna, ni una
promesa cumplida.

Chapter Two: Mexico's Broken Heart

You offered me the sky and the moon,
everything in life, but truly I have not seen any of
it, not one fulfilled promise.
(Alvaro Carrillo, "Te doy dos horas" 1959)

Audiences in the late 1940s and early 1950s witnessed the proliferation of romantic and sentimental songs made possible in part by Agustín Lara's success and the opportunities provided by the nascent recording industry.[1] Poetic themes of broken hearts and unfulfilled promises provided the content for hundreds of recordings by at least sixty documented trio ensembles. Mexico experienced a period of rapid economic growth after emerging from the depression of the 1930s, fueling optimism about progress in Mexican society at large. The bolero during this time was a music made largely by and for members of Mexico's rural poor or emerging middle class, who wanted access to more economic resources, education, and expanded cultural interests.

Unfulfilled Promises

Bolero composers wrote and performed music that thematized their lived experiences—especially shifting morals and economic insecurity—concerns expressed mainly through the language of romantic love. A brief survey of song titles hints at the

[1] I cover Lara's music and the development of mass media in Mexico City in detail in Chapter 1.

extent to which the bolero expressed thwarted desires. In his anthology of boleros, Rodrigo Bazán Bonfil (2001) groups songs into thematic categories. One, accounting for only 36% of the titles, he calls "amor feliz" (happy love). The other three categories could easily be grouped together under the heading "unhappy love." They include themes of longing ("Esperanza inútil" [Useless hope]), deception ("Perfidia" [Perfidy]) and poverty, as in the following songs from 1950:

"Quinto Patio" (1950)	"Fifth Patio"
Por vivir en quinto patio	For living on the fifth patio
Desprecias mis besos…	You despise my kisses…
El dinero no es la vida	Money isn't everything,
Es solo vanidad.	It's just vanity.[2]
"Ofrenda" (1950)	"Offering"
Me dicen que soy pobre	They tell me that I'm poor,
Que no tengo derecho	That I have no right
A destruir tu vida	To destroy your life
Y a pretender tu amor	And to aspire to your love.
Que nada puedo darte	That I have nothing to give you,
Que yo no te merezco	That I don't deserve you,
Que no debo llevarte	That I should not drag you
A mi desolacion	Into my misery.[3]

Sentimentalism associated with the bolero became an emotional currency that hundreds of performers used to move up the social ladder, as we will see in chapters three and four.[4] In the later 1950s, however, as Mexico's hopes for economic progress were

[2] Lyrics by Mario Molina Montes and music by Luis Arcaraz Torrás. The "fifth patio" is the poorest part of a tenement, a small, one-room apartment farthest from the street where, often, a whole family lives.

[3] Lyrics by Bernardo Sancristóbal and music by Miguel Prado.

[4] In her discussion of Argentinian tango, Martha Savigliano states that the foreign and domestic exploitation of exoticism has contributed to the development of an "emotional capital" that has paralleled the process by which "capitalism has extracted material goods and labor from and imposed colonial

sunk by political corruption and renewed economic turmoil, the bolero imaginary described in the previous chapter came to articulate an intense yearning for something often acknowledged as out of reach. Two examples given in chapter one, Cárdenas's "Yo sé que nunca besaré tu boca" and Lara's "Yo sé que es imposible que me quieras," demonstrate the presence of this powerful sentiment in the bolero imaginary of the 1930s and early forties. In the fifties, this yearning provided the basis of a powerful and complex structure of feeling. Raymond Williams's concept of a structure of feeling is a useful in this context because it removes "feeling" from the realm of the individual and places it instead in the realm of the cultural and historical (as in Taylor 2009). The concept is meant to refer to those "experiences to which fixed forms do not speak at all, which indeed they do not recognize" (Williams 1977:129).

Bolero and Structures of Feeling

I argued in chapter one that songs referencing an unrequited love can be interpreted as expressing an investment in and a love for one's nation. In chapter five I will return to this theme to argue that a structure of feeling, informed by that sentiment and constructed of yet unresolved emotions, belongs as much to present-day Mexico as to the past. In the 1990s, a new generation of performers revived and reinterpreted the bolero repertoire amidst a renewed outrage against income inequality and a frayed political system. Timothy D. Taylor (2009), in writing about doo-wop music of the US baby boomer generation, shows how in today's consumer culture, nostalgia can be associated with or provoked through commodities, and how nostalgia has become an

bureaucratic state apparatuses and ideological devices on the third world" (Savigliano 1995:1, 2). Here I am more interested in the emotional currency that provided capital for those in the field of cultural production.

increasingly noticeable structure of feeling as a way of finding stability and a frame for meaning. In reviving and updating the bolero repertoire, it became clear to cultural brokers in the 1990s that the music was a potent trigger for a structure of feeling that took listeners back to a golden age of Mexican cultural life while opening up a stream of cultural capital to younger performers looking to establish credibility in a crowded industry. Nostalgia and its exploitation in this context are further discussed in chapter five.

This remainder of this chapter, however, aims at providing a clear picture of Mexican cultural life at mid-century, including the socio-economic and political circumstances that led to the structure of feeling the bolero helped engender. It concludes with a profile of singer and film star Pedro Infante, whose career captures the rise of sentimentalism as emotional currency, and whose tragic death in 1957 so rocked the nation that it almost immediately triggered nostalgia for the "Golden Era" of Mexican song and film in which he rose to prominence (Monsiváis 2012).

Mexico at Mid Century

As the Second World War concluded, new political divisions established the basis for a protracted ideological conflict between capitalism and communism, and a new world economic order benefitting the Allied powers contributed to Mexicans' mixed feelings of fear and optimism ("Con Mezcla de Temor y Optimismo Recibió el Mundo el Nacimiento de 1952" 1952:2A). Ideals of hope and progress that emerged in the years following the Mexican Revolution (1910-20) reached a climax during the Miguel Alemán administration, fueled by its unprecedented investment in infrastructure areas such as

telecommunications, education, and electric power. From 1947 to 1950, the administration invested approximately five million pesos (the equivalent of 5.7 million US dollars today) in rehabilitating the country's train system, acquiring new equipment to refurbish passenger and freight trains ("500 Millones para Rehabilitar los Ferrocarriles" 1952:1).[5] The federal government acquired an additional loan from the Eximbank in Washington, D.C. for $56 million (484.4 million pesos, or the equivalent of about $553 million in today's dollars) for the rehabilitation of the Ferrocarril Mexicano (Mexican train system) in January 1952 with a 3.5% interest rate and a repayment date of June 22, 1954.[6] This news was interpreted as a clear sign of Mexico's economic stability and an opportune cooperation between Mexico and the United States ("Créditos a México por $484,400,000 para sus Ferrocarriles" 1952:1).

Another industry that saw the heavy influx of capital and infrastructure investment was the Comisión Federal de Electricidad (Federal Electricity Commission), which, in January 1951, received 330 million pesos in state funds—about $376 million today, reportedly the highest amount ever approved by the president for the CFE—to "electrify the country." Just one year later, the same institution benefitted from a loan agreement between Mexico and the World Bank that included 29.7 million pesos (almost $34 million today) for the development of electric power at seven widely scattered points throughout Mexico, a move expected to increase electricity production by 20% ("Loan Agreement was Signed For Vast Development of Electric Power in Mexico" 1952:5).

[5] New diesel, electric and steam equipment was acquired, along with 350 gondolas, 25 passengers trains, 65 Pullmans, and 49 express trains.

[6] The modernization of the Mexican railroad was to better facilitate U.S. exploitation of Mexican resources and labor during the war, but also ideological production (Fein 2001).

This agreement marked the World Bank's fourth loan to Mexico over the preceding three years and brought the World Bank's total investment in the country to $90 million.

Along with nationwide investment came the development of the country's capital. Iconic buildings were constructed, and several of Mexico's most important institutions were inaugurated during the early 1950s. Much of the campus of the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de México (National Autonomous University of Mexico) was built during this time, as well as the building for the Secretaria de Recursos Hidraulicos (Water Resource Secretary). Figure 2.1 shows this building, located on Paseo de Reforma Avenue, next to a statue of Cristobal Colón, who seems to gesture toward the building as a mark of progress.

Figure 2.1: The building of the Secretaria de Recursos Hidraulicos, circa 1950 (Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, UNAM).

In addition to world power realignment, the first half of the 1950s was a time of internal political changes in Mexico and the United States, which both held elections in

1952. The frequent news about infrastructure and the "vote of confidence" from the World Bank played an important role in electoral propaganda in favor of the official candidate, Adolfo Ruíz Cortines. The following picture (Figure 2.2) is one of many full-page advertisements in newspapers promoting the idea of economic progress. By the end of July 1952, Ruíz Cortines was elected president of Mexico, and the flow of optimistic news about economic progress continued to flood major news outlets.

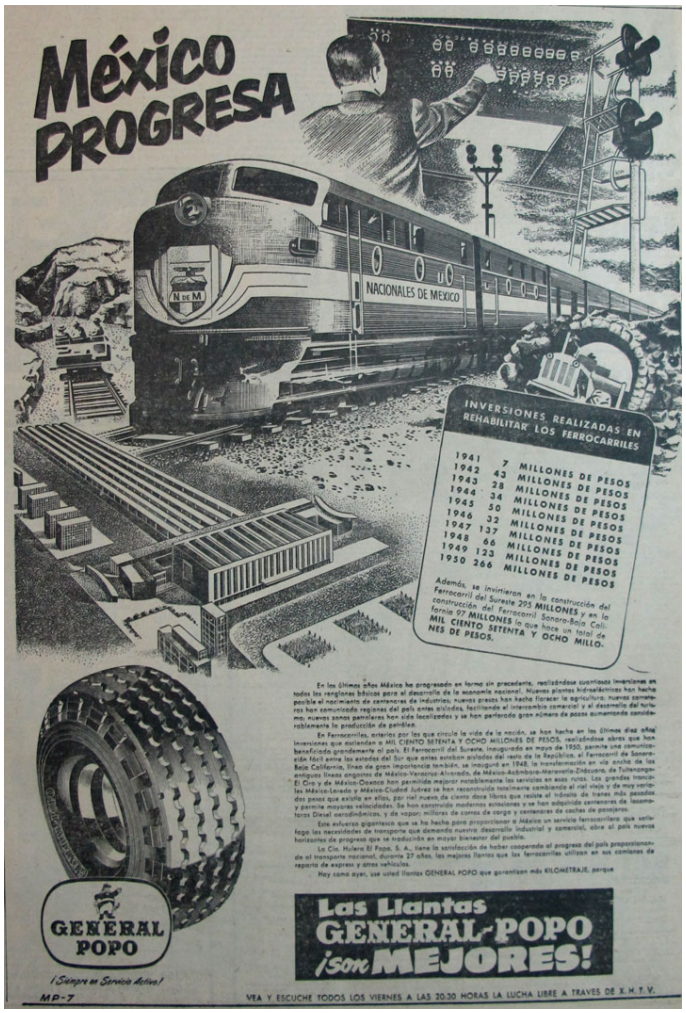


Figure 2.2: Advertisement promoting the idea of progress in Mexico as evidenced by train infrastructure investment (*Excelsior*, 5 June 1952:13).

Mexico's Peso Devaluation

According to Secretario de Hacienda (secretary of the treasury) Antonio Carrillo Flores, the optimistic economic landscape was supported by hundreds of millions in *superavit* (economic surpluses), and an increase of $131 million in Mexico's reserves provided an "*excelente situacion económica*" ("Aumento en 131 Millones de Dolares la Reserva de México, Excelente Situación Económica del País" 1953:1). Though the government bragged about a strong economy, the peso was shielded from possible fluctuations by an agreement between the United States and Mexico that would set the dollar-peso exchange rate at $8.65, insured—according to officials—by the gold and money reserves in the Banco de México. By signing this agreement the Mexican government also received an additional $75 million. The exchange rate was to remain stable until 31 December 1955 ("Se Firmo el Convenio que Estabiliza el Peso a 8.65 por Dolar" 1953:1). Not long after signing this agreement, however, the Mexican government under the PRI administration of Ruíz Cortines depreciated the peso 44%. On Sunday, 18 April 1954, the new exchange rate rose from $8.65 to $12.50 pesos per dollar, immediately causing the prices of imported goods such as cars, radios, and appliances to skyrocket, as well as the prices of the *canasta básica*—basic staples such as tomatoes ($.80 to $1.50 per kilo), cooking oil ($3.80 to $4.20 per liter), and beans ($1.50 to $3.00 per kilo) ("Hablan de la desvalorización grupos politicos" 1954:1). This measure was the latest in a series of adjustments to the peso that constituted its steady depreciation since 1946, when the Mexican government and the recently established International Monetary Fund had set the exchange rate at $4.85 pesos per dollar. Three years later, in the summer

of 1949, the exchange rate was set at $8.65 pesos per dollar, and by 1954, at $12.50 (Vilalte 1954).

Mexicans saw their ambitious dreams of progress slashed overnight. Carrillo Flores justified the government's actions by assuring people that this measure would reduce the importation of unnecessary articles, increase exportation, improve the situation of mining companies, discourage the exportation of capital, spark more investment from private capital, and improve revenues in the tourist sector (ibid.). Though the economic "adjustment" clearly increased the already existing gap between the wealthy and the poor in the nation, the ruling party (PRI) stated that "the measure was necessary, opportune, convenient, and patriotic, and that the most important thing is not the relationship between our currency and another, but how our people live, eat, and dress—aspects that are been taking care of by the government." The Partido de Acción Nacional (PAN) released similar rhetoric justifying the move: "When asked, the nation has never been reluctant to endure and accept sacrifices. Today it has been asked again to endure a new one, and it is absolutely necessary to point out the clean, brave, and just counter-measure of this sacrifice." The Mexican Communist Party, on the other hand, countered that "this depreciation produces severe consequences over the interest of the people and the country, and it only favors the interest of imperialism and the speculation of the financial bourgeoisie. It represents a considerable reduction of the national production value by increasing the cost of products and primary materials that Mexico buys from other countries" ("Hablan de la desvalorización grupos políticos" 1954:1).

For many analysts, the crisis was the result of an unbalanced budget and the lack of an in-depth overhaul of the Mexican agricultural, industrial, and education systems

that would propel the country forward and benefit all sectors of the population. The country lacked an integral plan for development,[7] which contributed to a steady decline of the Mexican economy. According to official statistics during the 1930s, Mexico had been able to have a favorable commercial balance by exporting more than it imported. Starting in 1941, however, imported goods surpassed exports as noted in Table 2.1.

Year	Imported	Exported
1941	915.1	729.5
1942	753.9	989.7
1943	909.5	1,130.2
1944	1,895.2	1,047.8
1945	1,603.4	1,332.6
1946	2637.2	1,961.5
1947	3,230.3	2,150.9
1948	2,951.5	2,661.3
1949	3,527.0	3,623.1
1950	4,403.4	4,337.8
1951	6,773.2	5,446.9
1952	6,395.4	5,125.8
1953	6,565.1	4,701.8

Table 2.1: Imports and exports (in millions of pesos) ("Por cada peso que vendíamos comprábamos al exterior 1.40" 1954:1).

Concerns about the state of Mexican agriculture fueled perceptions of the *bracero* program as a counterproductive economic measure that, while it provided much needed

[7] In fact, as noted by economists Guillermo Ortiz and Leopoldo Solis from Banco de México, S.A.: "The transition from inflationary period of the forties and early fifties to the era of 'stabilizing development' was effected quickly and smoothly. A typical orthodox stabilizing policy along monetarist lines (possibly in the form of an IMF package) would call first for re-alignment of the country's currency; second, for a sharp reduction in the rate of monetary expansion; and, third, for a program of austerity in government expenditures. After reviewing the Mexican experience, it appears that only the first part of the 'stabilization sequence' actually took place. The peso was devaluated in 1954 from 8.65 to 12.50 pesos per dollar, the rate growth of the nominal money supply did not significantly decline, and the government did not reduce its expenditures. The government deficit increased at an average annual rate of 6.6% during the years 1951-1954 versus 10.4% in the 1955-1958 period" (1979:520-1).

economic relief, also contributed to the economic crisis.[8] Since the end of the revolution, several Mexican states still lacked basic safety guarantees for peasants, and small agriculture business owners, who were subject to *caciquismos*[9] and *acaparadores,*[10] suffered from corruption between business people and government officials.[11] A cartoon from January 1951 shows a *bracero* at the border between Mexico and the United States. Going across the border in search of money, he waves goodbye to his crying wife, who represents Mexican agriculture being abandoned (Figure 2.3).

[8] The *bracero* program brought 4.6 million Mexican temporary contract (primarily agricultural) laborers to the United States between 1942 and 1964.

[9] An -ism that comes from the word *cacique* and which refers to local political person driving monopolies.

[10] From the verb *acaparar*, which means to grab and monopolize.

[11] The corruption and collusion between government officials, business impresarios, and guild leaders produced an environment of immoral civil behavior that—paradoxically—became a major concern for Ruíz Cortines' administration. In January 1954, the president launched an initiative towards "improving moral values." The initiative was based on the idea that material progress can only be the result of a solid civil morality. Ironically, the initiative invited citizens to "do something in favor of Mexico" in exchange for an economic stimulus ("Ruíz Cortines Traza un Plan para los Valores Morales."1954:1).

Figure 2.3: "Arriving at the bridge" (At bottom: "—There I remembered you, bathed in tears"). (*Excelsior* 24 January 1951:7)

Foreign Help

It was with this trajectory of an unbalanced budget, government spending, the lack of a long-term plan, and a disillusioned society that Mexico entered the mid 1950s. In a divided world, the United States was well aware of the possible repercussions of Mexico's economic instability, considering primarily that communist ideas did and would continue to resonate strongly with a largely poor society. In his message to Congress on 10 January 1955, President Eisenhower asserted, "The nation's enlightened self-interest and sense of responsibility as a leader among the free nations require a Foreign Economic Program that will stimulate economic growth in the free world through enlarging opportunities for the fuller operation of the forces of free enterprise and competitive markets" (Eisenhower 1955:1). Eisenhower justified this position by

stating: 1) that economic growth among allies was essential to national security; 2) that the economic growth between underdeveloped areas was crucial to prevent the penetration of communism; and 3) that global trade increased economic growth ensuring an improvement in the quality of life for Americans. There was no ambiguity in Eisenhower's commitment to a globalized economy driven by capitalism:

> For every country in the free world, economic strength is dependent upon high levels of economic activity internally and high levels of international trade. No nation can be economically self-sufficient. Nations must buy from other nations, and in order to pay for what they buy they must sell (ibid.:2).

Eisenhower recognized the disparity between the countries' productive capabilities and the United States' technological advances. He proposed to establish technical cooperation that would level the playing field:

> The whole free world needs capital; America is its largest source. In that light, the flow of capital abroad from our country must be stimulated and in such a manner that it results in investment **largely by individuals or private enterprises** rather than by government. An increased flow of United States private investment funds abroad, especially to the underdeveloped areas, could contribute much to the expansion of two-way international trade. The underdeveloped countries would thus be enabled to more easily acquire the capital equipment so badly needed by them to achieve sound economic growth and higher living standards. This would do much to offset the alluring but false promises of the Communists (ibid.:2, my emphasis).

Eisenhower's initiative brought the era of large US government loans to Mexico to an end and set the basis for private investment in the country, which, while it contributed to the development of seminal industries, also solidified preexisting practices of crony capitalism that greatly affected Mexican internal production.[12] Mexico's new higher

[12] On 24 December 1954, the Camara Nacional de la Industria de Aceites Grasas y Jabones (National Chamber of the Soap Industry) printed a full-page advertisement protesting favoritism of the Mexican government toward Procter & Gamble of Mexico, a transnational organization. In it, the Chamber complained that the Secretary of National Economy had authorized the importation of 500 tons of raw

exchange rate, an increasing dependence on and favoritism towards products produced by transnational companies, and Eisenhower's foreign policies on investment did not level the playing field; rather, they placed additional pressure on Mexican industries and on the livelihoods of Mexicans by increasing economic inequality.

US economic and political interests, a large base of economically disenfranchised people, and a growing mass media industry (film, radio, and print media) coalesced into an opportunity to generate capital and negotiate foreign and internal political shifting while mediating ideologies. The film and recording industry was at the forefront of this endeavor. As noted by Seth Fein, the Golden Age of Mexican cinema "resulted not from nationalist (as usually asserted) but collaborative policies that evolved out of the particularities of U.S.-Mexican interactions at a variety of transnational and intergovernmental levels between the 1930s and 1950s" (Fein 2001:164). In fact, Hollywood intervention in the Mexican film industry had more to do with "formulating a transnational mode of entertainment production to serve U.S. ideological interest" (166). This produced an industry in which those owning the means of production—such as government(s) and capitalist interests—played an important role in fine tuning ideologies. This ideological hegemony departs from the *culture industry* for two main reasons: first, culture does not adequately uncover power relationships;[13] and second, the

material for the production of soap for Procter & Gamble as the first installment of 4,000 tons requested by the company. The Chamber had previously requested the importation of 3,000 tons of the same material to be distributed proportionately among the organization's members, and its request had been denied. According to the Chamber, these actions were discriminatory and affected the livelihood of the Chamber's sixty-four members, its employees and their families ("Camara Nacional de la Industria de Aceites Grasas y Jabones: Telegrama Urgente" 1954:22A).

[13] When describing the music and cultural context of country music in a small town in Texas, Aaron Fox establishes than "even in the most nostalgic, sociable moments . . . the logics of class domination can be discerned" and that ethnographically "'culture' might be better described in terms of 'ideological

culture industry—as noted by Horkheimer and Adorno and its subsequent development (Hesmondhalgh 2007, Frith 1987, Negus 1999, Holt 2007 and others)—seems to be grounded primarily on economic and sociological connotations rather than on political ones.

The culture industries and the hegemonic ideologies associated with them capitalized on people's misery by creating products that resonated with their everyday hardships. Songs, comedy sketches, and movies were the cultural outlets for these real life struggles.[14] Aspiring performers from the working class flocked to the music recording and film companies looking for opportunities in show business. Few, however, personified the convergence of economic struggle, social mobility, and ideological production as well as Pedro Infante.

Pedro Infante

Pedro Infante Cruz (1917-1957) was born in Mazatlán, Sinaloa. One of fifteen siblings, Infante was raised in a primarily rural and poor environment. His father was a violin teacher who first introduced him to music. With humble beginnings, he worked in different low-paying jobs and abandoned his education in high school. One of his first

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hegemony,' since 'culture' has acquired a retrograde sense in much contemporary social thought as being conceptually inadequate for understanding the historical operations of power and difference" (Fox 2004:33).

[14] In this chapter I focus on the life of Pedro Infante in order to explore these ideological products; however, other influential characters are worth mentioning. Among these is actor and comedian Mario Moreno, better known as Cantinflas, who produced a series of films with pointed political criticism and launched real social campaigns. On 7 June 1952 Moreno launched a campaign against poverty and homelessness with his declaration, "I don't want to get rid of the rich, I want to get rid of the poor." The initiative proposed to collect 10,000 pesos annually from 1,000 rich people, a collection of 10 million pesos a year. His plan also considered the establishment of public hospitals and cafeterias, particularly for children ("Quiere Acabar con los Pobres Mario Moreno" 1952:5).

jobs was as a helper in a carpenter's shop, where he learned carpentry and built his own guitar. Like many other young people growing up during the 1930s, Infante was attracted to the life made possible by the rapid development of mass media taking place in Mexico City, and he moved there in search of opportunity.

Infante found an opening in the growing radio industry shortly after arriving in downtown Mexico City:

> I arrived in the capital with great illusions and encountered a very different landscape to the one I had been told about. For many weeks, I was eating little more than watery coffee and tortillas with salt. But one day my angel had to appear, and that angel was engineer José Luis Ugalde, who helped me enter the XEB [radio station]. He also gave me wonderful advice and pushed for me to have shows in that station. Even though I had an epic failure during my first audition, he was able to place me in a show where I earned two pesos for each presentation, which was every third day. In those days I sang boleros (Monsiváis 2012:67).[15]

By the 1940s Infante was performing boleros in one of the most famous cabarets in Mexico City—the Waikikí—where he earned ten pesos daily. According to his recollections of those days, however, "The problem was the clothing. I still did not have enough money to buy a smoking jacket, which was said to be the appropriate attire for these performances, so engineer Ugalde, who was a *reata*,[16] lent me his, and then, well imagine, what a difference. Being suited up, I was able to sing with a lot more confidence" (67).

Infante arrived in a Mexico City that was the center of cultural production. It was also the site of convergence of transnational and cosmopolitan aspirations and their negotiation with local, regional, and nationalistic ones. His singing and charm led to

[15] In his performances of boleros Infante was influenced by the crooning of Frank Sinatra, who was also at the beginning of his career.

[16] A "mover and shaker," someone who gets things done.

opportunities in the movie industry, and he appeared in films as early as 1939 performing background roles. He acquired notoriety in early 1940s films performing secondary roles and some leading roles in movies such as *La feria de las flores* (The flower festival, 1942), *Jesusita en Chihuahua* (Jesusita in Chihuahua, 1942), *Mexicanos al grito de guerra* (Mexicans at the cry of war, 1943), and *El ametralladora* (The machine gun, 1943). In 1945, however, he finally found fame with the movie *Cuando lloran los valientes* (When they mourn the brave). The film portrays a humble and heroic revolutionary *caudillo* (leader) and marked the beginning of Infante's career portraying a mythic, iconic, legendary, heroic and generous character; it inaugurates a genre in itself. Catering to the increasing number of people displaced by the revolution—and attracted by the opportunities of the city—demanded a more flexible and multifaceted actor capable of representing the heroic tales of the revolution and the sorrows of the poor *citadino* (city dweller). During the second half of the 1940s, Infante's productions show a transition from referencing an idyllic rural life in which honesty, sacrifice, and true friendship can be found,[17] to portrayals of a demonized, sinful, and pointless life in the city while dealing with political, social and technological transformations.[18]

From this transitional period stem some of Infante's most consequential films in which the struggle for financial stability became a trope with multiple performativities, both melodramatic and comedic. *Nosotros los pobres* (We, the poor, 1947) and its sequel,

[17] These included *Si me han de matar mañana* (If you have to kill me tomorrow) and *Los tres García* (The three Garcias), 1946; *La barca de oro* (The golden boat) and *Soy charro de Rancho Grande* (I am the horseman of Rancho Grande), 1947; *Los tres huastecos* (The three men from Huasteca) and *Dicen que soy mujeriego* (They say I'm a womanizer), 1948.

[18] Several of his movies make reference to U.S. led panamericanism; others deal with racism, and many include funny situations with technological devices.

Ustedes los ricos (You, the rich, 1948), directed by Ismael Rodríguez and with original music by Manuel Esperón, narrates the story of "Pepe el toro" (Infante), a carpenter living with his elderly mother and his daughter, Chachita. In the everyday struggle to raise Chachita, Pepe tries to conceal the fact that she is, in fact, his niece who was abandoned by her mother and the wealthy man who seduced her. In the sequel, the wealthy man tries to make amends and win Chachita's love. The dialogue in *Ustedes los ricos* (Figure 2.4) navigates urban working-class jargon, anglicisms, and the elegant language attributed to the wealthy class. The film combines tragic events, comedic sketches, and romantic songs, a mixture that establishes a discourse of poverty, disguised from the beginning by the director as a kind of introspective sociological exercise, which in turn romanticizes "the culture of poverty":[19]

> POOR friends, RICH friends, lets look at each other closely, to get to know who we are, how we are and why we are like that. And, once we have known each other, [and] our arms extend friendly, let's remove our wallets—full or empty—from our chests, so our hearts can get closer as we hug. Let my effort be for those whose only sin was having been born POOR, and to those who commit a sin having been born RICH (Translation by the author, uppercase in original).

[19] For more information on the culture of poverty, see Oscar Lewis' acclaimed book *The Children of Sánchez* (2011), a family saga that describes circumstances similar to those portrayed in *Nosotros los Pobres.*

Figure 2.4: Translated intertitle and still from *Ustedes los ricos* (1948) (Photo: Carlos Tinoco).

Comedy was another outlet that reflected the trope of financial struggle. Two films from 1951 exemplify the influence of the moving image and its combination with sound in forging new ideologies. The film *Necesito dinero* (I need money, 1951) is a case study for the ideologies concealed within and the subsequent characteristic themes that permeated mid-century Mexico's cultural production. *Necesito dinero*, directed by Miguel Zacarias with music by composer Manuel Esperón, is the story of Manuel (Infante), a car mechanic who is infatuated with Teresa (Sarita Montiel), a beautiful women who lives with her mother and her younger sister. Teresa is being courted by a rich impresario who presents her with many expensive gifts. Manuel, confronted by his economic peril, tries to find a way of acquiring money in order to compete with the impresario and win Teresa's love. Figure 2.5 is the newspaper advertisement used to promote the film. The ad is framed in what seems to be a bill of 100 pesos, and it includes pictures of the main characters with a short blurb taken from the movie dialogue to provide the reader with a preview. Additionally, at the center of the ad in black font the

following can be read: "*Traiga a su familia y a sus niños. Es una pelicula moral.*" (Bring your family and your children. This is a moral movie.)

Manuel: If you want to be happy, Maria Teresa, use your brain a little less and your heart a little more…! There is nothing we can do against life. God makes it like this and all our calculations fail.

Maria Teresa: I want to get out of this *medio* (life/situation), Manuel, and I have to get out, but I will do it the honest way. Of that I am sure.

Figure 2.5: Advertisement for the film *Necesito dinero* (I need money) (*Excelsior* 1 January 1952:19A).

The film *A toda maquina* (Full steam ahead, 1951), directed by Ismael Rodríguez and with music by Raúl Lavista and Sergio Guerrero, included songs that would become standard interpretations of ideological archetypes. The film narrates the story of Pedro Chavez (Infante) and Luis Macías (Luis Aguilar), two young men who work through their different economic situations to become best friends. As policemen they patrol the streets of Mexico City on their Harley Davidson motorcycles while competing for women. The film constitutes a reconciliation with the urban setting, which has been previously demonized as a place in which true friendship cannot exist. Among its most memorable scenes is when Pedro Chavez (Infante) sings to an audience of foreigners the

song *Bésame Mucho* (Kiss me much), originally composed by Consuelo Velázquez[20] and previously recorded by Frank Sinatra (Figure 2.6). The audience in the movie recognizes the song and joyfully yells: "Sinatra!" It was in the late 1930s when Infante initiated his career in the media industry and he did it by singing boleros in the style of Sinatra, nicely dressed and holding the microphone tight and close to his mouth. His performances attracted an audience that was leaving behind rural connotations at the beginning of the 1950s.

Figure 2.6: Screenshot of Pedro Infante performing "Besame Mucho" in *A toda máquina* (1951), director Ismael Rodríguez.

According to Mexican historian Carlos Monsivàis, the different stages of the Mexican film industry corresponded to reactions to the political contexts in which the films were produced. In the second half of the 1930s, for example, movies such as *Las cuatro milpas* (1937) and *Alla en el rancho grande* (1937) parallel an exaltation of the rural life and a criticism of Lázaro Cárdenas's agrarian reforms (Monsiváis 2012:72).

[20] Mexican composer Consuelo Velázquez (1916-2005) also wrote the songs "Yo no fui" (It wasn't me) and "Enamorada" (In love) for this film.

Infante arrived in the movie industry precisely at the rural-urban turn in Mexico's cultural production. Monsiváis continues, "Infante is a symbol and a primordial reality of a time when the film industry is much more than entertainment; the hours and the years invested in the urban movie theaters or their regional equivalent are central data of existence" (1).[21] Monsiváis incisively reminds us of Infante's importance in Mexico's cultural production beyond entertainment, three important aspects of which are worth considering and are relevant to this study. First, Infante was able to represent the different shades of what it meant to be Mexican, from performing boleros dressed in an elegant smoking jacket to singing *rancheras* while riding a horse. He alternated from elegant speech to working class jargon from distinct Mexico City neighborhoods, affecting class-divided accents. His chameleonic transformation throughout his career allowed people to rally around his persona and establish a badly needed national social unity, one historically based in displacement and updated in economic struggle (something that also resonated in other Latin American cities).[22] Infante himself had been a subject of these two social realities, leaving his hometown and then struggling to make a living in Mexico City, just like many among his audience.

These elements bring us to the second important aspect of Infante's career. He personified possibilities for social mobility and increased access to wealth and fame for someone from a humble background. Infante's audience knew of his humble beginnings;

[21] "*Pedro Infante es un símbolo y es una realidad primordial del tiempo en que la industria fílmica es bastante más que entretenimiento; las horas y los años invertidos en las salas de cine urbanas o sus equivalents regionales son datos centrales de la existensia.*" Translation by author.

[22] Although several scholars refer to Pedro Infante and his movies as a basis for national identity, I am careful about taking such a reductivist approach.

it was not a coincidence that in his most successful movies he personifies a carpenter.[23] Audience members and fans probably "did not always distinguish among the person himself, the publicity about the person, and the dramatic roles he played as a singer and an actor," so viewing Pedro Infante offered the possibility for social mobility and a better future (Rubenstein 2001:215).

The third and last important aspect of Infante's career is the construction and dissemination of a conformist discourse. Movies such as *Necesito dinero* (1951) educated the populace on how and how much to dream and when to give up. These melodramas produced internal stereotypes through prefabricated responses to economic sorrows, which taught Mexican society to endure and find the funny side of being poor, with ideas of social mobility taunting them only to show them their place in society.[24]

Music played an important role in this process. Infante's charismatic presence and the beautiful tone of his tenor voice provided the perfect elements visually and aurally to engage audiences in what French philosopher Michel Chion has called the "audio-visual contract" (Chion 1994). Infante's musical performances were effectively empathetic performances in which the audience had the ability to feel the feelings of others (ibid.:8). As Rubenstein states, "His instantly recognizable voice sounded as though he were singing from the heart, whether he was mourning the passing of a happier past, praising a new love, or declaring that his mother, his nation, or his northern region was the true object of all his affections" (Rubenstein 2001:216). By the mid 1950s Infante was among

[23] As in *Nosotros los pobres* (1947), *Ustedes los ricos* (1948), and *Pepe el toro* (1952).

[24] For more on this cultural intimacy, see Herzfeld 2005.

the best paid and most sought after musicians by the recording companies,[25] which noted an increase in sales and were expanding their operations in Mexico City.[26]

There was simultaneously a large demand for cultural products and a large base of people eager for fame and capital, and business opportunities for foreign private capital facilitated the development of Mexican mass media while providing a historic opportunity to shape the country's cultural/hegemonic production. By the 1950s the four major record labels (Columbia Records, Peerless, Musart, and RCA Victor) held complete control over the production of music recordings. Content managers decided what music did or did not have an opportunity in the market. Merengue, for example, a Dominican genre, was determined by Guillermo Kornhauser, manager of Peerless, as not having the "most remote opportunity to reach popularity in Mexico." According to Kornhauser, "'Merengue' will not be able to impose on us because it does not offer attractive qualities for the public and has no variation. All the numbers are the same and have the same monotonous rhythm, and lyrics do not offer an *argumento* [narrative]." On the same subject, Mariano Rivera Conde, artistic director of RCA Victor, stated,

[25] In 1956 Pedro Infante was noted for earning 45,000 pesos in 270 minutes by recording only six songs ("Pedro Infante al Grabar Solo Seis Canciones, Gano $45,000 en 270 Minutos" 1956). The other only musicians who rivaled this kind of earning power were the *trío romántico* ensembles, which I cover in depth in the next chapter, such as the famous trio Los Diamantes, who refused an offer of 75,000 pesos from Columbia Records to end their five-year contract with RCA Victor ("Los Diamantes Rechazaron una Oferta para Cambiar de Firma Grabadora, de $75,000.00" 1956:12A).

[26] According to a newspaper report, a record 12 million LPs were sold during 1955 by four major recording labels operating in Mexico: RCA Victor with 4.2 million; Peerless with 3 million; and Columbia Records and Musart each with 2.4 million. This constituted an increase in sales in 1955, despite (or perhaps because of) the depreciation of the peso in 1954 (Haro 1956). RCA Victor announced on 13 January 1956 the inauguration of an ambitious expansion program that included upper management reorganization by the appointment of M. S. Hazzard as the new president of the company, and F. C. Spielberg as a vice-president, as well as the development of a 17,603-square-meter factory to produce radios and televisions, with a capital investment exceeding 2.5 million pesos ("Con el Nuevo Presidente de RCA Victor Mexicana y un Gran Programa de Expansión" 1956:10A).

"[Merengue] cannot succeed because there has not been any publicity and there are no *números*[27] associated with that rhythm . . . besides, the public cannot accept anything to which it has not been habituated" ("Aseguran que el Ritmo 'Merengue' No Tiene Ninguna Oportunidad de Popularizarse Aquí" 1956:21A). On the other hand, "rhythms" such as bolero were strongly promoted by the industry. According to Luis Martinez, editorial chief of the publishing house PHAM,

> During the year [1956], it is a fact that the bolero rhythm will be back in our country . . . proof of that is that last December this rhythm had the best sales over any other. We will promote it strongly . . . We have the conviction to offer quality Mexican numbers to the foreigners, which would produce a large amount of money for our composers. It is worth mentioning that folkloric numbers will continue to have great demand, because that happens in all the countries with local songs. Surely the new talents will make possible the resurgence of the romantic song that the consecrated [artists] have let die because of their apathy ("El Ritmo de Bolero Volvera a Imponerse en Todo el País en el Transcurso de este Año" 1956:21A).

Little did Martinez know of the different elements that contributed to the accuracy of his prediction. On 15 April 1957 Infante died in the airplane he was co-piloting near Mérida, Yucatán. The news shook the entire nation. On 16 April the remains of the Mexican idol arrived in the city. Two thousand cars were filled with floral arrangements, and 200,000 people waited in the streets to catch the last glimpse of Infante in his funeral cortège. The frenzy on the streets was brutally repressed by the police (Monsiváis 2008:17). Infante's death symbolized the end of an era, the end of a film industry that had been a source of national pride though the middle of the 1950s (Rubenstein 2001:219). His life and death still capture the imagination of an ever-growing audience and continue

[27] *Números* (numbers) refers to staged choreographed numbers in which different musical genres were used during performances at nightclubs.

to intrigue scholars.[28] The years following Infante's death were colored by Mexico's slashed dreams of economic progress and intimations of a new world war between communism and capitalism, closing an era of ambivalent feelings toward the future, and they tipped the balance between optimism and pessimism toward a vision of a grim future for the working class while setting the stage for their nostalgia for an imagined "better" past. His films expressing that "there is nothing we can do [to improve our situation]," his songs, and his sentimentalism acquired new meaning that solidified the sentimentalism already at the forefront of cultural production. The hit song "Morir soñando," composed by Manuel Pelayo Diaz and recorded in 1956 by Infante, provides a good example of sentimentalism and the conformist discourse:

> Me preguntan si prefiero morir con el sueño de tu amor,
> O vivir para buscar el calor que en ti no pude hallar.
> Vale mas morir soñando, que querer vivir en la realidad.
>
> (I am asked if I would prefer to die with the dream of your love,
> or live to find the warmth that I couldn't find in you.
> Better to die dreaming that to want to live in reality.)

I posit here that boleros such as the epigraph at the beginning of this chapter and the example above contributed to a social structuring that articulated deeply social feelings of hope and disillusionment. Williams, reminding us that when discussing the social, description and analysis is usually in past tense, writes, "We speak of a world-view or of a prevailing ideology or a class outlook, often with adequate evidence, but in this regular slide towards a past tense and a fixed form suppose . . . that these exist and are lived specifically and definitively, in singular and developing forms" (1977:129). In

[28] See, for example: Cortés Reséndiz and Torre Gutiérrez 1993, Dehesa 2007, Herrera 1998, Infante Quintanilla 2007, and Monsiváis 2008.

historical analyses, experiences are routinely converted into finished products, formed wholes rather than "forming and formative processes" (ibid.:128). Bolero during the 1950s was just such a forming and formative process. The *trío romántico* ensemble literally gave voice(s) to a renewed urban sentimentalism while exploring the incorporation of new musical elements—elements that invented and re-invented sentimental music while competing for capital. In the next chapters I explore how the competition for recording contracts and audiences created a productive period of musical experimentation that combined transnational genres such as jazz, rock, and bossa nova, as well as classical elements found in opera and Baroque music. I do so by making use of Bourdieu's field theory in order to uncover what constituted capital, and how that capital was contested and circulated.

Miénteme más, que me hace tu maldad feliz.

Chapter Three: Voicing Competition, Part I

Lie to me more, because your wickedness makes me happy.
(Armando Domínquez, "Mienteme" 1950)

Boleros, Trios, and Competition

One theme appears as a thread weaving through countless interviews and informal conversations with trio musicians active in the 1950s: that their experience producing music was defined by unyielding competition. Composers, arrangers and performers, though often friendly with each other, all participated in robust rivalries in an effort to sell recordings and sell out performances. A cultural observer writing in Mexico City presented his ranking of trios working in 1958:

> The best trio that Mexico has for now is the Los Tres Ases—very complete, musically and personality-wise. Following them are Los Tres Caballeros, who have not yet surpassed their resounding success of "La Barca." In third place (but ready to move up one or two places), Los Duendes followed by Los Yucas. In fifth place: Los Panchos and Los Halcones. The novelty was Las Tres Siluetas (No title, 18 January 1958).

In describing these musicians and their work in the following two chapters I use Bourdieu's theory of the "field of cultural production" for reasons explained in the introduction. In chapter one I showed the ambiguity of the bolero as a musical genre and how the term was better conceptualized as a social experience that informed cultural production. In this chapter, by viewing the bolero as a field of cultural production, I illuminate what constituted capital in that field, what positions were available in the field,

and how these positions were defended and maintained. I aim to identify how during the 1940s and 1950s the field of bolero witnessed the competition among musicians from different musical and national backgrounds who came together to compete in Mexico City's field of cultural production. I explore how the idea of bolero as a field of cultural production provided the musical and discursive space for position-taking and the circulation of capital. I focus on the leading trios, their recording labels and the competitive atmosphere in which jazz, classical and other musical elements seen in Mexican society as "cultivated" or "elite" provided not only capital, but also a way to legitimize, consciously or not, the musicians' place in the culture at large. I explore how musicians competed for capital (both symbolic and economic) using sentimentality as an emotional currency and establishing new positions in the field by incorporating transnational musical elements (often familiar to their audiences yet unusual in the bolero context) in their arrangements.

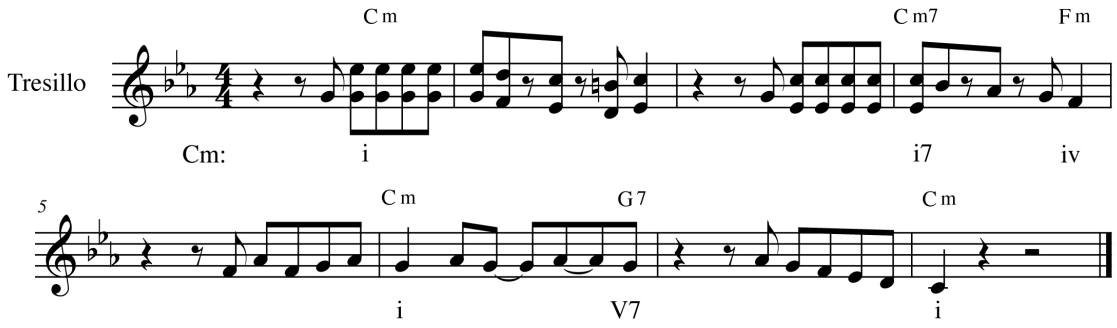
I often provide biographical information in some detail because many of the trio members are largely absent from the historical record and when covered, are rarely explored as social agents. Hagiography sometimes obscures their humble backgrounds and life experiences, an understanding of which is crucial to an examination of their position-taking. Exploring their personal histories also contextualizes social and political events and their roles in the development of Mexican popular music. I begin with the establishment of the trio style, which traces its origins along with the bolero (as discussed in chapter one) to Cuba, followed by an examination of subsequent position-takings as they appeared in the bolero repertoire in Mexico, closing this chapter just before the economic downturn of the mid-1950s (the subject of chapter four).

The Trio in Cuba

The origins of romantic songs presented in three-part vocal harmony can be traced to Cuba. In some of these early Cuban ensembles, like the Trio Matamoros, only two members sang, accompanied by the third member on a guitar. Visually and conceptually, however, these were trios, and they contributed sufficiently to the development of later trio music to include them here. Trio Matamoros incorporated African-derived influences found in other Cuban musics, such as call and response, syncopation, and improvisational *montunos*. Siro Rodriguez, Rafael Cueto, and Miguel Matamoros, from whom the trio derived its name, formed the group. Matamoros was a guitarist and composer; born in Santiago de Cuba in 1894 he worked as a driver, carpenter, and painter while he learned to play the guitar. His first public performance was in 1912 in the Teatro de Heredia in his hometown (Orovio 1981:241). Matamoros, besides singing the first voice of the trio, also plucked the guitar in a special way that made the resulting sound more vibrant. With the Trio Matamoros, a genre that was previously conceived to be listened to became danceable (Ortiz Ramos 1999:56). The trio was signed by representatives of RCA Victor, who recorded its first songs in 1928. Among these were "Promesa," "Juramento," "Son de la loma," "Olvido, mujer celosa," "Tito me rompio la maquina," "Visiones," "El Beso," and "Luz que no alumbra," among many others (ibid.). Trio Matamoros was instrumental in developing the concept of the ensemble as a group of musicians that could provide musical entertainment through the use of clever and poetic sentimental lyrics with a mix of musical genres such as *guarachas* and the recently created boleros. Renowned Cuban musicologist Helio Orovio commented on Matamoros' expressive

strumming and a *tumbao* provided by Rafael Cueto that created a polyrhythm (Orovio 1999:243).[1]

Although many of the songs performed by Trio Matamoros have been attributed to Miguel Matamoros, some were composed by his brother, Ignacio Falcón Matamoros (Bazán Bonfil 2001:189). Among those is the famous song "Lagrimas Negras" (1928), which opens with a brief, melodically simple introduction usually played by a guitar or a Cuban *tresillo* (Example 3.1). Percussion instruments such as maracas and claves are added in a slow tempo to accompany the voices.



Example 3.1: Introduction, "Lagrimas Negras."[2]

The example of "Lagrimas Negras" is also instructive because the lyrics demonstrate the quasi-masochistic rhetoric of unfulfilled desire that would occupy the bolero imaginary in the next four decades, in which the singer assumes the attitude, "even though you have abandoned me, I bless you":

[1] *Tumbao* refers to the slightly anticipated first beat.

[2] All musical examples in this chapter are transcribed by the author unless otherwise noted.

Aunque tú me has echado en el abandono,	Even though you have abandoned me,
Aunque tú has muerto mis ilusiones,	Even though you have killed all my dreams,
En vez de maldecirte con justo encono,	Instead of curse you with justified rancor,
En mis sueños te colmo,	In my dreams I fill you,
en mis sueños te colmo,	In my dreams I fill you,
de bendiciones	with blessings

Trio Matamoros' success demonstrated that there was an audience and market for trio music, not only in Latin America but also in the United States, and that the successful combination of harmonic singing accompanied by two or three guitars could also provide a means to acquire wealth. The trio recorded more than 300 songs between 1928 and 1955 (Ortiz Ramos 1999:60) and partly due to its large output it is often considered the most important and influential trio to come from Cuba during the early twentieth century.[3] Although Trio Matamoros influenced many musicians in the Yucatán peninsula, the association of the trio style with the field of bolero in Mexico did not happen before taking a detour through trios playing mostly regional Mexican music.

Tríos a la Mexicana

Despite the enormous popularity of Agustín Lara's compositions in the 1930s, trio ensembles did not adopt his songs and their accompanying urban aesthetic until more than a decade later. Throughout the thirties, Mexican trio ensembles kept—for the most part—their rural associations, imagery, and genres (sones, huapangos, and rancheras). They adapted the attire, repertoire, and stronger singing style of larger mariachi

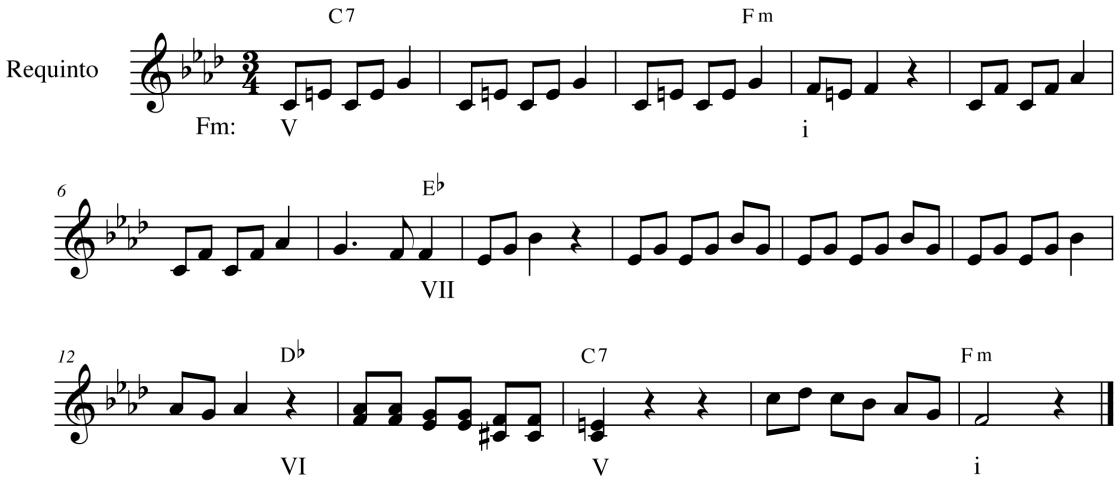
[3] Many other trios from Cuba contributed to the development of the style, such as Trío Azul, Trío Servando Diaz, Trío Oriental, Trío Los Guaracheros de Oriente, Trío La Rosa, Trío Camaguey, Trío Pinareño, Trío Los Tres, and Trío Avileño, among others. For more details about these trios see Ortiz Ramos 1999:63.

ensembles, and many *tríos rancheros* appeared: Trio Janitzio, Trio Tariacuri, Trio Los Mexicanos, Trio Los Caporales, and Trio Los Calaveras, among others.

The Trio Los Tres Calaveras (the three skulls) is credited with having standardized traditional musical genres such as *huapangos huastecos* in the trio style in their classic performances of songs such as "La Malagueña" and "Cielito Lindo" (Ortiz Ramos 1999:95). The group, founded by Miguel Bermejo, his brother Guillermo Bermejo, and Raul Prado, began by performing in the 1937 film *Mis Cuatro Milpas*.[4]

Los Tres Calaveras was particularly successful in the film industry; as the trio of choice for famous actor and singer Jorge Negrete, they appeared in many of his movies. They provided musical accompaniment for sentimental scenes, as in the 1946 production *Enamorada* with Maria Félix and Pedro Armendáriz. The film narrates the story of a revolutionary who is fed up with the injustice inflicted on the poor by the wealthy. The plot follows him as he falls in love with the daughter of a rich man in the town he invaded. As he stands under the window of his beloved, soft guitars provide a musical backdrop for his poetic words. Then, a soft melodic introduction leads into the well-known *huapango* "La malagueña." The following example shows this introduction as performed by Los Tres Calaveras in the film. The melody begins with rising eighth-note arpeggios over a dominant seventh chord that moves toward the tonic. The melody outlines the Andalusian progression popular in many Latin American music genres: VII – VI – V – i.

[4] The trio itself was the subject of a movie entitled *Los Tres Calaveras* (1965) directed by Fernando Cortés.



Example 3.2: Introduction, "La Malagueña" as performed by Trio Los Tres Calaveras.

The lyrics of "La Malagueña," written by Elpidio Ramirez, thematized the economic struggles experienced by a recently urbanized working class, and they appropriately complement the film scene:

Si por pobre me desprecias	If for being poor you detest me,
Yo te concedo razón	I agree with you.
Yo te concedo razón	I agree with you,
Si por pobre me desprecias	If for being poor you detest me.
Yo no te ofrezco riquezas	I don't offer you wealth,
Te ofrezco mi corazón	I offer you my heart.
Te ofrezco mi corazón	I offer you my heart,
A cambio de mi pobreza	In exchange for my poverty.

The *trio ranchero*'s presence on the big screen had major impact on audiences, who consequently associated the rhetoric of film plots with the music and the musicians themselves.[5]

By 1940, the Mexican film and radio industries were large enough to accommodate more than just a few trios, and musicians readily filled the demand as they

[5] For more about this audio-visual contract, see Chion, Gorbman, and Murch 1994.

sought fame and fortune. One of the new trios on the scene was Trio Los Caporales, founded by Felipe Gil, Alvaro Ancona, and Jesus "Chucho" Navarro. Felipe Gil (1913-1999) was born in Misantla, Veracruz. In the late 1930s, he moved to Mexico City to be part of the burgeoning music and media industry. His trio eagerly sought opportunities to perform on the radio, and soon he was touring abroad, including a stint working for CBS in New York City. In 1940, Alvaro Arcona was succeeded by Felipe's younger brother Alfredo Gil, also known as "El Güero." The new ensemble moved back to New York and stayed there from 1942 until 1944, when Felipe Gil and his wife, the famous Mexican singer Eva Garza, went on a South American tour. Alfredo Gil and Chucho Navarro stayed in New York and continued on as a duo for a time (Ortiz Ramos 1999:145), but soon they decided to start their own trio they would name Los Panchos, unaware of the revolution they would produce in the trio style and in the history of popular music in Mexico and beyond.

Trío Romántico

Trío Los Panchos

Los Panchos was formed by Hernando Aviles, Alfredo Gil, and Jesus "Chucho" Navarro. Navarro (1913-1993) was born in Irapuato in the state of Guanajuato, Mexico. He learned to play and sing at a young age and used his singing skills to supplement his poor student income, enrolling in medical school in Mexico City in 1933 (Ortiz Ramos 1999:151). There he met Alfredo Gil while singing and playing for shows at the XEB and XCB radio stations. As he remembers:

> I met El güero at the XEB. He was the official guitar player for the Rafael Hernandez program. I was afraid when I accompanied him . . . hearing El güero, it

> was a tremendous thing. El güero was always marvelous with his guitar. With those programs at the XEB I was able to earn enough money to eat. With any little program I had enough for a week. With those programs I alternated my studies [with performing] (Ortiz Ramos 1999:151).

In 1936, heartbroken by the sudden death of his mother, Navarro gravitated more toward the bohemian life of night clubs, abandoned his studies, and joined Trio Los Caporales with whom he traveled to perform for CBS in New York City in 1939 (Ortiz Ramos 1999:151). His lack of money, broken dreams, and his love for music led him to pursue a professional career in music (ibid.:152).

Alfredo Gil (1915-1999), known as "El güero" (and younger brother of founding Los Caporales member Felipe), was born in Teziutlan, Puebla. The son of Lebanese immigrants, Alfredo played guitar from a young age and participated in public performances during his teenage years. In 1932 he and Felipe played as a duo in Mexico City called Dueto Bojalil Gil. Alfredo also played for the Rafael Hernandez orchestra, took classical guitar lessons, and played the piano (Ortiz Ramos 1999:149). By 1937 he was performing for a CBS show in New York City along with his older brother and his cousins Carlos and Pablo Martinez Gil.[6] Alfredo stayed with the Hermanos Martinez Gil ensemble until 1940 when he and Felipe started their own ensemble called El Charro Gil y Sus Caporales.

Hernando Aviles (1914-1986) joined Los Panchos in 1944. He was raised in the Santurce neighborhood of Puerto Rico, an area known for its influence on music.[7] His

[6] Carlos and Pablo Martinez Gil were his cousins and also very successful performers who started the ensemble name Hermanos Martinez Gil.

[7] For more information on the musical geography of Santurce see Berríos-Miranda and Dudley 2008.

father was a cook at the Condado Beach hotel. Aviles grew up negotiating poverty (Ortiz Ramos 1999:152). He learned to play the guitar when he was very young and played for school festivals. By 1932 he started his first trio with Luis Antonio and Jose Alberto Borgos called Trio Antillano, and in 1934 he founded the Trio Los Gauchos with Carlos Alfaro and Pepito Maduro. In those years Aviles performed mostly Argentinian tangos, giving him a distinctive musical sensibility that would later contribute to the success of Los Panchos. In the words of historian Ortiz Ramos:

> His experience as an Argentinian singer [*sic*] was very useful and fruitful because he learned to project with a lot of emotion the smooth rhythmic patterns that are in tango. He incorporated that feeling and complaint of the tango singers and disciplined himself in his diction, creating a refined and exquisite style that later on he brought completely to the Trío Los Panchos (Ortiz Ramos 1999:154).

Trio Los Gauchos disbanded in 1937, and Hernando Aviles continued to perform mostly as a soloist, visiting the United States and countries throughout Latin America. In 1941 he joined musician Sotero San Miguel to perform as a Mexican duo called Dueto Azteca (Ortiz Ramos 1999; Fernandez 2005). During a presentation at the cabaret *El Chico* in Greenwich Village he met Alfredo Gil and Chucho Navarro for the first time. They met up again in 1944 and founded Trio Los Panchos.

Perhaps the best-known *trío romántico*, Los Panchos was formed during a time when there was an increased demand for musical acts for radio and live performances in New York City, which by the early 1940s was a world hub of international musical exchange. Here I introduce and then elaborate on three important aspects of Los Panchos' success that I consider pivotal in the advancement the trio style. First, unlike many of their predecessors, they composed most of their own songs. Second, Gil incorporated a smaller guitar called a *requinto* into his melodic ornamentations, giving Los Panchos a

distinctive sound. Finally, Aviles conveyed an unusual emotional quality through his soulful, lyrical singing.

Navarro and Gil were both gifted composers and between the two of them produced dozens of commercial hits. “Rayito de Luna” is one of the songs that are now part of the Latin American canon of sentimental songs. The song is said to have been composed in New York City at the beginning of Los Panchos’ career in a small apartment in the Bronx. In the middle of the night, Navarro watched wistfully as the moon lit the dark night of New York City:

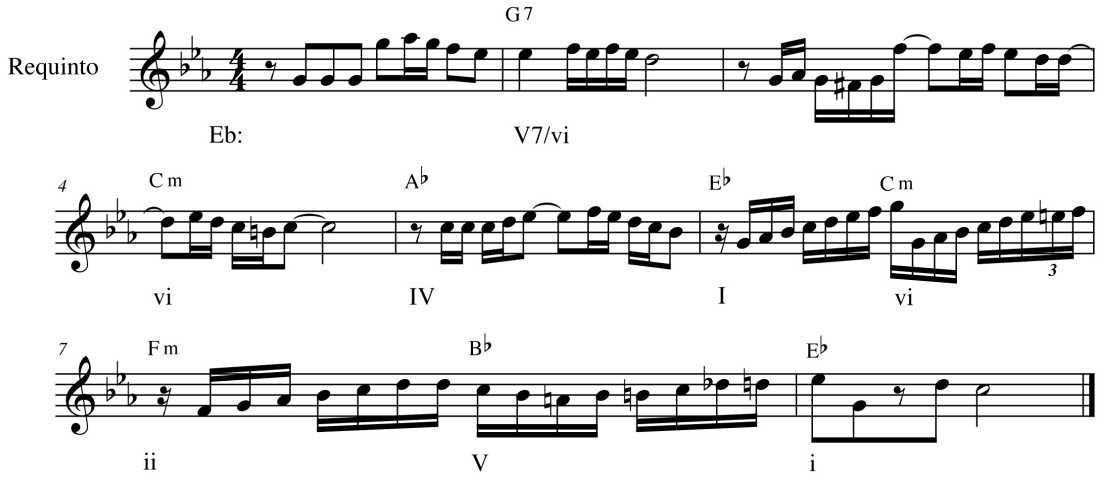
Como un rayito de luna	Like a ray of moonlight
Entre la selva dormida	Among the sleeping jungle
Asi la luz de tus ojos	That is how the light of your eyes
Ha iluminado mi pobre vida	Has illuminated my poor life
Tu diste luz al sendero	You gave light to the path
En mi noche sin fortuna	In my unfortunate night
Iluminando mi cielo	Illuminating my sky
Como un rayito claro de luna	Like a clear ray of moonlight
Rayito de luna blanca	Ray of white moonlight
Que iluminas mi camino	That illuminates my path
Asi es tu amor en mi vida	That is how your love is in my life
La verdad de mi destino	The truth of my destiny
Tu diste luz al sendero	You gave light to the path
En mi noche sin fortuna	In my unfortunate night
Iluminando mi cielo	Illuminating my sky
Como un rayito claro de luna	Like a clear ray of moonlight

The second important contribution of Los Panchos to the establishment of the trio style was the incorporation of a smaller guitar now known as the *requinto*. The origins of this instrument and its use in the trio style have been shrouded in doubt. During his career, Alfredo Gil stated that he invented the instrument by requesting to his friend Tata

to modify a Colombian *tiple*. Many of Gil's arrangements and melodic ornaments mostly took advantage of the upper register of the guitar in order to create a distinct layer apart from the accompaniment. This was usually accomplished by making use of the guitar capo, so Gil opted to "invent" a smaller guitar that would better accommodate his hands and be tuned by default in a higher register.[8]

This version of the story, however, has caused controversy among followers of the trio style. Gilberto Puente, for example, stated in an interview with the author on 8 February 2008 that a smaller guitar tuned a fourth above had already existed. Certainly, it is possible that different people in different times have had the same needs and resorted to the same logical solution. Regardless of the requinto's origin, it became a fundamental element of the trio style after Los Panchos. It allowed musicians to display increasingly virtuosic ornate passages and became a primary vehicle to express complexity. While previous groups such as Trio Matamoros or Las Calaveras had performed ornaments based on parallel thirds, Gil composed more virtuosic melodic lines based on new chord progressions. The following example is the opening of Chucho Navarro's "Rayito de Luna." The *requinto* introduction begins with a melodic ornament built upon the dominant seventh of C minor (vi, or the relative minor of Eb). The melody leaps between octaves and progresses from C minor to Ab (the subdominant), which leads into a common chord progression widely popular in boleros, the "*circulo*": I – vi – ii – V. The running sixteenth notes incorporate chromaticism and represent a departure from previous melodic idioms in the trio style (Example 3.3).

[8] According to Jorge Flores, Jr. and Gilberto Puente, Alfredo Gil had very small hands. Creating the requinto was also the solution to be able to play more complicated melodic lines making use of the whole register (Flores 2015 and Puente 2008).



Example 3.3: Melodic introduction of "Rayito de Luna" as performed by Alfredo Gil.

The third contribution of Los Panchos to the trio style was the ability to transmit the lyrics in a clear, emotional way. This was accomplished by focusing on the phrasing of the text. According to Gilberto Puente:

> There are many important things in a song. Sometimes when a composer writes a song, accents are in the wrong place. The text does not go well with the melody and you have to fix it so it can be understood, not only the text but the melody. There are many phrases that need to be sung well in Spanish so people from all Hispanic traditions can understand what you are singing, because there are many who sing and you can't understand what they are saying, and that was where Hernando Aviles excelled. Aviles taught us the phrasing, to pronounce well, and to analyze the bolero in order to understand the theme, what was it about, and fix everything that needed to be fixed (Interview with author, 8 February 2008).

Thanks to Gil's requinto innovations and Aviles's clear, direct singing style, Los Panchos and their music were well known by the end of the 1940s. They returned to Mexico under contract by Columbia Records, who gave each of them a new Cadillac as a bonus (Fernandez 2005:21). Their humble beginnings as Mexican immigrants in the United States had been left behind as they were transformed into international stars arriving from New York City. This transition transformed both the musicians and their

music. In order to flourish in the stiff musical competition of 1940s New York, Los Panchos had found their Latin Americanness a useful resource in advancing their careers. They distinguished themselves by playing up their Latin American identity. Once they entered the field of cultural production in Mexico City, however, they positioned themselves differently by avoiding rural connotations and the *sombreros* and *sarapes* (ponchos) they once wore to perform (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1: *Los Panchos* dressed in mariachi garments (left), and wearing tuxedos (right). From left to right in both pictures: Hernando Aviles, Chucho Navarro, Alfredo Gil. (Photo credits: Left, Armando Herrera; right, <www.vintagemusic.es>, accessed June 4, 2015.)

The visual change accompanied an aesthetic change in Los Panchos' music. They left behind their folksong repertoire in favor of songs that resonated better both musically and discursively with audiences in middle-class Mexico City.

Boleros were increasingly popular; Los Panchos entered the field of bolero capitalizing on the popularity of these sentimental compositions and experimented with new chords and voicing as a new position-taking. With Los Panchos, audiences first heard the *bel canto* singing style incorporated into songs sung in Spanish (Italian opera had long been favored in Mexico). Their simple musical phrases sung in three-part harmony accompanied by three guitars each playing the same chord in different inversions was also something not heard before. The paradoxically simple but

"sophisticated" musical innovations of Los Panchos gave the trio a favorable position in the field. The sentimental discourse and the implementation of certain musical elements associated with highbrow music such as opera resonated with the cosmopolitanism to which audiences were by then accustomed.

Los Panchos was very influential and successful during the last half of the 1940s, acting in movies and recording throughout most of the 1950s. They recorded over 800 songs and toured all over the world. In fact, the group was extremely popular in countries as far away geographically and culturally as Japan, where they recorded several albums and stayed for long periods of time performing in nightclubs. In an interview with ethnomusicologist Steven Loza, popular Japanese guitar player Antonio Kago remembers how he was fascinated by the music of Los Panchos during his high school years. He started performing in the style of Los Panchos and by age twenty was hosting a weekly musical television show (Loza 1998). Navarro composed a song for Koga entitled "Se llama Fujiyama" that became very popular in Japan and Latin America.

According to Koga, Latin music is popular in Japan because it shares the "same human feelings" and the words simultaneously express both sadness and joy in a manner similar to Japanese enka.[9] Phonetically, too, Japanese and Spanish have similar sounds. Japanese and Latin American audiences have found common ground in trio music (Loza 1998:394). For Los Panchos, recording and performing in Japan functioned as an effective positioning in the field; being accepted in a country as far away as Japan was

[9] In Japan, *enka*—a song of love, loss and yearning from the 1950s—provided an "'imaginary,' which holds up to public view a communally broken heart" (Yano 2003:3). Enka originated in Japanese ballads from the early twentieth century that combined Western instruments and Japanese scales. The lyrics conveyed emotional passages about love, hope and helplessness, true feelings among the Japanese people. Enka continues to engage middle-aged and older audiences in a nostalgic framework of collective memory while younger generations consider it associated with a rural, feudalistic country that does not reflect modern Japan (ibid.:8).

advantageous as they were reported on back home as internationally renowned musicians. The album cover in Figure 3.2, *Los Panchos Sing Japan*, shows a later incarnation of Los Panchos (without Aviles) dressed in kimonos in front of a rural Japanese scene. This was one of many albums the trio recorded there, and they recorded many of its songs—composed by Japanese composers—in Japanese.

Figure 3.2: Album cover, *Los Panchos Cantan Japón* (1965).

Los Panchos' career was not without complications—they changed leading voices on several occasions—but it soon became apparent that they ultimately forged paths to social and economic capital for those who sang in the style they pioneered. Trio configurations were not only a way of acquiring fame but also a means for social mobility to those who had at their immediate disposal only their voices and a guitar.

First Contestation

Los Tres Diamantes

The success of Los Panchos showed impresarios the latent economic possibilities in the field of bolero. RCA Victor's artistic director, Mariano Rivera Conde, after several attempts to steal Los Panchos from Columbia Records, embarked on a project to produce a new trio that would compete with them. The resulting trio was Los Tres Diamantes.

Founded in Mexico City in October 1948 by Gustavo Prado, Enrique Quezada, and Saulo Sedano, Los Tres Diamantes represented a departure from the rural connotations of Los Panchos, as evidenced in its name ("the three diamonds").[10] Saulo Sedano (b. 1925) was born in the heart of the *barrio bravo* of Tepito, a dangerous, poor neighborhood in Mexico City. From an early age he sang with his brother Mario Javier, and formed a duet called Los Curripipis. The brothers Sedano sang for President Lazaro Cárdenas on numerous occasions, as they were his preferred performers at parties in the presidential residence. They also entered the film industry at an early age working with Cantinflas in three movies: *Asi es mi tierra* (1937), *Rancho Chico* (1938), and *Aguila o Sol* (1937).[11] They were also regular performers at the famous Teatro Lírico. Most of their early performances were based on traditional Mexican songs such as "Las Gaviotas," "La Marimba," "Aldrede," and "Rayando el Sol," among others. Their attire was usually, as Sedano put it, "de inditos" (like little Indians).[12] As the Sedano brothers grew up and their voices changed they started working outside the entertainment

[10] Los Tres Diamantes was one of the few trios to have kept the same members throughout its history.

[11] The expression "aguila o sol" refers to the flipping of a Mexican coin (as in "head or tails").

[12] According to Sedano, they performed as "inditos" when they were young. In the films in which they appeared later on they wore smoking jackets. In performances abroad their agents required them to wear Mariachi suits (Sedano 2015).

industry. Young Saulo worked as a carpenter, as a merchant selling bread on the streets, as a blacksmith, as an installer of car accessories, and eventually as a mechanic's assistant at Buick Mexico, Chrysler, and Oldsmobile. As he tells it, one day he had a chance encounter on the street with composer Carlos Crespo,[13] who suggested he be part of a trio ensemble and provided him with the address to audition with two others.

Sedano remembers that the audition was at the house of Raul Prado, member of Las Calaveras, and that Gustavo Prado,[14] Raúl's brother, lived there as well. Gustavo had worked previously in Trio Janitzio and was looking to start his own group. Gustavo had a very good friend from childhood with whom he used to play *fútbol* around the Santo Domingo neighborhood near the Zócalo. His name was Enrique Quezada. Quezada had a high-pitched voice and had the idea of starting a quartet, but the quartet ensemble was not popular and Gustavo suggested starting a trio instead. They tried several members, including Sergio Flores, who eventually formed Los Tecolines,[15] but none of them were successful until Sedano. Sedano arrived at the address and knocked on the door; Gustavo opened the door and welcomed him to the house. Quezada was reluctant to have Sedano in the group at the beginning, but the ensemble sounded good, and the voices were slowly blending. Sedano remembers that his voice was too clean, but little by little he acquired the texture needed for the trio style (Sedano 2015). They started rehearsing, primarily songs already recorded and made popular by Los Panchos. They did not have their own

[13] Crespo was instrumental in Sedano's career, since it was he who recommended him to perform at the Teatro Lírico and for the president, so in a sense he sometimes worked as Sedano's manager. He was born in Zacatecas and had been a member of trio Los Dorados de Villa. Crespo is well known for compositions such as "Hipocrita" (hypocrite), "Carta Fatal" (Fatal Letter), "Callejera" (Street Woman), "Descarada" (Shameless), and "Mala Mujer" (Bad Woman) (Bazán Bonfil 2001:214). He was arguably one of the main architects of popular song's misogynist discourse at the beginning of the twentieth century.

[14] According to Alicia Luna, Raul Prado and Gustavo Prado were half brothers (Luna 2015).

[15] Sergio Flores was the requinto player of Los Tecolines, a trio I cover further in the following chapter.

repertoire back then. Gustavo knew some songs from when he worked with Trio Janitzio such as "Mi cancion" and "Cuando me vaya," and those were the first ones they rehearsed.

According to Sedano, the history of success of Los Tres Diamantes would have not been possible without the help of Raul Prado from Trio Los Calaveras. As he remembers:

> I didn't have any money, and when we started practicing I missed a rehearsal and he [Raul Prado] asked me, "what happened, why did you miss rehearsal?" And I said: "To tell you the truth I didn't have money for the bus." It was only twenty-five cents but there was a time when I was in very bad shape. So Gustavo and Raul agreed on giving me one peso, so I would have enough to get to rehearsal and after that, I never missed one (Sedano 2015).

Once the trio had several songs well rehearsed, sometime during the fall of 1948, Raul Prado took them to the XEW Radio Station to meet with the artistic director for an audition. They were placed at *Salon Azul* (Blue Salon), where composer Maria Grever and singer Salvador Flores were working on the last episode of a radio show about her life. As Sedano remembers:

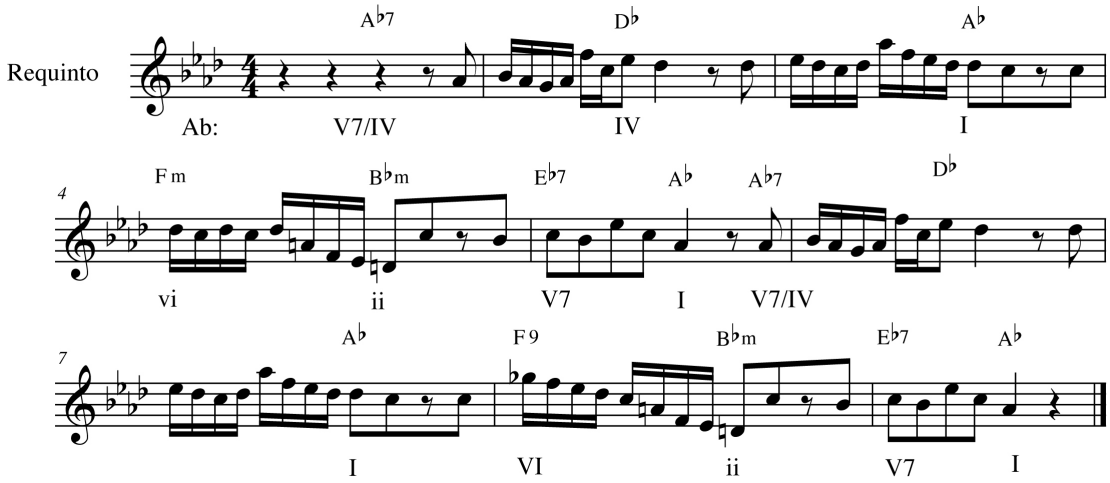
> We entered through the back door of the studio, and Mrs. Grever was seated in her wheelchair observing the production of the radio show from the back. We approached her along with the XEW producer Mr. Agustín Hernandez. She looked at us as if to ask, "What are you doing here?" Mr. Agustín Hernandez asked her: "Maria, I would like you to listen to these *muchachos*." She replied: "No, no, no, no. Don't bring me anything that has to do with trios, my songs are to be sung by soloists, I don't want anything to do with trios." Mr. Hernandez insisted: "Maria, please listen to them, I already listened to them and I think you are going to like them." We looked at each other thinking that oh well, we messed up. After much insisting and not happily, she accepted. So we started the first song "Mi cancion" (My song), which was one of her original compositions. Little by little we saw how her facial expression changed from angry to tranquil. She looked at us and sat up in her chair, paying more attention to the music, and then we finished singing and she didn't say anything. We looked at each other and the only thing she said was: "Cual es la otra" (What else do you have / Which one is

> the other one). After that we thought we made it. Following that, we played another of her compositions, "Cuando me vaya" (When I leave), which is very high, but we had it very well rehearsed and she started crying, and I thought thank God, we won. After finishing the second song, she congratulated us and asked the solo singer Salvador Flores, "Do you mind if this trio sings this last episode?" Flores accepted, and right there was our debut, meaning that Mrs. Maria Grever was the *madrina* of Los Tres Diamantes (Sedano 2015).

After the arrival of Los Tres Diamantes on the radio scene new performing opportunities appeared, and Raul Prado once again took them to RCA Victor to meet with Mariano Rivera Conde, artistic director of the label and a good friend of Prado. Trio Los Panchos was extremely popular at the time, as they were the only *trío romántico* on the radio. They went for an impromptu audition with just one microphone in a small room, and after singing a couple of songs, Rivera Conde was immediately convinced and scheduled an appointment for a formal recording session. There first two songs were "Mi canción" and "Cuando me vaya," which were also their first hits and the first songs following the style established by Los Panchos. Although Los Panchos had established a style that was very well received, Los Tres Diamantes were looking to follow up on their success but create their own style. When I asked Sedano what it was that distinguished his style from Los Panchos he responded:

> I was totally different than Los Panchos in the requinto arrangements, because I use one or two strings, very discreet but with a lot of sentiment. So much that over time other trios were playing songs and arrangements by Los Panchos, Los Tres Ases, and others, but not so much from Los Tres Diamantes. Many were playing a lot of *garigoleado* [excessive ornamentation], and I was playing what I thought was very simple. They said that even though it looked easy, it was in fact very difficult; that is where the expression of *dificil facilidad* (difficult easiness) was attributed to my playing. The difficulty they said was in giving the "touch" and getting that sound out of the guitar . . . I had my own feeling, and I played how I was feeling it. Without wanting it I created my own style, one or two strings sometimes, like in the song "Condición" (Condition). That is what gave me the opportunity to be in a good place with the public and with the producers and with everyone (Sedano 2015).

Sedano both adopted Los Panchos' trio style and distinguished his requinto playing from that of his friend and fellow *requintista* Alfredo Gil.[16] The following score (Example 3.4) is the introduction of the song "Mienteme," one of the hits of Los Tres Diamantes. Sedano strove for simpler melodies, not *garigoleado*, but trying to provide a soft touch that would convey sentiment and emotion.



Example 3.4: Introduction to "Mienteme" as performed by Saulo Sedano.

Audiences found in the music of Los Tres Diamantes a sound similar to Los Panchos yet with a new set of songs and melodic arrangements; RCA Victor had successfully produced a trio that would compete with Columbia's Panchos.[17]

[16] Saulo Sedano and Alfredo Gil met when Sedano was very young. Gil took him on as his unofficial apprentice and even called him "mi'jo" (son) as a term of endearment.

[17] According to Ortiz Ramos, Mariano Rivera Conde, artistic director of RCA Victor, asked for the help of Raul Prado, member of Trio Los Calaveras, to produce a trio that would compete with Los Panchos (1999:219). The goodwill expressed by Sedano toward Prado should also be seen in the light of powerful relationships between social agents in the field.

After establishing a performing career, Sedano's life changed in many ways, as he remembers:

> My life changed in the sense that we were able to have a house, something to eat, because there were times when I was so broke that sometimes we had something to eat and sometimes we did not, and once things started to change, everything started to grow: my attire, my way of being, my everything. At least for me it was something grandiose, because I was able to have my people, my father and my mother like *Dios manda* (proper living). I had a lot of family, we were six siblings, and we were poor, we were a poor family, *y gracias que empece a diamantar* (and because I started to perform with Los Diamantes) everything started to change for the whole family (Sedano 2015).

In fact, Sedano and Los Tres Diamantes followed in the steps of Los Panchos and toured around the world, including Japan. Sedano remembers:

> Everyone says that Los Panchos were the first ones to arrive to Japan, and it was true; however, they had already heard an album of Los Diamantes. El Güero told us, "Don't worry, after we go there, you are going to go there after us" and it was like that. They did their season, and then he got us contracts, and they [Japanese] brought us. We were not able to wear the tuxedo, because they told us from the beginning, "Here you have to work dressed as charros."[18] So we got very beautiful charro suits made and that how we started [in Japan]. Every artist who wanted to perform had to follow those rules . . . we went fifteen times to Japan. The first time we were not very well known, but eventually we were very well recognized. We played mainly in concerts, then at big nightclubs (Sedano 2015).

In Mexico the charro suit would have been taken as a regression into a nationalistic aesthetic, but it opened doors internationally.

[18] The term *charro* refers to a traditional Mexican horseman, like a cowboy but with distinct dress and manners. The suit is familiar to most people as what mariachis wear.

Figure 3.3: Single and LP from Los Diamantes recorded in Japan.

Los Diamantes were also asked to compose and record songs in and about Japan. Sedano recalled:

> They wanted us to record over there, just as we did in Spain, Italy, Argentina, Brazil and everywhere . . . we recorded mostly whatever was fashionable in that country. For example, in Italy we recorded "Nel blu dipinto di blu" [In the sky, painted blue], the song that was awarded first prize that year [in the Eurovision contest] . . . In Greece, I remember we stayed for about eleven months; in fact, we opened a cabaret. I remember going and listening to other trios, mainly local trios. I was fascinated by the use of the instrument called bouzouki. It was so beautiful; I loved the harmonies, the requintos in two voices. That is where I got the idea for the song "Otesto kiraki" ("Nunca en Domingo") (Sedano 2015).

Traveling to other countries meant not only the approval of the international music circuit, the incorporation of musical elements from other countries also provided new openings for their own position-takings.

As the 1950s progressed the demand for sentimental music also increased, and recording labels saw a great business opportunity in trios and searched for others that could offer something new within the style. Those who were mere copies of Los Panchos did not succeed in the competition for recording contracts and international fame. Few did, and they achieved not only immediate fame and fortune but also inscribed their names in the history of Mexican popular music.

Second Contestation

Los Tres Ases (The Three Aces)

Los Panchos and Los Tres Diamantes were at the forefront of cultural production fueled by the competition of two major record labels, Columbia and RCA Victor, respectively. After the successful entry of Los Tres Diamantes into the field, Rivera Conde continued his search for other trios that although within the style, would occupy new positions and fill an increased demand for trios. Through a careful process of audition and selection, he signed Los Tres Ases, who are often considered the third major trio in the history of the style.

Los Tres Ases was originally founded in the early 1950s by Juan Neri as the leading voice and *requinto* player, Hector Gonzalez as second voice, and Antonio Perez Meza, who was replaced later by Marco Antonio Muñiz. During my fieldwork I was fortunate to find Alicia Luna, Hector Gonzalez's widow, who shared with me the story of her late husband and the trio.

Hector Gonzalez Pineda was born in Navajo, Sonora in 1923, one of seven siblings. He started life in a privileged environment; his father was a professor, army general, and politician well positioned to become the next governor of the state. They had a *quinta* (large country house) in Sonora and another one in Sinaloa, and young Gonzalez Pineda lived with all the benefits of a privileged life until his father died of complications from diabetes. His mother became very ill shortly afterwards, and his godfather and the executor of his father's will absconded with the family's fortune. Young Hector suddenly had no opportunities to study; instead, his brother Edmundo taught him how to play the guitar. At a very young age, Hector sang and played his guitar in the local bars of

Culiacan, Sinaloa, in order to earn money to support his family. He met Antonio Perez Meza and Juan Neri, and with them he started the Trio Culiacan. Eventually they moved to Mexico City. After modest success, the trio changed their name to Los Tres Ases and incorporated the voice of Marco Antonio Muñiz,[19] who did not have a particularly high-pitched voice like Hernando Aviles of Los Panchos or Enrique Quezada of Los Tres Diamantes. This allowed the trio to experiment with new vocal arrangements.

Although Los Tres Ases is usually placed chronologically as coming after Los Panchos, its musicians trace their careers to the early 1940s. As Hector Gonzales Pineda, remembers:

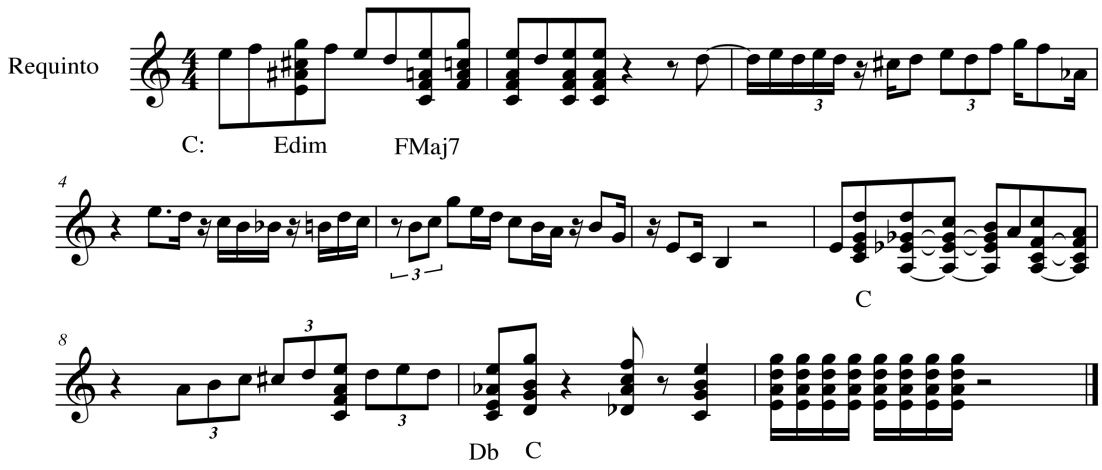
> I arrived from Sinaloa during the forties with the trio Culiacan, I remember that in those days [there] were [the trios] Los Tamaulipecos, Trio Tariacuri, Las Conchitas, Los Vaqueros, Los Calaveras, Trio Guayacan, all of them unforgettable trios. Back then Los Panchos had not arrived on the scene, but when they arrived is when everything turned beautiful with the ensembles . . . competition, however, was tough. From the exterior were arriving successful [solo] artists such as Lucho Gatica, Andy Russell, Daniel Villalobos, Antonio Prieto, among others, and the trios had to compete against them in the night clubs . . . the song "No me platiques mas" (Don't tell me more) by Vicente Garrido[20] was made very popular by Lucho Gatica and we [Los Tres Ases] had to produce our own version in order to compete (*Homenaje a Los Tres Ases* 1986).

Through most of the first half of the 1950s, positions in the field of bolero followed closely what Los Panchos had done. With Los Tres Ases, new positions and new forms of capital emerged. Los Tres Ases took the style established by Los Panchos (three-part vocal harmony and melodic ornaments played on the *requinto*) and developed

[19] According to Alicia Luna, the trio started playing in the famous bordello La Bandida, a place where artists, politicians, and influential people gathered and which was owned by Graciela Olmos. Antonio Perez Meza did not like the environment and decided to withdraw from the trio.

[20] During the 1990s, this song was recorded again by solo artist Luis Miguel with considerable success. New, younger audiences were exposed to the bolero repertoire. For more information, see chapter 6.

its own interpretations of the standard *bolero* repertoire by incorporating melodic phrases infused with jazz and by substituting basic harmonic progressions with jazzy chords such as seventh, ninth, thirteenth and diminished chords. Juan Neri along with Los Tres Ases took the "position" (in the Bourdieusian sense) of jazz performers, distinguishing themselves from others and acquiring cultural capital that allowed them to advance in the field. The introduction of the song "Sabor a mi" (Taste of me), for example, shows Los Tres Ases in their prime and demonstrates the jazzy elements that set them apart. The song begins with Neri playing the melody on top of full chords on the requinto, followed by a short improvisatory section in which he uses a diminished minor scale, as shown in the following example.



Example 3.5: Introduction of "Sabor a mi" as performed by Juan Neri.

This style of playing followed the premise established by Los Tres Diamantes and Los Panchos but pushed the style into new musical territories that resonated well with urban, cosmopolitan audiences. By the second half of the 1950s Los Tres Ases were regular recording artists signed by RCA Victor's Rivera Conde and had become one of the most popular trios. Los Tres Ases and Los Tres Diamantes, following in the steps of

Los Panchos, showed that there was money and fame to be made if you sang in three-part harmony. Figure 3.4 shows members of Los Tres Diamantes, members of Los Tres Ases, and famous singer Pedro Vargas.

Figure 3.4: Photograph of Los Tres Diamantes and Los Tres Ases with Pedro Vargas. From left to right: Juan Neri, Enrique Quezada, Marco Antonio Muñiz, Pedro Vargas, Gustavo Prado, Hector Gonzalez, and Saulo Sedano. Used by permission of Alicia Luna.

Battles

It is generally accepted that the first major trios in the bolero tradition were Los Panchos, Los Tres Diamantes, and Los Tres Ases. After them, hundreds of trios would compete for a place in the field and in the history of Mexican popular music. As time passed and more trios appeared, competition escalated. The following section covers what could be considered the fourth major trio, Los Tres Caballeros, but by the mid 1950s many other trios had also materialized. Instead of continuing the chronology I have

set up, I see the following as the opening for a plethora of contestations in the field that I continue in the next chapter.

Los Tres Caballeros

In Bourdieusian terms, knowledge of "the present and future structure of the market of symbolic goods" (doing "something out of the ordinary" in order to establish a position and gain capital) mobilized agents to take positions in their field relative to one another (Bourdieu 1993:133). By the mid 1950s, the field of bolero was clearly defined, and actors knew the rules of the game. Many new actors entered the field, including recording labels, such as Musart. Rivera Conde at RCA Victor had shown that Los Panchos did not hold a monopoly on the production of boleros, and that there were positions in the field to be filled. He continued searching for other trios and helped produce Los Tres Caballeros, only to lose them to Musart.

Los Tres Caballeros was a trio formed by Leonel Galvez singing first voice, Roberto Cantoral singing third voice, and Chamin Correa on second voice and requinto. Correa began playing guitar when he was five years old. His father was an orchestra conductor, and his grandfather was a judge and guitar aficionado who taught him how to play the guitar. He first met Roberto Cantoral, who had a group called Los Cuatro (the four). They were classmates in junior high when they decided to start a trio, inspired by the popularity of Los Panchos. Correa played the guitar, but once he heard the requinto he decided to devote his attention to it instead. Young Cantoral was already composing his first songs, and they went in search of a leading voice, a task that took a long time. Correa remembers:

> There were already Los Tres Diamantes and Los Tres Ases, and we needed to do something out of the ordinary . . . it was a beautiful musical current, from which many good trios emerged; Los Panchos who were the professors of all of us, after them, Los Diamantes, then Los Ases, and then we were the fourth. From there many other trios followed: Los Galantes, Los Tecolines, Los Dandys. All of them very good, in their own style; we did not sound like each other (Correa n.d.).

In their pursuit of a novel position Los Tres Caballeros tried different members and configurations. Founded in 1952, the trio recorded under the RCA Victor label in 1953, but in Rivera Conde's view their recordings were not successful enough to keep the trio at the label, so he let them go. After a brief sojourn in New York they returned with the sponsorship of Discos Musart, whose director signed them to an exclusive contract. With Musart Los Tres Caballeros had its breakthrough with the hits "La barca" (The boat) and "El reloj" (The clock). Correa remembers the long hours of rehearsal required:

> We left the scene having established a "school" harmonically speaking, not only [in Mexico] but everywhere. It was a complete spectacle, we practiced up to twelve hours daily, always glued to our instruments. In Greece they called us "the most technical trio in the world." In Greece we had a good experience; there was a trio in every restaurant that sang like Los Tres Caballeros, but they were from Greece. In Italy it was the same. They didn't know any Spanish, but they had all our repertoire, an authentic copy of the trio. We went to Japan and the same, there was a trio called Los Pepes, *ni una gota de español* (not a drop of Spanish) but they had all the repertoire as if they were a copy (Correa n.d.).[21]

The wholesale copying of a trio in a country as far away as Japan or Greece was likely the highest testament to a group's position in a crowded field. As the economic downturn of the second half of the 1950s occurred, the competition for positions ramped up even more, as evidenced by legal battles that ensued over the use of trios' names. The

[21] After the dissolution of the trio in France in 1964, Chamín Correa became artistic producer for Capitol Records in Los Angeles. He was also vice president of Polygram, vice president of EMI Capitol, and president of Orfeon, and had the opportunity to experience the other side of cultural production, working with artists such as El Piruli, Demi Russo, and Julio Iglesias.

bolero imaginary that had been developing since the 1930s contributed in the late fifties to the structure of feeling introduced in chapter two.

In this chapter, I have shown the development of the trio style and its connections with the bolero. Furthermore I have explored the ways in which different actors in the field competed and negotiated different forms of capital through position-taking. In particular, I have looked at how that position-taking was expressed in the music through the incorporation of other musical genres and styles. Additionally, I have shown how the real-life economic and social struggles of the musicians contributed to the construction and development of the bolero as field of cultural production. As in many aspects of culture and social life, social phenomena are never static, and so the field of bolero did change along with the social and political changes of the time. In the following chapter, I explore the second half of the 1950s, the beginning of the 1960s, and the development of the trio style in the light of nostalgia for an era that was rapidly disappearing, the "invasion" of rock'n'roll, and the dawn of important social movements such as the civil rights movement and the student protests around the world. The following chapter also describes the process of how that structure of feeling solidified and further influenced the position-takings of later trios.

Tú tienes que ayudarme a conseguir la fe que con engaños yo perdí,
Me tienes que ayudar de nuevo a amar y a perdonar.

Chapter Four: Voicing Competition, Part II

You have to help me find the faith that I lost with deception
You have to help me to love again and to forgive.
(Bobby Capo, "Poquita fé" 1961)[1]

By the mid 1950s most of the sentimental music production in Mexico was dominated by the trios and their repertoire, which grew exponentially. The demand for trios grew so much that the Discos de Oro (Golden Discs) awards added a special category for them (Moreno Rivas 1979:162). The overwhelming number of trios in this saturated market forced musicians to look across musical and political boundaries to develop their own original styles, whether in the rhythms, the combination of voices, or the melodic ornaments in the requinto. Certain stylistic possibilities were limited in the sense that the overall ensemble still had to fit within the "Panchista" (bolero-trio) framework to be recognizable. In their position-takings, trio musicians competed to create more and more elaborate arrangements that, to some observers, bordered on an excess of *barroquismo* [over-ornamentation] in the use of the *requinto* and a feminine mellifluousness of the voices that set the trio style at the border of *chabacaneria* [bad taste] and corny sentimentalism (Moreno Rivas 1979:163). The trios reviewed in this chapter, however, consciously struggled to distinguish themselves from each other, negotiating a variety of stylistic possibilities.

[1] All translations in this chapter are by the author unless otherwise noted.

As the 1960s arrived, bolero musicians in Mexico also faced important social and cultural changes, such as the increased diffusion of musical genres from the United States including rock'n'roll, blues, country, and jazz. Additionally, there was a generational gap between bolero musicians born in the early part of the century, who were raised with widespread nationalistic discourses, and those coming of age in the 1960s, whose awareness of social change, including the international civil rights movement and student protests, gave them a more cosmopolitan worldview. The following chapter explores how these social changes changed the field and compelled musicians to take new positions. It follows the second half of the development of the trio style and its decline in popularity in the mass market, showing how boleros continued to function as an emotional currency that provided social, cultural and economic capital. I am particularly interested in the way position-taking allowed musicians to experiment and incorporate musical genres and melodic ideas outside Mexican regionalism, to include musical instruments not previously associated with Mexican music.

I show how, after the resounding success of trios such as Los Caballeros, Los Tres Ases, Los Tres Diamantes, and Los Panchos, the trio style and everything associated with it (the songs, arrangements, lyrics, and names of the trios) solidified as a kind of emotional nostalgic currency that has provided capital for new generations of musicians ever since. I also examine how the emotions that originally drove this musical sentimentalism changed as people felt slowly but steadily less socio-economically vulnerable in the immediate post-war era. The period in question, however, implanted a repertoire and certain sentiments that would return in later economic crises, as we will see in chapter five.

This chapter is divided into two main parts. The first one explores the histories of trios Los Tecolines and Los Dandys. The information related to these two ensembles has been provided by the sons of the founding members: Jorge Flores, Jr. of Los Tecolines, and Francisco Escamilla, Jr., of Los Dandys. Both men were born into the sentimental musical production of their respective parents, and as they grew up they followed the trios, became disciples, and eventually became involved in the field. In addition, both have fought over the legal rights to use the names of the trios their fathers founded in order to carry on the family business. Their legal battles attest to the importance of a name as a brand and as a means to acquire capital. During their interviews they gave me access to archival materials and firsthand accounts of what they did during those years. The second part of this chapter explores Trio Los Tres Reyes and Trio Los Santos. In these cases I spoke to some of the founding members as well as the younger generation. The ethnographic accounts of these trios and the musical analysis included here center on the transformation of the music that negotiated regionalism and incorporated cultural elements considered to be of a higher social class status.

Los Tecolines

It is generally accepted that the first widely successful trios were Los Panchos, Los Diamantes, Los Tres Ases, and Los Tres Caballeros. However, the story of many other trios who also performed and recorded at the beginning of the 1950s has yet to be revealed.[2] Among those were Los Tecolines, which had four members throughout most

[2] The trios covered in this chapter and the previous is only a short list that by no means is based on their importance related to other trios; rather, it reflects the access I had to primary sources. It is worth mentioning that other trios such as Los Galantes, Los Soberanos, Los Fantasmas, and Los Delfines, among many others, made important contributions as well, and more research will uncover other nuances.

of the group's existence but has been considered part of the trio movement because Sergio Flores, one of the group's founding members, did not sing; instead he performed the melodic requinto arrangements. Thus, the group's voicing followed the three-part harmony of the Panchista style. Los Tecolines was formed by Antonio Velazquez, who alternated between the first and second voices, Luis de la Cruz Damian, who alternated between first voice and *tercera alta* (third above), Jorge Flores, who performed second and third voice, and his brother Sergio Flores playing the requinto and electric guitar.

Sergio Flores (1935-1969) learned to play the guitar when he was five years old from his older brother Jorge (b. 1927). When he was seven, after taking classical guitar lessons, he debuted at the *Teatro Lírico*. At age eleven he performed a solo guitar recital in the Palacio de Bellas Artes.[3] Having been classically trained was a relatively rare asset in the field. Requinto players especially were judged by their skill at playing intricate melodic introductions, a trend established by Alfredo Gil in the 1940s with his increasingly complicated song introductions. Sergio Flores had befriended Gil as a fellow student of classical guitar. Figure 4.1 shows, on the left, a flyer that promoted Flores' 1947 concert at Mexico City's Schiefer Hall, and on the right, Flores and Gil with their guitar teacher at the XEW several years later.

[3] On 28 February 1947, Flores gave his debut concert at the Palacio de Bellas Artes, where he played pieces from the classical repertoire including works by Albéniz, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, and Granados.

Figure 4.1: Advertisement for Sergio Flores performing at eleven years old (left), and Flores and Gil with their guitar teacher (right). Used by permission from Jorge Flores, Jr.

As they grew up, the Flores brothers performed professionally as a duo on radio concerts for the XEW and the XEQ, performing pieces such as "Sobre las olas" (Over the Waves) by Juventino Rosas and Rachmaninoff's Prelude in C Minor. In 1947 they founded a larger ensemble and invited Ernesto Lazareno (tenor) and Francisco Elizondo (baritone) to join them. Lazareno and Elizondo were both classically trained and had strong operatic voices. Antonio Flores Luna, Sergio and Jorge Flores's father, named the ensemble Los Zenzontles (the Mockingbirds). This was the brothers' first attempt to make it in the music industry, and they drew heavily from Sergio's classical training and the singers' operatic backgrounds (Flores, Jr. 2014). After three years of professional and informal performances, Los Zenzontles disbanded.

In 1950 the Flores brothers met Antonio Velazquez and Luis de la Cruz Damian. During one of their early performances on the radio, a manager of the radio station XEQ

decided to call them Los Tecolines.[4] In 1952 they recorded the songs "María Perica" and "De que me sirve" by Gabriel Luna de la Fuente for the record label Peerless. In 1955 the ensemble once again changed some of its members. Antonio Velazquez left and Juan Valdez replaced him to sing the leading voice. Additionally, Jesus García Lopez (Chucho) joined the group. Although Los Tecolines had several commercial hits, the constant changing of members made it difficult for their audiences to follow the group in their artistic trajectory. The base of the group was always the Flores brothers, but Sergio did not sing, and it was easier to identify a trio by the leading voice (ibid.)

As competition grew at the beginning of the 1950s, Los Tecolines kept up by introducing the electric guitar and by drawing new repertoire from international hits. One of the most important contributions of Los Tecolines to the trio style was the incorporation of a Gibson Les Paul electric guitar in the fall of 1958, which Sergio acquired with the support of his record label in November (ibid.) The group started rehearsing immediately, and by December Los Tecolines released an album of Christmas songs featuring the new instrument. The electric guitar became a seal of distinction for the ensemble, a symbol that demonstrated a move away from strict nationalistic ideas; its use was strongly associated with music from the United States (jazz, blues, and rock). Figure 4.2 shows a later album cover of *Cerezo Rosa* (1958) with the Gibson guitar in the forefront.

[4] *Tecolines* is a Mexican slang term for money.

Figure 4.2: Left: Album cover of *Cerezo Rosa* (1958); right: photograph of Los Tecolines featuring the Gibson Les Paul electric guitar (used by permission of Jorge Flores, Jr.).

The incorporation of the electric guitar was only one of Los Tecolines' position-takings within their part of the field of cultural production with which they attracted audiences and recording companies. Another was to find songs from different countries and to translate and adapt them for the Mexican audience. A good example is the featured song on the album cover above, "Cerezo Rosa," which was originally composed by Louis Guglielmi, a Spanish/Catalan composer with Italian heritage, which was made an international hit by Perez Prado's orchestra. "Cherry Pink" and Guglielmi's other famous song, "La Vie en Rose," became standards around the world recorded by performers in different languages.

In 1969 Sergio Flores died unexpectedly, putting an end to a long and successful career as a performer and shaking the configuration of Los Tecolines. Later, his brother Jorge reconstituted the ensemble with a new generation of musicians and with his son

Jorge Flores, Jr. as manager. Los Tecolines' incorporation of the electric guitar opened the door for the incorporation of new musical elements.

Los Dandys

Another group that was successful during the second half of the 1950s was Los Dandys, whose name suggested the search for cultural elements that would depart from rural allegory and align with current fashion trends. Los Dandys was formed in 1957 by Joaquin Ruiz (El Gary), Jose Luis Segura, Armando Navarro, and Francisco Escamilla. Though also technically a quartet, Los Dandys belonged to the second stage of trio musical production as I've defined it here and was able to cut through the crowded marketplace to land several "trio-style" hits that became standards beloved by audiences and recorded by later trios.

During a long conversation with Francisco Escamilla, Jr. in Mexico City, he told me that his father and the other members of the ensemble came from very humble origins. "I want you to put this down in your notes," he said. "They were very poor. They grew up in the poor neighborhood of Escuadron 201, you know, where people stayed back in the day when they arrived to the city and did not have a place to stay" (Escamilla, Jr. 2014). The neighborhood was established by *paracaidistas* (squatters) from the rural areas. Young Joaquin, Jose Luis, Armando, and Francisco endured harsh poverty surrounded by the wealth of the upper classes. By the second half of the 1950s the members of Los Dandys knew the success stories of others who had overcome their economic peril by recording in the trio style. Armed with their guitars and fueled with their will to succeed, they sang for radio station XEW under the name Los Piedra and at

other times under the name Los Hermanos Dublin. After deciding that their name was not evoking the desired association with elegance, they decided to adopt the name Los Dandys.[5] During the same year (1957), the composer Luis "Güicho" Cisneros approached the ensemble to promote some of his songs. Many of Los Dandys' hits are Cisnero's compositions: "Gema," "Tres regalos," and "Como un duende," among many others (Escamilla 2014).

Los Dandys' debut took place in September 1957, when they alternated with Trio Los Caporales, regular performers of the Teatro Lírico. In the beginning, like other trios, Los Dandys navigated between the exoticism built upon the idea of *mexicanidad* (referring to mariachis, indigenous, and rural traditions) and the elegant cosmopolitan style. Figure 4.3 shows Los Dandys in one of their earliest performances standing next to Los Caporales.

Figure 4.3: Los Caporales and Los Dandys (c. 1957), used by permission of Francisco Escamilla.

[5] "Dandy" is an English borrowing that carries the same meaning in a Mexican context (someone wealthy and well dressed).

After their initial performance, Los Dandys became regular performers at the Teatro Lírico. In those early days they didn't have any suits or the attire proper for a group called Los Dandys. According to Francisco Escamilla, Jr., for their first performances as headliners they went onstage with borrowed suits; their new look is shown in Figure 4.4.

Figure 4.4: Los Dandys (photograph by Armando Herrera),[6] used by permission of Francisco Escamilla.

By the end of September 1957 Los Dandys received an opportunity to audition for the artistic directors of RCA Victor, Mariano Rivera Conde and Rafael de Paz, who were looking for a trio to compete with Musart's Los Tres Caballeros.[7] In October they recorded "Gema" at Discos VIC, an alternative label owned by RCA Victor where aspiring musicians would try their luck. They were also requested to record "El telefono,"

[6] Herrera was known in Mexico as "the photographer of the stars."

[7] Los Tres Caballeros had been exclusive artists of RCA Victor without any major success. It was only when they started recording for Musart that they found success. See previous chapter for more information.

composed by Roberto Cantoral, and "Ni un poquito."[8] After the recording was completed and produced, the label aborted the project. Disappointed, the young members of Los Dandys went home to listen to their album. They noticed that Jose Luis had sung the third voice an octave higher and concluded that that must have been what the producers at RCA Victor didn't like. This, nevertheless, would become part of their signature singing style. With their rejected discs in hand and nothing else to do, Armando and Jose Luis went back to looking for work. Joaquin Ruiz, Francisco Escamilla, and Guicho Cisneros took a train to Tijuana, where they had been told there were performing opportunities. During their trip north, they gave their album to some of the radio stations wherever the train stopped. One day, after arriving in Tijuana, they heard their song "Gema" on the radio, the result of their marketing efforts. The song gained in popularity and RCA Victor began to search for them. When they returned from Tijuana, RCA Victor immediately signed them as exclusive artists for the label (Escamilla 2014).

Following the signing of their contract, Los Dandys recorded their first full album entitled "Nuestros Primeros Exitos" (1958), which included several of Cisneros' compositions: "Alma de cristal," (Crystal Soul) "Tres regalos" (Three Rresents) and "Gema." Following in the tradition begun by Los Panchos, Los Dandys and RCA Victor opted for album cover imagery that associated them with a cosmopolitan elite. In the two images below we see, on the left, an album cover of Los Panchos taken during the early 1950s with the trio dressed in elegant suits and toasting with brandy glasses. On the right is Los Dandys' first album cover with the members dressed in tuxedos, smoking and toasting with martinis. The juxtaposition is interesting; the trio that created the style had a

[8] "El teléfono" was a standard of Los Tres Caballeros and was requested for the purpose of comparing the two trios (Escamilla, Jr., 2014).

name more closely associated with a rural life (Los Panchos) and their followers with the highlife (Los Dandys).

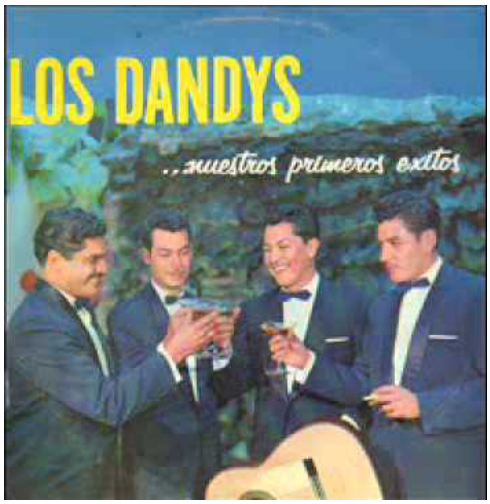


Figure 4.5: Album art of Los Panchos (n.d.) and Los Dandys (1958).

Los Dandys kept its original configuration until the beginning of the 1960s, a time when they began to experience the decline of the trio style's popularity. The original members went their own way, and Francisco Escamilla decided to venture out on his own as a soloist.[9] Güicho Cisneros, who had been part of the ensemble primarily as a composer, spokesperson, and sometimes as substitute musician, decided along with Florentino Cruz to continue Los Dandys, recording new songs and re-releasing some of the group's hits. Over time another original member, Armando Navarro, also established his own group and called it Los Dandys. Other former lesser-known members created their own Dandys, and by the late 1970s and early 1980s, no fewer than five different

[9] When the field of bolero and trio music started to "depreciate," musicians looked for other ways to acquire capital. Some trio singers opted for a retrenchment into mariachi, a genre that had proven value in the culture. Francisco Escamilla, Sr. changed his name to Jorge Reyes and recorded mariachi songs for a time.

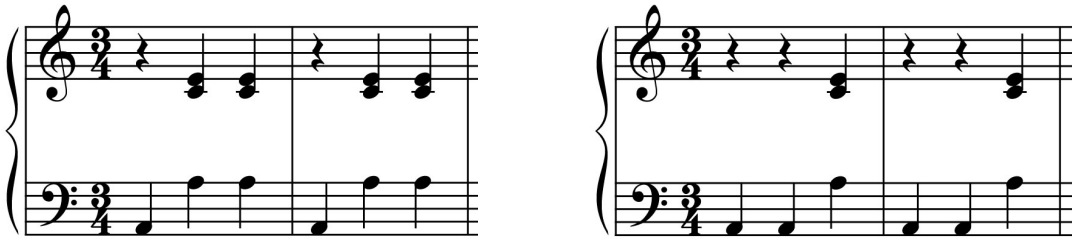
ensembles were performing as Los Dandys, sparking a legal battle over the ownership of the name and the right to perform with it.

By the 1980s the legal names of trios such as Los Dandys, Los Tecolines and even Los Panchos became commodities worth fighting for. The surviving members of these trios and their offspring once again saw opportunities to accrue capital through the re-articulation of sentimentalism in bolero. Francisco Escamilla, Jr. (son of founding member of Los Dandys) and Jesus Navarro (son of founding member of Los Panchos) were involved in the two most notable cases of legal battles over the ownership of a trio's name. The name Los Dandys and the right to perform was granted to Francisco Escamilla, Jr. by the office of Derechos de Autor México (Mexican copyright office). The struggle over the legal use of the name Los Panchos continues to this day.

Ecuadorian Pasillo and Peruvian Waltz

In the field of bolero new positions emerged. In the second half of this chapter I examine how trios at the end of the 1950s explored musical connections south of the Mexican border, drawing on the traditions of the Peruvian waltz and Ecuadorian *pasillo*. I take as case studies the Trio Los Tres Reyes and Trio Los Santos, two of the last of the great original trios. Both arrived on the trio scene at the very end of the style's popularity, and they incorporated the Peruvian waltz and Ecuadorian pasillo very differently to take distinct positions in the field. While the members of Los Santos drew on their shared rural background for musical inspiration, Los Tres Reyes approached the same genres from a highbrow perspective.

The Ecuadorian pasillo, usually in a minor key, is an offshoot of the Viennese waltz that arrived in Colombia and Ecuador during colonial times as a formal ballroom dance. The pasillo was eventually adopted by the lower classes and infused with mestizo culture. The slow version of the pasillo is considered to be nostalgic and melancholic in its text and melodies (Gradante 1980), which fit perfectly into Mexico's existing field of sentimental music. Another offshoot of the Viennese waltz, the Peruvian waltz, also known as *vals criollo* (creole waltz), was adopted by the rural working classes in Peru and became a musical symbol of nationalism. The main difference between these two triple-meter South American waltzes lies in their accentuation; while the Peruvian waltz follows the more familiar waltz pattern with an accent on the downbeat of the 3/4 measure, the Ecuadorian pasillo accentuates the first two beats of the measure, creating a distinct rhythmic effect. Example 4.1 clearly shows the difference in accentuation.



Peruvian waltz Ecuadorian pasillo

Example 4.1: The Peruvian waltz and Ecuadorian pasillo.[10]

Another South American musical waltz-like genre with strong connections to Mexico is the *chilena*, a dance that alternates 6/8 and 3/4 meter (sesquialtera) that arrived

[10] All musical examples in this chapter are transcribed by the author unless otherwise noted.

through the ports along the Pacific coast of Oaxaca and Guerrero (known as the *costa chica*) in the early nineteenth century. Musicians from the region of Oaxaca and Guerrero, such as songwriter and performer Alvaro Carrillo (1921-1969), negotiated between their regional traditions and the popular musics that arrived from afar that they heard on their radio airwaves.

Carrillo was born in 1921 in San Juan Cacahuatepec, a rural village in Oaxaca, and found success in the mass media industry in the mid 1940s. Like many before him, he made the obligatory move to Mexico City, where his ideas mingled with those of other composers and performers. Carrillo's lyrics in particular were a refreshing reminder that sentimental music could convey a broken heart without being rude or sexist. The chord progressions accompanying his music were original, with smooth modulations to other tonalities and the avoidance of formulas such as the *circulo*[11] or the *paseo.*[12] Additionally, he successfully incorporated music from other genres into his original compositions.

Carrillo grew up on the *costa chica,* one of the poorest regions in Mexico, with an economy based mainly on subsistence agriculture and fishing. The *costa chica* also maintains a predominantly Afro-Mexican culture due to the many settlements of former slaves. Carrillo grew up among many musical influences but was also subject to the ever-growing diverse music coming from the mass media, such as mariachi, boleros, Peruvian waltzes and Ecuadorian pasillos. It was in the latter that he found similarities with his familiar chilena; South American genres were increasingly being accepted in Mexico. Carrillo was savvy in the promotion of his compositions, most notably with Los Dandys

[11] The *circulo* is the chord progression I – vi – ii – V – I.

[12] The *paseo* is the chord progression I – ii – iii – *b*iii – V – I.

and the song "Amor mio" (My Love), and Los Tres Ases with the song "Sabor a mi" (Taste of Me).[13] By the mid 1950s Carrillo was an established composer with the social capital to help others find success, such as the young aspiring trio Los Santos.

Los Santos

Los Santos arrived on the trio scene at the very end of the style's popularity. They were, however, able to land some of the last big bolero-trio hits. Their members were from a humble background in the state of Guerrero, in an area not far from where Carrillo was born. Diego Alcaraz, born in Tixtla, Rolando Morlet, born in Chilpancingo, and Lalo Ayala, born in Alcozauca, met in 1956. The trio started when these three young men moved to Mexico City looking for better opportunities in the metropolis' public school system.

They arrived separately in Mexico City sometime between 1949 and 1950 at a very young age. In those days Los Panchos was very popular. Some years later, Rolando and Diego at the Escuela Nacional de Maestros (ENM), and Lalo at the Instituto Politecnico Nacional (IPN) met as students. Rolando and Diego had founded a trio called Trio Linaloe, while Ayala had a trio called Trio Las Iguanas. Through a mutual friend, Lalo was introduced to Diego and Rolando, and in 1957 they decided to start singing together. During those days Ayala lost his scholarship at IPN and transfered to the ENM, where his friends were already studying; this allowed them the time to practice and the opportunity to play regularly. Their first trio with this new member configuration was

[13] Additionally, composers from other countries recorded his music, such as Japanese singer Yoshiro Hiroshi. For more about connections with Japanese enka and exchanges with the trio style, bolero and sentimentalism in Japan, see chapters 1 and 3 of this dissertation.

named Trio Ecoe. They created their own arrangements of popular songs by Los Panchos, Los Tres Diamantes, Los Ases, and Los Tres Caballeros (Ayala 2015).

As the trio became popular inside and outside their school, performance opportunities appeared. Lalo Ayala remembered how, in those days, money was scarce, and his musical abilities provided the opportunity to perform in exchange for food (Ayala 2014). He recalled meeting composer Salvador "Chava" Velazquez, known for his songs "Sabes de que tengo ganas" and "Huesito de chabacano." As the owner of a publishing company, Velazquez was familiar with the media industry. After hearing the Trio Ecoe, he introduced them to some friends at XEW radio. Ayala recalled that with humble clothing and carrying their schoolbooks they auditioned for Musart's artistic director Guillermo Acosta, who signed a contract with them and recorded their first album. One day at the school cafeteria they heard their voices coming out of the radio. Excited, they called their friends' attention to the song, and afterwards the radio host announced the name of the trio as Los Santos, a name they heard for the first time. It turned out that Musart's executives had found their former name unappealing. Los Santos matched the fashion for two-syllable names (Panchos, Ases, Reyes), and the young, impressionable personalities of these student-musicians fit well with the name Los Santos (the saints) (Ayala 2015). According to Lalo Ayala's son, Carlos Ayala:

> They were students, and healthy, they were the kind of people who went to sleep at 8pm in order to get up early to go to school. They had no malice, didn't go partying and drinking or work in *casas non santas* (bordellos) from which other marvelous trios and maestros originated (Ayala 2014).

An early album cover of Los Santos draws from religious iconography. By the late 1950s the music and musicians associated with the trio movement were often associated

with discourses of jealousy, betrayal, and sin. The incorporation of a trio called Los Santos proved a refreshing contrast meant to appeal to newer audiences. Figure 4.6 shows an album cover depicting Los Santos with halos over their heads, positioning themselves as "saints" declining the advances of a beautiful woman.

Figure 4.6: Album cover of Los Santos (1959).

Economic opportunities and social mobility in Mexico have traditionally been closely tied to ethnicity, and this was particularly true during the 1940s and 1950s among aspiring musicians and composers. The *mestizaje* promoted by the government effectively homogenized society in the collective imaginary, but class and racial tensions still lurk to this day below the surface of official discourses, influencing the position taking of musicians in practice.[14] The rural background and perceived indigeneity of Los Santos appealed to songwriter Carrillo; they shared a particular habitus, and their position

[14] In Mexico, *mestizaje* refers to the genetic and cultural admixture of European, Native American, and African heritage. In the years following the Mexican Revolution the concept contributed to nation building and social cohesion projects.

taking followed a similar path in the field of bolero. Carrillo, having acquired his success some years earlier, took the young musicians of Los Santos under his wing. According to Lalo Ayala, after their successful audition for Musart, Carrillo took them to Acapulco to celebrate and to encourage them to continue with their studies while taking advantage of imminent opportunities in the recording industry. Carrillo gave several of his compositions to Los Santos to record, creating the perfect synergy between the seasoned composer and the young, eager trio. Examples of this are the songs "El andariego" and "Luz de luna," composed in the style of the Peruvian waltz and the Ecuadorian pasillo respectively.

Los Santos recorded "El andariego" for Musart in February 1959. The song became very popular, and other trios, including the newly reconstituted Los Panchos, recorded it. The song has also become one of the favorite songs of the bolero repertoire and due to its obvious waltz pattern has contributed much to scholars' and the general public's confusion about what musical elements comprise the bolero.

Los Tres Reyes

Another trio that recorded songs in the unconventional styles of waltz and pasillo was Trio Los Tres Reyes, but their treatment of the genres is distinct from that of Los Santos, using them as frameworks on which to build songs with more studied chord progressions and elaborate melodic ornamentations. Also arriving at the end of the 1950s, when it was thought that the trio style had been exhausted, the musicians of Los Tres Reyes used their classical training to reinvigorate the style. Their virtuosic arrangements of songs' introductions and intermezzos connected with those who first heard the

requinto in the hands of Alfredo Gil and with those who were hearing the instrument for the first time.

The most successful configuration of Los Tres Reyes included the brothers Gilberto and Raúl Puente and the original leading voice of Los Panchos, Hernando Aviles. Gilberto and Raúl were born fraternal twins in Anahuac, Nuevo Laredo on November 29, 1936, the two youngest of four siblings. They started singing and playing the guitar together at an early age. By the late 1940s and after having heard Los Panchos, the Puente brothers started a duet and eventually formed the ensemble Trío Hermanos Puente, with their older brother Gustavo in 1951. During the following years the Puente brothers tried different leading voices and ensemble names.[15] The trio disbanded when Gustavo moved away to pursue a career in dentistry. Subsequently the Puente brothers started singing with Hermilio Milo Garcia and formed the Trío Puente García, which was active from 1952 to 1954. In 1954 they met Felipe Gil, who invited them to record the songs "Son sabrosito son" and "No me engañes" for Columbia Records (Leal Benavides 1996).

It was, however, with the unmistakable voice of former Panchista Hernando Aviles that Los Tres Reyes achieved resounding success. In 1958 the Puentes decided to contact Aviles after reading in the newspaper that he had left Los Panchos definitively.[16] The combination of the Puente brothers' youth with Aviles' experience lent them success in the already saturated market for trio music. In an interview for Televisa Radio in 1990, Gilberto Puente said:

[15] With Hermilio Garcia, Trio Puente Garcia; Jose Porras, Trio Los Puente.

[16] Aviles had separated from Los Panchos first in 1951 and for the second and last time in 1958 (Fernandez 2005:45, 63).

> There was an honest competition; to make the best introductions or solos, that is where the competition was. It was not only Los Tres Reyes or Los Panchos, there were Los Ases, Los Diamantes, Los Tecolines, Los Duendes, Los Dandys, Los Delfines. Competition was not easy, so you had to study a lot; you had to worry about the arrangements, the clarity above all in order to transmit something different. We had the leading voice that had been previously with Los Panchos. The color of Raúl's and my voice was not the same as Los Panchos, it was a different thing; a new trio, it felt fresh. I knew about harmonies, but I didn't incorporate them in my arrangements, because if I did, I would fall into the [more jazzy] style of Los Ases, and if I played very sweet, I would have fallen into the style of Los Diamantes. So I had to be attentive to that . . . [Although competitors,] we were all friends. I used to bring jazz recordings to Juan Neri, and I was a very good friend of Sergio Flores. I sometimes brought strings that you couldn't find in Mexico City to Saulo Sedano. We had an honest and frank friendship (Puente 1990).

Gilberto Puente, one of the youngest requintistas of the time, had been classically trained in guitar, and he was disciplined and creative. I met Gilberto and Raúl, whom I always addressed as "Maestro" and "Raúl,"[17] in 2008 during a conference in San Antonio at which I was presenting a paper about Los Tres Reyes. I invited them to see my presentation, and they offered to play a couple of songs. After that event, I kept in touch with them and started visiting them. At age seventy-something, Gilberto (the maestro) still wakes up every morning and practices his favorite requinto, which he received as a present from a luthier in Greece. His usual warm-up consists of scales throughout the entire fretboard followed by complicated Baroque pieces, such as fugues by J.S. Bach transcribed for guitar. In one of my interviews I asked him about these exercises and if they related to the melodic arrangements that made him and Los Tres Reyes famous. He responded:

> My teachers were the classical composers. I studied my instrument for eight hours a day, and listened to Mozart, Debussy, Beethoven, Bach, and all the great composers. I extracted a theme and developed it. That is where I got the idea to

[17] When I met them I was careful to pay respect to both of them, so I addressed them using the formal you (Usted) in Spanish rather than the informal tú. However, Raúl asked me to address him by his name in a more familiar way. His brother, on the other hand, preferred the formal address, which I respected.

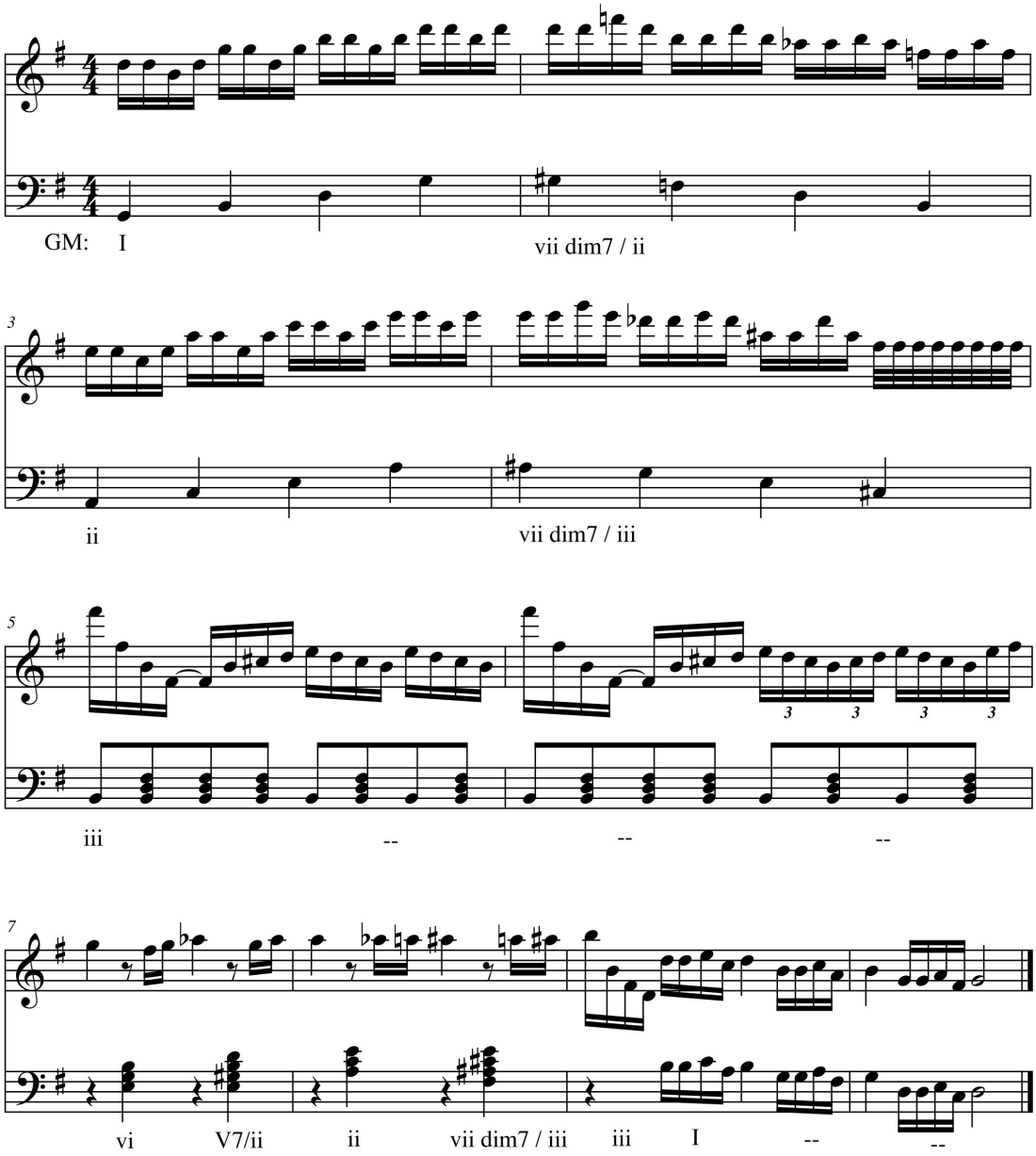
> create original introductions in all the songs that we were going to arrange. [Back then] in our Thursday rehearsal, we invited composers to meet with us, and people like Los cuates Castilla, Roberto Cantoral, Armando Manzanero, and others, to show us their latest compositions. So one week I would work on three introductions in a minor key, and the next week I would work on three in a major key (Puente 2008).

Puente's dexterity on his instrument is well known, as is his dedication. On one occasion when I was trying to establish a way of sending them some information electronically, he said: "I don't use computers. They consume too much time I'd rather use playing my requinto" (Puente 2008).

Audiences in Mexico were ready to move forward musically, discursively and socially as they approached the 1960s. The music of Los Tres Reyes, due to Gilberto Puente's challenging classical-inspired introductions, formed the apex of the trio style. The song "Poquita fé," which they recorded for RCA Victor in 1961, is a good example of this. The song was originally entitled "Sin fé" by Puerto Rican composer Bobby Capo. The song discursively attests for the repeatedly deceived one, and begs for help in order to believe in love again:

Yo se que siempre dudas de mi amor, no te culpo,	I know that you always doubt my love, and I don't blame you,
Y se que no has logrado hacer de mi querer, lo que tu amor soñó,	I know that you have not been able to do with my love, what your love dreamed,
Yo se que fue muy grande la ilusión, que en mi forjaste,	I know it was big, the illusion that you forged in me,
Para luego encontrar desconfianza y frialdad en mi querer,	To later find distrust and coldness in my love,
Comprende que mi amor burlado fue, tantas veces,	Understand that my love was mocked so many times,
Que se ha quedado al fin mi pobre corazón, con tan poquita fe,	That my poor heart has been left with so little faith,
Tú tienes que ayudarme a conseguir, la fe que con engaños yo perdí,	You have to help me find the faith that with deception I lost,
Me tienes que ayudar de nuevo a amar, y a perdonar.	You have to help me once again to love and to forgive.

The powerful lyrics were beautifully accompanied by an introduction inspired by a common baroque chord progression that makes use of diminished secondary dominants and smooth tonal transitions. “Poquita fé” is in G major. The requinto arrangement shown in Example 4.2 displays both the idiomatic melodic figuration (in this case, arpeggiation elaborating each bar’s harmonic change in the first four measures of the example) and harmonic sequencing of the High Baroque.



Example 4.2: "Poquita Fé" introduction as performed by Gilberto and Raúl Puente (*Éxitos de Los Tres Reyes,* RCA Victor MKL 1360, 1961).

If Gilberto Puente's goal was to create virtuosic requinto arrangements, he has achieved it; many have attempted to perform his arrangements with little success. Three main principles guided the sophistication of the melodic arrangements in the requinto: the chord progressions, the poetry and the three-part harmony. The incorporation of

classical/Baroque musical elements signaled a cultured background, a statement of familiarity with highbrow trends and culture, a statement of class that in Bourdieu's terms allowed for the potential transformation of cultural capital into economic capital. Second, the complicated arrangements provided a signature to the songs, a way of owning them so no other performer or trio could be identified with them. At the height of the trio's popularity, composers would circulate the songs among the different trios, who would try to make them their own. As Gilberto Puente reminds us:

> Every time a song is arranged, it is like an open check. A trio is an *empresa* (enterprise/company); everything is money in cash . . . When we arranged a piece we tried to get as much profit as possible in the poetry, in the arrangement, so that when it became public no one could get anything out of it . . . My arrangements of "Odiame" and "Poquita fé" are in a way like the introductions of Los Panchos' "Sin ti" and "Rayito de Luna." If people repeat them well that is good for me . . . I think that everything I have done, first as a requinto player and then as a solo guitarist, is a contribution to popular music in Mexico. I believe I have left a world-class style (Puente 2008).

Gilberto Puente's arrangements, Raúl Puente's accompaniment, and Hernando Aviles's voice did leave an important mark on Mexican popular music. Their success lay in their ability to combine classical musical elements associated with an elite class and merge them with musical traditions usually associated with a rural working class. Such is the case of the Peruvian waltzes and Ecuadorian pasillo.

This has increased confusion regarding the definition of a bolero. Discussions often arise about whether or not a famous song performed by Los Tres Reyes, such as *"*Engañada," *"*Mis flores negras," or "Odiame," is a bolero or not.[18] In the words of Carlos Ayala, leading voice of Los Santos and a trio expert:

[18] In online forums where videos of Los Tres Reyes are uploaded, the comments usually refer to the origin of the song. While some people argue that the song is a bolero, people from Peru are quick to correct those comments saying that "Odiame" is a Peruvian song, and "Lagrimas negras" an Ecuadorian pasillo.

> Los Tres Reyes don't have a lot of boleros. They recorded mostly Peruvian waltzes. Their hits were Peruvian waltzes, but they entered in the epoch of the bolero. The three-voice style, the paused accentuation in the diction for the interpretation, it is very adequate for the bolero. Their biggest hit was the Peruvian waltz "Odiame," but they never sang it with the Peruvian accentuation. The accentuation of their performance is bolero but the rhythm is Peruvian waltz (Ayala 2014).

"Odiame," originally composed by Manuel Otero and recorded by Los Tres Reyes in 1959, has become one of the standards of the trio repertoire and the song on which many aspiring requintistas measure their skill on the instrument. The melodic arrangement makes use of a harmonic progression inspired once again by Baroque sequencing, combined with a flamenco style of plucking, which can be traced to the very origins of the trio style with Alfredo "El güero" Gil. According to Gilberto Puente, "I started imitating the technique of famous flamenco players like Sabicas.[19] This coincided with Alfredo 'El güero' Gil who had heard flamenco and incorporated the hammering style in the bolero" (Puente 2008).

Los Tres Reyes not only pushed the limits of melodic arrangements, chord progressions, and the inclusion of other musical genres in the trio-bolero style; their musical influences also included country, samba-cançao, jazz, and film music.[20] They signified a return to the elegant poetry in which the bolero saw its beginnings. For

[19] Agustín Castellon Campos, better known as Sabicas, was a Romani-flamenco guitarist from Pamplona born in 1912 who went into exile during the Spanish Civil War. He lived in Mexico City and New York. He was extremely influential with regard to the playing style of Gilberto Puente and other requinto players.

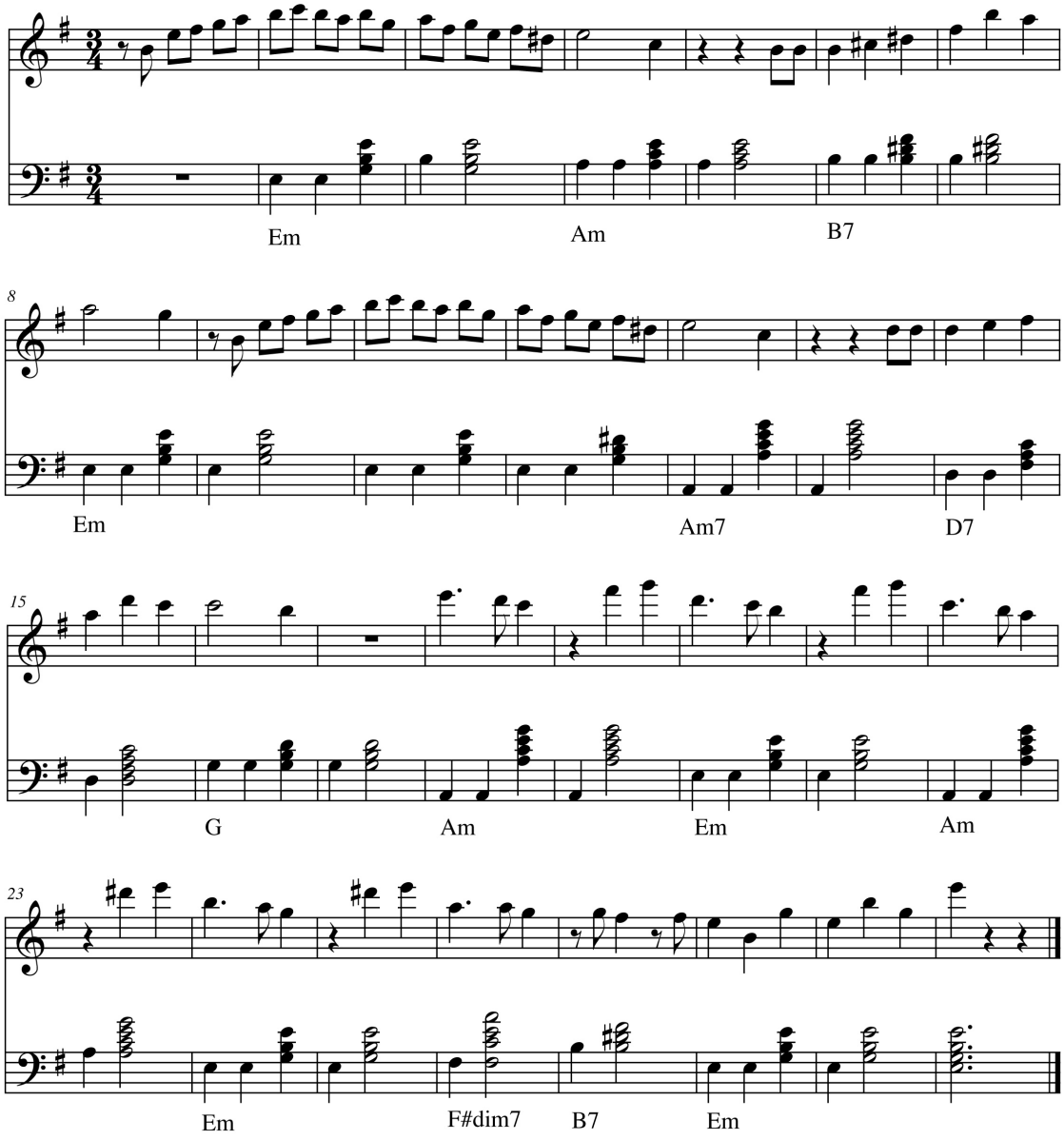
[20] Los Tres Reyes adapted samba-cançao songs "Dos rosas blancas" (Two white roses) and "Doraliz" by Dorival Caymmi. For more information about the connections between bolero and samba-cançao see Araujo, and chapter one of this dissertation. In fact the introduction of the song "Por que me dejas," recorded in 1962, took inspiration from Dave Brubeck's "Take Five." When I asked Gilberto Puente about this arrangement, he responded, "At the time, Take Five was very popular and we decided to arrange a song based on that tune" (Puente 2008). The song "Mi destino" was an adaptation of the famous movie soundtrack *The Magnificent Seven* (1960) composed by Elmer Bernstein.

Gilberto, the most important aspect of a song is its poetry; without poetic lyricism one cannot transmit and convey emotions adequately. Take for example the song "Mis flores negras." The song is based on a poem with the same name written by Colombian poet Julio Flórez (1867-1923). Los Tres Reyes' setting of this poem incorporated classical musical references and provided a renewed sentimentalism that eschewed the sexist lyrics that dominated boleros in the previous thirty years. It resonated well with a society that, while accustomed and attached to the sentimentalism of the 1930s, was ready to move forward musically and stylistically. Paradoxically, the return to traditional forms of poetry, the incorporation of rural genres, and sophisticated melodic and harmonic arrangements provided this forward movement. The following is a translation of the poem. Worth noting is the fact that many nuances may be lost in translation.

Oye: bajo las ruinas, de mis pasiones	Listen: Under the ruins of my passions
En el fondo de mi alma, que ya no alegras	at the bottom of my unhappy soul
Entre polvos de ensueños, y de ilusiones	Among the dust of my dreams and illusions
Flotan entumecidas, mis flores negras	Float numbed my black flowers
Ellas son el recuerdo de aquellas horas,	These are the memory of those hours
Que presa en mis brazos, te adormecía,	When I had you dormant and prisoner in my arms
Mientras yo suspiraba, por las auroras,	While I sigh, for the auroras
De tus ojos auroras, que no eran mías	Auroras of your eyes, that were not mine
Ellas son tus desdenes, y tus reproches	These are your disdains and your reproaches
Ocultas en mi alma, que ya no alegras	Hidden in my soul that you don't cheer anymore
Son por eso tan negras, como las noches	That's why they are so black, like the nights
En los gélidos polos, mis flores negras	In the icy poles, my black flowers
Guarda pues este triste y débil manojo	Keep then this sad and weak handful
Que te ofrezco de aquellas flores sombrías	That I offer to you of those somber flowers
Guárdalo nada temas, es un despojo	Keep them, don't worry, it is a dispossession
Del jardín de mis hondas, melancolías	From the garden of my deepest melancholies.

These powerful and poetic lyrics surfaced in an equally poetic musically speaking arrangement. “Mis flores negras” is in the key of E minor, and the melodic line in the requinto contains ascending eighth-note figures followed by the Ecuadorian pasillo accompaniment (Example 4.3).

Figure 4.7: Los Tres Reyes (1960), used by permission of Gilberto Puente.



Example 4.3: Introduction of "Mis Flores Negras" as performed by Los Tres Reyes (*Éxitos de Los Tres Reyes,* RCA Victor MKL 1360, 1961).

As the 1960s began, many youth gravitated to the new musics coming from the north, particularly jazz and rock and roll. In fact, with the incursion of new American and European musics, proponents of sentimentalism experienced a real challenge in keeping up with the developing taste of a new generation. The beginning of the 1960s was the beginning of the end for the trios; the cultural industries started looking for new ensemble

configurations. For Los Tres Reyes, the breakup took place in Lima, Peru in 1964 during negotiations of their upcoming contracts. They noticed a decrease in their pay. As Gilberto remembers, "we used to earn six thousand dollars for a concert in 1964; however, other trios started to offer their services for less. That is when I knew that the trios wouldn't last more than two or three years, and in fact, that is what happened. By 1967 nobody wanted to know anything about trios." The three members of Los Tres Reyes went their separate ways. Hernando Aviles retired from singing and died in 1986. Gilberto and Raúl, being significantly younger, continued to perform separately. Raúl pursued a career as a jazz guitarist in the United States, performing in jazz clubs in New York City, Cincinnati, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. Gilberto continued to perform and record as a soloist achieving great success, and performing with Linda Ronstadt on her famous album *Canciones de mi padre* (1987). After a couple of years he entered the public sector, working in immigration services at the border. The boleros so popular in the 1960s resurfaced as ballads in the 1970s and 1980s, which prepared the way for a full-blown return in the economically tumultuous 1990s.[21]

In 2001 the Puente brothers decided to re-start the trio after hearing that a newly constituted Los Panchos was attaining critical success.[22] They found a new leading voice in singer Luis Villa, who worked with the trio for three years. Roberto "Bebo" Cardenas has sung the leading voice since 2007. Today Los Tres Reyes continues to perform, compose and tour around the world.[23]

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[21] I detail the bolero's popular resurgence in the 1990s in chapter 5.

[22] A trio using the name of Los Panchos was profiting off the name. More about these legal issues can be found in chapter 3.

[23] For more about Los Tres Reyes, see Garcia Corona & Sheehy 2011.

In this chapter I have examined the bolero and the trio style as it developed during the second half of the 1950s and beginning of the 1960s. I have tried to show the variety of position-taking of the most popular trios and how the intensified competition for recording contracts pushed them to extend themselves musically in order to differentiate their positions from other positions in the field. I have shown the transformation of symbolic capital, which still included classical training and drawing on musical traditions that were considered cultivated or elite, the incorporation of new musical instruments such as the electric guitar, and the use of rural genres from other countries such as the Peruvian waltz and the Ecuadorian pasillo. Additionally, I have shown how many of these musicians came from poor backgrounds and found in the performance of trio music a manner in which to achieve social mobility. In the following chapter, I investigate how the bolero gave way to the balada as the primary musical expression of sentimentalism in Mexican culture, only to return in the 1990s and 2000s as a result of a structure of feeling of unresolved emotions in Mexican society.

Chapter 5: Unresolved Emotions

Mexico and Optimistic Attachments

Raymond Williams's concept of a "structure of feeling" served our understanding of social phenomena in the 1950s that were felt through lived experiences rather than known through cognition—"what is actually being lived, and not only what it is thought is being lived" (130). Williams, however, as noted by Taylor, did not theorize in what ways structures of feeling carry over into other generations (Taylor 2009:98). In this chapter I aim to show how the structure of feeling in which bolero played a crucial role during the first half of the twentieth century was triggered and rearticulated in the late 1980s and early 1990s, ignited by a powerful form of nostalgia that resulted from new economic and political turmoil. In doing so I draw on recent theory that has stemmed from and updates Williams's structures of feeling: Lauren Berlant's "cruel optimism" (2010, 2011). Williams's theories deal with "affective elements of consciousness and relationships, not feeling against thought but thought as felt and feeling as thought, practical consciousness of a present kind, in a living and interrelating continuity" (1977:132). Berlant, on the other hand, places feeling in the realm of the lived experience of the body and/or a group of bodies and examines the way these bodies are affected by shared emotions and shared ideas of "the good life." A brief introduction to affect theory in general, and Berlant's cruel optimism in particular, will help contextualize its use in this study.

There is no one approach to affect theory, but all theorizations surrounding the concept of affect have in common that they decentralize and downplay the effects of cognition on human action. The approach most relevant to the present study is one focused on understanding how the para-linguistic realm intersects with the realm of the senses, in which "ethico-aesthetic spaces" open up "affective encounters with…music" (Gregg and Seigworth 2010). Lauren Berlant uses such an approach. Her "cruel optimism" originates with an idea, which could be about love, food, and/or a political project (2011:1). This idea in turn generates an optimistic attachment—one that moves one out of oneself in order to "bring closer the satisfying something that you cannot generate on your own but sense in the wake of a person, a way of life, an object, project, concept, or scene" (2). This attachment however, becomes cruel when the object of desire actively impedes the realization of the idea or desire, when the object that attracts one's attachment actually becomes an obstacle.

The theory of cruel optimism is a useful one in this context because it expands on Williams's concept, provides an updated approach applicable to more recent social issues, and explains why people remain attached to the idea of a promising future for themselves despite their own worsening socio-economic conditions. At the center of cruel optimism is "that moral-intimate-economic thing called 'the good life'…and the retraction, during the last three decades, of the social democratic promise of the post-Second World War period in the United States and Europe" (3). As she elaborates: "The affective structure of an optimistic attachment involves a sustaining inclination to return to the scene of a fantasy that enables you to expect that this time, nearness to this thing will help you or a world to become different in just the right way." The fraying fantasies

she cites, "particularly, upward mobility, job security, [and] political and social equality," are precisely those objects desired by many Mexican citizens throughout the post-revolutionary years, and most of the twentieth century (2011:4). The denial of those attachments and the unraveling of their fantasies of social and economic stability assisted the return of the emotions circumscribed in the mid-century structure of feeling discussed in chapter two.

This is significant because the bolero, which—as we saw in chapter one—has often been discussed as a genre with its roots and significance in the early to mid twentieth century, has become a cultural marker of transformation in Mexican society that, though always present in the mass consciousness, resurges to confront social and political turmoil. Behind renewed interest in the bolero is a structure of feeling that articulates sentimentalism while providing new meaning to new generations.

In this chapter I demonstrate that the bolero and its connections to socio-political and economic events present an opportunity to explore a social experience still in process. I explore the transformation of the bolero into what is now known as *balada romántica moderna* (modern romantic ballad) and how, through this transformation, different musicians and composers negotiated the symbolic capital provided by the idea of a new sentimentalism, only to return to the bolero imaginary and trigger a mid-century structure of feeling of nostalgia. To this end, I briefly review the second half of the 1960s, which saw a sharp decline in bolero production, and the 1970s and 1980s, which was the height of the modern *balada*. In addition, I explore briefly the social and economic changes of the late 1980s and first half of the 1990s. My main interest lies in highlighting the connections between the bolero and social, political, and economic

events of great importance: an unprecedented devaluation of the Mexican peso; the fraudulent elections of 1988; the assassination of presidential candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio; and finally, yet another dramatic currency devaluation. The combined effects of these events contributed to a general malaise in Mexican society, to a new generation of brokenhearted citizens, and cultural production during this period reflected and responded to their concerns.

So far this dissertation has been about a time in Mexican history that I can only approach objectively as a historian and ethnographer. Much of what follows, however, is interpreted through the lens of my lived experience; from stories, feelings and societal frustrations that I recall and derive meaning from personally, from discussions in streets and restaurants, from music played on the radio, television programs and every aspect of the daily life of those years. It is, in part, an exercise in retrospective participant-observation and personal interpretation.

From Bolero to *Balada Romántica*

The beginning of the 1960s meant the end of the trio movement and the rise of the romantic ballad, creating new articulations of sentimentality. While the cultural industries shifted toward favoring rock bands, there was still an eager market for sentimental performers. The incursion of new musical genres and the development of new technologies, particularly those from the north, kindled nostalgia among those who longed for those homegrown musics and those associated with nation building during the early twentieth century. Those who positioned themselves by adapting elements of bolero to new cultural demands capitalized on this new nostalgia. Among them were composers

like Roberto Cantoral, Ruben Fuentes, and Armando Manzanero, who served as a bridge between the last part of the golden trio era and the beginning of the modern ballad.

Armando Manzanero

Armando Manzanero (b. 1935) grew up listening to trova yucateca singers such as Guty Cárdenas and Ricardo Palmerín (discussed in chapter one), but moved to Mexico City in 1950 to take part in the cultural musical revolution. Though very young, Manzanero positioned himself as accompanist to artists like Pedro Vargas and Lucho Gatica, who recorded his first compositions "Historia de un amor" (Love Story) and "Voy a apagar la luz" (I'm going to turn off the light). This put him in an advantageous position in the field of cultural production. He recorded singles for Victor in 1959, and in 1960 recorded his first album entitled "Mi primera grabacion" (My first recording). The album is one of the first steps in the transition in the articulation and delivery of the *discurso amoroso*. The early 1960s music scene was still dominated by the trios Los Tres Reyes, Los Santos, Los Dandys and others, such as Los Panchos, but Manzanero's first album followed a new style similar to crooners like Frank Sinatra whose music arrived from the United States.

In his first album, Manzanero included three of his own compositions, "Nunca en el mundo" (Never in the world), "Voy a apagar la luz" and "Que vas a hacer" (What are you going to do?). The instrumentation moved away from Mexican regionalism to favor cosmopolitan instruments, such as the string orchestra of Chucho Ferrer. The cover shows the aesthetic transformation that includes some elements of the elegance of the 1950s but now exalts the solo singer, as Manzanero appears alone dressed in an elegant

tuxedo (Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1: Armando Manzanero, *Mi primera grabacion* (1960).

Manzanero's musical style and execution denotes a significant rhythmic and harmonic freedom emphasizing the text rather than the music. With his songs romantic music became an individualistic expression, a return to the interpretive style of Agustín Lara. Technological advances in audio, lighting, and television helped create a romantic mediated atmosphere. Manzanero added to his capital by producing albums by younger performers.

The International Circuit of *Baladistas*

In 1970 Manzanero's compositions were sung by international artists participating in a circuit of sentimentalism articulated through the ballad, which adapted well to the trend toward solo singers such as Frank Sinatra. Many songs, including Manzanero's "Somos Novios," were translated into English and sung by Elvis Presley and Perry

Como. In the Spanish-speaking world, the increasing number of *baladistas* in the late 1960s and early 1970s allowed the creation of musical competitions to aid in the search for new talent. One of the first competitions was the "Festival de la canción" (Song Festival) promoted in Mexico. Competitors from various countries came to Mexico seeking fame and fortune, similar to what happened during the 1930s with the development of radio. But in 1972 Spanish-speaking countries created a transnational organization to house a global annual musical event similar to today's popular Eurovision competition. This was known as the OTI (*Organización de Televisión Iberoamericana*, or Iberoamerican Broadcasting Organization) festival. The OTI included the most important broadcasters in the Spanish-speaking world: Televisa, Telemundo, Rede Globo, RTVE, Channel 13, Univision, and Venevision, among others. It homogenized the articulation of sentimentalism in the 1970s and '80s; now, more than ever before, people of different nationalities could identify with the lyrics of hope, suffering, and frustration articulated onstage.

Baladistas and New Structures of Meaning

Competitions like these contributed to the interaction between emerging singers and seasoned songwriters, which created a circuit of international *baladistas*. In Spain there emerged such artists as Rocío Jurado, Rocío Durcal, Julio Iglesias, Camilo Sesto, and Rafael, who competed with Mexicans José José, Juan Gabriel, and Armando Manzanero, and Brazilians Nelson Ned and Roberto Carlos. Many of these singers spanned the wide variety of musical genres available but became successful by copying the sound, aesthetics, gestures, and musical arrangements of pop singers from the United

States in a new Ibero/Hispanic romantic ballad.

The romantic ballad is a slow love song presented by a solo singer, usually accompanied by an orchestra (Party 2006). Furthermore, it expresses a common Latin American sensibility. According to Jesus Martín Barbero, Latin American emotional integration was a phenomenon that standardized ways of feeling and expressing emotions through gestures, sounds and rhythms, largely through the *telenovelas* (soap operas) (1992). The romantic ballad is another example of the connection between the culture industries, music, and the development of structures of meaning.

Mexican Peso Devaluation

Parallel to the transformation of the bolero into the balada from the 1960s to the 1970s came the deterioration of the Mexican peso. As we saw in chapter two, the exchange rate was set at 12.50 pesos per dollar in April 1954. Between 1976 and 1982 (during the administration of Jose Lopez Portillo) the Mexican peso dropped in value from 12.50 to 74 pesos per dollar (Elizondo Mayer-Serra 2011). The global economic crisis from the 1970s caused by the oil embargo, the emergence of new economic powers, particularly in Asia, and the stock market crash in 1973 all had an impact on the Mexican economy and employment. The government attempted to ameliorate the situation by taking over failing private enterprises and using them as sources of employment. These however, were not profitable enterprises and the government could not support them. With discoveries of Mexican oil, the government started acquiring loans in petrodollars

from New York investment banks.[1] Between 1972 and 1982 Mexico's foreign debt skyrocketed from $6.8 billion to $58 billion. In August 1982, when the Volcker shock reverberated in the Mexican economy, the debt became un-payable and Mexico declared bankruptcy.[2] In 1982 the incoming government of Miguel de la Madrid set the exchange rate at 150 pesos per dollar. Additionally, it was during his tenure (1982-1988), that the peso was devalued more than 3,975%, reaching an exchange rate of 2,330 pesos per dollar and an annualized inflation record of 367% in 1987.

The 1988 Presidential Election

As Mexican society saw its purchasing power dramatically curtailed, economic and political instability threatened the status quo of the ruling party (*Partido de la Revolución Institucional*, or PRI) for the first time ever. The PRI had held power through fraudulent elections since its establishment at the end of the Mexican Revolution (1920). 1988 was an election year, and people were fed up with the PRI and its economic and electoral fraud. PRI dissidents chose to establish their own political party, known as the *Partido de la Revolución Democratica* (PRD). Among them was Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, the son of former president Lazaro Cárdenas, who nationalized the oil industry. The PRD distanced itself from the policies of the PRI's economist-technocrats.

Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas ran in the 1988 elections as the PRD candidate, rallying

[1] Petrodollar is a term coined by Georgetown University economics professor Ibrahim Oweiss to describe the dollars received by petroleum exporting countries in exchange for oil. These dollars did not circulate within the country and were not part of the regular money supply.

[2] Named after Paul Volcker, Chairman of the Federal Reserve between 1979 and 1987, "Volcker shock" is the term given to the recession that followed his drastic raise in interest rates that was an attempt to curb inflation. More broadly, however, the raise represented an abandonment of Keynesian policies in favor of Milton Friedman's neoliberal theories. In the recession that followed, the US Treasury and the IMF proved this by rolling over Mexico's debt in exchange for neoliberal reforms (Harvey 2005:29).

the people with the idea of change. On July 2, 1988, preliminary exit polls gave the victory to Cárdenas; however, a "computer system crash" enabled the official PRI candidate Carlos Salinas de Gortari to declare victory.[3] This result would be the beginning of a new era of economic and political obscurantism in modern Mexico and the activation of a serious democratic movement against the authoritarian PRI.

The Return of Bolero

Although the bolero repertoire has been a constant presence in the music consumption of Mexican society, instability in Mexico contributes to the reinterpretation of the music in the mass market, as it articulates similar emotions in which the original music was created. Although the romantic ballad had been very popular for the past two decades, the bolero as a musical imaginary and a social phenomenon, articulated new contradictory feelings of hope and frustration. By the end of the 1980s the artistic production of several of the most important baladistas began using the bolero repertoire as a means to articulate the national feelings.

The return of the bolero was evident in the movie industry, in music competitions, and in recordings. In the next section, I would like to explore some examples of Mexican baladistas who began to perform and record the bolero repertoire. I take as an example, five of the most important baladistas of the time: José José, Guadalupe Pineda, Manuel Mijares, Lupita D'Alesio, and Luis Miguel.

[3] In a recent biography of former president Miguel de la Madrid, he confirms that the night of the election preliminary results were giving the victory to Cárdenas and that the machine of electoral fraud was set in motion (Thompson 2004).

At the Movies

José José (b. 1948) was born and raised in Mexico City in a family of musicians. He began singing for television in the late 1960s. Collaborating with some of the most important composers of his time, including Ruben Fuentes, Armando Manzanero, and Roberto Cantoral, José José recorded his first album for RCA Victor in 1969, entitled *Cuidado* (Careful). Mexico's youth (as with youth around the world in the late 1960s) were active in an ongoing protest against their government and rejected any social feelings that would link them to the previous generation, including sentimentalism. Producers and promoters of sentimental music during the late 1960s were aware of this. A telling comment from José is found on the back cover of *Cuidado*: "I sympathize very much with my generation. I think that their concerns, their music, their clothes, the long hair, are formidable. But there is other music, another way to express the emotions that is eternal" (José 1969). The singer rose to fame with his performance of the song "El Triste" (a composition of Roberto Cantoral, who had been a founding member of trio Los Tres Caballeros) at the Latin song festival hosted in Mexico City in 1970. Afterwards he successfully positioned himself as one of Latin America's most important crooners.

In 1988, however, José's artistic production began to draw on the bolero imaginary. He was involved as a leading actor in the production of a 1988 film about the life of composer Alvaro Carrillo (covered in chapter four). The film traces Carrillo's origins of in the state of Oaxaca, his success in Mexico City, and his tragic death in 1968. The film features performances of José José singing Carrillo's hits. The soundtrack of the film is captured in an accompanying album titled *Sabor a mi*, featuring updated interpretations of boleros (Figure 5.2).

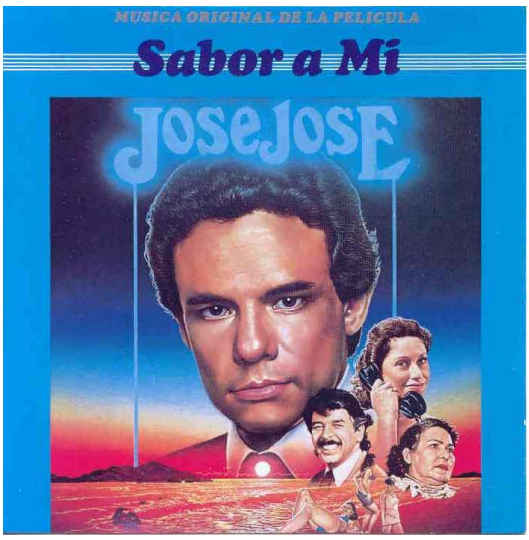

Figure 5.2: José José, *Sabor A Mi* (1988).

In Song Festivals

Another significant and decisive event was the reappearance of boleros in the 1990 OTI festival held at Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas, where the Mexican delegation, led by emerging singer Carlos Cuevas, won first prize with the song "Como un bolero" (Like a bolero). Cuevas appeared on stage next to Chamín Correa, member and founder of Los Tres Caballeros, who played his requinto. The execution of the song on stage between Carlos Cuevas and Chamin Correa symbolically highlighted the bolero's return and the restoration of the genre for a new generation.

Albums of Boleros

Additionally to the soundtrack of the movie about Alvaro Carrillo, several albums appeared in the 1990s that revived interest in the bolero. Here I explore four of them: Guadalupe Pinedas's *Boleros de siempre* (Eternal boleros, 1990); Luis Miguel's *Romance* (1991); Manuel Mijares's *Maria bonita* (1992); and Lupita D'Alessio's *Boleros*

de siempre (1992).

Mexican singer Guadalupe Pineda (b. 1955) began her career singing in school at the National Autonomous University of Mexico. Pineda, known in her artistic life as the "Queen of bolero," was one of the first baladistas to make use of the bolero. In 1990, she released the album *Boleros de siempre*, an eclectic compilation of such classic boleros as "La barca," "La enramada," "Caminemos," and "Noche de ronda" (Figure 5.3). However, it also included compositions of Argentine origin such as the song "El Dia que me quieras" by Carlos Gardel, and "Se me olvido otra vez" composed by Juan Gabriel in 1974. This album is one of the first of the 1990s to directly reference the bolero and contribute to the complication of the term through its eclectic repertoire.

Figure 5.3: Guadalupe Pineda, *Boleros de Siempre* (1990).

Any history of Mexican popular music in the last twenty years, however, would be incomplete without the enormously popular Luis Miguel Gallego Basteri (b. 1970), known by his stage name Luis Miguel. Born in Puerto Rico, he was fully fifteen years younger than most of the baladistas popular at the time and thus greatly admired among older children and teenagers. Luis Miguel made his first recordings in the early 1980s,

and by the early 1990s, he was an established popular artist. In 1990 he recorded the Album *20 Años* (20 years), which established him as a mature artist leaving teenage music behind. The following year he released the album *Romance* (Figure 5.4), which included twelve songs, most from the early 1950s, including classic boleros such as "La barca," "La mentira" (The lie), composed by Alvaro Carrillo and originally recorded in 1951, and "Cuando vuelva a tu lado" (When I return to your side) composed by María Grever and popularlized by Eydie Gormé with Los Panchos in 1961. Baladista Armando Manzanero appeared as executive producer of the album and had two of his compositions included: "Te extraño" (I miss you, 1968) and "*No sé tu*" (I don't know you, 1986). These two compositions depart stylistically from the mid-century boleros on the album, but Manzanero knew that, as he put it, "It was good for me if people associated me with the bolero" (Cited in Party 2006:62). When *Romance* was released Luis Miguel already had so much capital in the world of popular music that almost anything he released would have been successful. Manzanero, by associating himself with Luis Miguel and having his compositions presented next to the work of César Portillo de la Luz, María Grever, and Roberto Cantoral, positioned himself in the renewed bolero field of the nineties.

Romance had also the collaboration of Argentine composer and arranger Bebu Silvetti who put together a group of accomplished musicians from different parts of the world and musical traditions: Abraham Laboriel on bass, Carlos Vega on the drums, Grant Geissman playing guitar, Luis Conte, percussionist, and Justo Almario, saxophonist. Additionally, Manzanero invited Chamín Correa, whose requinto arrangement had made the original "La barca" a hit. By having Correa perform his iconic requinto introduction, Manzanero positioned the recording as an updated yet "authentic"

interpretation of the song. According to Justo Almario, Manzanero, Silvetti and Luis Miguel all worked in the production room together ironing out which combination of new and older musical elements would make the album connect with older generations while connecting with newer audience members (Almario 2015). *Romance* quickly became the best-selling album in Mexican history, and the first Spanish-language album by a non-crossover Latin artist to be certified gold in the United States. The song "Inolvidable" (Unforgettable) stayed at number one for six months in the Mexican record charts, and stayed at number one on *Billboard*'s "Top Latin Songs" in the United States for five weeks. Luis Miguel solidified his position in the field of popular music and revived the bolero (genre and field), in which he released five more albums, among them *Segundo Romance* (1994), *Romances* (1997), *Todos los Romances* (1998), *Mis Romances* (2001), and *Mis Boleros Favoritos* (2002).[4]

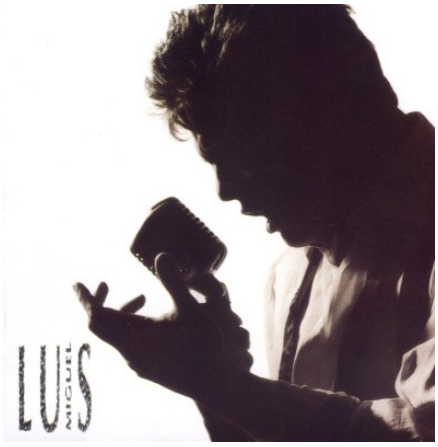

Figure 5.4: Luis Miguel, *Romance* (1991).

The creation of a renewed audience for the bolero in the 1990s opened up a younger consumer market for the genre and made producers and artists take a new look at the field and its potential. Silvetti's first attempt to reproduce his success with Luis

[4] Luis Miguel is the artist with the second most number-one hits (16) on *Billboard*'s "Top Latin Songs" (after Enrique Iglesias).

Miguel was the production of the album *Maria Bonita* in 1992 for the popular artist Manuel Mijares (b. 1958). Mijares, as he is popularly known, is a Mexican singer who began producing albums in the early eighties. He participated in youth talent competitions and was declared a "revelation of the [OTI] festival" in 1985. He dabbled in genres like pop and rock and roll, but his first best-selling album was *Maria Bonita*, the title of which references the song of the same name by Agustín Lara that he composed for the famous actress María Félix as his wedding present to her in 1945. Mijares' album includes several of Lara's compositions. While this album does not explicitly use the word bolero, the cover art references the movie poster for the 1947 film *La Diosa Arrodillada* (The kneeling goddess) in which Félix starred (shown in Figure 5.5). Many of the songs chosen for the album are classic boleros, among them Lara's "Maria bonita" and "Noche de ronda" and Bobby Capo's "Piel canela," all of which were popularized by Los Panchos decades earlier.

Figure 5.5: *La Diosa Arrodillada* (1947) and Mijares, *Maria Bonita* (1992).

The last example I would like to explore here is that of Lupita D'Alessio (b. 1954), who began her career recording children's songs but became a baladista in the 1970s. In 1992 D'Alessio released the album *Boleros de Siempre*, which included such classic boleros as Maria Grever's "Ya no te acuerdas de mi," "Tu me acostumbraste" by Frank Dominguez, and "El reloj" by Roberto Cantoral. The album followed closely on the heels of Luis Miguel's and Mijares's bolero albums.

Figure 5.6: Lupita D'Alessio, ***Boleros de Siempre*** **(1992).**

The 1994 Mexican Presidential Election

After the first wave of renewed interest in the bolero, let us briefly return to the political and economic situation. Several key events marked Carlos Salinas de Gortari's presidency: first, the return of presidentialism, in which the figure of the president was untouchable by the media, and that was marked by the minimal presence of an opposition government; second, the creation of economic devices designed to patch the Mexican economy. Salinas de Gortari's administration is the case of the literal removal of three zeros from the Mexican currency, converting 10,000 pesos into 10. This artifice gave the illusion that the Mexican economy was stable. Additionally, Salinas de Gortari's

administration eliminated the floating peso, just as politicians did in 1954, and set the exchange rate at 3.50 pesos (in reality 3,500) per US dollar. Therefore, the beginning of the 1990s was a mixture of hope scaffolded by false promises of economic development followed by disappointment.

Near the end of Salinas de Gortari's presidency the country enjoyed an apparent economic recovery, and he even explored the possibility of reelection, which is prohibited by Mexico's constitution. Since the founding of the PRI, however, presidents had effectively chosen their own successors, and through electoral abuses and fraud had managed to stay in power. Luis Donaldo Colosio (1950-1994) was chosen as the official PRI candidate. Colosio was a politician from the state of Sonora who was aware of the historic responsibility to face an election representing the ruling party after the embarrassing election of 1988, which was widely acknowledged to be fraudulent. Despite being a candidate of the ruling party, he decided to distance himself from the president and the PRI's political structure. On March 6, 1994, Colosio delivered a political speech that took place at the Monumento a la Revolución. To a plaza filled with thousands of audience members, Colosio opened his discourse with an assuring "Here is the PRI with its strength, with its organizations, with its men and women, here is the PRI to encourage civic participation, here is the PRI to keep peace and unity among Mexicans." As he delved into his discourse his distancing from his party became more evident: "Here is the PRI that not only knows about accomplishment but the PRI that knows about deficiencies." He continued:

> We know that we are the heirs of the revolution and that is a source of pride, but that does not legitimatize our political wheel. Legitimacy needs to be earned with our initiatives and with our actions. We are going to lead a new era in the political transformation of Mexico. We know that in this process [the elections], only

> Mexican society has a sure place. Political parties have to credit our vision. At this hour, the strength of the PRI stems from our capacity for change—change with responsibility, as the nation demands. Our vision and our link with the government has allowed us the opportunity to participate in the great changes of the country. The strength of the government has been the strength of our party, but today things are different. Only our own capacity and initiative, our presence in Mexican society and our work will give us strength. No one will be able to substitute our effort. No one will be able to grant us a role in the transformation of Mexico if we don't fight for it, if we don't earn it. Behind us is the time where political struggle was secluded to the internal processes in our organization, and not with other parties. Those days are over. Today we live in competition and we have to rise to the challenge. To do it we have to leave behind old practices. Practices of only dialoguing among us and with the government; [practices] where the party did not have to do much to win. As a party in competition, PRI today does not have a sure win. It has to fight for it. Only victory will give us the stature to our political presence (Colosio 1994).

Colosio's discourse then took a turn toward criticizing Salinas de Gortari:

> Mexico doesn't want political adventures, political schemes that have been in power already and proved to be inefficient. We proposed to reform the power. I express my commitment to renew the relationship between the people and the state, in order to eliminate any trace of authoritarianism. We know that many of the wrongs are due to the excessive concentration of power, concentration of power that produced wrong decisions, monopolistic initiatives, abuses and excesses. Reforming the power means a presidentialism subject only to the limits set by the constitution and by a democratic and republican state (Colosio 1994).

Colosio tried to rally all members of society by acknowledging the deficiencies of the economic policies that benefited few citizens.

> I see a Mexico with field in poverty and in debt, with workers that do not find jobs, young people who confront the difficult reality of not finding jobs, women without the opportunities they deserve, professionals without jobs that would help them develop their careers; teachers, academics, researchers, who ask for recognition of their professional lives, who demand the increase of their income and better condition for their academic endeavors. I see a Mexico with hunger and thirst for justice, a Mexico of transgressed people, transgressed by the distortions imposed on the law by those who should obey the law. I see a Mexico of men and women afflicted by the abuse of authorities or by the arrogance of government institutions. I see citizens worried for the lack of safety, citizens who deserve better services and a government that delivers. The economy has to serve the Mexican people. That is why the new economic growth has to be distributed with

> more equality. It is time to battle inequality, it is time to fight poverty, it is time to deliver justice to the indigenous and to respect their dignity (Colosio 1994).

Colosio encouraged people to get out and vote and proposed the inclusion of international observers on Election Day. He knew that the only way he was going to be president of Mexico was if he not only had the vote count but the moral authority to implement changes in the country. He stated:

> That day there will be one winner, it will be only admissible the clear and un-objectable victory of the Mexican people. On August twenty-first all parties have to be subject to the law, without advantage for anyone, without prepotencies, without abuses, without arbitrarities. Our elections, and I say this fully convinced, will not have shame to hide (Colosio 1994).

Mexicans received Colosio's speech with great enthusiasm; the political class, with great anger, particularly those in his own party who saw their interests potentially thwarted. Just a few days later, on 23 March 1994, he was assassinated at a public campaign rally in Tijuana. As Mexican public intellectual and historian Enrique Krauze said in a radio interview with journalist Carmen Aristegui, "We lost…an authentic democrat, and the man who could have advanced a real democratic change in Mexico" (Krauze 2014).[5]

The 1994 election was the first in which I was eligible to vote. On March 23 I came home from work to find my family gathered around the television, and my mother said "Mataron a Colosio" (they killed Colosio). I remember having mixed feelings—on one hand, Colosio was the PRI candidate, a party I never would have voted for, but on the other he had just articulated the most coherent, democratic, and touching political discourse I had heard in my young life. With only a few months until the election the

[5] Radio Interview for MVS Noticias on 21 March 2014.

Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) chose Ernesto Zedillo as its new candidate, and he won. In December his transition team decided to float the Mexican peso, which ignited a capital flight and resulted in a devaluation from 3.50 to 9 pesos per dollar. Salinas de Gortari was widely believed to have been responsible for the move, but he immediately shifted blame to Zedillo, calling the devaluation the "December mistake." The sequence of events that took place in 1994, Colosio's assassination, the presidential elections, and a new devaluation of the peso, set the stage for a second wave of boleros. Luis Miguel, who in 1991 had broken many sales records with his *Romance*, returned to the commercially successful boleros.

Luis Miguel, *Romances*, and the 1990s

Though he wins no points for originality in album titles, Luis Miguel followed his own proven formula for producing commercially successful albums that connected boleros with young audiences, releasing *Romances* in 1997, *Mis Romances* in 2001, and *Mis Boleros Favoritos* in 2002. (Note the requisite tuxedo in all four album covers in Figures 5.7 through 5.10.

Figure 5.7

Figure 5.8

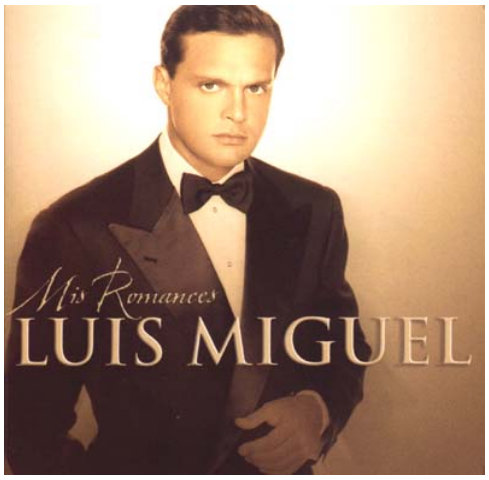

Figure 5.9

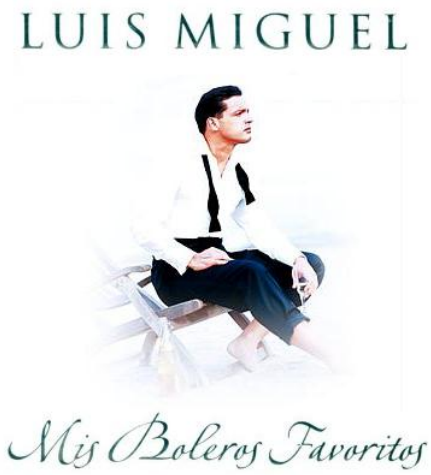

Figure 5.10

Figures 5.7-5.10: Luis Miguel, *Segundo Romance* (1994), *Romances* (1997), *Mis Romances* (2001), and *Mis Boleros Favoritos* (2002).

The bolero imaginary of the 1950s had idealized and given voice to Mexican citizens' aspirations for an industrialized economy. The revived boleros of the 1990s ignited nostalgia for that imaginary amidst a period of increased economic volatility and inspired an optimistic attachment to the idea of "the good life"—the promise that a shift in the governmental power structure would produce economic relief and increased social well being.

In this chapter I have explored the transition between the bolero and the balada

romántica, the development of the baladista (soloist) performers, and the subsequent return of the bolero. Furthermore, I have shown through a juxtaposition of social, economic, and political events, the connections between the reinterpretation of boleros and political turmoil. I have also shown how a new generation of Mexicans has forged sentimental attachments to the nation only to find new disappointments, which are articulated by the bolero. In doing so, I have shown the transforming and transformative power and process of the bolero.

Miguel

In the early 1990s, my friend Miguel (whom we met in chapter 1) had a good job as an auditor for *Teléfonos de México*. He earned a decent salary, which he used to buy an apartment and eventually purchase taxis. You could say he was on his way to attaining "the good life." Combining his income from his job and his taxi business on the side, Miguel invested in a country house forty minutes south of Mexico City. The economy was strong, and banks were eager to lend to people like Miguel, so he took out a mortgage to pay off his country house in thirty years. After the 1994 peso devaluation, his debt more than tripled, from 300,000 to 1,000,000 pesos. Miguel, trying to meet his financial obligations, sold one taxi at a time until, little by little, he ran out of investments and real estate and eventually lost his job. He was trained in administration, and he decided to study law in order to sue the bank to keep his house. The lawsuit took over fifteen years and exacted an enormous physical, economic, and emotional toll on Miguel. Today he squats in an abandoned house with few belongings, including his beloved guitar and requinto, with which he performs in order to make a little money and survive. Today,

as he did in his childhood during the 1950s, Miguel plays boleros in a trio called Los Trovers.

Conclusions

In this dissertation I have explored the connections between music and sentimentalism in Mexico, particularly as expressed in the popular songs known as boleros. I have shown how these songs connect with socio-political and economic events and how, in the Mexican case, musical sentimentalism is one expression of society's disappointments and at the same time a means for social mobility through the competition for symbolic capital.

Bolero, as it has been presented in this dissertation, is a complex subject of study. The nuances covered here regarding economic and political connections form only one of many spheres of knowledge around the bolero. Others, including gender, religion, and music production technology, have yet to be fully examined. My aim in this dissertation has to develop a foundation on which to build a much larger project. In doing so, I have revealed the importance of sentimentalism in Mexican society beyond discourses of cosmopolitanism and urbanism, and as a demand for social justice.

In deconstructing the idea of romantic love as a main theme of boleros, I have reviewed and deconstructed the term by exploring its historical and social origins and development, showing how the bolero has become increasingly difficult to define, and how the term is better described as a cultural artifact or as an imaginary through which members of Mexican society articulate deep social and economic concerns, often couched in themes of romantic love. Additionally, I have shown how the bolero continues to articulate feelings of love, longing and waiting, and how, through repeated

collective loss and disappointment, that longing has become solidified into a structure of feeling that informs present patterns of bolero production and consumption.

Through an exploration of mid-century Mexico, I have attempted to provide a clear picture of Mexican cultural life at mid century, including the socio-economic and political circumstances that led to the structure of feeling the bolero helped engender. I have historicized how Mexico has failed to establish domestic policies for sustainable development and implement policies that would benefit national agriculture, for example, instead of favoring transnational companies. I have examined how mass media and the state acquired a tight grip on powerful institutions and ideas such as nationalism and sentimentalism, which they have utilized to exploit people's misery, and how in doing so the unequal distribution of wealth permeates the bolero discourse. Additionally, I have shown how the construction of the bolero has been a dialectical process to which mass media, the state, and members of society at large have contributed.

In exploring the internal workings of social concerns and musical elements I have take the cultural production of trios as case studies. The *trío romántico* ensemble literally gave voice(s) to a renewed urban sentimentalism while exploring the incorporation of new musical elements—elements that invented and re-invented sentimental music while competing for cultural capital. I have shown how through competition the music has transformed itself and those who produce and consume it. In my exploration of the trio ensemble throughout the 1950s and '60s, I have shown the transformation of the bolero, the development of the trio style in light of a nostalgia for an era that was rapidly disappearing, the rock'n'roll "invasion," and the dawn of civil rights movements and students protests around the world. Furthermore, I have shown how these changes

compelled musicians to take new positions, incorporating musical genres and melodic ideas outside Mexican regionalism and including musical instruments not previously associated with Mexican music.

In my exploration of newer interpretations of the bolero, I have shown how its connections to socio-political and economic events present an opportunity to explore a social experience still in process and show how Mexicans maintain an optimistic attachment to the nation in the hope that its systems will deliver the promise of the good life. In doing so, I have explored the transformation of the bolero into what is now known as *balada romántica moderna* (modern romantic ballad) and how, through this transformation, different musicians and composers negotiated the symbolic capital provided by the idea of a new sentimentalism, only to return to the bolero imaginary and trigger a mid-century structure of feeling through nostalgia. I explored briefly the social and economic changes of the late 1980s and first half of the 1990s highlighting the connections between the bolero and social, political and economic events.

Academic enterprises are ideally objective, but they are also personal as they live with us for so many years. In writing about the bolero during the 1980s and '90s, I have provided a first hand account through the lens of my lived experience; from stories, feelings and societal frustrations that I recall and derive meaning from in my personal experience. I have shown through a juxtaposition of social, economic, and political events, the connections between the reinterpretation of boleros and political turmoil.

Additional Research for this Project

This dissertation has uncovered important connections between social, political, and economic events, but it is just the beginning of several projects. Further investigation on genre formation would benefit from additional time in several archives, including the vast collection of scores and papers of Agustín Lara at the Archivo General de la Nación in Mexico City and archives in the state of Mérida, Yucatán where more information is held regarding the trova yucateca and its connections with the Cuban bolero.

Though I was very fortunate to interview some of the most important composers and performers of boleros during the 1950s, additional interviews with them and others would build upon my ethnographic accounts. One example of this is a former artistic director of Musart records during the 1950s, whom I contacted but was not able to interview. Some other important statistical resources can be found buried in the Mexican bureaucracy that, if acquired, would provide additional empirical evidence. During my time in Mexico I was able to meet radio director and bolero expert Pablo Dueñas, who graciously offered his help, but our connection took place at the end of my fieldwork. More time with him and the archives he holds would certainly build on this project. During my time at the Fonoteca Nacional, I found many supplementary audio resources that appear in search results but have not been digitized. The process to get access to these resources is long but will be valuable to future iterations of this project.

Concerning the additional research needed for the exploration of bolero during the 1990s, additional interviews with key figures such as Guadalupe Pineda, Luis Miguel, and Armando Manzanero are possible and necessary for the development of my

ethnographic account. Additional research at the Hemeroteca Nacional would provide many important facts surrounding the political and economic crises of the 1990s.

Future Research

This project has uncovered connections between bolero and social justice in Mexico City, primarily during the 1950s. This has led me to wonder in what other places boleros are performed and what, if any, are the possible connections between boleros and social justice. During my time in Los Angeles I came in close contact with bolero performers and aficionados and have conducted fieldwork on a transnational community of about sixty older immigrant adults in Los Angeles County who are aficionados of the *bolero*. These immigrants, largely from Mexico, meet weekly in a converted auto mechanic shop in Bell Gardens to sing sentimental songs and share stories. Their appreciation for the boleros is not solely attributable to nostalgia for youth and homeland. Many of these older adults are triple political minorities: elderly, immigrant, and Hispanic, and the vulnerability expressed in these songs parallels their status in the United States. The economic downturn hit this group, who are often dependent on their adult children, particularly hard. In future research, I aim to address the social construction of later life in older Hispanic immigrants by studying their cohesion around the bolero.

This research considers diversity and inequality in old age, and dependency in later life as a social construction underpinned by the social relations of late capitalism, which values activity and consumerism. It also challenges the axiom in ethnomusicology that mariachi and *son jarocho*, two rural genres, are the musics responsible for the

formation of Mexican American identity, which assumes that all Mexican immigrants come from rural areas. Certainly, many do, but there are significant numbers who come from urban centers—like Mexico City—with whom that music does not necessarily resonate. The bolero's importance as a Mexican (and Mexican American) artistic expression and as a cohesive mechanism among older immigrants has not been studied. This research expands and significantly develops this dissertation and advances a post-nationalist perspective in ethnomusicology. Rather than focusing on how national or regional identity is constructed in music, it reflects new understandings of how music audiences are shaped by the intersections of production, distribution, performance, and consumption. This forms the basis of my research agenda writ large: to investigate how post-national interpretations of cultural identity have developed through music under the logic of late capitalism. I see this agenda as contributing not only to ethnomusicology but engaging the scholarly community as a whole, since it addresses issues of migration, economic justice, and social mobility among historically underrepresented groups.

Epilogue

Today, the bolero continues to be ever present in Mexican society, and it has maintained its connections with social and political turmoil. On October 31, 2013, Natalia Lafourcade, a twenty-nine year old GRAMMY award-winning singer from Mexico City, filled the Nezahualcoyotl Auditorium—the largest concert hall in Latin America—to croon her own interpretations of Agustín Lara's music. The concert, a benefit event for people with hearing impairment, set the stage for a dramatic revisionist interpretation of the song genre (Figure E.1).

Figure E.1: Advertisement for Natalia Lafourcade concert at UNAM

Today, as Mexico confronts the challenging social issues of violent crime and increasing wealth disparity, young Mexican musicians like Lafourcade reinvent boleros, focusing their arrangements on instruments—such as ukulele and steel pan—signifying idyllic soundscapes, and re-interpreting the discourse though small but significant changes in the lyrics. Dressed in conservative 1940s garb, Lafourcade's performances invoke a powerful

mid-century nostalgia that resembles the hope for a brighter future captured in boleros of the 1940s and ‘50s. Although Lafourcade never experienced the original temporal and social context of the 1930s, ‘40s or ‘50s, her versions of the repertoire connect with Mexicans who did. Additionally, her interpretations of the lyrics revise a genre previously associated with machismo and sexism and resonate with current gender discourses.

One of Lara’s most popular songs, for example, is “Aventurera” (Adventuress), which, in his original version, portrays the life of a prostitute and her sins as described in the following lyrics:

Vende caro tu amor, aventurera,
Y aquel que de tu boca la miel quiera,
Que pague con brillantes **tu** pecado (my emphasis)

Sell your love expensive, adventuress,
And that one who desires the honey of your mouth,
Should pay in diamonds for **your** sin (my emphasis)

In Lafourcade’s version, she encodes interesting subtle aesthetic and discursive changes. Musically, she makes use of ukulele and steel pan, instruments usually associated with an idyllic setting. She also changes “tu” (your) in the lyrics above to “su” (his).

Sell your love expensive, adventuress,
And that one who desires the honey of your mouth,
Should pay in diamonds for **his** sin (my emphasis)

Lafourcade also reinterprets Lara’s song “Mujer divina” (divine woman). Her music video for the song presents a narrative of two young women in love with each other, adding a notable social commentary that positions her as progressive in a society now open to discussing homosexuality.

As the approach in this dissertation has shown, the field of *bolero* is constantly changing, with new players and new forms of capital. What constituted capital during the 1930s was not the same during the 1940s, 1950s or during the *bolero* revival in the 1990s and 2000s. Issues of gender, race, and class have permeated the discourse and aesthetics of the music. The importance of *bolero* today as a site of contestation, and paradoxically as a place of reconciliation, cannot be overstated.

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