Decentering the Nation

Music, Mexicanidad, and Globalization

Edited by Jesús A. Ramos-Kittrell

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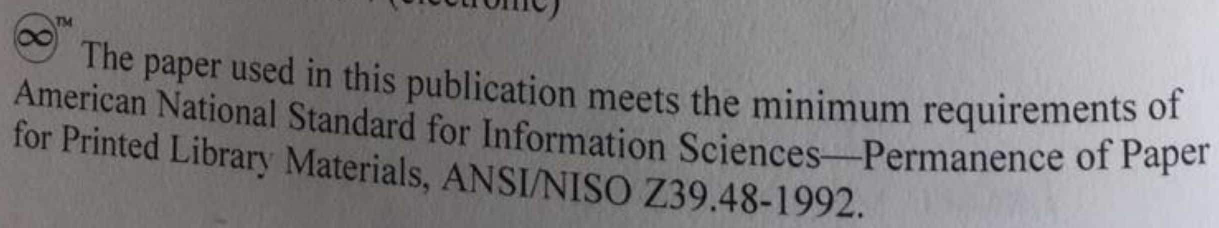

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Chapter 5

Soy gallo de Sinaloa jugado en varios palenques

Production and Consumption of Narco-music in a Transnational World

César Burgos Dávila and Helena Simonett[1]

Shouting in excitement, the audience moved toward the bandstand to take pictures and videos of Ariel Camacho and Los Plebes del Rancho entering the stage.[2] Beams of light and heavy smoke blurred the band's appearance which was accompanied by fragments of its popular narcocorridos and ballads—"El karma" (Karma), "La fuga del dorian" (Dorian's Escape), "Toro encartado" (Imprisoned Bull), "Los talibanes del prieto" (Prieto's Talibans), "Entre pláticas y dudas" (Between Talks and Doubts), "El señor de los cielos" (The Lord of the Skies), "Te metiste" (You Got In), "Hablemos" (Let's Talk), "Rey de corazones" (King of Hearts)—introducing Ariel Camacho and Los Plebes del Rancho as follows:

> It's music from the Sierra. And this genre that was, is, and will always be of and for the people has a new leader . . . with his youth, talent and guts he has accomplished by this day to become the new lord and master of the corrido . . . His skill and musical power are as high as the pines . . . Country [*peasant*] music has a new leader . . . Mexico and the United States stand at attention for the 'King of Hearts' [reference to one of his songs]: Ariel Camacho. And he does not come alone, he comes well escorted by Los Plebes del Rancho [The Fellows from the Ranch] . . . Take good note, the instruction is very simple: Let's everyone dance, drink and sing with full Sinaloan force. Here he is: Ariel Camacho. . .[3]

Then Ariel Camacho addressed the audience: "Good evening. We'll play some songs for you . . . Everybody, let's drink and dance . . . Go Culiacán, Sinaloa, and Sunnyvale Palladium!"—the latter a nightclub in the San Francisco Bay Area where the band was performing that night. Cheerfully and energetically they opened their gig with "El sinaloense" (The Sinaloan), a song that celebrates the boisterous and upbeat Sinaloan character.[4] The dance floor began to fill up with young couples, and the festive mood continued

throughout the night as the young people were drinking, shouting emotionally, and singing along to the songs and narcocorridos the band performed.

Reflecting the development of drug trafficking and drug-related violent crime, the content of the narcocorridos is ever changing (Burgos 2013, 158–60). The transnational musical connection between California and Sinaloa, based on drug trafficking, specifically, has been a long-standing one, and has allowed for the articulation of both social realities and cultural resignifications in relation to changes in narcocorridos. This chapter, thus, examines how transnational music production, circulation, and listening practices among *mexicanos* in California have changed since Chalino Sánchez, the now legendary Sinaloan narco-singer, was brutally murdered in 1992 for singing the 'wrong' corridos (Simonett 1998). We are particularly interested in how narco-music is influenced by the different settings in which it is created, distributed, evaluated, and consumed.

During Simonett's ethnographic fieldwork in the 1990s, "Nuevo Los Ángeles" or "Nuevo L.A.," as the predominantly Mexican and Latino area that in earlier decades comprised the industrial heartland had been dubbed, was the hub of the production of this emerging musical genre (Acuña 1996, 3; Simonett 2001a, 226–54). A number of small, independent record labels began to record narcocorridos that were commissioned and performed at local nightclubs frequented by Mexican immigrants. Cassettes and compact discs with this music were distributed locally by small stores or at carwashes and swap meets. Carried by the *technobanda* craze in California, narco-music eventually seeped into Spanish-language radio broadcasting and reached a wider audience. Although music related to drug trafficking and traffickers was stigmatized as a subcultural expression, relevant to a minor population only, compositions about drug trafficking quickly kindled an interest among young second- and third-generation Mexicans who felt empowered by this 'very Mexican' music they could call their own. The new genre became a symbol of pride in one's Mexican roots and served for the formation of cultural self-imaginings during a time when the American political environment that had grown increasingly hostile towards anyone of Mexican descent (Simonett 2001b).

At the dawn of the new millennium, the so-called "Regional Mexican" music had become the most popular Latin music genre in the United States in terms of radio promotions and sales (Cobo 2001, 2005). This was partly due to the popularity of the *duranguense* bands that originated in Chicago in the early 2000s (Simonett 2012), and partly to a 'rejuvenated' style of narco-music produced and promoted by the Sinaloan immigrant siblings Omar and Adolfo Valenzuela—better known as Los Cuates Valenzuela (the Valenzuela twins)—owners of Los Angeles-based Twiins Enterprise. Their target audience not only included recently arrived Mexicans, but young first- and second-generation Mexican Americans as well—a market largely ignored by mainstream media producers (Kun 2006). It was, therefore, more lucrative to produce narco-music in California than in Mexico: Twiins speculated that once popular in the United States, the music would "cross back into the market in Mexico" (Adolfo Valenzuela quoted in Kun 2006). Given that record labels dedicated to narco-music are located in Los Angeles, there is a constant musical exchange between California and Sinaloa, the reason why they are considered today the main sites of production, diffusion, and consumption of the genre.

Unlike in the early 1990s, today's bands are no longer confined to small, local audiences that attend their live performances; their music is being consumed by many millions of virtual listeners. Ariel Camacho y Los Plebes del Rancho shall serve as an example to illustrate this phenomenon: by October 2016 the official video of "Hablemos" (posted on YouTube in March 2014) generated 220 million views, and two years later the number doubled. There are other YouTube postings of the same video that score in the millions as well. Another of Camacho's songs, "Te metiste" (posted by a fan with audio only) has received over one hundred million clicks in one year, and three years later the number increased to 250 million. Other narco-songs by this particular band, though less popular, still score in the millions. For example, "El karma" (posted by the original video producer in March 2014) was re-produced by DEL Records in East Los Angeles as the band's U.S. debut album. Since then, the song has generated over 77 million views.[5] Moreover, the music video of "El señor de los cielos" (The Lord of the Skies, as Sinaloan drug lord Amado Carrillo Fuentes was known), posted by DEL Records in January 2015, had generated 141 million views by the time this chapter was written. Furthermore, "El negociante" (The Dealer), received 380 million clicks in less than a year. In addition to these YouTube streamings, the songs have been digitally downloaded and given significant airplay, thus multiplying their consumption. Over the last years, YouTube and similar social media networks have established new practices of use and cultural consumption, as well as new modes of music reception, production, circulation, and socialization.[6]

While we cannot know who the millions of virtual consumers of this music are, why they listen to this music or what it means to them, we believe that the massive consumption of narco-music sheds light on the kind of mobile identities that emerge under the influence of transnational marketing and consumption practices. As such, narco-music is a postmodern expression *par excellence*, an aesthetic production that has become integrated into commodity production outside the nation-state's control. This latest stage of capitalism,

according to Fredric Jameson (1991), is characterized, among other things, by the international division of labor, the explosion of financial markets and communication media across national borders.

Ultimately, the existence of a thriving transnational narco-music culture—and the way it has redressed notions of 'Mexican music'—points to the culturally decentered position of the nation-state in globalization. The phenomenon, however, also interrogates the complicity between state representatives, the media, and cultural brokers, as well as the ambiguity of their positions in the articulation of narco-music culture. The narco-music genre allows us to critically examine this process from three angles. Number one is narco-music's role in the production of meaning and in the shaping of communities and socio-musical practices. Number two refers to the joint effect of media and migration on the work of imagination as a constitutive feature of modern subjectivity. And number three points to the messy articulation of transnationally-produced values, ideologies, and aesthetics.

SOY GALLO DE SINALOA JUGADO EN VARIOS PALENQUES

Born in 1960, Chalino Sánchez grew up in a large family in Sanalona, a village thirty kilometers east of Culiacán. At the age of eighteen, he migrated to California like many other poor Mexicans hoping to find a better future in the North. Chalino's dream of becoming a professional singer eventually came true in Los Angeles, his second home.[7] Chalino began to compose corridos on commission and later, from 1989 on, recorded them on cassettes for his clients with local *norteño* groups and *bandas*. He produced some of his best songs with Los Amables del Norte and Banda Flor del Campo, both bands based in the Los Angeles area. Chalino's success was partly due to his ability to fabricate his own 'tough guy' image, drawing from Sinaloan folklore, the bandit-hero myth, and the corrido tradition. Immortalized with and through his songs, Chalino's persona embodied the character of a Mexican drug-trafficking subculture transpiring in Mexico and the United States (see Figure 5.1).

After his violent death, Chalino Sanchéz became a key figure in the musical landscape of Mexican Los Angeles. Although his corridos did not receive any airplay on radio at the time, he prompted a cultural movement known as *el chalinazo*: dozens of youngsters in the Los Angeles area emerged imitating his voice, his singing style, and his particular way of dressing in *ranchero* (cowboy) style—a style that journalist Sam Quinones (1998) coined as 'narcotraficante chic.'[8]

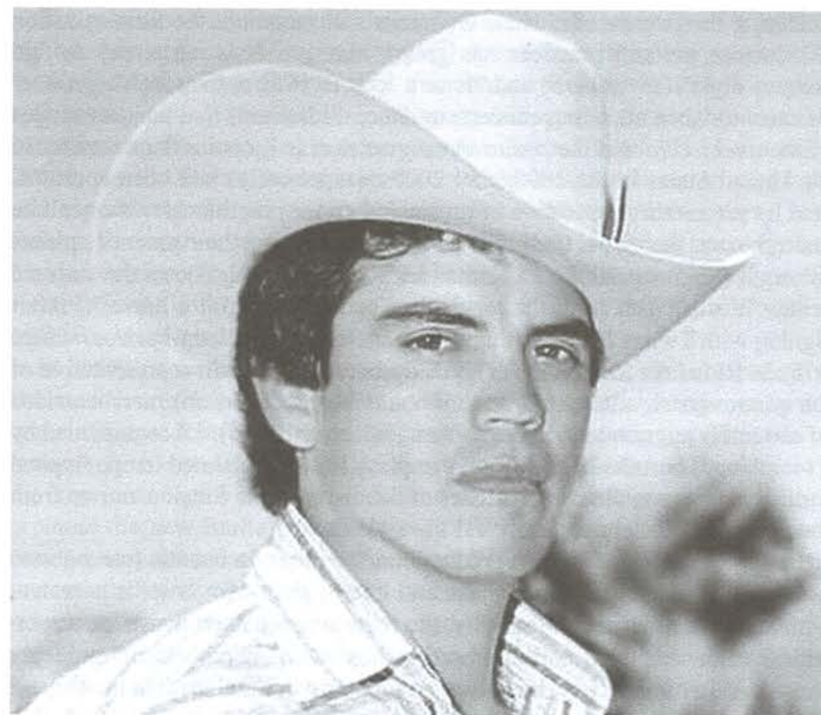

Figure 5.1. Screen shot of Chalino Sánchez from the music video "A ti mi grandota."

"El gallo de Sinaloa" (The Rooster from Sinaloa) was one of Chalino's most popular corridos. In the first line of the song, the singer refers to himself as a "rooster that has played many cockfighting rings." The rooster is a metaphor for the aggressive fighter with a strongly pronounced sexual potency, commonly used by rural people to boast about one's proficiency and power (in this song, enforced with potent weapons) and to intimidate potential enemies such as traitors and U.S. drug enforcement agents. Chalino's posthumous rise in fame brought along a 'Sinaloaization' of Mexican cultural expressions in California.[9] As Quinones suggested:

> If tourists thought mariachi synonymous with Mexico, in L.A. the Mexican working class were really listening to the music of Sinaloa: the norteño *conjunto* and the banda, a tuba-anchored marching band playing dance music. And if being Sinaloan—with its drug undertones—was suddenly cool, even more so was to be from the Sinaloan rancho (2001, 24).[10]

During the two decades since Quinones's observation, the Sinaloaization of Mexican cultural practices has grown stronger. It is customary to "go cowboy style" (*ir vaquero*) and "have a look as if from the ranch" (*parecer de rancho*) when attending concerts or dances.[11] It seems that the dress codes of the *quebradita* and the *pasito duranguense* eras (popular dance crazes in the United States in the 1990s and 2000s, respectively) had been appropriated by yet another generation of music-and-dance practitioners who reclaim and renovate their own traditions away from their, or their parents', places of origin (Simonett 2008). El Komander's 2014 hit song boosts the vaquero pride: "Yes sir, I'm from the ranch; I'm on boots and on a horse."[12] After signing with Twiins Music Group, Los Angeles, the Sinaloan-born *corridista* Alfredo Ríos (aka El Komander) quickly became the main representative of the controversial "altered movement" (*movimiento alterado*), narcocorridos of extremely aggressive, violent content (Miserachi 2016).[13] Accompanied by a (combined) norteño-banda group that plays in an accelerated tempo, typical for this new genre, the singer alludes to the disreputable Sinaloa known from the news while celebrating its rural life style.[14]

In Regional Mexican music productions, the idea of a bucolic (*campirano*) Mexico, a country where men make and live by their own laws, is prevalent both aurally and visually. Similarly, the corrido genre itself insists on a rootedness in the Mexican northern borderlands of an anarchistic time: deeply embedded in rural society, it evolved as a mestizo cultural form in the context of border conflicts with the United States and later became associated with the rise of Mexico's national consciousness during the early decades of the twentieth century (see Chávez in this volume).[15] In their introduction to *Music, National Identity and the Politics of Location*, Ian Biddle and Vanessa Knights remind us to not be surprised "to find that new forms of nationalism continue to emerge and the force of the nation as a cultural trope continues to adapt to new political and material conditions." Globalization has not erased nationalist tropes; rather, "new forms of nationhood and the continued operative force of 'older' imaginations of nation" are both dynamic agencies in contemporary musical identity (Biddle and Knights 2007, 11).

While Mexican nationalist tropes still influence contemporary music production, the identification with the northern part of the country, and in particular the Sinaloan rancho, seems to be the way to commercial success.[16] According to corrido scholar Juan Carlos Ramírez-Pimienta (2011, 188), the periphery has become the new center: in the world of the corrido, to be or appear to be from the *sierra*, specifically the Sinaloan Sierra, carries much symbolic capital.[17] Allusions to the sierra—the refuge of the persecuted, the revolutionary fighters, *guerrilleros*, and the *narcos* alike—are omnipresent in band names, song lyrics, video images, logos, and clothing.

The generation of singers following in Chalino's footsteps took a pass on his handmade *huarache* sandals, typical footwear in Mexican countryside farming communities. Instead they transformed themselves into Wrangler- and boots-wearing "badasses" (*perrones*), dedicated to a tougher style of narco-music, the so-called *música perrona* (badass music).[18] In the early 2000s, Lupillo Rivera broke with the cowboy image and, as an elegantly and expensively dressed cigar-smoking *pelón* (bald-headed man), set a new fashion that sparked a new generation of bilingual, bicultural Los Angeles-Mexican artists. Today's artists of the altered movement feel equally comfortable in a T-shirt and wearing a baseball cap or in a stylish suit with a tejano cowboy hat.

In 2011, inspired by the popular corrido, "El muchacho de la barba" (The Bearded Youngster) by Código FN and Enigma Norteño, a young man by the name of Edgar Ramírez created a logo off a selfie, showing the silhouette of a man's face with full beard.[19] He then sold baseball hats and T-shirts with the imprinted logo via social media and equipped musicians who helped to promote the new Barba Norteña label. On the company website, the young entrepreneur advertised Barba Norteña as a 'life style' expressed in this unpretentious logo.[20] "The idea was to start a brand that focused on stuff I could relate to. I've always loved certain brands here and there, but I never found anything I could really relate to," Ramírez recalled (quoted in Lara 2015). The label, with its affirmation of *lo norteño* (anything northern), became an instant success. Although not exceedingly expensive, the Barba Norteña brand is intended for urbanites that cultivate their relationship with Mexico's rural north through music. Its everyday products, such as hats, shirts and other accessories, feature imprinted images from the world of norteño music. For example, the motif of a rooster printed on a T-shirt with the caption "played in many cockfighting rings" (*jugado en varios palenques*), refers to Chalino's corrido, "El gallo de Sinaloa." The silhouette of a pistol with the caption "so, you said you wouldn't fire" (*no que no tronabas*) alludes to the popular phrase that the norteño comedian-actor Lalo González "El Piporro" popularized: "so, you said you wouldn't fire, little pistol?" (*¿No que no tronabas, pistolita?*)[21]

"As design and fashion become quasi-independent forces closely connected to the movements of capital and the rapid growth of specialized technologies for manufacture, the world of commodities undergoes a galactic expansion," Appadurai contends (2013, 256). The global production and distribution of consumer goods, however, obscures the fact that even commercial geographies are historically produced. "It is historical agents, institutions, actors and powers that make the geography" (66). The circulation and consumption of Barba Norteña commodities point to a specific kind of identity politics,

one in which consumption habits, situated in social forms of everyday life of mexicanos in California, produce a transnationally articulated locality. Rather than valuing Mexico as simply "a repository of cultural nostalgia," it becomes a dynamic part of "the geopolitical present" (Spivak 1999, 402).

MEXICO AND *'EL OTRO MÉXICO'*

Since the War on Drugs was unleashed in 2006, tens of thousands of people have become victims of the bloody turf wars between drug cartels and between the cartels and the army. Homicide rates in the embattled border city of Ciudad Juárez reached unprecedented heights between 2008 and 2012. Banda and norteño music became the soundtrack to this horrendous violence: a local official of Ciudad Juárez said that gunmen would announce executions on police radio frequencies via narcocorridos (Schwarz 2011). In 2013, photojournalist Shaul Schwarz (2013) documented this gruesome reality in his film *Narco Cultura* with footage from the front lines.[22] The condition of violence—massacres, beheadings, kidnappings, and extortions—that many Mexicans experience in everyday life has become material for entertainment. Schwarz shows how the growing music industry based in Los Angeles plays with these coexisting realities. "If there wasn't so much violence in Mexico, we wouldn't have such badass corridos," Twiins Enterprises cofounder Adolfo Valenzuela reasons (featured in Schwarz 2013). Oscar López, director of a low-budget Mexican action movie business specializing in the narco genre, believes that people who have "never been affected by this drug war are on the side of the narcos—or they want to be. That's why narco culture has grown so much; because these guys see narcos as modern-day Robin Hoods. They go against the government, against the system" (featured in Schwarz 2013).

This connection with the shady underworld of drug traffickers increased the visibility and consumption of narco-music produced by small-scale record labels in metropolitan Los Angeles. Spanish-language radio stations across the United States now broadcast narco-music, and movies inspired by narcocorridos, previously sold in Mexican neighborhood grocery stores, are now found in major chain stores such as Walmart and Target. Whilst in Mexico, narco-music has been banned from the public for decades, and new governmental regulations continue to do so today, as we will address in more detail below.

Territorialism remains an important force in today's politics as rising nationalism, border protectionism, and isolationism worldwide show (Martell 2007, 173). Although the global flow of people and goods may deceive us into thinking that territorial boundaries no longer serve as markers of identity in today's world, identities that are created and performed in the context of transnational economies do not negate borders, rather they emphasize their fluidity. Mexican migrants residing in "the other Mexico" (*el otro México*, as band Los Tigres del Norte named the territory north of the border in a song by this very title in 1986), reshape and rearticulate their Mexicanness based on perceived Mexican identities and cultural practices. Referring to the current popularity of narco-music, a member of a local Californian norteño group problematizes what he sees as a cultural misconstruction as follows:

> There is a lot of liberty of expression here in the U.S. But the problem is that many youths lack life experience, maturity; they don't know how to listen to a corrido in a healthy way. They hear something and want to do it as well . . . they too want to wear things they can't afford, to live a lifestyle that's not theirs: and yet, through the corridos they can live it, they can do it.[23]

Other musicians agree: they have been commissioned to compose narcocorridos for everyday men who want to experience the fame of the corrido heroes, "the guys that are making the money and are flashing around the neighborhood; because there is no other way to get out of the neighborhood."[24] It is a vanity game, commented documentary filmmaker Schwarz. "I can totally understand why teenagers valorize narcos, and it's actually simple. At the end of the day, our policy has let the bad guys win for such a long time and it's never been worse . . . at the end of the day these kids see our failed policies as evidence of what success looks like" (quoted in Viscarrondo 2013).

The current popularity of the corrido relates to how the music industry has produced a music that appeals to an audience sensitive to the fluidity of social, regional, national, and gender boundaries that they experience. Hector Amaya believes that:

> The claims of Mexicanity and the way [narco-]performers . . . have embodied the narco-brand are thus not only commercial tactics. They are also the means by which Mexican-American urban youths, who are the typical consumers of narcocorridos, reconfigure their marginalization through the tactical deployment of counterhegemonic fantasies that narcocorridos activate (2014, 226).

The widespread popularity of narcocorridos in the U.S. has no single cause, as the abovementioned opinions suggest. Yet, economic deprivation, social exclusion, and the ongoing pervasive othering of people of Mexican heritage may indeed affect individuals' life stance. An analysis of commissioned corridos of the 1990s suggests that social acceptance was of prime importance to drug traffickers and wannabes alike. According to Quinones, by the end of the 1990s, the corrido had "adapted to the new reality of Mexicans having to live and work away from Mexico" (2001, 27). A commissioned corrido was considered tangible proof of economic success—one that placed the owner

close to Mexico's drug traffickers who, by that time, had acquired significant social status and an important cultural position in the Mexican social imagination: they had become the new patrons of this regional music style (Simonett 2001a, 201–25).

In a recent article on "The Ballad of Narcomexico," folklorist and corrido scholar John McDowell somewhat disdainfully states: "Examining the corridos on YouTube, one might imagine that the corrido tradition has become captive of drug cartels or the production studios, that the corrido is now and will forever be the narcocorrido" (2012, 268). Yet, ethnographic evidence draws a more nuanced picture of narco-musical production and consumption than that provided by internet consultation and secondhand journalistic sources alone. Having witnessed local music productions and talked to musicians, composers, fans and music producers alike, we believe that there are no clear-cut answers to the messy articulation of transnationally produced values, ideologies, and aesthetics related to the narcocorrido, let alone the corrido genre as a whole.

Openly celebrated commemorative practices that unite and fuse folklore with delinquency and violence such as the ones of the Sinaloan Robin Hood-like outlaw Malverde, have coerced the idea of the *valiente*, the brave man who raised his arms against the established social order and the representatives of the ruling class (Córdova 1993, 39). Narcos are often compared to the bandit-hero Robin Hood, but no one we have met who has experienced narco-terror upholds such a glamorized view. Rather, social bandits "are heroes not in spite of the fear and horror their actions inspire, but in some ways because of them," Eric Hobsbawm stated in his classic book on bandits in pre-capitalist societies. "They are not so much men who right wrongs, but avengers, and exerters of power; their appeal is not that of the agents of justice, but of men who prove that even the poor and weak can be terrible" (1969, 50).

The drug trafficker of today is, as Marc Edberg pointed out, "a commodified persona that sells—a fact not lost on the media industry that markets CDs, ringtones, and movies; or among narcotraffickers themselves, who commission narcocorridos as advertisements to enshrine their reputation in the public memory" (2011, 68). Outlaws have long been mystified in popular culture: their sensational stories have undeniable commercial appeal. Al Capone's deeds are exploited in numerous action movies and Colombian kingpin Pablo Escobar's life has become an American crime web television series (*Narcos*) so popular that Netflix recently announced a fourth season, to premier in November 2018.

Appadurai described cultural commodities disseminated by the media as "image-centered and narrative-based accounts of strips of reality" (1990, 9). According to prolific corrido songsmiths, such as Enrique Franco and Teodoro Bello, "all the stories are entirely truthful" (Guardado 1996), they are "based on what the press, the radio, and the television say" (Cruz 2000). El Komander follows in their footsteps claiming to be 'a reporter of reality.' Corridos indeed once were the 'history books' of the illiterate, providing an intriguing folk counterpoint to Mexico's 'official' history. But rather than functioning as a kind of folk newspaper—as commonly believed—corridos depended on a prior transmission of news: their goal was to interpret, celebrate, and ultimately dignify events already thoroughly familiar to the corrido audience or community (McDowell 1981, 47). Similarly, narcocorridos—if not simply fictitious—usually retell what has already been disseminated by the news media. Amanda Morrison finds *corridistas*'s claims to truthfulness interesting, "considering the fact that the 'objective' journalism offered by the mainstream news media . . . walks a similarly fine line between spectacle and reality" (Morrison 2008, 393).

Los Angeles-born Edgar Quintero, lead singer of the narco-band BuKnas de Culiacán featured in Schwarz's documentary (2013), sings about people and events he knows and learns about mainly from the internet. For him and his fans, the appeal of narco-music is based on a simulacrum that has little to do with the violent reality of the drug war as it is experienced daily by thousands of people south of the border. The twenty-two-year-old lead singer of the San Jose-based group Nueva Mentalidad wishes for nothing more than to be commissioned by a famous narco. He told Burgos that he has always dreamed of playing for the head of the Sinaloa cartel, "El Chapo" Guzmán: "Like Enigma Norteño and the others in Culiacán who know and live with these guys."[25] Similarly, Quintero yearns to cross the border and see the 'real Mexico.' For Quintero, the real Mexico is the state of Sinaloa, home to the world's "deadliest drug cartel" (quoted in McAllester 2013). "If you're born here [in the U.S.], you don't have the same vocabulary as someone from Mexico" (Quintero featured in Schwarz 2013). Aspiring narco-musicians, especially those born and raised in *el otro* México, ache for street credibility such as personal contact to someone influential in the drug business.

On the other hand, many musicians lament their dependency on clients that make their money illegally. Not only has their work environment become exceedingly violent—El Komander says that there are fights in eight out of ten shows he does—but the quality of the music has suffered as well. "Sinaloa has produced many great artists, several wonderful bandas, with excellent, excellent musical skills," a member of Nueva Mentalidad says, "but if they play 'beautiful music' they go out of business."[26] Musicians are forced to play the "ugly and brave" (*feo y bravo*) repertory that is in vogue in order to survive economically. He hopes that the current violent corridos are just a passing fad like the ones that came before:

When Los Razos and Los Originales [de San Juan] came out, everyone was from Michoacán. Later, when [*pasito*] *duranguense* became fashionable, everyone was from Durango. *Tribal* came out and everyone was *tribalero*. Everyone follows the fashion. When the *corrido alterado* came out, everyone became a bloodthirsty bully and *buchón*, a Sinaloan drug cartel hit-man wannabe.[27]

Narcocorrido's decline, though, had long been prognosticated. But its recent popularity on the internet has revitalized the genre tremendously, and this has caused some critics to say that "the narcocorrido style—in song, dress, and lifestyle—forms an expressive cluster within which the interests of the cartels and the efforts of the promoters coincide in producing a climate favorable to the distinct YouTube narcocorrido videos" (McDowell 2012, 259).

One should keep in mind, however, that the altered movement was launched during the bloodiest time in Mexico's history since the revolution a century ago. In 2006, President Felipe Calderón declared war on drugs just a few days after entering office with the goal to recover the spaces occupied by the drug cartels and to restore security (Astorga 2015). Yet, the military intervention had devastating consequences for the Mexican people: drug-trafficking violence grew to unprecedented levels as a result of gruesome fights between drug cartels caused by the elimination of a number of key cartel leaders (Chabat 2010). Calderón's militarization of Mexico left the country with an estimated death toll of 120,000 and tens of thousands of people disappeared.[28]

Mexico's grisly reality was reflected in the narcocorridos of the young composers and performers. Stories about the victories and defeats of the capos, the alliances and retaliations of the drug cartels, the deals with politicians, corruption, crimes, extortions, massacres, beheadings, and disappearances were also the material of norteño and banda music (Burgos 2013, 175). Explicit and violent song lyrics generate huge economic profits, which led BMI (Broadcast Music, Inc.) to recognize the Valenzuela twins as leading producers of Mexican regional music.[29] Moreover, El Komander, one of Twiins's strongest-going altered movement acts, won a Billboard Latin Music Awards in 2016 in the category of "Regional Mexican Song Artist of the Year, Solo" (McIntyre 2016).[30] Furthermore, narco-singer Gerardo Ortiz received an award for the best "Regional Mexican Album of the Year," despite protests against a controversial music video for which he was arrested by the Federal Police in Mexico a few months later, and charged with "criminal exaltation" (Cobo 2016b). By that time the song had hit the Top 10 of Billboard's Hot Latin Songs chart. Thus, the glorification of violence in music videos eventually turned out to be positive for Ortiz's career. Leila Cobo, Billboard's Executive Director of Content and Programming for Latin Music, summarized the intricacy of the Ortiz case: "What started as a genuinely productive look at hard-core music videos that indeed exalt criminal activities has backfired, with many in the media, including serious columnists, accusing the Mexican government of overzealousness (2016a)."

By celebrating artists' (and by extension their own) economic success, the music industries have consistently downplayed their moral complicity in producing and disseminating artistic representations of various forms of violence—a violence that south of the border has caused thousands of deaths and that continues to take an enormous toll on society.

CENSORSHIP AND THE STATE'S COMPLICITY

In the late 1980s, the San Jose, CA-based norteño band Los Tigres del Norte became a leading voice for the plight of Mexican immigrants with socially conscious songs such as "La jaula de oro" (1986), a story about life in "the gilded cage," a metaphor for the experience of undocumented immigrants living in the United States. Before that, the band launched its breathtaking career with the hit songs "Contrabando y traición" (Contraband and Betrayal, 1971), a tale starring drug trafficking couple Emilio Varela and Camelia La Tejana; and "La banda del carro rojo" (The Gang of the Red Car, 1973), a story about the fate of a gang of cocaine smugglers. Although norteño groups experienced governmental suppression of their musical activities as early as the 1970s, censorship of corridos telling stories about drug smuggling was not a hot topic until bands began to record corridos that pointed to the involvement of high officials in the illegal business. In 1989 Los Tigres del Norte released an entire album with songs about drug trafficking with the title *Corridos prohibidos* (Forbidden Corridos), ridiculing the Mexican government's attempts to repress its music.

This marketing strategy helped push norteño music to the top of Mexican regional music and shaped a new generation of corrido performers (Simonett 2001b, 320). Los Tigres del Norte, admired by millions of Mexicans and Mexican Americans as "the idols of the people" (*los ídolos del pueblo*), is the most influential norteño group and, after more than three decades of activity, still one of the top-selling groups in the U.S. Latino market. The band's success and popularity has enabled its members to exercise harsh criticism against the Mexican government and official authorities, accusing both of corruption and blaming them for the failure to win the War on Drugs.[31]

In 1995 Los Tigres del Norte launched a song that portrayed (former) President Carlos Salinas de Gortari and his brother Raúl as heads of the Sinaloa drug cartel. Simonett, then doing fieldwork in Sinaloa, noticed that soon everyone in the streets could sing along the catchy melody and knew

the words by heart: "Carlos and Raúl were the owners of a circus; Carlos was the tamer, the younger brother, Raúl the coordinator, hungry to get rich."[32] In the second verse, the word 'circus' alluded to 'cartel,' and suggested that the Salinas brothers were deeply entangled in Mexico's drug business. "El circo" (The Circus, written by Jesse Armenta) dominated Sinaloa's airwaves much to the dismay of the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party), the political party that had held power in Mexico since its inception in 1929, but had lost many of its voters after the country's economy spiraled downward. Much was at stake and such a direct accusation against prominent members of the PRI elite was politically damaging.

Carlos Salinas began office in 1988 after controversial elections. An economist and alumni of Harvard University, Salinas continued the PRI's neoliberal policy: both the banking system and the national phone company were privatized. He also negotiated the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between Mexico, the United States, and Canada in 1994. Nonetheless, scandalous accusations offset his political accomplishments. By the end of his six-year term in office, Mexico slipped into a deep economic crisis (see the introduction to this volume). The assassination of the two most visible and powerful official heads of the PRI in the election year of 1994—the presidential candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio and the secretary-general José Francisco Ruíz Massieu, once married to Adriana Salinas, sister of Carlos and Raúl—tinted the president's political reputation. The following year, Raúl Salinas was arrested (and eventually convicted) for his involvement in Ruíz Massieu's assassination, and the former president went into self-imposed exile twelve days after his brother's arrest (Bruce 2005).[33] Carlos Salinas de Gortari also became the target of a drug-money laundering investigation involving authorities in at least ten countries. (In Switzerland, for example, the attorney general seized US$114 million deposited by Salinas in numbered Swiss bank accounts under false names, see Ward and Moore 1999.)

Until 1994, high-level corruption was rarely linked to drug trafficking and minor drug-fighting activities dismissed potential critiques of the government (Patenostro 1995, 46). While President Salinas joined U.S. President George H. W. Bush in his militarized war on drugs, the arrest of Mexico's most powerful kingpin, Miguel Ángel Félix Gallardo, was read as a success of the Salinas administration against organized crime. Sinaloan sociologist Luis Astorga, however, called it an "act of symbolic power" (1995, 76–77). It was no secret that Félix Gallardo's drug trafficking network had been protected by many high-level government officials within the PRI, and that he was a house guest of Sinaloa's then governor Antonio Toledo Corro (Grayson 2013, 27).

In their music, Los Tigres del Norte criticized the Salinas administration for all of this havoc. Their song "El circo" suggests that Carlos Salinas

'tamed' the cartels to empower himself, thus offering a counter discourse to the discourse of power. The song closes with the rather pessimistic assertion that similar 'circuses' will follow ("until a new circus arrives / and then the same trick again).[34] Indeed, the allusion to the *avionazo*—the arrest of Sinaloan kingpin Héctor Luis Palma Salazar in 1995 after a crash landing of his jet—indicates that despite such political power acts, the cartels remain a Mexican reality.

Fast forward: In May 2011, Los Tigres del Norte dined at the home of Sinaloa's governor Mario López Valdez (elected for the period of 2011–2016).[35] The governor had just passed a new decree that prohibited the dissemination of narcocorridos in public spaces as part of a new strategy to combat violence, and he was in dire need of public support for his controversial law (Cabrera and Morales 2011; Notimex 2011). López Valdez, a populist politician with the demeanor of a television actor, grandly staged himself with the widely popular Los Tigres del Norte, pledging to help him improve Sinaloa's reputation—the very same band that is, at least partially, responsible for the wide acceptance of narcocorridos.

Despite their commercial exploitation of the narco theme, such as the Grammy-nominated corrido "Jefe de jefes" (Boss of Bosses, 1997—an allusion to the almighty Sinaloan cartel boss Félix Gallardo), Los Tigres see themselves as true-to-life storytellers[36] rather than *narcocorridistas* (narco-balladeers). But so does El Komander, the best-known representative of the kind of violent corridos the Sinaloan governor tried to ban. "Does being a corrido singer or making this kind of music cause violence? Of course not!" El Komander opinionates (featured in Schwarz 2013). Two of the major "badass music" (*música perrona*) advocates, Long Beach natives Jenni and Lupillo Rivera, were similarly unconcerned about possible negative effects of their 'bad stuff' on young audiences. On the contrary, Jenni believed that "it gives [the listeners] an adrenaline rush, they get hyped up and it makes them happy. It makes them feel tough and it makes them feel, like, really, really Mexican. And I think we all like to feel like that" (Jenni Rivera quoted in Wald 2002, 144).

While the music's sonic and verbal messages may provide young listeners with some sense of empowerment, narcocorrido opponents on both sides of the border are concerned about this sort of nationalist display: they feel that the narco attitude further contributes to an already widespread stereotypical image of the Mexican as a criminal. Indeed, narcocorridos' wide acceptance among a public not directly involved in drug trafficking had alerted the Mexican authorities in the 1980s already. Sinaloa was one of the first states to put partial censorship policies for the protection of children and adolescents in place. In light of an ever-growing production and accessibility of music and

music videos with exacerbated violent content, several states have issued new decrees to curb the problems of the drug war on a cultural level (Burgos 2012, 32–33).

Governor López Valdez's recent strike against narco-music, however, has taken the debate to another level: he claims that banning the music from public life prevents crimes, increases public security, and encourages positive attitudes among youths. He understands his cultural policies as a national strategy to combat drug trafficking. Therefore, cultural policy has become an instrument to censor cultural manifestations associated with drug trafficking activities, which could potentially tarnish the state's image (Burgos 2016, 3-4). Such policies have stigmatized, persecuted, and labeled regional musicians as promoters of drug culture. Thus, while the country's powerful drug trafficking organizations are spreading violence and fear and have infiltrated federal and local institutions economically and politically, narcocorridos are portrayed as the real "enemy of the state" (Valenzuela et al. 2017, 72–73).

On the other hand, narcocorridos are not simply people's chronicles that transgress, desecrate, or question the official view, as José Manuel Valenzuela (2002) suggests in his book on the genre. Rather, they are intrinsically linked to complex ideas about nationhood based on different life experiences (Simonett 2006). Censorship of narco-music vividly demonstrates that "claims against popular music are not just about music. They are also expressions of political, cultural, and social disagreements over images, meaning, and behavior. They are contests for control over public images and expressions" (Gray 1989, 143).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

As Biddle and Knights (2007, 14) state, "popular musics can productively open out the national not simply as the space in which nationalist ideology located itself, but also as a 'territory' that has symbolic force beyond its parochial-political needs. This territory is fluid, open-ended and productively unstable in its encounter with 'real' nation-states, as well as with 'real' national and nationalist aspirations." Since the signing of NAFTA in 1994 Mexico has fully embraced neoliberal practices and ideologies that shape its economic development. The rise of new forms of communication and cultural circulation made possible by digital media among Mexicans on both sides of the border has challenged ideas of fixed musical identities and styles bound to specific social groups or cultural areas. Community is constructed, lived, and expressed at a local level. But as the narcocorrido phenomenon so demonstrates, "the new power of the imagination in the fabrication of social lives is inescapably tied up with images, ideas, and opportunities that come from elsewhere, often moved around by the vehicles of mass media" (Appadurai 1991, 199).

Mexican regional music has come to interrogate the very 'Mexicanness' of Mexican music, as a Californian musician concludes:

> It is championed by *pochos*, people born here [in the U.S.] and not there [in Mexico] . . . they grew up here, and just because their family is from there, and because it's fashionable right now, they [claim to be] from there. I think these are their fantasies, illusions they try to live out [in this music].[37]

Adolfo Valenzuela of Twiins Enterprises, on the other hand, thinks that "it's cool to see regular people go to a club to feel narco for that night" (featured in Schwarz 2013). El Komander, hailed by the Las Vegas International Press Association as "Supreme Hispanic Pride" (*Máximo Orgullo Hispano*, Univision 2016) for his outstanding artistic career, recently released the song "El méxicoamericano" (The Mexican American, 2017) in an attempt to capture these Mexican-American fantasies. The music video presents clips of a festive atmosphere, supposedly somewhere in Sinaloa, where "good-quality cocaine" (*un pericón de lavado*), "icecold beer and marijuana" (*forjadito de hierba*) abound. The singer's T-shirt and baseball cap featuring Culiacán's league team, Los Tomateros, make visual his Sinaloan Mexican stance while, courted by scantly-dressed ladies, he sings to a bouncy banda-norteño tune. In the idealized festive ambiance of the song he "is awaiting his cousin" and a "gorgeous light-skinned girl" to arrive by a propeller plane on a dirt road, images that prompt an association with clandestine drug trafficking. Indeed, the cousin brings "a Colombian detail" (cocaine), a gift from Bogotá. The singer's conclusion: "It's more relaxed here [in Mexico] than there with the *güeros* [slang for white-Americans]. Cousin, let's step aside to pull the AK-47!" Within a couple of months El Komander's music video had been watched by close to three million people on different internet channels.

Since its emergence in the 1980s, the music video had been one of the most significant developments in the field of popular music. In the following decades, global computer networks and modern technology have expanded the circulation and accessibility of this medium. The internet has enabled artists to bypass the vetting of music and media industries while appealing to wide audiences. These new forms of music production, circulation, and consumption have made the altered movement a success among a young generation of Mexicans and Mexican Americans. Ángel Del Villar, founder of DEL Records, recalled:

> young people with a musical concept different from the Regional Mexican genre post their music directly on the internet . . . Many young people play their guitars at home and upload their videos to YouTube . . . Their way of composing, singing and performing instruments was a drastic change in the genre (interviewed by Garza 2016).

Spanish-language radio stations had broadcasted narcocorridos for many years, but the ones circulating on the internet were different in style. Twiins co-owner Adolfo Valenzuela remembers that it was "a style, a movement that had no name, nothing. It was simply there. It was viable, it was happening. Artists were starting to come out of it" (interviewed by El Llanito 2010). This was the moment when savvy music entrepreneurs began to invest in the movement.

At the presentation of the fourth album in the *Movimiento Alterado* series in 2010 Twiins credited the young people for 'spreading the virus': "The different social networks helped young people to create and develop a new way of life never seen before," Valenzuela said (quoted in Burgos 2016, 14). "This is more than just producing music for us. This is a big political movement. We have *a voice* now as *a people*, and we hope that our music can help make the voice be heard" (Omar Valenzuela quoted in Kun 2006). While this may sound empowering for a politically marginalized and disenfranchised population in the United States, the relationship between music and politics, as we have shown in this chapter, is much more complex than that.

Narcocorridos, specifically YouTube narcocorrido videos, are aesthetic productions generated from 'the margins.' As symbolic responses to experienced realities, the content of this genre is constantly adapting to changing historical, political, economic and cultural conditions. Although the genre has recently been absorbed into the transnational circuit of popular music production, young people across the border continue to be the active, critical, and creative actors in its production, diffusion, and consumption. Narcocorridos reflect their experiences, expectations, practices, and ways of positioning themselves in transnational contexts ravaged by violence and drug trafficking, thus articulating what 'being Mexican' means to them.

NOTES

1. This collaborative chapter is based on ethnographic fieldwork in Sinaloa and in California. Simonett began her ethnomusicological research on narco-music as a transnational phenomenon in 1994 while studying ethnomusicology at the University of Los Angeles, California. Burgos Dávila began his fieldwork in Sinaloa in 2008 when he was a Ph.D. candidate in social psychology at the Universitat Autònoma de

Barcelona, Spain, and continued his research as a postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Ethnic Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, from 2014 to 2015.

2. Ariel Camacho (1992–2015) was a Mexican singer-songwriter known for his soft, nasal Sinaloan 'country' voice—similar to that of the legendary Chalino Sánchez—and his particular style of playing the *bajo sexto*, a type of Mexican guitar with six double courses of strings. He is also recognized for popularizing the Sinaloan 'sierreño' (Sierra) style in the United States. Accompanied by César Sánchez on guitar, the two guitarists nicely harmonized their voices, accentuated by a fast tuba bass line played by Omar Burgos. With only three members, the band is the smallest unit to which one can reduce a *banda sinaloense* and a *norteño* ensemble and still sound typically 'sinaloense' (see Simonett 2001b, 139–140). Norteño features a core instrumentation of button accordion and bajo sexto. Banda sinaloense is a full-fledged brass band consisting of eleven to sixteen musicians.

3. Original text: *Es música de la sierra. Y este género que ha sido, es y será del pueblo y para el pueblo tiene un nuevo patrón . . . que con su juventud, talento y agallas hoy por hoy ha logrado convertirse en el nuevo amo y señor del corrido . . . Su destreza y poder musical son tan altos como los pinos . . . La música campirana tiene un nuevo patrón . . . México y Estados Unidos se le cuadran como el Rey de Corazones: Ariel Camacho. Y no viene solo, viene bien escoltado por Los Plebes del Rancho . . . Tome bien la nota, la instrucción es muy sencilla, a bailar, a tomar y a cantar todo mundo, con todo el poder sinaloense. Aquí está, Ariel Camacho . . . Ariel, Ariel Camacho y Los Plebes del Rancho . . . Ariel, Ariel Camacho y Los Plebes del Rancho* (Burgos, field notes, Palladium Night Club, Sunnyvale, California, January 15, 2015).

4. Severiano Briseño registered "El sinaloense" in 1945 in his name. According to various Sinaloan musicians, however, this piece was composed by Enrique Sánchez Alonso "El negrumo" (from Culiacán) who later sold the composition to Briseño. This was not an unusual praxis among composers at that time (Simonett 2004, 158).

5. Although Camacho's untimely death at the age of twenty-two may have had some impact on the surge in streaming, sales, and radio airplay of "El karma," it is nevertheless astonishing that the song is one of only a few of the regional Mexican genre that have reached the top of Hot Latin Songs (Mendizabal 2015).

6. We have shown in detail in a recent article on *música tribal* how these new channels of communication change music production and consumption (see Simonett and Burgos 2015, 14–16).

7. Marisela Vallejo (Chalino's widow), interview by Simonett, Los Angeles, 1996.

8. For a summary of Chalino's life and work, see Meza (2014).

9. See "El mito del Pela Vacas, Chalino Sánchez" in Ramírez-Pimienta (2011, 159–90); "The Ballad of Chalino Sánchez" in Quinones (2001, 11–29).

10. Mariachi scholar Jesús Jáuregui (2007, 309–10) argued similarly that mariachi has become overshadowed by genres from the U.S.-Mexico borderlands that are "más coherentes con la lógica de la globalización, y en las que se manifiestan las nuevas

identidades que se producen bajo su influencia: identidades más flexibles, híbridas, más móviles."

11. Burgos, field notes, November 23, 2014.

12. *Sí señor, yo soy de rancho; soy de botas y a caballo*. Half a year after "Soy de rancho" (2014) was launched by Twiins Culiacán TV, it peaked at #8 on Billboard's Hot Latin Songs (https://www.billboard.com/music/el-komander/chart-history/latin-songs/song/812058); the song has since received 97 million hits.

13. *Alterado* in colloquial language means upset, deranged or infuriated. It can also mean to be under the influence of drugs. The music productions of the alterado movement are called *pura enfermedad* (pure disease).

14. A representative example of this style is the music video "Leyenda M1" by El Komander, a corrido about the legendary Manuel Torres Félix, aka M1 (1958–2012), a high-ranking leading member of the Sinaloa cartel.

15. For a concise definition of the corrido genre, see Simonett (2014, 548–51). For an in-depth analysis of a contemporary corrido tradition in Mexico, see McDowell (2000). Early recordings can be heard on the double-album *Corridos y Tragedias de la Frontera*, which includes a 167-page commentary in English, with discography, photographs, and song lyrics in Spanish with English translation, by Chris Strachwitz and Philip Sonnichsen.

16. DEL Records celebrated the appearance of the new Los Plebes del Rancho, highlighting their bucolic Sinaloan roots: *Los miembros de la banda vienen de un México de sol, de desierto, de la sierra. Llegan con la música de su tierra en su máxima y más auténtica expresión – una gran agrupación cargada con todo el misterio campirano y el talento desenfrenado de su Sinaloa* ("Del negociante" [Of The Dealer]; half a year later the site showed 106 million views; in September 2018, the number of views had grown to 380 million).

17. Ramírez-Pimienta elaborated on this phenomenon in the chapter on "El mito del Pela Vacas, Chalino Sánchez" (2011, 159–190): *Con sangre cien por ciento mexicana* means "of one hundred percent Mexican blood." Burgos, a native of Sinaloa's capital Culiacán, felt that during his fieldwork in northern California, interviewees often paid him respect for being an insider with 'natural' knowledge.

18. *Perrón*, which literally means 'big dog,' became a slang word among young *Mexicanos* (Mexican Americans) in the 1990s, describing anything superlative. According to Gabriel Francisco Kleriga, founder and owner of the music fanzine *Perrona* (literally 'big bitch'), the slang originated in Guadalajara and was soon appropriated by Los Angeles's Mexican youths as an attribute to the narco-subculture (interview by Simonett, Mazatlán, 2004).

19. Vidal and Damián (Los Plebes Eztilo Violento), interview by Burgos, Oakland, California, 2015.

20. *Lo que empezó en el 2011 como una marca dedicada al uso de la barba y el estilo regional hoy ha evolucionado a algo mucho más allá gracias a sus seguidores que adoptaron la marca como parte de su personalidad*, https://www.barbanortena.com (accessed January 15, 2017).

21. The saying is applicable to a thing or person that resists but ends up yielding.

22. The film was honored with an IDA (International Documentary Association) Creative Recognition Award for Best Music.

23. Johny (Nueva Mentalidad), interview by Burgos, San Jose, California, 2015.

24. According to narco-music promoter Joel Vázquez (Twiins Enterprises), featured in Schwarz (2013).

25. Enigma Norteño's corrido "El Chapo Guzmán" (2015) had generated ten million views within one year after it was posted on YouTube.

26. Interview by Burgos, San Jose, California 2015.

27. *Buchón* is a regionalism used in Mexico to refer in a derogatory way to the peasants of Sinaloa who are involved in drug trafficking. The word derives from a brand of whiskey (Buchanan). It is now commonly used to describe the kind of extravagant material culture that drug trafficking has generated. For *tribal* music see Simonett and Burgos (2015).

28. Mexicans' hope in their new president, Enrique Peña Nieto, to combat drug trafficking and organized crime and ensure citizen security quickly dwindled as the country's institutional failures keep staggering (Redacción Proceso 2013). Beleaguered by charges of corruption, the federal government has been unable to enforce the rule of law. By 2014, a third of the country's population considered the lack of security as the most important problem facing the nation: over 40% knew of sales of illegal drugs in their neighborhood and 23% were aware of a murder that occurred in their neighborhood (Cohen et al. 2017).

29. "Sanguinarios del M1" is a praise song to a leading member of the Sinaloa cartel, Manuel Torres Félix, also known as M1 (a firearm). Half a year after the song came out 100,000 copies had been sold. The official music video, "Movimiento Alterado—Sanguinarios del M1," was uploaded on YouTube by Twiins Culiacán TV in 2011 and has since been seen forty million times. For comments on the alterado movement see Redacción Animal Político (2012), Redacción SinEmbargo (2013), and Denselow (2012).

30. Also on the list of winners were Ariel Camacho y Los Plebes del Rancho ("Artist of the Year, New" and "Regional Mexican Song of the Year").

31. For example, in "El General" (The General) by Teodoro Bello on Los Tigres's Grammy-nominated 1997 album *Jefe de jefes* (The Boss of Bosses).

32. *Entre Carlos y Raúl eran los dueños de un circo: Carlos era el domador, el hermano más chico, Raúl el coordinador, con hambre de hacerse rico*. In an interview with Elijah Wald, Los Tigres's leader, Jorge Hernández, explained how the song came into being: "one day I told [Jesse Armenta]: you are falling behind, you have to work. I am going to give you an idea. I want you to do me a favor. Get on it, get sources. Right now there is an alarming problem in Mexico [with] the politicians. Buy all of the newspapers, learn about the Salinas issue, the president. Get good source material and write me a story about the politicians, because I will go into the recording studio next month and now is the time to record these stories. Because right now the president just signed a treaty, supposedly to give us more freedom of expression, and we can sing what we are allowed by the Secretariat of Foreign Relations. We are a bit more open, let's see what happens. (*Un día le dije [a Jesse Armenta]: Te estas quedando atrás tú, tienes que trabajar, te voy a dar una idea, quiero que me hagas*

un favor, ponte, documéntate ahorita hay un problema muy grave en México, los políticos; cómprate todos los periódicos, agárrate como está la cuestión de Salinas, el Presidente, documéntate bien y hazme una historia de los políticos, porque yo voy a grabar el mes que entra y ahorita es el momento de que grabemos esas historias, porque ahorita acaba de firmar el Presidente de la República un tratado donde dice que nos da un poquito más de libre expresión y podemos cantar lo que la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores nos da permiso de cantar, estamos un poquito más abiertos, vamos a ver qué pasa, a ver cómo nos sale) Http://www.elijahwald.com/jhernan.html (accessed September 1, 2018).

33. After having served ten years of his twenty-seven-year sentence in prison, the conviction was overturned in 2005 and Raúl Salinas was released.

34. *Hasta que llegue otro circo / y otra vez la misma transa.*

35. Espinosa (2011). The governor has long been plagued by accusations of corruption and links to organized crime (Gómez 2013). For a detailed analysis of the impact of narco-music on Sinaloan youths, see Burgos (2011).

36. According to the band's own website, "About Los Tigres del Norte," http://www.lostigresdelnorte.com/english/about.html (accessed September 5, 2018).

37. Interview by Burgos, Oakland, California, 2015.

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