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Abstract
This dissertation is a theoretical treatment of the history of Latin American music in the twentieth century. Its central claim is twofold. First, the progressive development of a Latin American music was made possible and meaningful by the region's economic, political and cultural peripherality vis-à-vis the (neo-)colonial metropole: Western Europe and the United States. That peripherality was manifest as an attempt to find in Latin American particularity the grounds for universal significance. Reading this attempt in Kantian terms of conceptual determination, it appears as an aesthetics. Given the failure of imported concepts to adequately schematize the stuff of Latin American experience, that which was native to the region could only be determined reflectively in light of sense-data alone. Throughout the last century, musical compositions, genres, and practices sought to complete that process of determination, or else transcend it altogether. The second part of my claim is that those musical responses to the aesthetic problem of Latin American peripherality were ultimately consumed by the very duality of universality and particularity they sought to overcome. They share an aporetic structure proper to the eruption of geographical difference onto the historical plane.

The dissertation revolves around three case studies. The first focuses on the composer Carlos Chavez, making perspicuous the stakes of his stylistic development in light of the peasant revolution of 1910. The second traces the intellectual history of the musical gauchesca, understanding this genre as turning on the contradictions of Argentine modernity in its identification with song and Nature as such. Finally, the last case study takes up Chilean Nueva Canción as it appeared in the years before the 1973 military coup. It represented a musical movement that sought out a place for aesthetics in the context of a socialist revolution. These three cases form a counterpoint to a philosophical discourse on the history of Latin America - one that demonstrates the shape and import of an idealist musicology.

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MUSIC, AESTHETICS, PERIPHERALITY:

NOTES ON A PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY
OF LATIN AMERICAN MUSIC (1910-1973)

Stephan Hammel

A DISSERTATION in Music

Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania
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Lastly, I must express utter gratitude to my family. They have never once doubted my eventual success, even when faced with ample cause. Whatever is good in me was handed down.
ABSTRACT

MUSIC, AESTHETICS, PERIPHERALITY:
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OF LATIN AMERICA MUSIC (1910-1973)

Stephan Hammel
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This dissertation is a theoretical treatment of the history of Latin American music in the twentieth century. It’s central claim is twofold. First, the progressive development of a Latin American music was made possible and meaningful by the region’s economic, political and cultural peripherality vis-à-vis the (neo-)colonial metropole: Western Europe and the United States. That peripherality was manifest as an attempt to find in Latin American particularity the grounds for universal significance. Reading this attempt in Kantian terms of conceptual determination, it appears as an aesthetics. Given the failure of imported concepts to adequately schematize the stuff of Latin American experience, that which was native to the region could only be determined reflectively in light of sense-data alone. Throughout the last century, musical compositions, genres, and practices sought to complete that process of determination, or else transcend it altogether. The second part of my claim is that those musical responses to the aesthetic problem of Latin American peripherality were ultimately consumed by the very duality of universality and particularity.
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The dissertation revolves around three case studies. The first focuses on the composer Carlos Chavez, making perspicuous the stakes of his stylistic development in light of the peasant revolution of 1910. The second traces the intellectual history of the musical *gauchesca*, understanding this genre as turning on the contradictions of Argentine modernity in its identification with song and Nature as such. Finally, the last case study takes up Chilean Nueva Canción as it appeared in the years before the 1973 military coup. It represented a musical movement that sought out a place for aesthetics in the context of a socialist revolution. These three cases form a counterpoint to a philosophical discourse on the history of Latin America - one that demonstrates the shape and import of an idealist musicology.
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In a 1977 essay called “América Latina en la confluencia de coordenadas históricas y su repercusión en la música,” the Cuban novelist, music critic and intellectual, Alejo Carpentier, argues that the history of music of Europe differs from that of Latin America. While the former follows a traceable line of development from the beginning of musical notation in the ninth century to the avant gardes of the twentieth, Latin American musical development was non-linear, disjunct. European music history, he claims, enjoys such clarity and coherence that even those composers whose more recent gestures to break convention in favor of thoroughly modern sonorous expression could not help but make explicit reference to history. Here Carpentier has in mind Schoenberg and Stravinsky, the twin pillars of twentieth century composition, who both seek some kind of historical precedent for their innovations. Schoenberg, for example, overtly places himself in a culminating position with respect to the arc of central European musical development which has led to his systematic critique of harmony with what the Cuban critic calls historical ‘necessity.’ By contrast, the Latin American composer cannot tie himself to any such narrative. “Cuando nos enfrentamos con la música latinoamericana, en cambio, nos encontramos con que ésta no se desarrolla en función de los mismos valores y hechos culturales, obedeciendo a fenómenos, aportaciones, impulsos, debidos a factores de crecimiento, pulsiones anímicas, estratos raciales, injertos y trasplantes, que resultan insólitos para quien pretenda aplicar determinados métodos al análisis
The claim is that the relationship of European culture to that of the former colonies in America is not merely one of contrasting histories, but of opposed - perhaps even complimentary - historicities. The content of past musical events, the relevant figures, technical processes and stylistic tendencies, are no doubt distinct in Latin America. Carpentier, however, goes further, pointing out that the course of European music emerges from a certain Reason (at one moment even suggesting the term ‘dialectical’). On the other hand, the Latin American composer - Carpentier’s example is Heitor Villa-Lobos - appears spontaneously, without precedent, without necessity. In this argument, historical spontaneity, the marker of a historicity proper to Latin America, is the result of the conceptual duality of the native and the imported. Every musical product which is not simply in Latin American but of Latin America confronts this duality and rehearses the conflict between them. Ruled by the dualism, Latin American music history is denied historical necessity and closure. The divide that rules musical development at the level of history also determines the structure and meaning of music at the level of the individual composition. Whatever the role of ‘nationalism’ or ‘folklore’ in a Latin American work, “se percibe siempre un dejo nacional, más o menos marcado, tras del medio de expresión escogido.” This is not strictly speaking a formal observation: “En partituras al parecer ‘cosmopolitas’ por el aspecto

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exterior, corre sangre de tal o cual país de nuestro continente. Es, aquí, un modo de usar la percusión; es, allá, el impulso rítmico; es, más allá, el asomo de una escala, de una cadencia característica, de una sonoridad peculiar; o bien, el ‘collage’ revelador, la índole del trazo, el humorismo del decir, la melancolía de un clima.”

Lest one mistake this as positing some kind of essence for Latin American music, a special substance working behind the scenes of history to lend coherence to a musical repertory, it is worth recalling that it is precisely a lack of coherence that Carpentier is attempting to highlight. Unable to decide its constitutive conceptual dialectic, Latin American music cannot help but bear the trace of being, somehow, out of place.

What makes Carpentier a particularly valuable source is that unlike nearly all other writers on this subject, he presents the material in question in terms of a philosophy of history. He is not simply concerned with a reconstruction of past events for its own sake, but the conceptual mechanisms of art in history which have repercussions in multiple registers. In doing this, he finds himself in a line of thinking about art that has its roots in a philosophical tradition going back to German Romanticism. While he is far less ambitious than Schelling in his Lectures on the Philosophy of Art of Hegel in his Lectures on Aesthetics, the key move made in both of these grander tomes is the same, namely, the separation of the work of art from the concepts individual works both employ and determine. Just as there is a difference between Greek tragedies and the tragic, or between the Bildungsroman and the bourgeois subject, there is a distinction to be made

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2 Ibid. p. 9.
between Latin American compositions and an opposition and identity, proper to colonality, of the native and the imported. The mining of artworks, in all their materiality, for conceptual determination is just what signals a philosophy of history of art.

The present project follows in this tradition, but by virtue of the peculiarities of the subject matter, must distinguish itself at the level of method. Taking seriously Carpentier’s insistence that Latin American music does not determine, nor is determined by, a single developing concept such as the tragic, but rather by a conceptual opposition/identification constantly rehearsed in various guises, what follows is not a successive history. Rather, I pick up specific episodes in the history of Latin American music and distill the conceptual dynamic at play. In this way, I hope to make better understood, not just the stuff of Latin American music, but something of its stakes and meaning.

This chapter stands apart in that it lays out a theoretical thesis about the historical progress and nature of the conceptual duet in effect - “que rige” in Carpentier’s language - in Latin American music history. Building on the commitments of nationalism in the region, I outline a theoretical matrix that ties the contradictions of regional dependency to the historical possibility of conceptual determination. Multiple dialectical pairs manifest themselves in what follows: national particularity/cultural universality, folk modality/Western tonality, place/space, center/periphery, independence/dependence. By treating all as versions of one another and of Carpentier’s contradictory logic of the native
and the imported, I avoid positing a ‘master’ dialectic from which the rest follow genetically, as it were. The point is to shed light on the aporetic structure of Latin American music history as such. The New World specificity of the aesthetic is found in precisely the constituent gap(s) in this structure.

**The Stakes of Musical Nationalism**

In a Forward written for the 1972 edition of his 1945 *Music of Latin America*, still the most ambitious English-language monograph on the topic, Nicolas Slonimsky lamented the passing away of musical nationalism in Latin America: “Just as adolescent Americans of European national extractions feel reluctant to use the language of their parents, many young Latin American composers, having tested the intellectual wine of avant-garde techniques, abandoned their national allegiance in favor of more refined, more scientific cosmopolitan trends.”\(^3\) For the Russian musician, turning away from national rootedness “disregards the loss of collective originality and the concomitant increase of stylistic entropy inherent in the abdication of national art.” “Even when a Latin American composer exploits ethic resources,” he continues, “native melorhythms become morphologically or topologically altered, resulting in a coded message which can be deciphered only by obtaining the key to these latter-day enigma variations.” Slonimsky’s disappointment could be chalked up to conservative taste if, indeed, his taste was conservative. His concert tour of Latin America that inspired the book included a performance of Schoenberg’s Op. 33a

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at every stop. He partially credits himself with giving the foreign musicians he met on his trip that intoxicating ‘taste of avant-garde techniques.’ There is more than a little irony in a Russian émigré to the United States on tour in South America writing with disdain of cosmopolitanism.

There is, however, sense to be made of Slonimsky’s sentiments. The cultivation of ‘scientific,’ international music in the developing world forecasted the exhaustion of the bourgeois nationalist project as such. A great deal had changed in the region since the end of the Second World War. The form nationalism had taken since the nineteenth century had given way to its socialist counterpart from Santiago de Cuba to Santiago de Chile. The threat of Soviet influence in the Americas had become received wisdom for politicians in the United States and it was by that point undeniable that the battlegrounds of the Cold War were to be found in countries like Guatemala and Nicaragua. In sum, the nationalism that Slonimsky was so excited by in the 1940’s was now hard to distinguish from a fantasy of the hotel gift shop. Some of the heads of state he takes great pride in meeting or communicating with while in the region were long deposed or overthrown by the early 1970’s. While he does not say so explicitly, the aging pianist’s reflections strongly imply that the project he undertook three decades earlier had inadvertently taken stock of a relatively brief moment in music history, one that had evaporated because the concepts it relied on for its intelligibility - national essence, authentic primitivism, bourgeois cultural autonomy - had either been discredited or made irrelevant.
It is, in fact, as largely unintelligible that musical nationalism presents itself today. Slonimsky’s concerns appear quaint at best. It is not simply that few, if any, composers today consciously attempt to bring about a distinctly Mexican, or Peruvian, or Chilean art music: the impetus can no longer really be felt. What compelled such an ideal is mysterious; and this is so even while the nation-state persists and continues to throw off cultural avatars. Globalization has won out over the force of nationalism in contemporary music.

There is, therefore, some recovery work to be done. Nationalism, while not in any sense presently absent, no longer enjoys normative force in Latin American art music (the “world music” market being a wholly different matter). This is to say that it can no longer be the kind of reason for composition it was for most of the last century. Nationalism is also no longer an obviously legitimate standard by which to judge a composition. The term is far from meaningless, but its referent’s meaningfulness is changed. At issue is musical nationalism’s amounting to something, mattering. And to the extent that a concept’s mattering is a part of that concept, musical nationalism itself is changed, perhaps even decayed. As such, recovering the concept involves an archeology in the sense of ἀρχή, origin and power. First, the concept of nationalism proper has be to isolated and then explicated with respect to its manifestation in Latin America. Second, nationalism has to be framed as an aesthetic problem so that it might tell us something about music.
Nationalism as Modern

Perhaps the most important thing to point out about nationalism is its modernity. In Eric Hobsbawm’s view, it is “the basic characteristic of the modern nation and everything connected with it.”4 The concept as well as the ideas and practices commonly associated with it are all of relatively recent vintage. This is a fact necessarily denied by nationalism itself. Nations present themselves as quintessential first causes, inherently reducible to essential properties and underwritten by substance outside of history. There will always, it has been said, be an England. While it is rather easy to deny that today’s nations, often simply conflated with nation-states, are somehow metaphysically substantial, it is significantly harder to pinpoint the historical birth of the nation. To some extent, it depends on what the historian’s criteria for nationhood are. The candidates, however, are all modern: German Romanticism, the French Revolution, the English Civil War, and of course, Latin American independence.5 In terms of temporal position alone, then, nationalism’s modernity is secure. The nations recognizable as such are native to a world after the breakdown of absolutism and under the sway of political and economic liberalism.

It is, in fact, only in the terms that classical liberalism describes that contemporary nationalism can be interpreted. The sovereignty of the individual is grafted onto groups. The multiple aspects of a nation that are called on to stand in for its identity, whether linguistic or geographical, cultural or political, are

5 I have borrowed this list from Craig J. Calhoun, Nationalism (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).
aspects of an object assumed to exist independently of these groups. Ernest Renan makes this point in his celebrated essay on the nation concept: “A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle.” With a national soul comes unity and independence. Actually existing political independence is nothing without its spiritual principle. He goes on to write that “the nation, like the individual, is the culmination of a long past of endeavors, sacrifice, and devotion.” Nations have something like personal histories. A world of nations is a world of peoples and places existing in themselves and apart from others, just as individuals ideally do in Smith and Ricardo’s Robinsonades.

This brings us up against the most significant aspect of nationalism’s modernity for our purposes: its relation to the principle of autonomy. Indeed, nationalism is just a special kind of autonomy, one that extends beyond the individual person. Arguably the most influential recent analysis of nationalism’s concept is offered by Benedict Anderson. He defines nationalism as the reproduction of the nation and the nation as an “imagined community.” He emphasizes three features. The first is the ideal nature of nationalism: it is “imagined.” By this, Anderson does not mean to downplay the “reality” of the nation or nationalism, but rather means to distinguish it from a concrete interpersonal relationship. “All communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined” in Anderson’s sense.

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7 Ibid., p. 19.
The key feature of imagining here is its ability to conceive of generalities. Specific instances that are encountered in practical situations can through the imagination be understood in terms of their kind. To the extent that nationalism has normative force, this aspect is essential. The second feature Anderson mentions is that of limitedness. All nations are communal, but they are nonetheless necessarily particular. “No nation,” he writes, “imagines itself coterminous with mankind.” Nationhood is a kind, but not an only kind. If this is true, then the concept of the nation is in troubling contradiction with itself. It cannot both be substantial and relative. As will be demonstrated throughout what follows, this is precisely the contradiction that drives the history of nationalism. Anderson’s last structural feature is nationalism’s communal character. It’s parts - the persons of the nation - are homogenous inasmuch as they are of the nation. Nations are interpersonal rather than personal, to be sure, but Anderson is right to highlight the abstraction at work here. Nations depend on having members, but not on specific members. There is no member, for example, without whom the nation would disappear. In fact, the disappearance of the Spanish king into Napoleon’s custody was used as a justification by Latin American advocates of independence for removing authority to the ‘people’ of the various prospective nation-states.9

We can now take from Anderson’s three features our own set of conceptual determinants. The nation is both “imagined” and a “community,” and both of

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9 Enrique Dussel insists that this political move represents one of Spanish America’s first contributions to philosophy.
these are abstractions. The nation’s being “limited” names its particularity. Nationalism, then, is a particularizing abstraction and, therefore, intriguingly paradoxical.

If above is found a brief analysis of nationalism as an ideology, its complement would treat of nationalism’s material and social efficient causes and contexts. Ernest Gellner interprets the relationship among nationalism’s ideas and its, in this case economic, material context as one of strict determination:

> We do not understand the range of options available to industrial society, and perhaps we never shall; but we understand some of its essential concomitants. The kind of cultural homogeneity demanded by nationalism is one of them, and we had better make our peace with it. It is not the case [...] that nationalism imposes homogeneity; it is rather that a homogeneity imposed by objective, inescapable imperative eventually appears on the surface in the form of nationalism.\(^\text{10}\)

Gellner’s position derives from his analysis of the growth of industrial societies from agricultural ones. The diversity found in the latter must be stamped out in order to fulfill the economic needs of the former. It is economic determinism rather pure and simple. He even refers to a ‘surface,’ which is his analog for Marxist ‘superstructure.’

There are good reasons to distance ourselves from Gellner on this point as Anderson and others explicitly do. There is, however, a kernel of truth to his conclusion. Nationalism is a bourgeois phenomenon. This is not to say that only the industrial bourgeoisie authentically supported or benefited from ideological nationalism; in fact, it was often a powerful tool of Left populism. The point is,

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rather, that only with the emergence of the capitalist world could nationalist ideology take on its form. A Lukacsian move is required to avoid Gellner’s conclusion without dismissing his insight. Without either ideology or economics determining the other as if from outside, we can understand these as parts of a whole. They are as complementary parts of a unified historical movement. The conceptual framework of ideology, however contradictory or apparently counterfactual, only exists inasmuch as it is socially effective and can refer to the material world of natural things. Nationalism is mediated by the people, geography and languages it pulls into its framework. The character of each nationalism is marked by this mediation. French nationalism is nothing without its bourgeois revolution and Russian nationalism disintegrates without its historical rural peasantry. At the same time, without the ideological frame, none of the brute matter of the national holds together as itself. The Russian rural peasant becomes nothing but a rural peasant and rather abstract.

It is already clear from this crude example that the bourgeois character of nationalism is not seen in its ability to give meaning to the decidedly capitalist aspects of the world. An immense diversity of things is interpreted in terms of their national status. Indeed, in principle, all things are susceptible to this interpretation. It is often pre-capitalist life that is held as typically national. Think here of the characteristic novel. The justificatory nature of nationalism is ultimately its reflection of bourgeois life. The national grounds aspects of social life in terms of a purposive relation to a concept. In other words they are given something like final causes. The need for this justification arises from the
fragmentation of a preexisting and hitherto undisputed order of things. With the rise of capitalist society and its ideological counterpart, the European Enlightenment, autonomous justification became a pressing concern. With Lukacs, we read this transformation as a result of the alienation endemic to the commodity form.\(^\text{11}\) Emergent with capitalism is the making commensurate of naturally distinct things: this yardage of linen for so many bushels of wheat, this much work for this much bread. This requires the introduction of a third thing common to both objects, inherent in them such that it can be made a point of contact between them. The good Marxist knows this as value.\(^\text{12}\) Each potential commodity has a value and this quality must, in turn, be made quantitative such that exchange can occur. The labor theory of value classically holds this to be “socially necessary labor time.”

Noteworthy is the abstraction here. The natural thing is divorced from a part of itself and bound with another. Commodities, however, cannot be traded at their value. If one does not dispense with the labor theory, then there are no meta-valuative criteria with which to decide on a price. Who is to decide in an instant, and for every instant, what the socially necessary labor time required to produce any given product is? Price, then, the particular, cannot accurately reflect value, or at least can only do so accidentally. This is the gesture of particularization. Particularization here is, as it is in nationalism, expressive and necessarily unsatisfactory. It is always open to doubt in a way the simple concept


\(^{12}\) The labor theory of value as a model for the abstractive nature of commodities is most clearly articulated by Marx in the *Grundrisse*.\(^\text{13}\)
of value cannot be without exchange itself collapsing. Unsatisfactoriness and doubt will be seen below to be at the heart of the properly aesthetic problem of nationalism. For the moment, though, the argument above is meant to show that the ideological structure of nationalism at its most basic theoretical level is reflective and expressive of an economic reality ‘on the ground,’ as it were. Gellner is right in pointing out the bearing of the material on nationalism even if the material is not so clearly divorced from the conceptual as it at first seems it ought to be. Commodities, like nations, are constituted by ideas along with iron, wood, flags, and standing armies.

To be clear, the universalization/particularization scheme sketched here does not come with any metaphysical or even partly transhistorical baggage. The breach between universal categories and the utterly specific material of life is specific to capitalist modernity just as the categories used to explicate it are.

**Latin American Nationalism and Aesthesis**

The story so far would seem to complicate the assertion found in Anderson and here that Latin American nationalism is prior to other forms, not only chronologically (although there is a strong argument to be made here) but conceptually, which is to say that it is paradigmatic for nationalism as such. After all, if there is a theme to historiography of Latin America from the eighteenth century until today it is the idea of persistence: things have a way of remaining in effect. The historian Jeremy Adelman has, indeed, named this ‘the problem of
Social and historical theses from the Black Legend that allowed eighteenth century British propagandists to frame their neo-colonial incursions into the Spanish American market as emancipatory to current accounts of Latin American underdevelopment have stressed the backward colonial legacy that persisted after the formation of independent states in the region. If it is the case that the ideology of nationalism is tied to the rise of capital and the effects of the Enlightenment, then Latin America could only have belatedly inherited it. The region, after all, yoked by its imperfectly overcome feudalism and Catholic stubbornness, anachronistically stood behind European advancement. A relatively recent trend in Latin American historiography essentially takes this view. It has broken with the once unquestioned account of the wars of independence of the start of the nineteenth century and their legacy through to the twentieth. An account that concentrated on individual heroes (eg. the libertadores San Martín and Bolívar) and a radical break from colonial life and politics has been gradually replaced by a narrative that highlights the continuities between pre- and post-liberation America.

What is it, though, that is meant to have persisted, and to continue to persist? If it is merely a matter of retarded industrialization, then there is an argument to be made. Beyond that, however, the matter is far more complicated. The thesis that much of Latin America remained feudal after Independence is far

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from certain. Indeed, dependency theorists since the 1960’s and 70’s have frustrated this claim. There is no doubt that Latin America participated in the global economic system since its inception. This, of course, is the economic meaning of colonialism. That participation was as capitalist as the global system in which it formed an essential part. It’s peripheral status hardly changes this. Independence did not alter the framework of society overnight, but it did form part of the historical emergence of capitalism. And economic modernity is only one part of a broader modernity, one whose progress encompasses scientific, political and cultural avatars. This progress was, of course, uneven, but not always to the disadvantage of the New World states. As has recently been argued, if republican modernity - the formation of modern representational government as the most rationalized and Enlightened kind of government - is seen as a particular kind of modernity, then the Americas can be understood to have been a vanguard of progress. This is certainly how some nineteenth-century lettered intellectuals conceived their political situation. As Sander writes:

While Europe was embarking on its second great wave of imperial conquest, creating colonialism that would define dominant visions of modernity until this day, [Mexican liberals after fighting off the French invasion] proposed a countermodernity that rejected the right of power and equations of civilization with violence. [...] Linked with this denunciation of force was a conception of modernity in the international arena that downplayed economic, technological, and cultural accomplishments in favor of moral and political benchmarks.

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17 Ibid., p. 113-114.
Rather than take on the separation of economic, technological, and cultural modernity from their republican cousin, we might understand each of these ‘kinds’ of modernity as having been unevenly distributed. This unevenness, though, gave priority to Spanish America in the development of republican nation states.

Each American nationalism, however, traversed its own path to self-determination. If, as argued above, all nationalism depends on the creation of universal abstractions that form the basis of belonging, then they also include a moment at which they are expressed in the form of particular, non-contingent elements in the ‘external’ world. Nations have to be seen and felt, not just thought. This is the force of the concretion in particularity, which introduces the problem of aesthesis. It is in this sense that we ought to understand the nation and its attendant nationalism as an aesthetic problem. The arts, of course, are only one kind of answer to the need for an aesthetic component to nationalism. It was, however, an important and indispensable component. Its fate is what ultimately concerns us here. In the spirit of the concrete, then, we can turn to an example. It will lead us to see that the aesthetic problem of nationalism in Latin America turns on a certain geography and thereby suggests its own analytic frame.

**The Musics Themselves**

In 1926, the Chilean composer Carlos Isamitt Alarcón found himself in the Salle Pleyel. He was nearing forty, but still at the beginning of his creative
development. It would take him another decade to find his way to 12-tone technique and garner some fame as the first of his countrymen to adopt the method. Like so many Latin American musicians, he had crossed the Atlantic to catch up to history and escape the belatedness that was presumed to characterize the cultural development of his half of the New World. It was in this historical ‘present’ of inter-war Paris that Isamitt encountered the work of his former composition teacher, Pedro Humberto Allende. He related the story in a journal article years later:

El delicioso pianista, ligado a la gloria de Debussy y Ravel, Ricardo Viñes ejecutó cuatro Tonadas de Allende en un programa de obras modernas de Hindemith, Rosenthal, Trépard, Ferrond, Fairchild y Koechlin. Creo haber sido el único chileno entre la asistencia repleta de aquella sala y también la única persona que no batió palmas al finalizar la ejecución de las Tonadas. Mi atención estuvo dedicada a captar los menores aspectos de la reacción espontánea del público hacia esas obras tan singularmente nuestras.\textsuperscript{18}

The image is a striking one. An applauding public all looking toward the stage and a lone figure, a foreigner, staring back at them in rapt attention, attempting to make out their spontaneous reactions. His reminiscence makes it clear that he perceives the Chilean tonada as away from home. It is a folk artifact on display. In this way it resembles the stuff of colonial expositions, the kind that allowed Debussy to hear Indonesian gamelan and Gilbert and Sullivan to fantasize about Japanese mikados. At the same time, he is one of the elites invited to witness this

\textsuperscript{18} Carlos Isamitt, “Humberto Allende y su obra” Boletín Latino-Americano de Música 2/2 (1936): 238. [The delectable pianist associated with the glory of Debussy and Ravel, Ricardo Viñes, played four Tonadas by Allende on a program of modern works by Hindemith, Rosenthal, Trépard, Ferrond, Fairchild and Koechlin. I think I was the only chilean in an audience that filled the hall, and also the only person who did not clap when the performance of the Tonadas was over. My attention was engaged in assimilating unto the most minor details the spontaneous reaction of the public to these pieces so singularly ours.]
exotic cultural item. The result is paradoxical. Indeed, he tells the story in the context of an article about Allende. It is marshaled as evidence that the latter had struck upon authentic musical modernity with his chamber tonadas. That modernity carries all the weight of what he himself calls “el camino de la universalidad.” (“the road to universality”).

A number of issues appear to require further elaboration if they are to be taken at all seriously. For example, how are we to understand the status of a musical piece that is at once self-consciously particular to a given place and paving a road to universality? What kind of modernity does Isamitt have in mind when he associates it so closely with universality? And what kind of universality might it be that it linked to modernity? Is that universality merely temporal or does it carry spatial and global geographical implications?

It would be altogether too easy to dismiss Isamitt’s comments here as exaggeration. He is not, of course, an unbiased critic of his teacher’s legacy. Still, how he chose to praise Allende is not arbitrary. In addition, the stakes of universality and modernity in music are hardly low. Both have strong consequences for music’s very intelligibility. Isamitt was no doubt well aware of this when he turned around in the concert hall that night. The applause had confirmed something about the music. As we have seen, however, that something is far from obvious.

A closer look at the pieces in question might shed some light. Allende’s *Doce tonadas de carácter popular chileno* are a set of twelve two-part compositions for piano solo. Each is in its own key and the keys are arranged
sequentially, an overt reference to Bach’s *Well-tempered Clavier*. An image that accompanied their Sénart publication illustrates the intent.

There is, therefore, an implicit association made between Bach’s prelude and fugue forms and the Chilean tonada.

The *tonada* refers to a wide range of musical forms in Chile. The earliest usage of the term occurs during the colonial period, when it referred to song in general. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, the term takes on a more specific meaning. For Allende, it would have referred to a strophic song form.

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19 There are, of course, notable differences between Allende’s systematic exploration of the keys and Bach’s. Allende’s arrangement, for example, begins in C-sharp. Also, the sequence moves by circle of fifths rather than chromatically, a pattern that the Chilean composer might have taken from Chopin’s Preludes. These differences and the fact that there exists a handful of pieces from the nineteenth century that are arranged in this way, however, are not enough to place the reference to Bach in doubt.
whose duple guitar accompaniment contrasted with a triple meter in the voice. Tonadas of this type are harmonically simple, rarely moving further afield than the subdominant. They are also bipartite, consisting of a slow and a fast section often in contrasting modes, a feature Allende used to his advantage. The tonadas that appear in this set pit a slow section in minor against a fast section in major. In this way, Allende is able to get to all twelve major and minor keys. The melodic line in the right hand is often doubled in thirds - a reference to folk performance practice - but all harmonic simplicity is enriched by chromaticism throughout. Finally, the meter shifts often, not just from piece of piece, but over the course of each tonada. The effect, however, is often something like notated rubato. Asymmetrical signatures are here employed to give the pianist a great deal of metrical freedom. The form Allende employs gives him the freedom he requires to explore a wide variety of developmental models while maintaining formal consistency.

With its pliable structure, Allende makes his music into an argument. It is as an argument that we should understand the *Doce tonadas*. They are, like their Baroque progenitors, elements of a proof, at once empirical and theoretical. Allende composed them over a seven-year period (1915-1922) while he was trying his hand at a number of other formal experiments. There is the cello concerto of 1915 and a movement in sonata form from the next year. Both of these were attempts to master classical European forms. He even sent the former to

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20 Here, I follow Christof Wolff, among others, in reading Bach’s compositions as part of European culture’s turn toward Enlightenment empiricism.
Debussy, who made minor corrections to the instrumentation. At the same time, Allende was busy composing pieces such as *La voz de las calles* (1920), which attempted to pin down the contours of a specifically Chilean musical language based on the sound world of everyday life in the rural central valley. *Doce tonadas* is the result of an antiquarian interest on Allende’s part. From about the middle of the nineteenth century onward, the tonada had escaped the attention of Chile’s emergent urban *letrados*. The distinctly Hispanic song form was displaced by melodies from Italian operas, the kind Chileans elites would have increasing access to throughout this period. By the time Allende took up the tonada, it had ceased to be of anything but nostalgic interest, and cultivated solely among rural musicians. It was this very distance from contemporary interest that gave the tonada its Chilean particularity. Allende’s pianistic attempt, then, is a synthesis of the peculiarly Chilean and the classically European, the particular and the universal.

The synthesis is not a mere graft. The Bachian model is not slapped onto a character set featuring a stylized regional song form. The major/minor duality is an element proper to the tonada itself. The gesture Allende makes is to bring that formal feature to the surface of the music. By thematizing a formal element and allowing it to be the basis of the organizational structure of the set, its particularity dissolves into a figure of musical coherence in general. This is just one of a host of abstractions. Mode - and, through mode, key - is abstracted. The removal of the voice forces the vocal, narrative genre into self-reference. The replacement of the guitar by the piano severs the form from the timbral world of
its traditional performance. The effort is one of development. The musical elements latent in the tonada’s structure are made tangible. The ‘absolute’ in Chilean folk music had only to be unlocked to be heard.

Another tool in this process is music writing. This is the abstracting gesture *par excellence*. As ethnomusicologists are quick to point out, inscription implicitly assumes that the music being transcribed is amenable to graphic representation. This is, arguably, far from the case when confronted with music that is native to a purely oral tradition. With the tonada, folk performers have no need of music literacy and there is every reason to assume that the narrative structure of the form points to the general illiteracy of its intended audience. That said, the tonada is the result of Spanish colonial musical culture in which music maintained its identity in notation.

What links these forms of abstraction is not the way in which they go about altering a model, but the way they assume the preexistence of a model to be altered. The treatment of tonality in the set is paradigmatic. The reference to Bach is, no doubt, in some sense historical. It is also the case that common practice tonality (to the extent it can be unproblematically identified at all) is a historical development and not immediately thrown up by Nature herself. Allende’s work, however, treats cyclic, tonal harmonic organization as an ahistorical foundation. The ‘historical’ nod to the Baroque is made, then, in
abnegation of History. It almost goes without saying that this is hardly a unique position, but the theoretical gesture concerning tonality *par excellence*.\(^{21}\)

The status of the *Tonadas* vis à vis universality appears ambiguous. The folk form, a particular, is at once transformed and maintained in abstraction. It challenges us to hear its specificity as demonstrating the terms by which all music achieves intelligibility. After all, the very title of the set has an ‘Other’ in mind. At the same time, the universality Allende’s piece mobilizes becomes particularized. The tonada provides roots to the abstraction. The composition can be read as interpreting the cold ‘realities’ of tempered tonality as always already elements of folk culture, even if not a specifically Hispano-American one. What we are left with is a universal-particular, which is equally a particular-universal. The ambiguity is unresolvable and the order of the terms determines how the meaning of the work is interpreted. The dissatisfaction this result inspires might be behind Isamitt’s contention that Allende was merely on the road to the universal - he interprets it as a universal-particular. For all its ingenious technique and thought provoking self-referentiality, these tonadas are not able to resolve the deep aporias of Latin American music on their own.

It might be objected at this point that an illegitimate leap has been made. A given work in all its contingent finitude can hardly be expected to yield a key to ‘the deep aporias of Latin American music.’ In fact, it is not clear that they might contain very much beyond themselves. Any claim that this music has to

autonomy is certainly falsified if its intelligibility depends on cultural debates outside of even its own extra-musical references. Furthermore, as the idea that there might be degrees of universality as seemingly suggested by Isamitt is, on the face of it, an absurdity, we could be encouraged to simply throw out the issue in the name of modesty. Over-ambition, scholars often warn us, is a danger in itself. There is also the problem of weak hermeneutics. Allende’s Bach reference could be used to read this piece as in some sense argumentative, but certainly this practice only goes so far. There are no obvious criteria we can hold on to in order to keep us from reading too much into the music. It is just music, after all.

All these objections share a set of unexpressed assumptions about musical ontology. Taking the very objectivity of the concept for granted, music is allowed to flit about unharmed in the negative space between subjective experience and history. Its aesthetic autonomy depends on the indeterminacy of this space. Music is reified, in the sense given to this term by Lukacs - it is a thing. If this is assumed, the process by which music became a thing is impossible to see. If all assumptions about the ontology of music are abandoned, and the concept is sought in the slow labor of history, then nothing of its substance escapes mutability. The analysis above was not interested in what Allende’s music expressed. This model for hermeneutics uncritically assumes the division of form and content. The Doce tonadas are interesting precisely for how they pose the question of form and content. The dichotomy is present, but as part of the work’s historical burden. By foregrounding form, Allende collapses it into content. He does not, however, eliminate the dualism. It is, rather, transformed, or sublated.
What Isamitt heard in Paris and what we witness in the score is a historical breakdown of previously naturalized musical categories. It is at once the moment when they become most relevant, and the moment of their crisis.

It is in this vein that we return to the dichotomy of universality and particularity. The manner in which this duality is posed and transformed in the music must be read as part of a historical process. It is in this way that it achieves significance. Allende’s contingent piece, then, is not interpreted per se, but understood as a moment in the history of Latin America’s self-understanding. Even when music self-consciously claims its autonomy from history (here, in the form of universality), history returns to claim autonomy as one of its moments. As Adorno might put it, given that musical works ‘precipitate historical relations.’ He reminds us that “the unsolved antagonisms of reality return in artworks as immanent problems of form.”

Understanding the inner work of a set of piano pieces, then, is a means of confronting the most general socio-historical antinomies, perhaps even a privileged means.

What Allende’s composition furnishes us with is a position from which to approach at least part of what is at stake in Latin American musical aesthetics: the question of universality versus particularity is a version of the geographical question of centrality versus peripherality. Both of these dichotomies are at work in the tonadas inasmuch as the music thematizes its own identity. Following guideposts found in the archive, then, we might start working through the

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geographical meaning of Latin America in order to evaluate its use as a category before going on to place aesthetics - and, in particular, musical aesthetics - within it. Geography, after all, is what helps map centers and peripheries. It, however, is given to grand speculation, so to speak, even in its claims to the concrete - oceans, mountains, territories, regions, continents, and so on.

Speculative Geography

A long tradition has it that Latin America is a periphery opposed - and made meaningful only in its opposition - to a (neo-)colonial metropolis. From the moment of discovery, the region’s essence has been variously interpreted as a treasure chest open to plunder, a virgin world ripe with possibilities, a decolonized dependency. No process of decolonization on the continent was able to make Catholic Ibero-America into an entity wholly unto itself. Even when, in the post-Independence era, lettered intellectuals sought to forge a discourse of national belonging, they could not abandon an external, inevitably European position from which to do so. As was the case in the Allende example, music in the region bares what Antonio Candido called - with respect to literature - a “placental link” to its European parent.\footnote{Antonio Candido, “Literature and Underdevelopment,” in Ana del Sarto, Alicia Ríos, and Abril Trigo, ed. \textit{The Latin American Cultural Studies Reader} (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), p. 46.} The challenge is to understand peripherality as more than just a natural fact or a banal, if devastating, socio-economic reality. This is to say that there is a ‘meaning’ to Latin America’s
peripheral status. In an effort to unpack this meaning, we can pilfer from an existing tradition.

In a ground-breaking work from 1958, the Heideggerian Mexican intellectual Edmundo O’Gorman sought to debase the myth that America had been ‘discovered.’ He held it had, rather, been *invented*. America represented a set of newly forged discursive constructs that were hardly waiting out on the other side of the Atlantic for European Man to happen upon “one fine day in 1492.” Further, this invention constituted a key stage in the Enlightenment of the West. America becomes in O’Gorman another name for the Copernican Turn, indeed, for the humanist conception of responsibility itself. “For this story [of the discovery],” he writes “is the first episode in the liberation of man from his cosmic prison, from his ancient servitude and impotence [...] American man was the new Adam.”

The force of discovering a New World was to cause a reflective reaction on the part of its discoverers. Suddenly positioned face to face with a wholly new and unexpected negation, Europe could not help but re-discover itself.

However convincing one finds O’Gorman’s talk of new Adams and European progress, his key insight is that the continent is not a mere geographic reality, but an event in the history of Reason. The discovery is revealed to be the first scene in a speculative process. His work points us toward developing a speculative geography from which reified spatial positions are derived. As

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O’Gorman’s extensive discussions of early modern map-making demonstrates, objective geographical knowledge was shot through with the content of a cultural struggle over the identity of Europe’s others. And as with any struggle over otherness, the stakes are ultimately over the possibility of satisfied selfhood.

While there exists after O’Gorman a Heideggerian tradition that seeks the Being of America, more recent work has taken up the problem of the philosophical identity of the region from a Hegelian perspective. This comes as something of a surprise. After all, it is undoubtedly the case that negatively citing Hegel in a discussion of Latin America is a commonplace, even a cliché. He is used as a foil against which to measure the extent to which an argument avoids Eurocentrism. No doubt, there are damning passages about the Americas to be found in Hegel; especially so in his lectures on the philosophy of history. The Americas are given harsh treatment:

America is a new, feeble, powerless world. Lions, tigers, and crocodiles are feeble there than in Africa, and the same is true of human beings. The original inhabitants of the West Indies have died out. [...] Those who assert themselves there and sense the need for independence are Creoles, just like those in the Free States.

Allowing these judgments alone to stand in for an argument against basing a philosophical approach to Latin America on Hegelianism is altogether rash. Dismissive direct commentary on the weakness of America can be countered with elements in the structure of Hegel’s own thought.

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25 Recent years have seen at least one monograph devoted to Hegel’s bad reputation with regards his interpretation of non-European peoples in history. See Teshale Tibebe, *Hegel and the Third World: The Making of Eurocentrism in World History* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2011).

In fact, recent work by Susan Buck-Morss has gone some ways toward demonstrating the centrality of the American experience to Hegel’s concerns. In *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History*, Buck-Morss demonstrates that Hegel would have been well aware of the Haitian revolution and the conditions of slavery that existed on the island prior to it. With reference to the by now classic observation that all of the Enlightenment’s discourse against human enslavement existed at a time of brutal Western slavery, she argues that Hegel’s Master/Slave dialectic addresses this disparity head-on. That passage in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is both a moment in his developmental exploration of human subjectivity and an implicit philosophical description of actually existing slavery.

The consequences of her argument for geography are not fully articulated by Buck-Morss herself. She does, however, develop a concept of universal history that resists the well-known dangers of universalism. Her way around these is through a reevaluation of space for dialectics. “Universal humanity,” she writes, “is visible at the edges.” She goes on:

> There is no end to this project, only an infinity of connecting links, And if these are to be connected without domination, then the links will be lateral, additive, syncretic rather than synthetic. The project of universal history does not come to an end. It begins again, somewhere else.27

The quotation points to the avoidance of bad universals by a perpetuation of the dialectical process. This process remains successive without being necessarily progressive. Most interesting, however, is her sense that such a non-totalizing

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totality is to be found in geographical relationships. Space does not suffer from
the binary (forward/backward) structure of time. History moves for Buck-Morss
because it moves in space. In this model, the *Wirklichkeit* of the French
Revolution is a geographically displaced Haitian Revolution.

A quick digression about what is meant by the proprietary term
*Wirklichkeit* in the Hegelian tradition is in order. The word roughly translates as
‘actuality,’ but is often - and I believe quite legitimately - rendered as ‘truth.’ If
Hegel’s system is predicated on the necessary relationships among concepts not
immediately recognized as being associated, this is an instance of that
relationship. Not only is it the case over and over again in his dialectical
demonstrations that the identity of concepts is based on the identity of that
concept with its opposite (Being is identified with non-being, for example, in the
opening gambit of the *Science of Logic*), but oppositions themselves reveal their
identity with wholly other concepts (Being and non-being are at once each other
and both present in becoming). Becoming is the *Wirklichkeit* of Being, its truth. In
history the logic is akin to an unintended consequence that was nonetheless the
only result possible: the French Revolution into the Terror, Kantian ethics into
legalistic hard-heartedness, Christianity into secularism. These examples are all
conceived in temporal terms. What Buck-Morss ultimately allows us to think is
the disjuncture in union of this kind of ‘truth’ that manifests itself on a plane
rather than a trajectory. Something like a non-teleological necessity can be
conceived of for history.
Allowing space to do some of the work of time in the Hegelian system represents a significant intervention. The way the *Phenomenology* is constructed, time is the medium in which the dialectic resonates. While there are references to various parts of Europe and Asia in which historical occurrences took place, geography is not itself an aspect of Hegel’s argument. Consciousness’s discovery of self-consciousness and self-consciousness’s discovery of spirit are all moments in a temporal process. The narrative of the book depends on a linear flow, even if that flow admits of some pauses and reversals. Hegel’s cryptic reference to his own time being one of ‘birth’ in the Preface further puts emphasis on the privilege bestowed on time in Hegel’s philosophy. Interpreting Hegel’s productive temporal displacements as potentially fully articulated in geographical difference, then, puts pressure on the predominant conception of his system, in which everything is subsumed into some zero-point of Absolute Knowing. Tensions can arise and be sublated *laterally* and there is in principle nothing that can prevent any given dialectical reversal from beginning again precisely where it started.

Following Buck-Morss’ account, the Americas become the space of radicality. The *Wirklichkeit* of a given European theoretical constellation manifests itself at the edges of Europe’s cultural sphere. In revealing itself there, it betrays itself. If Hegel calls the Americas the ‘land of the future,’ we might be encouraged to read him as making a strong claim about the speculative identity of time and space. The New World exists in a geographical relationship to Europe that serves as counterpart, or even a supplement in the Derridian sense, to the present’s own futurity.
A robust version of this thesis is to be found in the work of Leopoldo Zea. In his extensive output, the Hegelian theme that finds prominence is that of the ‘Unhappy Consciousness.’ This is the moment in the *Phenomenology*’s narrative that immediately succeeds the Master/Slave dialectic. Consciousness, after having garnered a basic form of self-consciousness in the pseudo-recognition of a Master, internalizes that mastery. Self-consciousness now worries constantly over its inability to live up to its own goals. The Unhappy Consciousness is something like that of the Ego with respect to the Superego in Freud. In fact, Zea refers to the condition of unhappiness in psychological terms: as guilt and disappointment. He writes:

In spite of all his efforts, however, the Latin American cannot avoid comparison of his achievements with those of the world which serves him as a model. It is this unavoidable comparison which produces disappointment. The new masters, the new Latin American aristocracy, were not satisfied; although they tried hard, they did not feel like the people upon whom they model themselves. [...] They knew they were different, very different from the men who belonged to the old established aristocracy of the Peninsula. [...] Latin America began to be looked upon as a place of exile.  

For Zea, geographic displacement, or exile, is the result of Europe’s encounter with the American Other. The colonized - in Hegel’s terms, enslaved - are condemned to rehearse their own difference as a lack. In Zea’s intellectual history of the continent, he demonstrates that Unhappy Consciousness is the motor of Latin America’s historical reflections. The region’s self-reflections never escape dissatisfaction, ever returning to a new confrontation with an internal master.

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The apparent stagnancy of Latin America’s quest for autonomy does not lead Zea into pessimism. As in Buck-Morss, the tragic hypocrisy of European Enlightenment ideals and the persistence of colonialism do not signal an end of history. The spatial logic both thinkers employ precludes such a fallacy. There is no moment into which History dissolves. No end of history can exist for the same reason that there can be no end of the world.29

Zea’s spatial dialectics leads him to interpret the Leftist movements of the second half of the twentieth century - from revolutionary Cuba to socialist, democratic Chile - in terms of a global process of self-consciousness that has independence as its goal. He insists that if any given Latin American movement refuses to instantiate the universal in its very particularity, it will fail to attain anything like freedom. Or, in the words of Che Guevara he cites at the opening of his *Dialéctica de la conciencia americana*: “La lucha en América adquirirá en su momento dimensiones continentales. Será escenario de muchas grandes batallas dadas por la humanidad para su liberación.”30 We are back to the concepts of universality and particularity, but this time they are given a more satisfying account. Particularity need not simply be found in a given place, but can be precisely what it means for a given place to be. The particularity of location, in turn, is inconceivable without its determinate negation: the universality of empty space. Zea’s hope for American emancipation depends on the possibility of the sublation of this opposition that would yield a fuller, more satisfying form of

29 Francis Fukayama’s famous doctrine is, if for only this reason, a paragon of Eurocentrist ideology.
universal space. For this, particularity has to reveal its internal universality. An artistic analog for this appears in the work we saw being carried out in Allende’s folk song experiment. As aspects of the genre’s particularity were manifested as structural elements of the set, the work points toward closing the gap between rough specificity and smooth generality. If one allows for the short circuit that sees a Chilean folk tune stand in for the dimension of place and Allende’s modernist abstraction take up the role of ‘empty’ space, the stakes of the composition become all the more clear and compelling: the tonadas in their Chilean emplaced particularity already contain the empty space that claims universality precisely with particularity as its negation.

The relationship between space and dialectics is itself part of a historical process. In the Critical Theory tradition, this has been largely ignored. Recent work by Carlo Galli bucks this trend. In his volume Political Spaces, he historicizes space itself, beginning with the ordering of space found in the Greek city-state and continuing on to the aporetic, failed identity of place and space in the modern nation state. His argument reveals not just the historical, but the political stakes of spatial dialectics. It is not just the location of history that is at issue, but the very status of location itself. The role of the Americas in his argument throws a great deal of light on its role in a speculative geography. The discovery, for him, was the moment when Europe ceased to be displaced from its

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own origins. As Rémi Brague has argued, the Roman Empire found itself always already exiled from the harmonious unity of Greek ethical life.\textsuperscript{32} The relationship Western Europe had to its past before the Discovery was just as much an instance of Unhappy Consciousness as Latin America’s relationship to Western Europe after it. As a double figure of temporal alterity - both forgotten past and imminent future - America gave identity to Europe. That identity allowed for the invention, in strictly O’Gormian fashion, of modern center/periphery space.

The Brazilian Darcy Ribeiro gives this same narrative a materialist turn in \textit{The Americas and Civilization}.\textsuperscript{33} In that magisterial work, he gives an account of the entry of the Americas into civilization. The Iberian invasion of America is here presented as a byproduct of the geographical extremes of European civilization turning to expansionist religious zealotry as a response to the Renaissance in central Europe. If the Renaissance brought an increased interest in humanist religious reform and empirical science in German- and Italian-speaking territories, Russia and Spain mounted offenses against early modernity. Taking up the task of expelling impurities and restoring conservative order, the Peninsula expelled its Jews and dedicated itself to converting a foreign continent nearly simultaneously. The tremendous success of this salvationist legacy depended on its mercantilist logic. Far from establishing a new feudalism, Spain fostered a highly centralized bureaucratic empire whose lifeblood was the extraction of raw materials from colonial territories and the transference of those

\textsuperscript{32} Rémi Brague, \textit{Eccentric Culture: A Theory of Western Civilization}, trans. Samuel Lester (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine’s Press, 2009).

materials to Spanish ports. The development seen on the continent during the colonial period was largely unintended. The city of Buenos Aires, for example, entirely depended on the silver mines in present-day Bolivia. The inefficiency of Spanish plunder sustained the city’s economy through the end of the eighteenth century.

This very process of colonial extraction created the conditions for the eventual dissolution of the mercantilist imperial project. Spain’s great success in pouring precious metals and other raw materials into the European economy allowed nascent capitalist enterprise to turn those commodities into capital. The Spanish state-run economy served as an ideal tool for what Marx called ‘primitive accumulation.’ As capital took over Europe with the birth of industry, the dependency of colonial and, indeed, post-colonial America remained in place. If anything it increased, as capital requires growth in order to sustain itself and that growth was never without spoliation.

This is the core of ‘dependency theory.’ The usefulness of this theory for our current project lies in the material basis it provides for understanding the emergence of a new kind of peripheral space. If the Discovery and Conquest was the geographical ground upon which Europe built its historical identity vis-à-vis its future, the political economy of the process led directly to it. Ribeiro has us read the entire development of underdevelopment in the Americas as at one with the advance of Europe. “We are faced,” he writes, “with divergent effects of a general civilizational process that manifests itself in some cases as stagnation and
regression and in others a development and progress.” The unity in this opposition is not only theoretically justified - we are dealing, after all, with a positive category and its determinate negation - but made materially present in history in the form of crises which affect the entire system. It is in the political and economic development of the region that we can locate the emergence of a geographical relationship of dependency and centrality. It goes almost without saying that centrality is equally dependent. It is, however, unable to admit its dependence. Perhaps this goes some way toward explaining Hegel’s refusal to allow for the productive difference of space even when he insisted on the same for time.

The network of writers gathered above, from O’Gorman to Galli, outline what we might call a tradition of thinking peripherality historically. This is to say that they demonstrate a way of thinking history as space. The center/periphery model is at once a result of a historical process and a means of interpreting it. What is left is to link this thought to the general problem of universality tout court. In order to be relevant to art, it is not enough to demonstrate the emergence of ‘universal,’ which is to say homogeneous and infinite, space, or to simply denounce it as European perversion but to map the relationship of this spatial organization to universality as such. Without this connection, it is not clear how it can become a problem for form, even if it has obvious bearing on the senses.

34 Ribeiro, p. 27.
The most important modern precedent for this thought is found in the late work of Edmund Husserl. In *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* and other works from the 1930’s, the phenomenologist constructed an extended historical genealogy for his own philosophy. He traced the concerns he found motivating his own work back to an originary Greek moment. He did this, however, by strictly separating from its Others the lineage he saw himself as completing from its Others. What was required was a conception of Western Philosophy that was not tied down to territory, indeed, a conception of ‘Europe’ that could not be reduced to measurable space. Husserl, therefore, insisted on a ‘spiritual Europe’ that transcended national boundaries. What united this spiritual entity was born in Greece. In Greece,

there arises a *new sort of attitude* of individuals toward their surrounding world. And its consequence is the breakthrough of a completely new sort of spiritual structure, rapidly growing into a systematically self-enclosed cultural form; the Greeks called it *philosophy*. Correctly translated, in the original sense, that means nothing other than universal science, science of the universe, of the all-encompassing unity of all there is. Soon the interest in the All, and thus the question of the all-encompassing becoming and being in becoming, begins to particularize itself according to the general forms and regions of being, and thus philosophy, the one science, branches out into many particular sciences.\(^{35}\)

Spiritual Europe, then, is nothing other than the project of universal knowing.

The techniques for abstraction developed by Greek philosophy and brought to mathematized rigor during the Renaissance are but moments in a trajectory that

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makes good on the ability of human beings to perform infinite tasks. Of course, it is precisely this tendency that Husserl sees as threatening the West. The legacy of universality cuts both ways it would seem, undercutting the merits of its own venture with the methods it developed to accomplish it. All the same, this dialectic is internal to the spiritual space of Europe. “We,” he insists, “if we understand ourselves properly, would never Indianize ourselves.”

Space and history meet here in Husserl in a, by now, familiar way. The geographical entity known as ‘Europe’ is a speculative space defined by a theoretical project. This entity ‘Europe’ is logically prior to the territory that appears on a map. Its project allows for the invention, at first in the form of Euclidian geometry, of a universalized version of space.

With this in mind, we can now return to the problems posed by Allende’s piano pieces. The concept of universality that must be assumed in order that the composition be intelligible depends in turn on a specific concept of universal space that arises in the history of Western Reason. The basis for a harmonic scheme that allows in principle for modulation across the spectrum of possible pitch centers - but the most obvious abstract universality thematized by Allende - is precisely the universal-ideal space that Husserl recognizes in Euclid. The other aspect of the pieces, however, their regional particularities, must then exist on a different ‘plane,’ one that does not - cannot - share the same genealogy as that of the work’s harmonic layout. Put another way, our initial analysis of the work made clear that the central problematic for working out the coherence of the

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36 Ibid., p. 277. So much for the prospect of Schopenhauerian geography.
compositions lay in the conditions under which they could manifest universality in particularity (and vice-versa). A closer look at those conditions, however, reveals that this circle might not be so easily squared. The ‘Euclidian’ space of the metropole cannot, in principle, admit of the colony’s peripherality as such. This is a version of a somewhat familiar trope: Europe is not able to recognize its dependence on its colonial possessions in the same way those possessions are forced into precisely this recognition. It is, after all, the lesson of the Master/Slave dialectic. The Master is stuck in his mastery, unable to acquire any substantial identity with his actions as they are mediated through the slave. This must remain unrecognized by the Master lest he abandon his status. In light of the above discussion, it is possible to glimpse the amenability of this logic to geography.

The Aesthetics of Peripherality

In Allende’s work we hear a relationship between the twin registers of peripherality. This claim has, so far, been implicit. It now requires explicit elucidation in order to develop an aesthetics for our historical theory of peripherality. The claim is not hermeneutic, an interpretation of the content of an artwork beneath its form. It is, rather, an assertion about its nature. This is a heterodox starting point, to be sure, but one required in order that the ‘artwork’ concept not be hypostatized. Inasmuch as art, with its attendant technicities, achieves an identity apart from life, it is able to make claims upon its hearers on its own. This represents the work of a historical process - one that ought to be
familiar from all reification narratives of the arts since Weber - but it is a peculiar one as it is incomplete and, indeed, it cannot ever be completed without the erasure of art itself. Nevertheless, it would be a simple misrepresentation of the artwork status of Allende’s composition to not take seriously the autonomy of its claims. What is at issue below is not the manner in which one ought to interpret music from ‘peripheries,’ even specifically Latin American ones. Rather, the point of interest is the status of aesthetics when thought of in a theory of peripheral space. In other words, the question is: what is aesthetics for peripherality?

In a sense, peripherality might be another name for aesthetics as such. So far, we have been able to identify center/periphery space with the metropole/colony relationship. That relationship, in turn, articulated itself in a division between the form and content of knowledge. At the moment when the spatial logic of Europe stopped being defined by an East/West polarity (Jerusalem incessantly pitted against Athens) and began to be reimagined in terms of a new colonial experience, the project of European knowing transformed from one based on the recovery of a lost knowledge to the project of subsuming aesthetic particulars under abstract concepts: the perception of Euclidian space is subsumed under “Space.” To the extent that we can identify, as Husserl is at great pains to do, conceptual abstraction with Europe, we can also understand peripherality as aesthesis.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, we have arrived at a Kantian moment in our dialectical analysis. The epistemological model of subsumptive understanding that motivates Kant’s concerns in the Third Critique is itself based on a radical
separation of theoretical truth from ethics. The amenability of the natural world to the imperatives of fully individual, autonomous ethics requires some guarantee for us, if not for the realm of extension in itself. Beauty, and the purposiveness in Nature that follows from it, step in to mediate between Reason’s knowing and the doing. Part of my own project is to place this thought back into the folds of a history of space. Kant’s aesthetics are significant for us because his philosophy radicalizes and most fully articulates a shape of consciousness itself shaped by history. We can therefore flip the telescope and reread the Discovery through a Kantian lens.

Columbus’s accounts of the New World are filled with detailed description of what he and those under his command encountered there. His is not, however, mere description. He very often has recourse to mythical imagery from within and without the Biblical tradition. Tropical storms become the floods of Moses and the beauty of mermaids is famously put in dispute. His European imaginary is simply grafted onto the American landscape. The effect, however, is hardly abstract. He deals with specificities. His are empirical mermaids. And consider this passage from his letter on the Fourth Voyage:

Ptolomeo diz que la tierra más austral es el plazo primero, i que no abaxa más de quince grados i un terçio. el mundo es poco; el injuto d’ello es seis partes, la séptima solamente cubierta de agua. la experiencia ia está vista, i la escrivi por otras letras, i con adornamiento de la Sacra Escritura, con el sitio del Paraíso terrenal que la sancta Iglesia aprueva.\(^37\)

Ptolemy’s careful geometrical work and Holy Writ are both subject to correction here. *Experiência* is the final arbiter here. The point is not that Columbus was forced to invent a new epistemological position from his ship. It is that American space is, at the very instant it becomes a part of ‘Western’ history, a space of experience. Europe, no longer displaced from its perceived origins, finds itself at the center of a world that has formed new joints.

This status is maintained through to the nineteenth century, when the Americas were invaded by travelers and natural scientists. The importance of their writings for Latin America’s self-understanding can hardly be overstated. Roberto González Echevarría has likened it to a “second European discovery.” The likes of Charles Darwin and Alexander von Humboldt traveled to South America in search of data that could be incorporated into a European scientific project that sought to progress history by bringing nature fully under the yoke of human understanding. About this, Humboldt is explicit: “Two main aims guided my travels,” he writes, “to make known the countries I visited, and to collect those facts that helped elucidate the new science vaguely named the Natural History of the World, Theory of the Earth or Physical Geography.”38 In order to collect the necessary data on nature, it seems, one had to step away from Europe. Nature could only be truly witnessed at the periphery.

That periphery is paradoxically both original - untouched by History and therefore an ideal realm in which to investigate that which exists outside of time,

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whether it be Nature herself or the unchanging qualities of the human being - and radically new. Humboldt himself expresses the hope that the future will see great cities populated by self-determining Kantian subjects rise up on the banks of the wild rivers he navigated. This duality is just the dichotomy of the data of the senses, the stuff of experience in this new aesthetic paradigm. That which is sensed is always-already present and, in principle, not predictable. It is the irrational core of the rational. This theme is to be consistently found in foundational texts of nineteenth-century Latin America, from *Facundo* to *Os Sertões*, that take their cue from scientific travel writing. It also haunts modern fiction in works like Alejo Carpentier’s *El siglo de las luces*. In all of these works, the contradictory nature of bare experience is mapped geographically. The same historical process that made America into a treasure chest of empirical material for natural science also made it into an aesthetic realm.

If colonial and post-colonial America is another name for the separation of art from life, the pre-Columbian takes on all the promise of prelapsarian unity. This, at least, is the motivation behind recent musicological works, notably by Gary Tomlinson and Olivia Bloechl. Like the protagonist of *Los pasos perdidos*, Tomlinson attempts to peel back the veil of disenchantment and find Song in a place - which is also a time - before Music. In his self-consciously stilted terms, it is a cantology, which is not a musicology.

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39 This should not be confused with the ‘sublime’ either as it appears in Kant or in more recent Continental aesthetics.
In what remains, then, we will consider the consequences of the ‘invention’ of aesthetics for art made under the aegis of American space. If America is ‘invented’ as aesthetics, then all Latin American art is autonomous art. Already severed from the good and the true, sensuous immediacy can never find its way back to life. This condition, in turn, becomes the central preoccupation of Latin American art as such. Latin American art (as distinct from art in Latin America or by Latin Americans) is just the material knowing of this preoccupation. In response to the dissatisfaction inherent in its condition, this art takes on the task of manifesting community. Put another way, it concerns itself with making tangible the universal in the particular. This was, after all, what we found in Allende’s tonadas.

The history of music, along with what we might broadly refer to as ‘literature,’ in Latin America is the history of the fully modern problematic of aesthetic alienation. In this sense, it shares its constitutive conceptual constellation with art in the neo-colonial metropole. On the periphery, however, the story plays out differently, and with different stakes. Alienation does not result in modern ennui as it does in Paris, but in dependency. With little doubt, music is currently the primary ideological force in the region. This contemporary situation, however, has a historical density that is easily missed.

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The problem of music in Latin America can be written off as mere culture, but it is precisely this fact that makes its explication imperative.

Method

We have seen so far that nations are conceived in the modern world along the lines of individual subjectivities for whom self-determination is imperative. Further, that there is an aesthetic moment of that self-determination. Latin American nationalisms determine themselves primarily with respect to place in a geographical mapping of center and periphery, a framework that privileges the peripheral, which - when run again through the logic of subjectivity writ large - is rendered an aesthetics.

The following account of musical modernity in Latin America takes off from this theoretical matrix. The meaning of musical practices supervene on norms that determine their in-placement. These norms have to be made explicit in musical practices themselves. This is because, unlike in Europe, the experience of modernity in Latin America is one of expropriation and colonial/neo-colonial spatial deferral rather than brute rationalization and homogenization. The legitimacy of actions (in their theoretical isolation as well as in organized concatenations we call practices) depend, then, not only on their role in a possible narrative, but in their taking place. The story of musical modernity in Latin America, therefore, is the story of its in-placement. This process, however, is precarious. Any making explicit of place (here this appears in the form of one nationalism or another) is open to challenge, not to mention its being done in
concert or discord with the host of similar claims to legitimacy of place that inhere in the rest of the social edifice. Put simply, the consequences of any given musical practice are uncertain and are open to a logic they cannot of themselves control.

Tracing that logic is the present project’s task. It is divided into three case studies, which are also moments of a non-successive dialectic. The first is the case of Carlos Chavez whose musical project was an attempt to in-place music immediately, through nationally substantive content. I demonstrate how Chavez’s compositions are part of the larger process of post-Revolutionary national self-determination in the cultural field and the centrality of aesthetic concepts - notably, beauty - in this process. This moment ends by confronting the hollowness of the national substance it has to affirm such that it might control content.

The third chapter takes us to Argentina and traces the development of the musical *gauchesca* as an analog for nationally specific modernity in that country. If hollowness was the limit of Chavez’s aesthetics, it is the thematized center of the *gaucho* genre. Ginastera’s own interpretation of his stylistic development and his *Pampeana* pieces are read as self-conscious reflections on the aporia of *gaucho* nationalism.

The concluding chapter moves to the Chilean Nueva Canción movement. Tracing it from its roots in bourgeois folklore research to its propagandistic phase, I show how a political end for music grows from the fundamentally contradictory structure of Latin American music history.
Finally, it behoves me to note that this dissertation is neither musicological, strictly speaking, nor properly historical. Not musicological, if by ‘musicology’ we refer to that set of discourses which seeks to make music intelligible after that intelligibility can no longer be guaranteed by the music ‘itself.’ Not historical, if by history we mean an attempt to preserve something of the past so that it might survive relatively unharmed into the future. This dissertation is, rather, a conceptual inquiry - ultimately about ideas.
CHAPTER TWO: CARLOS CHAVEZ AND THE REVOLUTIONARY NEOCLASSICAL

Very few figures in Latin American music history enjoy the celebrated status and apparent historical importance of Carlos Chavez (1899-1978). Distinguishing himself as a composer, conductor, critic, public servant and educator, Chavez defined what Mexican musical modernism would sound like, largely controlled how it would be interpreted within and without his native country, and made his own aesthetic commitments paradigmatic for the generation of Mexican composers who came after him. What concerns us in what follows are the nature and consequences of his aesthetic commitments as he went about elaborating his career-long project of creating a peculiarly Mexican music that would nonetheless be universally valid as high art. This chapter will attempt to make clear what is at stake for this project and the content of Chavez’s contribution.

Imitation and Expropriation

The appearance of national art music in Mexico is far from an inevitable development. There is a sense, after all, in which ‘Mexican national art music’ is a contradiction in terms. Lettered composition as such - in Mexico and in Latin America as a whole - exists as a legacy of the attempted cultural erasure carried out by Spanish colonialism. From the colonial Baroque through the Revolutionary period (1910-20), we can refer to music in Mexico with more
security than we might refer to music of Mexico. If music and musicians were not
directly imported from the metropolis, form and content, both in church and
secular composition, were imported for imitation by native-born musicians. The
post-Independence era saw the rise of opera, both in its Spanish and Italian
varieties, and piano virtuosos. While a handful of these compositions reference
Mexican popular music, none before 1910 makes a claim to have achieved
something like an authentically national compositional practice. The lettered art
form was disseminated in Mexico as a luxury import when it was not being
created there as imitation.

It is precisely as a commodity that music is best understood before the first
decades of the last century. The materials of culture in the economic dispensation
Mexico suffered before the Revolution were simply not the product of local
manufacture. Existing politically as dependent on foreign investment and
materially as a field for colonial expropriation, Mexico did not develop culturally
along the same lines as Western Europe and the United States. Unable to escape
being conscious of dependency, Mexican elites - who primarily consumed
imported manufactured goods and thereby lived an approximation of the cultural
lives of their trading partners - essentially experienced a kind of exile. The first,
immediate reaction to this in the arts was imitation. As Samuel Ramos, a cultural
critic and philosopher whose 1934 treatise *El perfil del hombre y la cultural en
México* attempted to reconstruct a national psychology, puts the point:

Carecería de fundamento suponer en México, ya no la existencia,
sino aun la mera posibilidad de una cultura de primera mano, es
decir, original, porque sería biológicamente imposible hacer tabla
rasa de la constitución mental que nos ha legado la historia. No nos tocó venir al mundo aislados de la civilización que, sin ser obra nuestra, se nos impuso, no por un azar, sino por tener con ella una filiación espiritual. En consecuencia, es forzoso admitir que la única cultura posible entre nosotros tiene que ser derivada.\textsuperscript{41}

So it is that the statue of Cuauhtémoc on the Paseo de la Reforma in Mexico City appears in neoclassical grace, draped in a toga. Nineteenth-century Mexican positivism, the reigning philosophy before the Revolution, would be derived explicitly from its French counterpart. And composers took their cue from abroad. To wit, one of best known salon waltzes ever written was penned by the Mexican - and full-blooded Indian - Juventino Rosas just before the turn of the century.\textsuperscript{42} Nothing about the waltz indicates its place of origin, an aspect, incidentally, that contributed to its wide dissemination as it slipped from Mexican salon repertoire to that of North American fiddlers, ultimately appearing as a glockenspiel tune heard played by ice cream trucks.

It is in the midst of this imitative spirit, proper to a culture marked by expropriation, that the young Carlos Chavez was introduced to music making on the global periphery. His juvenilia consists of a series of imitative works. There is a prelude and fugue, a sonata movement, a set of waltzes, character pieces for the piano and song settings. Chavez went as far as to compose his own German lied, setting Heinrich Heine’s “Du bist wie eine Blume.”

Imitative composition, as Chavez soon discovered, is finally unsustainable. It runs aground when it confronts the limits of its own possibility. To make this

\textsuperscript{41}Samuel Ramos, \textit{El perfil del hombre y la cultura en México} (Mexico DF: Colección Austral, 1934) p. 20.

\textsuperscript{42}The case of Juventino Rosas is a fascinating story in itself. For more on this curious figure see Robert Stevenson, \textit{Music in Mexico} (New York: Thomas Crowell, 1952).
clear, something about metropolitan musical modernity has to be rehearsed. The development of music in Europe involved an increased subjectification on the part of musical works inasmuch as they were objectivated in the market. The emancipation of composer from the bonds of patronage had long allowed him to enter the public sphere as an individual. That individuality, in turn, was used to underwrite the intelligibility of the artworks he produced. The paradigmatic figure here is Beethoven, whose utter control over the determination of his output embodied a version of the emancipated ego proper to the modern, post-Jacobean, bourgeois ideal subject. Embodying this subjectivity, of course, involved - in fact, relied on - a moment of technical skill and objectivation. The musical work is both umbilically tied to its maker’s individuality and able to make a claim to autonomous individuality for itself. Inasmuch as this latter claim is convincing, the musical work becomes indistinguishable from its peers and, ultimately, from all other potential commodities.

The dialectic of subjectification and objectivation that characterizes the emergence of musical modernity in Europe is reversed in the neo-colonial periphery. In the Mexican context, the literate musical work arrives as an alien object on the market. It’s moment of objectivation comes first, as it were. The church hymn has come from Spain, the opera written by an Italian, the waltz imported from a Vienna in cultural decline. When they arrive in Mexico, musical works must seek out the subjects suited to them, or else create the kind of subjectivity required to understand and reproduce them. There is no kind of subjectification under these conditions, however, which is not heteronomous. As
culture is imported, it assumes a cultural expropriation. Weber’s modern Man, the one found in the metropole, is caught between his individual freedom and his self-authored unfreedom. He embarks on a musical project to overcome this antinomy. The Mexican modern subject experiences a radically individuated reality, but one in which the conditions of that reality have been expropriated. The musical project becomes one of overcoming that expropriation. Chavez’s compositional career as a whole is just this.

Chavez’s First String Quartet, written in 1921, represents an early breakthrough in overcoming imitation. The opening movement displays remarkable thematic unity and control. A two-bar phrase triumphantly announced in unison in the violins at the start is sequenced, expanded, contracted, clipped and otherwise developed in every subsequent measure. A second theme, derived from the first, is fully articulated at the movement’s climax, marked off by a long crescendo leading to a triple forte. This theme is less angular than the first and is self-contained while the other suggested the need for compliment. Following the logic of an altered sonata-allegro form, the first movement bares all the hallmarks of a confident, even Romantic, humanism. It is perfectly in line with Chavez’s early imitative technique.

All of that changes in the second movement. A single, drawn out pitch begins an introductory figure, a series of vertical harmonies set up to accompany a melody. This cues the entry of the second motive from the first movement. The process, however, is suddenly cut off. The introduction returns again and again, but never succeeds in introducing anything. Instead, it itself is sequenced
aimlessly before being let go altogether. The Scherzo (marked Vivo) that follows replaces motivic development with sheer rhythmic drive. No distinct motives are picked out amidst the endlessly repeated rhythmic figures. At one point in the middle of the movement the initial motive from the first movement appears, but it is truncated and never returns. The concluding Sostenuto ends after 28 measures. An aimless melody runs throughout. It is accompanied by a recurring short figure that recalls the rhythmic profile of the first of the opening movement’s motives. This figure, though, veers away from its accompaniment role, sounding increasingly dissonant against the first violin’s sweeping line. The final three bars have the second violin and viola playing the figure a second apart, ruining the final cadence. The quartet, as his most important biographer points out, is the “culmination and synthesis” of his early career.\(^{43}\) The movements after the first each seek out some way of ceasing to imitate. Each strikes out against clear development or borrowed form. Although the result is almost entirely negative - a series of subversions of convention - it nonetheless indicates a space where a new compositional method might arrive.

That same year, Chavez would find the resources for a new compositional practice. With his ballet, *El fuego nuevo* (1921), he would turn decisively to what some of his commentators call ‘indianism.’ This version of primitivism fell comfortably into a post-Revolutionary aesthetic ideology that sought grounds for a properly Mexican art. Because the Revolution itself, as well as its social and political aftermath was formative for Chavez and his concerns, we ought to

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reconstruct the event before turning to the next step in Chavez’s stylistic development. Significant for the present purpose is to identify the place and relevance of aesthetics in what was ostensibly a political eruption.

The Aesthetic Phase of the Revolution

The Revolution that ended in 1920 was an anti-capitalist revolt largely carried out by the peasantry. It represented the bloody result of the economic shock Mexico sustained in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Before that time, the Mexican economy depended on the extraction of metals and a handful of agricultural exports to provide the means to buy imported goods. This is to say that the basic outlines of the colonial economic system had largely remained unchanged by political independence. Indeed, the consequences of the Reform period - which saw liberalism, Enlightened and Republican, enshrined in Mexican law - were to expand the latifundia. Territory that had previously been owned by peasant communities or under the control of the Catholic Church was opened up to speculation. Laws ostensibly designed to provide for the emergence of a nation of small-holders prevented that class from emerging altogether. As a result, the kind of political “modernity” that someone invested in a particular stripe of bourgeois ideology would recognize as proper to a functional, free and expanding capitalism never emerged. This has led some historians to deny that pre-Revolutionary Mexico was capitalist in the first place. After all, despotic rule,

thoroughly associated with what Marx called the Asiatic mode of production decidedly prevailed. Major institutional changes of the kind familiar from the elevation of England and France out of the inertia of feudal reproduction did not appear. Even Marxist historians have come to the conclusion that the Mexican Revolution was a bourgeois revolution in the sense that it overthrew the political avatar of the feudal mode of production in order to introduce a State apparatus that would provide markets (both in goods and labor) as well as primitively accumulated capital for a nascent capitalist class.

There is some truth to this analysis. One aspect of the economic shock of the 1880’s and 90’s was a steep decline in the number of land-holding peasants. By the time of the Revolution, roughly 3.5% of the rural population held any land at all. Expropriation met with impassioned objection, especially in places where indigenous communities had managed to largely preserve pre-Cortesian social organization. The paradigmatic case was the state of Morelos, where Emiliano Zapata would assume leadership of the peasant revolt, demanding the reinstatement of communal ownership. Before the Revolution, this demand went unmet. An agricultural proletariat had arrived. These peasants cum proletarians, in turn, were exploited by a land-owning bourgeoisie, which produced goods primarily in order to reap profits. These shifts were, no doubt, a factor which induced the need for political reform, if not outright revolt. However, the transition that Porfirio Díaz oversaw did not introduce the profit motive to Mexico, nor did it make accumulation the primary goal of land and mine owners. In fact, this had been the structural impetus behind production since the last
decades of the colonial period. The difference was not between *modes of production*, but between *types of capitalist production*. Pre-Porfirian Mexico did not have the material bases it needed to derive relative surplus from a constant technological innovation. Rather, it was forced to reap absolute surplus by controlling the price of labor. ‘Asiatic’ despotism was the political face of this control. With the arrival of a second, imperial phase of capitalist growth, new forms of labor repression were invented. Díaz installed a rural guard and gave it a mandate to discipline a laboring population with a long history of resistance that had suddenly been dispossessed of its means of subsistence.

A rapid, State-driven process to fold the country into the imperial world system brought about massive foreign investment in infrastructure, rail, finance, and industry. As many historians note, the growth of the railways provides some perspective: tracks which covered less than 700 kilometers in 1876 spread over 20,000 by the turn of the century, effectively uniting a country in which excessive distance had previously guaranteed utter isolation. While the first wave of rail construction had been carried out with domestic capital, the blossoming that occurred at the end of the century demonstrated just how transformative European and American capital could be. With the help of French investors, Mexico established a network of banks from Monterrey to the capitol, as well as its first national bank. Readily available debt sped what Marx called the ‘moral decay’ of industrial and agricultural fixed capital (institutions and technologies of surplus extraction). New technology, both electrical and hydraulic, rendered obsolete within a handful of years great swathes of production methods that had
persisted for many decades. The takeover of huge swathes of the Mexican north by the Americans in the earlier part of the century had been followed up by a move on the part of American capital to invest heavily in Mexico’s border states. Production in northern Mexico was dominated by exports, mostly agricultural. Domestic capital was diverted to service industries and Mexican stakeholders in the region knew well just how ambitious their English-speaking neighbors could become.

Despite its eventual anti-capitalist profile, the Revolution was catalyzed by a split in the bourgeoisie. Modernization had put a great deal of pressure on smaller producers and Northern landowners justifiably feared the long-term effects of foreign ownership. The sector of the capitalist class that benefited from Díaz’s open-door policy with respect to foreign investment grew increasingly smaller as the twentieth century progressed, especially after a worldwide financial crisis around the turn of the century ate deeply into Mexican profits, demonstrating a significant structural weakness of what would be known later as dependent development. What might once have been seen by most of the Mexican bourgeoisie as a benevolent dictatorship that brought a much-needed respite from the political violence that plagued the country since the expulsion of the Spanish, was now regarded as a tyrannical regime invested in a model for development that harmed domestic capital. A democratic reform movement grew up and an opposition leader, a wealthy landowner from a northern state, was chosen. When a peaceful solution to the struggle within the bourgeoisie no longer
seemed feasible, the opposition turned to the subaltern: the agrarian proletarian and the newly minted industrial worker.

Both the rural and industrial working classes had been restive and quick to strike or revolt. In a sense, then, the massive rebellions carried out by these groups during the armed phase of the Revolution were merely the continuation of a long history of labor resistance in Mexico. New in 1910 was the class alliance that saw labor fall behind one segment of capital against another. As was the case during the French Revolution more than a century before, a reform movement unleashed the force of popular resistance in order to win a political victory. Venustiano Carranza at the end of the civil war was as sure as Francisco Madero was at the start that the State would control the majority once its material control had been reestablished. In fact, the former was a confirmed reactionary when compared to even the Jacobin wing of the revolutionary elite. By 1920, the government that had formed relied for support on a landowning bourgeoisie. Organized peasants were this class’s natural opposition. Free from discipline for the first time in decades, peasant armies systematically dispossessed property from landowners. The government that had opposed Díaz now sought the defeat of Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata.

The armed working classes were both the key to the fall of Díaz and the establishment of a petty bourgeois regime in its place. They also represented the greatest threat to that process. Peasantry would hold the upper hand in the Revolution for nearly its entire duration. This was made clear and manifest when Villa from the north and Zapata from the south captured Mexico City in 1914.
However, either because of unwillingness or inability, the two peasant commanders failed to build an institutional order to match the strength of their military strategy. They were eventually routed, and the tide of the struggle would turn in favor of the capitalist classes. The latter were also very successful in bringing the industrial working class into their fold.  

The end of the armed phase of the Revolution saw both of its peasant leaders murdered and the industrial and agricultural factions of the working class on opposing sides of the fighting. The petty bourgeois who found themselves with the reins of the State fell to the task of consolidating their power. As significant as the changes wrought by the Revolution in fact were, the event had not produced a binding social order. Military defeat followed by co-optation and clientism had done away with an independent working class movement. This, too, would be controlled by the swelling State. However, the nature of the defeat and the entry of the peasant onto the national stage had forced major concessions from the bourgeoisie. Egalitarian demands of workers could be championed without doing damage to the protection of private property rights, or so went the assumption of the dominant ideology. Before mid-century, extensive land redistribution, vigorously opposed by Carranza during the war, had been carried out, and the possibilities for social mobility were greatly increased. Perhaps the most important achievement of the struggle was the establishment of a mixed economy.

45 Some historians have credited the victory of Carranza over Villa to the entry of Red Battalions into the war.
and the expropriation of a large fraction of foreign assets. The slogan “Mexico para los mexicanos” (“Mexico for Mexicans”) bore this meaning most clearly.

What fell with the Porfiriato - the reign of Porfirio Díaz which was overthrown by the Revolution - was not simply an unsustainable development model or a government apparatus or a set of class and labor relations. More fundamentally, the reasons that justified and made intelligible all of these were altered. The conflicts that gave rise to the taking up of arms were, of course, understood in terms endemic to the moment in which they arose. Indeed, to an extent they are only understandable in this way. This is especially true when it comes to the material pressures and transformations described above. The consequences that resulted from the efforts to manage the conflicts of one moment, however, opened up conceptual space for another. A strategic turn to the subaltern at a decisive moment in the battle against Díaz, for example, had significant unintended consequences. And so with the concessions that were necessary in order to win over labor to the cause of State consolidation. Even so, a new order of political categories and conceptual justifications unsystematically drawn up by interested parties in the midst of a struggle could hardly produce their historical fulfillment. The sheer diversity of these concepts alone - from the version of communal property ownership that justified the governing of the state of Morelos under Zapata to the extension of the logic of personal property which did the same for the privilege of domestic over foreign capital - precluded this. A gap became apparent by the Revolution’s end. Not one between classes or even
between competing political goals or ideological positions, but between the reasons for the founding of a new society and the world(s) that would demand their relevance. Without knowing it, an economic and political crisis had precipitated a cleavage in the very substance of society. This represents, as it were, the speculative payoff of the events on the ground. It is at this level of analysis that art might enter the story as part of a world that demanded relevance in this society: aesthetics. But it too would come to appear as a gap itself.

The phase of the Revolution that followed violence, then, was invested in resolving this gap. State consolidation, legislative and economic reform could not simply be carried out, rather they required a making explicit of their reasons, if not always their reasonableness. These reasons were founded on a new popular subject, the post-Revolutionary Mexican citizen, ethnically determined and marked by an essential self-consciousness. Every version of the State building process included a conception of this authorizing subject. Relating that subject to objects, the materials of the new order, involved conceiving of a moment of synthesis, a reconciliation of the categorical determinations of an ideal subject to the world of determinate objects. This is the key to the resolution of the gap produced by the Revolution. We might call this the event’s ‘aesthetic phase.’ And it is explicitly in terms of aesthetics that the Mexican State intelligentsia went about elaborating practices that would produce a solution to the social fissure. Mexican nationalism was rendered as a theory of the beautiful.
Mexican Beauty

“When the middle-class individual and the indigene have the same sensibility in art, we will be redeemed culturally.” - Manuel Gamio

If the ideal revolutionary subject is at the heart of the speculative stakes of the Revolution, the relation of that subject to objects is key to its deployment. The quotation above by the anthropologist and public intellectual Manuel Gamio spells out that the very coherence of this subject - a synthesis of the new dominant class and the authentically indigenous - depends on a relation to art. That relation, in turn, stands in for the relation of this subject to all objects. A common sensibility is the goal.

Lest all this appear overly abstract, we should recall that it is precisely this sensibility that Chavez claims to have tapped into with his turn to ‘indianist’ primitivism. Reflecting on the composition of El fuego nuevo, Chavez wrote that after finding a suitably Mexican subject for the ballet (an Aztec legend) he had to create a music of equivalent authenticity. He writes:

Desde hacía 9 o 10 años, Ponce había puesto de moda la idea de la ‘música mexicana’ sobre la base de la canción mexicana de origen español o italiano, pero la música india era otro mundo. Yo me di cuenta entonces qué cerca estábamos de él, aun sin saberlo; cuán grande era su presencia en todo, en la sensibilidad, en la plástica, y aun en la música, que fue de hecho la primera que yo oí y me impresionó, desde los seis años de edad. De golpe, y sin que previamente hubiera yo escrito nada parecido, escribí ‘El fuego
Chavez’s claim here is one he made repeatedly throughout his career. His early exposure to the music of agrarian peasants of indigenous descent - so his story goes - gave him the resources he needed to compose, of himself and without recourse to ethnographic research, an authentically Mexican music. Chavez’s subconscious became his inner Aztec. As a middle class individual offering up an indigenous sensibility in art, Chavez embodied Gamio’s cultural redemption.

The logic of this redemption ought to be unpacked. It was not a simple matter of disseminating ideas with enough frequency that they would eventually settle like concrete in the imaginations of suddenly more governable citizens. A common sensibility strikes deeper here. Those charged with creating it sought to tutor the senses so they might immediately encounter the object domain proper to the new State, that is, precisely without the mediation of official ideological concepts. A common sensibility is something closer to the foundation of explicit prescriptive ideology, a sensing in common that would make prescriptions relevant to the world.

We would do well at this point to bring this version of common sense into proximity with that found in Kant so that its full weight might be appreciated. As will become clear in this section, Kant is never far from the thoughts of the formidable petty bourgeois intellectuals whose concerns structure this historical

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46 The passage from a 1954 article by Chavez is quoted in García Morillo, p. 21.
moment. In Section 20 of his *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, Kant broaches the subject of a common sense. He does so as part of his analysis of judgments of beauty (essentially all those that are reducible to “This is beautiful.”) These judgments, he argues, are paradoxically subjective and objective at once. They are objective in being, indeed, judgments about specific objects in time and space. They are, however, nonetheless subjective in their being restricted to the sensing of rather than the knowing of objects. We humans witness the beauty of, say, a flower, but the beauty is, so to speak, in the flower but not of it. The fact that beauty is something like a consciously human contribution to experience (in contrast to the ‘unconsciously’ human contribution to the determination of experience, made by virtue of the categories) does not stop judgments of beauty from being universal, meaning that they demand that all other humans acquiesce to the judging. This is the objectivity’s insistence: “the judgment of taste expects agreement from everyone; and a person who describes something as beautiful insists that everyone ought to give the object in question his approval and follow suit in describing it as beautiful.”47 The scene that Kant sets up is an odd one to be sure. Two people sense the same object and inasmuch as at least one perceives beauty, neither is satisfied until each has independently not only experienced the pleasure that would inspire the judgment of beauty, but articulated the judgment itself, said it out loud. It is a moment of communication and this is what Kant has in his sights. Beauty is in principle universally communicable. In fact, it relies on

the assumption of a community in which this communication might occur. No such appearance of human otherness and being in common is to be found in either of Kant’s two other Critiques. Community is not needed for the cognitive synthesis involved in mathematical judgments or the ethical calculus required in deliberation about actions according to the categorical imperative. Other people show up in Kant, unexpectedly, when contemplating flowers.

We have come to the crux of the matter. Beauty cannot be coherently judged without a community, and particularly, without a sensing in common. Importantly, Kant thinks this is true even if no such community can be found. This is the cost of beauty’s subjective ground. Such a community need not even have concepts in common: it “differs from common understanding, which is also sometimes called common sense: for the judgement of the latter is not one by feeling, but always one by concepts, though usually only in the shape of obscurely represented principles.”48 In the end it is not clear that the community that underwrites the objectivity of beauty could exist for Kant. That judgements of beauty include a moment of subjectivity, that principled skeptics can conclude that beauty is nothing more than “a mere subjective play of the powers of representation” tells us that there is reason to doubt the reliability of any sensing in common. As one commentator has explicitly argued, there is a memorial quality to Kant’s aesthetics.49 The modern world includes much strife about what is beautiful and modern art records this strife on many a purposively shocking or

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48 Ibid., p. 68.
ugly canvass and score (Berg’s ländler scrapes and Picasso’s demoiselles stare at us in pieces). When common sense is referred to in Kant, it appears as a kind of memory of a moment - perhaps one that never was - when a community sensing in common made fully objective our judgements of taste.

So it is that a theory of the beautiful might stand in for the question of community. In the case at hand, it is the question of a new Mexican state. The task at hand was getting Mexicans to articulate the beautiful. The negotiation that would follow would reverse engineer the community both present and absent in the Third Critique. What was referred to above as a gap between the reasons for action (i.e., for setting forth a new society after the Revolution) and the world in which actions take place hides behind the florescence of art: murals, museums, and music.

The metaphysical cast given here to the stakes of aesthetic projects after the Revolution is not meant to deny that certain manifestations - perhaps most - bore a strikingly quotidian character. In 1921 the newspaper El Universal, a publication openly committed to the goal of building a powerful central government, held a beauty contest.50 “El concurso de la india bonita” sought to award a woman of distinctly indigenous racial features. The experiment was a thinly veiled argument for a change in the concept of female beauty. If up until that moment beauty had been tacitly universal, the contest was to demonstrate that beauty could be specific, particular to Mexico. The submissions, however,

50 My comments on the ‘india bonita’ contest are based on invaluable research by Rick López. Especially see his Crafting Mexico: Intellectuals, Artisans, and the State after the Revolution (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 29-64.
showed just how little common sense, in an un-Kantian sense, this made immediately after the Revolution. Many submissions offered photographs of girls in the traditional dress of the pre-Revolutionary rural bourgeoisie. Many had blue eyes and light skin. Mexicans had to be taught what Mexican beauty was and, more importantly, taught to see it, to sense it in common. The anthropologist Manuel Gamio was one of those hired by the paper to help judge the contest. While his scientific expertise was the reason he was picked, his interest was decidedly aesthetic: the ‘india bonita’ was to replace the Greek ideal of beauty. In his own words:

The classic model of physical beauty, the Greek model, does not exist, nor has it ever existed in Mexico. For lack of this aesthetic ideal, we have substituted the White physical type of Hispanic origin. But this is a crass error because Whites make up only a small part of the Mexican population [...] We should not establish exclusive canons of beauty.51

A living member of society, one whose features were like those of the majority of Mexicans, would substitute for a cold, white, sculpted Aphrodite. If the Greek ideal was abstract and shot through with pagan religious symbolism, the fifteen-year-old María Bibiana Uribe, barefoot with her hair in braids, is concrete. With the girl depicted in a full-page spread, the newspaper reader would have been taught to see the beauty in women with strikingly indigenous physical features and begin to demonstrate the sensing which is the prerequisite of substantial community.

51 Unpublished typescript offered in translation in Ibid., p. 41.
The limits of this effort are found in the role conceptual determination is meant to play. Even if it had been the case (which, of course, it was not) that the newspaper beauty contest significantly altered the way the average Mexican citizen saw beauty, the only way this change could be registered is as a change in what objects the citizen would pick out as beautiful: the Indian peasant rather than the “ancient Greek goddess.” The contest cannot escape determining the conceptual parameters for beauty. Uribe’s concreteness, her social and especially
her racial status, authorize her ability to serve as an ideal of a beauty that is particularly Mexican.

The very impetus behind holding the contest is premised on these conceptual determinations (race, class, ethnicity). Without them, it is unintelligible. The Mexican common sense might indeed manifest itself in a sensing of the beautiful in common even if mediated by intersubjective negotiation. The ‘Mexicanness’ of that beauty, however, cannot be a condition - and, especially, not a guarantee - of that sensing and negotiating. As already seen, beauty only demands communal negotiation by virtue of its being pre-conceptual. This is what allows it to maintain its ambiguous status with respect to objectivity. “There can be no objective rule of taste by which what is beautiful may be defined by means of concepts,” Kant writes.\(^{52}\) If not restricted to subjective sensing, there would be nothing to distinguish aesthetic judgments from an objective identification. “She is beautiful” fades into “She is indigenous.” A sensing is reduced to a kind of simple knowing. Still, no project to reverse engineer a common sense can dispense with objects of sense, necessarily determined by concepts. The contradictions inherent to holding up an Indian girl who nonetheless must at once stand in for and promote a common experience and articulation of beauty are inadvertently expressed by Gamio himself. The imported pseudo-Greek ideal of beauty is arbitrary in a place where the majority looks nothing like her. This motivates a turn to the specificity of indigenous beauty. Sentences later, however, he announces - with Kant - that beauty does not

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\(^{52}\) Kant, p. 62.
submit to canons. Too remote when undetermined, too present when determined, Mexican beauty reveals itself as another name for the very gap its evocation was meant to resolve.

Chavez’s ‘indianism’ after *El fuego nuevo* falls pray to precisely the same antinomic logic as does Gamio’s beauty contest. Compositions that followed, whether they be explicitly ‘indianist’ such as *Los cuatro soles* (1925) or *Sinfonia India* (1936), or not, would be interpreted in terms of his subjective synthesis of bourgeois individuality and indigenous substantiality. The objects that might correspond to that synthesis, however, were at once under- and over-determined. Commentators were, and indeed still are, able to locate the indigenous elements everywhere. In a review of a United States performance of his Piano Concerto in 1942, a critic wrote, “Indian music harkening back to a remote past obviously forms the basic material of the composition,” despite no actual indigenous melodies being present in the score. His evidence consists of “unrelieved, acute dissonances in every measure” which are repeated with what “might be called an obsession.” Finally, there were “strange, brash outbursts of sound, primeval in effect.” The reviewer, Noel Straus, was clearly making the most of stereotype, which in the context of Mexican-Usonian relations during this period could not have been devoid of United States triumphalism.

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53 Robert Stevenson cites this review in his *Music in Mexico*. He does not comment on the content of the review but to point out that the association of this music with barbarism was likely to boost Chavez’s avant-garde credentials.
The point here, however, is the ability for Chavez to all-too-easily fulfill the role of the ideal post-Revolutionary subject whose creation marked his artistic sensibilities as specifically Mexican. For reasons made clear above, there are no musical particulars on which this evaluation might rest. This allows for some startling conclusions. Consider Aaron Copland’s account of Chavez’s work from his Norton Lectures in the mid-1950’s:

Even without previous knowledge of the Amerindian man, his essential nature may be inferred from their scores. The music of Chavez is strong and deliberate, at times almost fatalistic in tone; it bespeaks the sober and stolid and lithic Amerindian. It is music of persistence - relentless and uncompromising; there is nothing of the humble Mexican peon here. It is music that knows its own mind - stark and clear and, if one may say so, earthy in an abstract way. There are no frills, nothing extraneous; it is like the bare wall of an adobe hut, which can be so expressive by virtue of its inexpressivity. Chavez’ music is above all, profoundly non-European. To me it possesses an Indian quality that is at the same time curiously contemporary in spirit. Sometimes it strikes me as the most truly contemporary music I know, not in the superficial sense, but in the sense that it comes closest to expressing the fundamental reality of modern man after he has been stripped of the accumulations of centuries of aesthetic experiences.\footnote{Aaron Copland, \textit{Music and Imagination} (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), p. 91-2.}

Contradictions abound. Chavez’s music is at once fatalistic and uncompromising. There is nothing of the Mexican peon, although the peon’s adobe hut appears sentences later. The music possesses an Indian quality, one that expresses something basic about modern man, although with all of the experiences that have made him modern torn away. Copland’s contradictions are hardly the result of confusion. He rather clearly pinpoints the constitutive contradictions at the core of Chavez’s objectivated double subjectivity. This double subjectivity was the
pressing historical problem that aesthetics was called upon to help solve through creating a shared sensibility. The possibility of such a creation, however, is impossible. Chavez’s compositional practice develops from the negativity of imitation in his early works into the impossibility of aesthetic reconciliation of his mature oeuvre.

Ruins of the Aesthetic State

We can neither dispense with aesthetics in the Revolutionary aftermath, nor in fact with Gamio. Even were he not as influential as he was during this period, his dynamic and creative responses to what he saw as the aesthetic problem of his place and time are worth unpacking. The best known of these responses is to be found in his *Forjando Patria* of 1916. Written in the last years of war before either Villa or Zapata had been killed, Gamio openly calls for the creation of an aesthetic State. With no mention of the Central European philosophical tradition he is transparently drawing on, our anthropologist theorizes the nation as the ultimate work of art. With the emergence of a new Mexico out of the ashes of the Revolution, the nation could be a poem, writ very large.

Gamio’s opening salvo describes the building of a statue. It is a metaphor for the creation of what he calls “patria.” The figurative language is decidedly out of place in a text that devotes most of its pages to observations and practical suggestions about everything from gender relations to educational reforms. The literary quality of this first chapter is nonetheless essential. Every subsequent
page of his book is concerned with an aesthetic conception of the nation, and by proxy, the State that was emerging around him. The image of the statue is a metaphor, but not an idle metaphor. He writes that the building of the statue was started in the past only to be followed by dissolution. The generation of libertadores forged “con sangre y pólvora, con músculos e ideas, con esperanzas y desencantos, una peregrina estatua hecha de todos los metales, que serían todas las razas de América.” He tells us that “llegó a vislumbrarse entre resplandores de epopeya una maravillosa imagen apenas esfumada de la gran Patria.”55 The vision of a united Spanish America planned by Bolívar did not, of course, last for long as former viceroyalties became bellicose nation-states in the post-Independence period. Gamio’s hope is that the Revolution gives Mexicans another chance to build a statue worthy of epic poetry.

Poetry’s appearance is hardly by accident. It stands for the harmonious Ancient Greek world of ethical coexistence proper to Homeric poetry. This thesis about the Greek world has an illustrious lineage. It receives its basic outline by Vico in the early eighteenth century and comes to maturity in Hegelian dialectics. It runs something like this: Ancient Greek society was an internally coherent totality. Who a member of that society was and what they were could not be separated. With no room for self-doubt or conscience, the Greek subject’s actions were just as much an extension of his person as a physical appendage, and the consequences of her actions returned organically in the guise of fate. Religious representation took human form because human and divine actions mirrored one another.

another directly. Since actions were always already their meanings, the transcendental realm could broach no abstraction or alienation. Indeed, this is the key. Greek art is radically integrated while modern art suffers from alienation. The Greek sculpture and epic, with its subjects who are both human and divine, express a social condition that possesses all the integration of a living organism. Life, the form of life, will further haunt any aesthetics that follows from this Greek ideal.

Gamio has this ideal in mind. He defines patria as a “coherent and defined nationality.” In other words, patria is the condition of being determined with respect to nation. Determination, however, must be substantial in the strongest sense - the language used turns overtly metaphysical. From those who possess a true nationality “se levanta el grito solemne de la misma sangre, de la misma carne.” He continues:

pues es la voz de la vida, la fuerza misteriosa que agrupa a la materia y se opone a su desintegración. En las almas de todas esas gentes hallará los mismos mirajes en que se recrea la suya. De los labios brotarán añejos como vino generoso o remozadas y alígeras las palabras de un mismo idioma de todos. Cuando así se vive se tiene patria.56

The possessor of a patria lives in such a way with others as to approximate participation in an organic whole. Representation and communication are central to this way of living. Those of the same nationality must rely on the same language and images and must respond to the same “voice.” This is another version of Kant’s common sense. There is no conflict between interior and

56 Ibid., p. 12.
exterior “images” and therefore no impossible intersubjective demands about the presentation of objects. The Greek world that is perfectly commensurate with art, the living organism, and common sense refer to one another. Gamio’s call, then, is for the creation of a State that approximates the status of art.

The role of actual artworks in this creation, however, is murky at best. In a telling section of his treatise on “National Literature,” Gamio pulls together diverse cultural offerings that could belong under this title: colonial histories, popular songs, nineteenth century novels, Aztec literature. None, he concludes, could serve as a national literature because each represents the interests and expresses the condition of a minority of Mexicans. Pre-Cortesian literature fares least well of all as a candidate for a nationally representative literature. Gamio relegates its interest exclusively to indigenes and scholars. In the absence of a suitable repertory, the author concludes with a list of texts that ought to be made more widely available. This, however, is not in order to promote the kind of social integration that he thinks is so crucial to fulfilling the promise of the Revolution, rather it is to prepare the ground for a national literature that emerges after this integration has taken place. Gamio, it seems, has learned his Vichian lesson well. Literature is representative, whether of social cohesion, historical spirit, or mode of production.\(^{57}\) When a nation becomes worthy of a national literature that might compete with Greece it does not do so because a Homer happens to have come along. When Johann Joachim Winckelmann, the art historian whose

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writings on antiquities laid the foundation for the German classicism and Idealist interpretation of the ancient world, insisted that the only way that moderns could become truly inimitable (and thereby do justice to the promise of the artwork) was to imitate the Greeks, he articulated the possibility that Gamio seems to deny.\textsuperscript{58}

No concrete and individual artwork could do the work of bringing to organic fulness the nation it represents because it is at once both inside and outside the whole it is meant to stitch together. In order for the artwork to realize the social world in which it is disseminated, it must be connected with the institutions that make up that world. However, if an artwork is to achieve the kind of autonomy commensurate with the aesthetic state it is meant to bring about, it must be divorced from all social institutions apart from itself. Closed in on itself, it is helpless to make a claim to relevance. Open to the nation, representative of its interests and expressive of its condition, it cannot remain art. The aesthetic state excludes the very thing that would serve to mark its completion: the autonomous artwork. Like Escher’s hands which sketch the hands that sketch them, Gamio’s Mexicans (the subjective pole in this relation) would have to produce the condition for their own determination (the objective pole in this relation), a determination that must be external and objective by definition.

\textsuperscript{58}Johann Joachim Winckelmann, \emph{Reflections on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture} (La Salle, IL: Open Court Press, 1987).
In 1932, Chavez stepped into the middle of the matrix of concerns outlined here. After writing incidental music for a production of Jean Cocteau’s “reduction” of Sophocles’s *Antigone*, he consolidated what he had written into what became his first symphony, *Sinfonia de Antigona*. After launching his nationalist ambitions ten years earlier, he found himself at work reimagining the ancient Greek world. At first glance, the composition appears to have nothing to do with the ‘indianist’ work so far discussed. That music was meant to objectify as coherent something contradictory in an ideal political/aesthetic subject. Chavez’s strict adherence to modal writing and consistent avoidance of intervals he believed the Greeks understood as dissonances (such as the third), is explicitly schooled in exactly the way he claims not to have had to have been to compose his ‘indianist’ pieces. The relationship between Chavez and his modes is external, inorganic.

The manner in which the work approaches its topic, however, suggests that it is at least partially concerned with the problem of the aesthetic state. The Greek tragedy, after all, is, unlike modern tragedy, expressive of the conflict of social norms that threaten to tear apart the social fabric as such. Antigone has a religious duty to bury her brother, even after his burial has been forbidden by the *polis* whose government he betrayed. An ancient play that, classically, through catharsis represents the resolution of these threatening conflicts (in the case of Antigone, through her death) would arguably be an ideal program for a symphony, Chavez’s first. Sonata form, with its process of resolving conflicting elements, potentially lends itself to just this. Chavez, however, avoids sonata
form. Although the texture is consistently contrapuntal, it is nearly devoid of easily identifiable motives. A program is not easily provided for this score. It is a testament, then, to just how attractive a programmatic reading is that two of Chavez’s best commentators opt for a version of it. Rather than hear a sonata-like resolution of motives in a full from one tonal area to another (tonic to dominant, in the classical model) and back to the first one (tonic, in the model), Stevenson, for example, hears contrasting modal tetrachords as symbols for Antigone’s conflicting duties. He goes as far as to indicate exactly where in the score the title character is meant to shift from the consideration of one duty to that of the opposing one.59

One does not have to resort to this kind of hermeneutic reading to locate importance in this strange piece. Chavez’s austere, un-cathartic composition outlines a new compositional strategy on his part. Antigona is utterly objective, and does not present itself as an artwork that might be fit for the aesthetic state. Chavez’s Greek experiment resembles a fragment of an ancient ruin, paradoxically complete in its very incompleteness, and in this sense very much of a piece with continental musical modernism. Given the antinomies of the aesthetic state, it is hardly a shallow thought.

The ruin reappears in the heady intellectual climate of the post-Revolutionary reconstruction, this time in 1925 with José Vasconcelos’s famed essay La raza cósmica. At the time of its appearance, its author had just ended

59 Stevenson, p. 249-250.
his tenure as Secretary of Public Education. Of all the intellectuals to have come to prominence just after the wake of the Revolution, Vasconcelos had the most significant influence, from establishing the country’s first network of public schools to enthusiastic promotion of muralism. This unusual philosophical treatise is his most widely read work. In it, Vasconcelos has a number of objectives. The most obvious being to marshall evidence culled from his reading of the evolutionary biology of his day against any version of a stable racial hierarchy. His denial turns on theorizing the productivity of racial mixture. Soon after arriving at this point, however, the text changes course and uses the evolutionary model of race as an explanatory force in history. The great civilizations (to be sure, the Greeks again make an appearance here) have been products of racial mixture, he claims. Thus, due to the interaction of races on the American continent, there is a great deal of promise in those places where colonizers did not destroy the native populations they found there. Vasconcelos outlines the potential rise of what he terms, borrowing from Theosophist doctrine, the ‘fifth race’. This people who are to grow to maturity in the Amazon would bring about a redemptive transformation in the world. “If the fifth race takes ownership of the axis of the future world,” he writes, “then airplanes and armies will travel all over the planet educating the people for their entry into wisdom.”

This sounds spurious at best, but for the definition that ‘wisdom’ gains in the rest of the text.

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Wisdom, for Vasconcelos, is not a knowledge of things, emphatically not the positivist goal of a scientific knowing robust enough to effectively manipulate the world. Indeed, it is Mexican positivists, who dominated philosophy during the Porfiriato, he is writing against in every page of his treatise. Wisdom is something closer to accurately judging the beautiful. When the fifth race will have attained global hegemony:

the orientation of conduct will not be sought in pitiful reason that explains but does not discover. It will rather be sought in creative feeling and convincing beauty. Norms will be given by fantasy, the supreme faculty. That is to say, life will be without norms, in a state in which everything that is born from feeling will be right.\(^{61}\)

It is a thrilling role for the perception of beauty and what he calls feeling; it has taken from reason’s ethical deliberations all authority and appropriated the guidance of actions exclusively for itself. Rather than prescribe knowable, fully cognitive norms for action, Vasconcelos’s wisdom demands that actions conform to feeling, which, not being fully cognitive, cannot provide anyone with norms.

It is clear that Kantian aesthetics is at the root of Vasconcelos’s thought here. He goes as far as to refer to “taste” when discussing perception as opposed to knowledge. The kind of demand that the presentation of beauty makes on the perceiver - namely, that all others articulate their perceptions with it - is Vasconcelos’s guarantee of subjective freedom even when regulating the actions of others. We can read the subversion of the ethical by sentiment here as the natural extension of the ‘india bonita’ contest’s attempt to create a common sense that would substantiate the cohesion of a community. It even departs from the

\(^{61}\) Ibid., p. 29
same intuition that the choice of mate is a key marker of common sense.

Vasconcelos claims in his text that racial mixture, up until the “aesthetic or spiritual stage” of human history, proceeded chaotically and at random. In the aesthetic stage, by contrast, procreation would be guided by a sense of beauty both universal and subjective. Each would freely choose a mate while conforming to the harmonious development of the race. “Life,” he says, “founded on love, will come to be expressed in forms of beauty.”⁶² These forms are not to be confused for artworks. Vasconcelos is fully conscious of the limits to determination that beauty entails. Bare form, abstracted from the form of anything in particular, is all that is left.

Most importantly for the analysis here, the messianism of La raza cósmica makes explicit the content of the ‘aesthetic phase’ of the Mexican Revolution in at least one of its dominant manifestations. The crisis in the interpretation of actions opened up by the Revolution was, as we have seen, articulated in terms lifted from a European discourse on art. The manner of resolution bore out the consequences of this borrowing. Beauty would reveal itself to be empty and thereby belie the limits of its usefulness as social intervention. Fashioning the State after an ideal of the artwork dissolved a necessary condition for the possibility of any and all artworks. Vasconcelos avoids these dilemmas, but at the cost of throwing the aesthetic resolution of post-Revolutionary modernity in Mexico into a thoroughly ideal future, despite all his protestations. This is rather poignantly exemplified in the last paragraph of the treatise. There he tells his

⁶² Ibid., p. 25
readers that the argument of his book was to be symbolized in an artwork 
commissioned for the Palace of Public Education, an institution he himself was 
largely responsible for. Allegorical carvings were to signify the civilizations and 
races of the world whose unification would mark the coming of the final race of 
Man. In the middle, a statue would stand for the progress of humankind through 
to its aesthetic perfection. The monument, however, was not built. It could not 
be. Here is our ruin. The statue could take no form adequate to its determination. 
The project of an artwork that has no identifiable form because it is proper to a 
stage in the evolution of the species that has transcended determination in favor 
of sensibility and creativity is a decidedly adequate image on which to end. The 
faith that Gamio and Vasconcelos project - that there could be, in art, a 
transcendence of the antinomies of modernity, the antinomies of bourgeois 
society - is left unfulfilled.

What Goes By the Name Neoclassical?

Secondary literature on Chavez’s musical style has emphasized an 
oscillation between two tendencies that are apparently opposed. On the one 
hand, the composer explicitly makes use of classical forms and relies on tonal 
harmony, aspects that make him fit for classification as a neoclassical composer. 
On the other hand, his championing of Mexican indigeneity and his references to 
pre-Cortesian musical practices make him an unabashed primitivist. To a 
musicologist such as Gerard Béhague, he cannot properly be both at once. In 
other words, there is no synthesis between tendencies. In Béhague’s own words:
While his *Sinfonia India* is one of Chavez’s more overtly Indianist compositions, it has a clear affinity with neo-Classical works by such composers as Stravinsky and Copland. Brilliant orchestral effects and occasional Impressionist techniques (parallelism, for example) more than counteract references to either pre-Columbian musical culture or contemporary Mexican Indian music. Yet it is a well-integrated work, expressing the exuberant musicality of its composer even if remote from the roots of its ideological pretext.\(^{63}\)

The evaluation here is odd. The *Sinfonia* is well-integrated despite its ‘indianist’ traits being “counteracted” by its neoclassical devices. Those devices, apparently consist of harmonic parallelism and skillful orchestration (both, incidentally, strongly associated in the standard accounts of European modernism with French masters Debussy and Ravel). It almost goes without saying that neither of these counts as unavoidably neoclassical. The designation, however, follows from a well-worn historiographical model that understands the products of twentieth century composition as divided between a Germanic, Romantic, expressive line that ends in Schoenberg and a anti-German, neoclassical, objective line that ends in Stravinsky. The musical avant-gardes that do not follow from the German tradition are often grouped together as ‘neo-classical.’ The composers who are labelled neoclassical are as varied as Ravel and Hindemith, or indeed as above, Copland and Stravinsky. Because the term does not seem to enjoy much of a stable definition, one might well throw it out. After all, it does not have so specific a reference as, say, ‘serialism’ or even ‘atonality.’ However, this would bypass what Béhague is attempted to pick out about Chavez’s mature work.

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There are distinct parallels with Stravinsky - even a ‘neoclassical’ Stravinsky - to be found in Chavez. We can, therefore, outline what neoclassicism was for the former so that it can be compared to what is to be found in the latter. As Scott Messing demonstrates in his monograph on neoclassicism in music, the term neoclassicism appeared in music criticism before the reception of Stravinsky’s most celebrated ‘neoclassical’ works, such as the Octet (1923).64 The term’s origins are associated with the French attempt to depart from Wagnerian musical aesthetics that privileged ‘progress,’ which resulted in a characteristic unwieldiness. It was understood that a Romantic drive to embody all the expressive force of subjectivity in an artwork had led to decadence. When the elder Chavez writes that the rallying call of his youth was “¡Chopin a la silla electrical!,” he refers precisely to this. The departure would be some version of a return to the principles of a more naive musical practice. What practice that ended up being did vary, but the gesture was always the same: modern decadence would be combated, subverted, or simply avoided by the clarity, simplicity, and immediacy of a borrowed, or restored aesthetic dispensation. The term garners more specificity in the context of Stravinsky’s critical reception and subsequent defense or degradation of his style in Stravinsky/Schoenberg polemics. In particular, the French critic Boris de Schloezer served to give the concept specific bearing. For him, Stravinsky’s neoclassical works, appear to us as an organic, natural synthesis of many different elements, such as Bach and the eighteenth-century masters,

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64 Scott Messing, Neoclassicism in Music: From the Genesis of the Concept through the Schoenberg/Stravinsky Polemic (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1988).
sentimental or playful romance of the past era, and the rhythmic frenzy of negro-american music. This synthesis, that is our new classic style, otherwise called objective.

It is imperative for Schloezer’s account that this last term be read non-metaphorically. To that end, he goes on to recall that the conductor Ernest Ansermet prefers the term ‘realism.’

But it seems to me that this word lends itself to equivocating, and suggests, in any case, the idea, evidently false, but difficult to make clear, of a certain reproduction or representation of objective reality. Now when we oppose romanticism to classicism, we oppose two methods of creation or of different aesthetic organization; one, subjective, which consists of the artist constructing his work in a different function of his state of consciousness which this work is destined to express; the other, objective, which consists of attributing to a work of art an absolute and completely autonomous existence in only causing to intervene in its structure purely formal considerations.\textsuperscript{65}

Realism is an insufficient term for Schloezer, then, because it fails to properly distinguish between a representing and a making. The subjective composer creates, no doubt, but the creation is expressive of content lent to the creation by subjective consciousness. It is representative in this sense. The objective composer bypasses this mediation, designing forms directly in the world. Ansermet’s term skips over the distinction it is meant to describe.

The opposition of subjective to objective composition is tied to a thought about the relationship of form to content. If musical form is not expressive of inner content, then that form must be its own content, so to speak. That is, the ‘formal considerations’ that Schloezer mentions must be either the sole conditions of what appears on the page and what is heard, or at least a coherent

\textsuperscript{65} Quoted in Ibid., p. 132
set of such conditions that can stand alone.\textsuperscript{66} This will guarantee ‘objectivity’ on the part of the music.

Chavez writes in a similar vein - and specifically referring to Stravinsky - as early as 1924:

It is not possible to separate external from internal form, just as it is not possible to refrain from seeing in “the details” the true and unique substance of things. External form comes exclusively from substance and the only manifestation of substance is external form. [...] Some distinguish between technique and meaning. That almost obliges us to believe that Stravinsky could have expressed “his meaning” using Beethoven’s technique. But if (assuming the distinction) Stravinsky had used Beethoven’s technique to “tell the world his message,” (!) it would be because the message arrived to the former with a blue stamp reading “delayed in transmission.” Perhaps we would not even have opened it.\textsuperscript{67}

Chavez held this position throughout his career. It appears with some frequency in his published writings.\textsuperscript{68}

The composer’s peculiar humor aside, his position on form is striking. He separates form and substance, or content, only to deny the possibility of the distinction. The passage almost reads like a moment of dialectics where the possibility, even the necessity of terms is simultaneously affirmed and denied.

For Chavez, art is flattened into its form, which bears no traces of nationalism, utopian social engineering, vitalism, or transcendence. Instead it takes

\textsuperscript{66} It is not assumed that what appears on the page and what is heard are either interchangeable or that the causal relationship between them exhausts what happens when music is written, played, and heard. These considerations, however, lie apart from the relevant thoughts here.


\textsuperscript{68} A passage from Chavez in 1950: “Un criterio elevado para juzgar la música no se basa en el valor sentimental, ni anecdótico, ni colorista de aquélla, sino en su valor de integración y cohesión, es decir, en su valor de forma. En la música, la \textit{forma}, que tiene este elevado valor, implica no sólo su significado común, sino también el de \textit{fondo} y substancia.” Quoted in García Morillo, p. 210.
responsibility for its own diremption from subjective determination and becomes pure, unmitigated objectivity.

The question remains, how may this objective determination work in the world, or as I put it, how can it become a relevant world for Mexican society, if at all? And if not, what reason does it obey. After all, objective determination cannot simply transcend the appeal that the individual Carlos Chavez makes to its power. Objective determination remains social, even and particularly when, as is the case with Chavez, it is said otherwise.

In the thoughts on aesthetics discussed so far the artwork, or beautiful thing or person, has been the privileged site of coherence and organic unity. The beauty of an indigenous girl could determine beauty and the autonomous state could take its cue from autonomous artworks, or at least the judgments of taste typically reserved for artworks. In Antigona we have already seen Chavez attempt to avoid these characteristic forms of post-Revolutionary aesthetics. If the Revolution opened up a breach in the substance of society that could conceivably be bridged by aesthetics, Chavez’s vision is altogether more bleak.

In his journalistic writing from the decades after the Revolution he bitterly mocks simple nationalisms as well as the local avant-garde. Neither, he suggests, is fitted to the reality of the Mexican situation. An important article of his responds to the insistence of a Spanish musicologist that composers from the Americas “americanize” their music. “Americanizaos bien vosotros mismos, evitad las inoculaciones europeas,” he paraphrases. Striking at the suggestion that relying on European models for composition is a way Latin American
composers to protect themselves from their reality, Chavez is quick to point out the irony in Europeans, who went to great pains in history to “europeanize” America, now “pat us on the shoulder and remind us that we are europeanized.” He affirms this: “In the same way that our commerce, our industry, our riches, etc. are foreign, our urban music is also foreign. [...] In the same way that we use Gillete (sic) razors to shave, we are dependent on European criticism to polish our musical impressions and bolster our judgments on the great esthetic-musical problems.”  

Mexico is radically dependent for Chavez. This empty essence is paradoxically the content of his nationalism. He prefaces his statement: “What I will say is probably disheartening, but I say it with tenderness and sadness, for those are the fundamental elements of my patriotism.”

Chavez’s ‘neoclassicism’ follows from the insight that lettered composition arrives with all the subjective or national authenticity of a Gillette razor. The objectivity of the imported commodity cannot be subverted or transcended: the Revolutionary hope for art. Art can, however, radicalize objectivity. Chavez can have Stravinsky’s neoclassical relationship to the musical past, one that sees it as raw material for a compositional method that avoids Romantic aesthetics. Chavez’s neoclassicism might be parallel to Stravinsky’s, but its meaning is entirely distinct. It is specific to its Mexican circumstance. This was what the musicologist Jesús Bal y Gay meant when he wrote that Chavez was a “compositor tan stravinskista como poco stravinskiano.” But the question of

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69 Chavez, p. 53-54.
70 Ibid, p. 51.
71 Quoted in García Morillo, p. 208.
neo-classicism, which is the manifestly recognized face of objectivity, is not fully resolved by this admission.

In Chavez, pace Béhague, the primitive, Aztec past is the most important reference point for the composer’s neoclassicism. Nowhere is this more pronounced than in *Xochipilli-Macuilzochitl* (1940), subtitled ‘An Imagined Aztec Music.’ The piece was written for concerts of Mexican music which were organized to coincide with an exposition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City called ‘Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art.’ In the published concert notes, Herbert Weinstock writes that “Carlos Chavez states clearly that *Xochipilli-Macuilzochitl* (sic) is not an actual reconstruction of pre-Conquest music, but that he believes that it offers a general impression of how that ancient Mexican music must have sounded.”72 This impression is based on the composer’s study of musical instruments that survive from the pre-Conquest period, the pitch range and intervalllic possibilities they demonstrate as well as the relationship among instruments that appear most likely. Chavez’s own introduction to the concert notes includes a very long quotation from Juan de Torquemada, a 16th century Spanish missionary whose description of native music Chavez perceives as authentic and useful. Chavez is engaged in something between art and crypto-ethnography here. It bears no traces of subjective engagement. Rather, it is an ‘objective’ approximation of a pre-modern musical practice, primarily horizontal and rhythmic, polyphonic without being properly contrapuntal. The composition

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is determined by Schloezer’s ‘formal considerations.’ Chavez has given us another kind of ruin.

Romanticism has been avoided, but not because of its decadence or lack of taste or clarity. Rather, the neoclassical rejection of romantic aesthetic unity and dialectical closure represents a taking seriously of what is unavailable to the composer inasmuch as he is Mexican. This is Chavez’s ‘disheartening’ nationalism. Pieces like *Los cuatro soles* or *El fuego nuevo* are Chavez’s way of moving past simple imitation and contributing to a project that was proper to his post-Revolutionary moment. The ‘neoclassical’ Chavez is no less ‘indianist’ in one sense, but his departure from the political project of art sees him move past the dominant aesthetic ideology which surrounded him. What he gives us in his most mature works, such as *Xochipilli*, is a way of witnessing through art a national experience of expropriation and systematic objectivation of expressive material in bourgeois society. In this way, Chavez is a quintessentially Mexican composer insofar as his music offers an experience of an interrupted Mexican subjectivity.

**The Will for Form**

This is all to say that Chavez’s compositional conclusions after his early nationalist period know something. However, if artworks ‘know’ something, it is not clear what they know. The troubled relationship of forms to their determination can easily be interpreted as the result of an abstract force. This is precisely the tack Octavio Paz takes throughout his prose writings. As a means to making Chavez’s musical contribution to the debates on Mexican aesthetics clear,
some comparison to Paz’s view is useful. He is at pains to give a ground to the 
historical emergence and dissolution of forms and goes as far as to make this a 
principle of history. In his celebrated speculative account of the essence of 
modern Mexican self-consciousness, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, Paz cites 
recurrent crises of expressive form as generating the historical emergence of 
national identity. “The whole history of Mexico, from the Conquest to the 
Revolution,” he writes, “can be regarded as a search for our own selves, which 
have been deformed or disguised by alien institutions, and for a form that will 
express them.”73 Indigenous society before the Conquest, sustained by an 
unforced fitness of religious and political form for the perpetuation of society as 
an ethical whole - but nonetheless resigned to its own catastrophic passing away - 
gave way in the wake of Cortez to a series of social forms tragically unequipped to 
achieve legitimacy even while they were at times able to sustain political stability. 
Insofar as a society conceives of itself as an independent whole (a process Paz 
metaphorically names ‘adolescence’), it must rely on conceptual categories that 
interpret social conditions. The extent to which those categories do not contradict 
one another and, what is more, allow for the intelligibility and reproduction of 
cognitive and ethical norms, is the extent of the *formal* legitimacy of the relevant 
concepts. For example, the Catholic scholasticism that determined the formal 
coordinates of colonial society frayed at the point at which reason confronted the 
demands of faith. Paz points to the writings of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz as an

attempt to reconcile modern natural science with Catholic dogma, reading her poetry as offering up creative formal solutions to a crisis in the legitimacy of the dominant categories of social reproduction. The nationalism of the post-Independence period adopted different conceptual schemes to found society, but the internal dynamic it experienced did not differ in kind from its colonial counterpart. Formal norms and reality fell apart.

By interpreting the history of Mexican nationhood in this way, Paz elegantly reduces the problem of national self-identity to the problem of representation. Art, therefore, attains a social role for Paz, one that responds to the question of formal legitimacy, although, as we will see, necessarily without the resources it would need to respond successfully. The hope of modern art is that it might continue fully conscious that it will keep falling short of its promise. It must constantly rehearse its end. It must do this because it is the only way to know the will for form beyond any given form. The metaphysics here run deep.

Paz lays out his position in full:

Will for life is will for form. Death, in its most visible and immediate expression, is the disintegration of form. Childhood and youth are the promise of form. Old age is the ruin of physical form; death, the fall into formlessness. That is why one of the most ancient and simple manifestations of the will for life is art. The first thing man did upon discovering that he was mortal was to erect a tomb. Art began with the consciousness of death. The mausoleum, since ancient times, has been both an homage to the dead and a defiance of death: the body decays, turns to dust, but the monument remains. Form remains. We are threatened not only by death but by time itself, which makes, then unmakes, us. Every sculpture, every painting, every poem, every song is a form animated by the will to survive time and its erosions. The now wants to be saved, to be converted into stone or drawing, into color, sound, or word. [...] There is no apparent commonality among the stylized jaguars of the
Olmecs, the gilded angels of the seventeenth century, and the richly colored violence of a Tamayo oil - nothing, save the will to survive through and in form.\textsuperscript{74}

Art here is in the service of a knowing beyond art. It constantly registers its own condition, which Paz deems to be a will in nature acting as a sort of inexhaustible libidinal spring in and for history. Death is equated with formlessness, so art becomes the human being’s most advanced way of surviving. No determinate forms can survive the onslaught of death, thus bare form is all that can. This oblique embracing of bare form is Paz’s modernism just as the project of an aesthetic utopia was Vasconcelos’s, and indeed, just as disheartening, anti-Romantic, ethnographic patriotism is Chavez’s.

Even if we embrace a ‘knowing’ in and of art as it is appears in Chavez and Paz, however, disappointment cannot be averted. Recall that the problem that presented itself to the young Chavez, that of getting beyond imitative composition and participating authentically as an artist in the building up of a post-Revolutionary society, has not simply been overcome. Rather, it has been displaced.

A year after the concerts at MOMA, Chavez spoke to a Mexican radio audience about the 1910 Revolution and the role of music in that political struggle:

But do not think that we ought to accept that the greatest degree of mexican-ness of our music be the ultimate reason for its supreme

beauty or ultimate legitimacy. It is not enough to forge Mexican nationality, rather we ought to make a just Mexico. As with art, our music ought to be just; just in its broad human sense, in its balance of form and content, in its sense of elevation and sublimation. Having achieved this two-fold goal [mexican-ness and justice] Mexican art will see itself reintegrated into the collectivity that in truth nourishes and vivifies it.75

It is as good a summary of the Revolutionary aesthetic ideal as one can find. It is fraught, of course, with contradictions now familiar. In order for Mexican art to be ‘reintegrated into the collectivity’ it does not need to have any particular degree of ‘mexican-ness.’ This was the antinomy of Mexican beauty. Music’s internal balance is necessary in order for it to participate in making a ‘just Mexico.’ This is the antinomy of the Aesthetic State. Any honest take on Chavez’s output reveals that his own work falls short of these goals.

What Chavez did produce was a music that was both specifically Mexican and universally valid. He did this by embracing a kind of ‘objective’ composition that described the negative space that is substantial mexicanidad. Whether it appears as a coldly mechanical, non-contrapuntal polyphony or Paz’s positively valanced, life producing void, it is always negative. That negativity is at once that of neo-colonial dependency and bourgeois subjectivity. This is, ultimately, the ‘content’ of Chavez’s contribution to Latin American music. The next chapter will

75 Carlos Chavez, Obras Vol. 2, ed. Gloria Carmona (México D.F.: El Colegio Nacional, 1997), p. 32-33. Pero no se piense que debemos aceptar y conformarnos con que el mayor grado de mexicanidad de nuestra música sea la razón suprema de su belleza, ni su justificación última. [...] no basta con forjar una nacionalidad mexicana, así, a secas, sino que hay que hacer un México justo. Del mismo modo el arte, del mismo modo nuestra música, deba ser también justa. Justa por su sentido humano general, por su proporción de forma y contenido, por su sentido de altura y de sublimación. Al verse logrado este doble fin, el arte mexicano se verá reintegrado a la colectividad en forma que en verdad la nutra y la vivifique.
outline what might be done in the wake of this contribution, what might, in fact, be authentic about negativity as such.
CHAPTER THREE:
THE METAPHYSICS OF GAUCHO SONG

Unlike the previous chapter, the protagonist of this one is not a composer, but a musical genre. More specifically, it is the concept of that genre as it tracks through the history of modern Argentina. The *gauchesca* has long been understood as the quintessentially Argentine musico-poetic genre: the figure of the gaucho himself serving as either patriotic symbol or figure of bad conscience. Apart from the actual sung lyric of the historical cowboy of the plains, the history of the genre’s concept is that of a set of reflections on the constitutive contradictions of peripheral modernity. This chapter will trace those reflections from the concept’s initial theoretical formulation in the thought of Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, through its crucial elaboration by the philosopher Carlos Astrada, on to its version in the compositions of Alberto Ginastera.

Before delving into intellectual history, however, something must be said about the historical gaucho and his material circumstance. What became the Argentine state began with the creation toward the end of the eighteenth century of the viceroyalty of Río de la Plata, a crucial component of the Bourbon reforms. The new seat of regional authority at Buenos Aires transformed the city into a major American port, opening a significant new route for precious metals to travel from the mines of Potosí in modern-day Bolivia to the Peninsula. Apart from the sliver of land used for this route and the port capital itself, the vast territory under Buenos Aires’s control was irrelevant to the Spanish Empire’s
economic (and therefore political) interest. For most of the colonial period, the large plains that extended west of the river were inhabited by bellicose natives, making settling these lands unattractive compared to those which stretched out east and bordered with Portuguese territory. The plains, knows as the Pampa, were subject to a slow and uneven incorporation into the emerging global capitalist system. As that system developed, the regulation of property was of increasing concern to the state and to property owners. Nomadic gauchos, who lived largely off of the slaughter of cattle, posed a direct threat to that regulation. By the end of Spanish rule, gauchos had already acquired their name and were subject to all manner of repression, officially sanctioned and not, which included military conscription. The very embodiment of class conflict in the region, the cowboy was ‘poetized’ - as Ricardo Rodríguez Molas puts it - rather early on. Thinking the gaucho became thinking the possibility of economic and political modernity in Argentina as such. It is not by accident that along with their means of subsistence, gaucho culture was legally restricted. The history of Argentine law bears witness to a ban that prohibited “juntas de gentes ni de guitarras.” The gaucho song, as the rest of this chapter seeks to make plain, is inseparable from thinking the contradictions of Argentine dependence.

Sarmiento’s Musical Outlaw

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76 Ricardo Rodríguez Molas, Historia social del gaucho (Buenos Aires: Centro editor de América Latina, 1982), p. 63.
What follows is premised on an apparent perversity: I take it that whatever literary interest it might inspire, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento’s *Facundo* is primarily - and, fairly transparently - a work of philosophy. A century and a half of the book’s reception history has read it otherwise. It has either been taken to be a work of fiction and therefore more like a novel than anything else, or it has been read as a quirky and unreliable work of amateur sociology in whose brokenness we might recognize the image of that fractured Reason that is claimed to characterize the Latin American condition. Classifying the work, however, is not a simple matter of correct labeling. What genre we understand Sarmiento to be contributing to determines the status of his claims. Given the nature of the text, the circumstances that inspired its composition, and the central place it enjoys (and suffers from) in the canon of Argentine literature and in “Latin America” as a whole, the question of *Facundo*’s genre status cannot help but be a political one. As Ezequiel Martínez Estrada reminds us in his study of the author, reading Sarmiento’s text as a novel is an effective way to dismiss its insights, one historically deployed by Sarmiento’s political opponents. The expected payoff here lies in giving conceptual density to the gauchesca as a music genre.

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77 The only commentator this author knows of who takes Sarmiento to be, in essence, philosophizing in *Facundo* is Ricardo Piglia. In an often-cited essay on the book, he takes Sarmiento’s mode of argument - which Piglia understands as based on analogies - as tying him to (rather elaborate) ontological commitments. While Piglia’s insights are enticing, to be sure, his overall goal is to undermine the ‘civilizing’ mission of the text. His is, therefore, a consistently uncharitable reading, shedding in the end more light on Piglia than on Sarmiento. Ricardo Piglia, “Notas sobre Facundo,” *Punto de Vista* 3/8 (1980): 15-18.

78 A detailed analysis of *Facundo*’s reception can be found in Diana Goodrich, *Facundo and the Construction of Argentine Culture* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996).
Marginal by definition and only incorporated into the symbolic logic of national popular culture at the moment of his dispossession (a classic ideological process Josefina Ludmer calls 'demarginalization'), Argentina's gaucho is the cultural sign of Southern Cone independence par excellence. He is set off in history by a seemingly infinite series of appropriations, both physical (such as army conscription and imprisonment) and ideal. The gaucho's historical face is blurred by the meanings it is made to bear. Still, there are aspects of his person that remain surprisingly consistent. What follows is concerned with the identification and development of one of these consistencies. It is, rather, a singular thought, namely, that the Argentine gaucho is a musician. This is, no doubt, a familiar thought, as it appears frequently and prominently throughout gauchesca literature from the first lines of Martín Fierro to the Gounod commentary of the Fausto Criollo. That the gaucho belongs to music history is also unproblematic. Gauchesca song was adopted by Argentine composers as early as the mid-nineteenth century as the basis for an autochthonous national style, and in the twentieth it can still be heard regulating folk music aesthetics in and for that country. Familiar, then, the thought may be, but I take it that its meaning remains opaque. The gaucho’s musicianship is not merely an empirical matter. Music was, of course, a part of the historical gaucho's life as the work of Isabel Aretz has convincingly shown, but this research does not shed any light on the matter at hand. The issue for us is accounting for the constitutively musical status of this figure.

Because it is to the concrete figure of the gaucho - the result of speculation - rather than to the abstract historical gaucho - the mere product of induction - that we turn, the primarily relevant document is Sarmiento’s Facundo. There one finds the first and most rigorously worked out version of the thesis that the gaucho is a musician. Working out Sarmiento’s thought promises to point us toward a coherent position on aesthetics in some sense specific to a philosophical conception of America.

The description of the gaucho cantor occurs at the heart of Sarmiento’s analytical reconstruction of what he calls an ‘order of things’ unique to the Argentine countryside. His goal here is to make visible a regime of normalcy that reigns among the gauchos of the plains so as to explain how that regime could become so powerful and threaten to supplant European progressive society. In contrast with the rest of the book, its first three chapters are barely concerned with history or biography. Time in the pampas, it would seem, does not move historically in the manner of narrative. Rather, its tendencies are simply reproduced and radicalized. Temporal stasis in these passages results from the eruption of geography into history.  

This occurs at two levels. Geographical determinants are presumed to engender social realities that halt the normal course of history. As is well known, for Sarmiento, the particular spatial configuration of the pampas, with their

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80 There is something of a tradition in Argentine letters of interpreting the geography of the nation. It is found in as early a thinker as Rodolfo Kusch and as late a writer as Juan José Saer, whose essay “El río sin orillas” is something of a classic in the genre. See Juan José Saer, El río sin orillas - Tratado imaginario (Buenos Aires: Alianza Editorial, 1991). As the rest of this chapter makes clear, the issue for us is not a particular interpretation of Argentine geography, but the particularity of the move to geography as such.
monotonous landscape, flat topography and endless sky, made the place and its people unsusceptible to change or transformation, let alone historical ‘progress.’] At the same time, however, those determinants vanish upon inspection. Space migrates onto the temporal plane because the geographical makeup of the pampas gives itself over to space as such. It is this second level that is often passed over by interpretations of Sarmiento that nonetheless emphasize his geographical determinism. Geographical determinism it no doubt is, but of a conceptual kind. In this light, we can take seriously Sarmiento’s novelistic language: “Al sur triunfa la Pampa, y ostenta su lisa y velluda frente, infinita, sin límite conocido, sin accidente notable: es la imagen del mar en la tierra; la tierra como el mapa.”81 The association of the plains with featurelessness and of featurelessness with abstraction is clear. They make of earth the representation of earth. Land and water dissolve into one another. One might argue that featurelessness is the pampas’ feature. Here, however, the logic of abstraction, specifically of aesthetic abstraction, wins out: Characteristics evaporate.

At the risk of running over the text’s implicit assumptions, we would do well to give historical density to this otherwise de-historicized claim. To wit, this space is modern empty space, something approaching Kantian transcendental aesthesis. The reference is only somewhat rash, as it is the wages of aesthetic abstraction that are ultimately at issue. Sarmiento describes the effects of this abstraction on the poet Echeverría:

This could serve as a technical definition of the natural sublime. The poet’s subjectivity, in its particularity, is brought into aesthetic contact with the abstract universality manifest in nature. If it is true that the quality of both the space and the sublime experience of the Pampa are thoroughly modern, sustaining nothing of mimetism and in some sense offered up to the domination of Man (an aspect heavily emphasized by Sarmiento), then the subjectivity it determines is just as modern. And this ought to go for the lettered Echeverría just as much as for the illiterate gaucho. It is precisely this ‘ought,’ however, which is suppressed, just as much in the nineteenth century as in our own.

To the extent that we understand Sarmiento’s geographical determinism in this way, we can recast the central struggle of Facundo - civilization against barbarism - as a struggle immanent to modernity itself. The homogenous, empty space created by modern colonialism is perfectly reflected in the desert landscape and the society fashioned upon it suffers in abstraction. The gauchos are immediate masters of nature who do not labor, because they are able to reproduce the conditions of their livelihoods without it. To evoke a well known dialectic: they are Masters who have no need of Slaves, as Nature herself fills that role. He writes:

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82 Ibid., p. 76.
El pastoreo proporciona las mismas ventajas, y la función inhumana del ilota antiguo la desempeña el ganado. La procreación espontánea forma y acrece indefinidamente la fortuna; la mano del hombre está por demás; su trabajo, su inteligencia, su tiempo no son necesarios para la conservación y aumento de los medios de vivir. Pero si nada de esto necesita para lo material de la vida, las fuerzas que economiza no puede emplearlas como el romano.83

The passage reads like an unwitting critique of Marx. The gaucho merely consumes without having to live in alienation from his labor time. He represents a leisure class outside the context of any form of class struggle. And as we know: for Marx, outside of class struggle means outside of history. We should be careful, though, not to reinsert Marx back into Sarmiento’s casual critique. To wit, class struggle cannot produce history in a Marxian way not simply because there is only one class, but because there is no history on which class struggle could play out in Sarmiento’s Pampa.

What prevents a society of Masters from creating a civilization is the onset of boredom. The gaucho, in his isolation, discovers a characteristically modern sentiment: ennui. Sarmiento tells us that the end of a gaucho boy’s maturity is his entry into idleness. Idleness here is not different in kind from that which we might find in Paris at precisely this moment. Just as it is there, our idle moderns of the Pampa fall into nihilism coupled with the addicting innervation of cruelty. “Desde la infancia,” Sarmiento writes, “están habituados a matar las reses, y que este acto de crueldad necesaria los familiariza con el derramamiento de sangre y endurece su corazón contra los gemidos de las víctimas.”84

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83 Ibid., p. 69
84 Ibid., p. 73-4.
Mastery, idleness, and cruelty are all symptoms of the radical individuality of Sarmiento’s gaucho. Forced by geography to travel lonely distances and live at great distances from all others, there can be no substantial social institutions for him:

En las llanuras argentinas no existe la tribu nómade: el pastor posee el suelo con títulos de propiedad, está fijo en un punto que le pertenece; pero para ocuparlo, ha sido necesario disolver la asociación y derramar las familias sobre una inmensa superficie. [...] El desenvolvimiento de la propiedad mobiliaria no es imposible, los goces del lujo no son del todo incompatibles con este aislamiento: puede levantar la fortuna un soberbio edificio en el desierto; pero el estímulo falta, el ejemplo desaparece, la necesidad de manifestarse con dignidad, que se siente en las ciudades no se hace sentir allí en aislamiento y la soledad. Las privaciones indispensables justifican la pereza natural y la frugalidad en los goces trae en seguida todas las exterioridades de la barbarie. La sociedad ha desaparecido completamente.85

The full realization of the individual Sarmiento describes is the monstrous extension of liberal ideals of self-sufficiency and autonomy. If the gaucho is anything, he is an autonomous subject. His society, then, can never take the form of a city - a polis - but to the extent that his individual interest aligns with those who surround him, he can forge what amount to business partnerships and rustle up bands of thieves.

The idle, nihilistic individual can do nothing but constantly reproduce the signs of his own mastery in different forms. Sarmiento is clear that this can be done as effectively in a duel as it can in an arbitrary bet. The need for self-expression that is inherent to his ideal makes it imperative that the gaucho externalize his individuality. Despite his isolation, there cannot be such a thing as

85 Ibid., p. 68.
a man who is but a ‘private’ gaucho: a well adjusted member of a substantial community on the outside, but who burns with radical individuality in the depths of his spirit. That kind of self-consciousness is impossible as it is dependent on the kind of communal existence denied to the gaucho by geography. Even the gaucho malo “no es en el fondo un ser más depravado que los que habitan en las poblaciones.” “El gaucho malo no es un bandido,” Sarmiento continues, because although he steals, it is his “science.”

It is ultimately, I want to argue, on this unusual conception of action and agency that the whole of the argument of Facundo rests. It reappears constantly throughout the biographical narrative. One famous scene has the youthful Facundo Quiroga sparing with a wild tiger. The contrast between the animal’s pure brutality and Facundo’s very human bravery is key. In these latter pages, the less intuitive, mechanical geographical determinism that appeared so central at the start of the text begins to fall away and be replaced by its conceptual avatar. Or, to put it more accurately, mechanical determinism reveals itself to have been the avatar for a kind of conceptual abstraction at the heart of Sarmiento’s concerns all along.

The concept of action is roughly as follows: having no spiritual community, the individual cannot come to terms with himself as he is in himself. Without the negativity at work in the formation of substantial bonds, the gaucho is condemned to the pure positivity of his arbitrary actions. He is a merely external force.

86 Ibid., p. 89.
It has become clear, I hope, at this point that we have finally found ourselves returning to aesthetics. For what can the necessarily pure externality of the gaucho’s actions be if not art? We should take Sarmiento at his word when he states,

Si de las condiciones de la vida pastoril tal como la ha constituido la colonización y la incuria, nacen graves dificultades para una organización política cualquiera, y muchas más para el triunfo de la civilización europea, [...] no puede por otra parte negarse que esta situación tiene su costado poético, y faces dignas de la pluma del romanticista.\textsuperscript{87}

The point appears here explicitly, even if, at the level of the text, its implications are obscure. Debates about the genre status of \textit{Facundo} can find some resolution here. Sarmiento moves from descriptive analysis to narrative to proscription, but rather than undermine the work’s status as primarily philosophical, we can read this oscillation as symptomatic of a fidelity to the link found in ‘pastoral life’ between art and science.

The association of merely external action and art is best displayed in the pairing of the \textit{gaucho malo} with the \textit{cantor}. The two figures are versions of one another. The adventures of the gaucho, his actions, are amenable to narration in song because they are, in essence, already art. The same person can even play both roles in succession: “El \textit{cantor} mezcla entre sus cantos heroicos la relación de sus propias hazañas. [...] Tiene que dar la cuenta de sendas puñaladas que ha distribuido, una o dos desgracias (muertes!) que tuvo, y algún caballo o muchacha que robó.”\textsuperscript{88}

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., p.75

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., p. 92.
The cantor is the figure in which we are able to see the gaucho’s unsustainability and finitude. The pure particularity of his life in the Pampa finds itself up against the universality of the European society in Buenos Aires which threatens to subsume his lifeworld along with its claim to absoluteness. If the gaucho’s life ends up as mere art - mere aesthesis - he disappears into the image of himself. His fate, in other words, is Martín Fierro. This liminality is what Sarmiento refers to when he identifies the cantor with the medieval bard: “El gaucho cantor es el mismo bardo, el vate, el trovador de la Edad Media, que se mueve en la misma escena, entre las luchas de las ciudades y del feudalismo de los campos, entre la vida que se va y la vida que se acerca.” The point here is not, as is so often assumed, that on American soil, two time periods or ‘temporalities’ can be found juxtaposed in space. As argued above, there is nothing anachronistic about the gaucho in Sarmiento’s account. He is as modern as the city he opposes. The cantor is like the medieval bard because the bard is the artist of a disappearing lifeworld, the artist of change. Put differently, while in the gaucho cantor we do not encounter a historical person as such, we nonetheless discover something about historicity in the Pampa. And this is possible because of the pair the cantor makes with the lettered poet: “En la República Argentina se ven a un tiempo dos civilizaciones distintas en su mismo suelo: una naciente, que sin conocimiento de los que tiene sobre su cabeza, está remediando los esfuerzos ingenuos y populares de la Edad Media; otra que sin cuidarse de los que tiene a sus pies, intenta realizar los últimos resultados de la civilización europea.”89 The

89 Ibid., p. 91
particularity of the gaucho is placed alongside the universality of the cultured
city-dweller and, between them, they participate in what I am tempted to call a
‘dialectic of Civilization’ to complement a well-known dialectic of the
Enlightenment.

Metaphysics in the Plains

That song is lost is a premise of Carlos Astrada’s reading of the *gauchesca*. In his brief essay from 1963, “El numen del paisaje: los signos rúnicos del
silencio,” he characterizes the Pampa as an evacuated space. Originating as a
geography saturated by the ethical life of its indigenous inhabitants, the plains
were forcibly removed from their unmediated significance and made empty by
Spanish conquistadors whose universalizing imperialism destroyed everything in
its voracious path. Whatever was left of substantial life in the interior was finally
fully eradicated by what Astrada calls “statists,” those founding fathers of the
Argentine Republic who waged war on native populations in an effort to establish
European-style national sovereignty. In his words,

> Después el silencio, que se vino adensando, cuajó en una runa invisible con su secreto sellado, el único monumento del pasado de la Pampa. Este silencio, con sus enigmas, con su verbo en potencia, esperaba, sin duda, su rapsoda.\(^{90}\)

Astrada’s Rousseauian conception of the musical origin of language is articulated
in the same essay. The originary song that ordered the seemingly characterless
geography of the Pampa into something that mattered of itself in the context of a

lifeworld has been silenced. Only another singing can retrieve it. The gauchos are those who returned to the interminable flatness after fighting off Spanish rule. What they heard there was a material determinate negation: silence. The evacuation in question, then, has a certain weight, a presence. Something is meant to be disclosed or, better, retrieved out of this silence that might redeem it. This silence is not a simple absence of sound. It is already mediated. A product of a silencing, the acoustic void carries a demand to be filled. Rather than being a demand issued from another subject, pampean silence issues its demand from out of its mere concept. As a result, the demand is categorical. This is an altered version of a Kantian categorical imperative in which the gaucho who does not hear the silence of the Pampa and its implicit call - in Heideggerian language, a ‘harkening’ - misrecognizes it. Part of what it means for the space - I should say the place - of the Pampa to exist objectively is for that place to relate to action. Remembering for a moment the complexity that action takes in Sarmiento’s account, silence may well demand something that cannot be fulfilled.

It is precisely this thought about silence that makes Astrada a pivotal figure in the self-reflexive history of the gauchesca. The silence left by colonialism and genocide is the ontological condition of art in this place. Radicalizing the gauchesca and rendering its ontological stakes essentially changes how we interpret it. Silence is also the limit art runs up against in its struggle to achieve meaning.

Silence is one of many terms in Astrada’s work for solitude. Melancholy is another: “Todo de su ser es una sombra en fuga y dispersión sobre su total
melancolía, correlato espiritual (ontológico) de la infinitud monocorde de la extensión.”91 If the reading of Facundo offered above is correct, there is nothing in this thought that separates Astrada from Sarmiento. The same modern subject, in all its fraught autonomy, is at issue here as it was there. The step Astrada takes is to make of this analysis a metaphysics and he does this, importantly, by placing art front and center. This is done in two (big) steps. First, the autonomous subject is defined by its infinite expanse. There is no outside of subjective experience. Everything is encompassed by it and, therefore, it cannot distinguish itself from a void. What was merely implicit in Sarmiento’s gaucho is here explicitly claimed as the essential structure of properly Argentine subjectivity. The silence of the Pampa finds its proper counterpart in the empty, melancholic gaucho.

Note the play of universality and particularity here. The Pampa and the subjective experience it structures - and, in turn, is structured by it - are moments of particularity. The gaucho is nothing if not an individual and the force of seeing the plains as the source of specifically Argentine national life relies on those plains being particular. Nevertheless, it is the nature of these twined particularities to mediate the universal. The subject cannot make out its border in the face of a horizon that is constantly receding and thereby slips unwittingly and reluctantly into universal objectivity, something like the photonegative of Hegel’s universal subjectivity. The subject’s slippage, however, should not be interpreted as a debasement into mere thinghood. Quite to the contrary, a universal objectivity here demonstrates the cosubstantiality of subject and object. All the

91 Ibid., p. 20.
ontological commitments, in the strongest sense of this word, are firmly in place. The spiritual correlation the subject discovers with extension is, as Astrada insists, metaphysical. The Pampa is filled with a silence that can only be responded to existentially and the only proper response to its demands are universal. If meaning is to be restored, through song or otherwise, to that place that appears as nothing but space, it cannot be done partially. Astrada is explicit about the urgency that inheres in this geography:

Proponerse ya el problema tiene, para nosotros un sentido de urgencia solícita con respecto a nuestro propio ser y a nuestro porvenir existencial y vital. Es, en un dramático esfuerzo por recogernos de la dispersión, afanarse, en la Pampa inmensa, por una ciudadela espiritual en que fortificar una esperanza contra el asedio de la desolación cósmica, contra la presión del témpano de la soledad telúrica; es, sobreponiéndonos a nuestro dolor de náufragos, decidirse a brasear en este mar monótono y melancólico para alcanzar la tierra firme de una certidumbre salvadora, el pathos profundo en que hundir y estabilizar raíces.92

One can clearly make out in this passage the logic of Unhappy Consciousness. The Argentine/gaucho subject locates the source of its meaningfulness outside itself. It is nothing but a castaway. Astrada prescribes a radicalization of this condition as the only solution. So far, however, the manner in which this is meant to be carried out remains obscure.

The properly metaphysical aspect of this argument, at least, should now be clear. The physical expanse and the fragile human beings that inhabit it are not at all (or, rather, not any more) themselves. What allows that which appears to appear is prior to the gaucho. That distinction accounts for his metaphysics. The

92 Ibid., p. 17.
gaucho and his plains are already a second-order reflection. Neither space nor subject can but reflect on itself.

This is the moment art intercedes. It is Astrada’s second (big) step beyond Sarmiento. Where the nineteenth century *letrado* could only imagine the banishment of barbarism through rationalization as a solution to the problems of modernity, the twentieth century philosopher cannot avoid skepticism. Song appeared in *Facundo* as the residue of significant action. It was, by definition, impotent. Astrada hears in the gaucho song the same barbarism, but recognizes it as the return of repressed myth. This is anything but powerless or insignificant. Through gaucho song, the binding power of substantial community can be forged without giving up on individuality.

Astrada believes that this process has already begun with *Martín Fierro*. For him, this poem/song represents the kind of modern myth-making that is required: “*Martín Fierro* es y quiere ser, en la intención originaria de su creador, viva encarnación del mito de los argentinos.”

93 There are two important aspects to this thought. The first is the perfect alignment of intention and result. The individual artist has his creativity exhausted in the artwork and it thereby acquires the full saturation of his identity. Whatever else Astrada had in mind when he suggested the empty Argentine subject might plant root in its own infinity, this gesture alone should satisfy him. The materiality always present in art just is the root. The ‘tierra firme’ turns out at this moment to have been the subject itself. The second aspect has to do precisely with materiality. The poem

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93 Ibid., p. 25.
incarnates myth. The religious reference here should not be glossed over as rhetoric. The ultimate incarnation of myth, of course, is the Christian incarnation in the figure of Jesus. Christ’s carnal and mortal fulfillment of prophesy (myth) completes and, thereby, neutralizes it. After incarnation, Man is able to find within himself the means of his own salvation. The myth at issue here has no divine origin. It is a more perfect means to ground autonomy. The artist genius Hernández is an I that is a We. The particularity of an individual’s presenting a secular myth as art becomes the basis for a communal life.

The point of departure for Astrada’s reading of Hernández is, of course, the late Heidegger. There are many differences between the former’s aesthetics and the latter’s philosophy of the origin of art, but they both borrow from Kant the concept of the creative genius. His struggle to maintain his freedom from heteronomy is at the basis of the modern artwork for Heidegger as it is for Astrada. In his “Origin of the Work of Art,” Heidegger writes, “self-assertion of nature [...] is never rigid insistence upon some contingent state, but surrender to the concealed originality of the source of one’s own being.” Can we not translate this into Astradian terms? The self-assertion of nature is the equivalent of the silence of the Pampa. That silence is the source of the gaucho’s being for himself. Just as Heidegger argued that artworks open up a world to which we can give ourselves up, Astrada calls upon his fellow Argentines to surrender to their

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94 This reading of the Gospel would have been familiar to Astrada from his European training.
destiny made materially manifest in *Martín Fierro*. Following a Heideggerian usage, we could title this surrender a *Lied von der Erde*.

Having made the question of the gaucho and, significant for us, his art a metaphysical, existential puzzle is Astrada’s contribution. It does not, however, make up for some of the more troubling limitations to his insights. There is the obvious: Hernández’s poem turns out to be merely a poem. Astrada is curiously unwilling to concede this. The only reason myth had to take the form of art in the modern world was because its essential power had gone the way of the indigenous natives Astrada mourns. This, no doubt, opened up art to individuality and particularity of a kind presumably impossible in a fully enchanted world. But this cuts both ways. Art is bound to its particularity in such a way as to make community problematic. The two claims Astrada maintained about *Fierro* do not line up. The artwork can either be the complete realization of the artist’s creative intention or the grounding of intersubjective experience. The philosopher leaves us with no argument as to how these can be identified. He is, in short, not speculative enough to give us the identity of identity and non-identity we would need in order for Astrada’s claim to make sense.

The gaucho genre, then, is incomplete at this point. The experience it tracks has not yet run out. We can now follow Astrada’s impulse to look at art for a clue to solving the riddle of what he calls ‘our sphinx,’ without however ending up with nineteenth century poetry. The gaucho is a modern figure by virtue of his self-reflective identity. He belongs essentially to the (metaphysical) problem of modernism in the arts, that is, to the problem of disenchantment. If modernity
pins its stakes on art - or has in some sense become art - then it is to modern art that we must now turn.

Ginastera’s Transcendental Deduction

By the late 1960’s and well into his mature career the composer Alberto Ginastera had developed a periodization scheme for his own output. Ostensibly meant to clarify something about his stylistic development, the map presents more mysteries than it dispels. To wit, the rather flimsy sketch has inspired a secondary literature all its own in the relatively small world of Ginastera scholarship. It first appeared in an interview with Pola Suarez Urtubey published in 1967 and is roughly as follows: the period from his first performed work, composed in 1937, to his *Pampeana No. 1* (1947) represents what he terms his “objective nationalism.” Folkloric music served then as material to be referenced directly, which is to say, on the music’s surface. With the first *Pampeana*, a period of what he calls “subjective nationalism” begins. While he dispenses with overtly ‘national’ musical cues, his pieces in this period nonetheless evoke “the Argentine character.” After the third of his *Pampeanas* (1957), his “neo-expresssionist” period follows directly. Nationalism appears to evaporate as an element of style in his composition at this point, and he declares himself a dodecaphonic composer.

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A number of suspicions arise immediately from this classification. It is, for example, altogether too neat. Could his development as an artist really have occurred in tidy ten-year stints: 1937, 1947, 1957, 1967? Why has the evolution stopped? The terms appear curious, as if carefully chosen, yet decidedly opaque. What technical or thematic difference inherent to the works that comes under these headings could possibly correspond to the distinction between objectivity and subjectivity? Are these metaphors or literal descriptors? And whatever ‘subjective/objective nationalism’ refers to, it cannot lie evenly with ‘neo-expressionism,’ a third wheel, indeed. At the end of the interview, Ginastera lists a number of prescriptions intended for younger composers. Among these is the demand that their practice correspond to a “logic of history.” Assuming Ginastera took his own advice, what historical logic does his style periods track?

Needless to say, Ginastera’s aesthetic claims - at least the ones made in words - require both reconstruction and extension if we are to understand them, let alone take them seriously. A first move in this direction plausibly begins by unpacking the category of “subjective nationalism,” because it appears to be the key to the whole. It is the borders of this period that articulate the transitions in his model. More compellingly, he himself cites the first and third Pampeana pieces as watersheds. Other, more popular works were composed and premiered between 1947 and 1957, including Variaciones Concertantes (1953). Still, it is the two chamber pieces and one orchestral work that ultimately carry the weight of their composer’s stylistic claims.

Taking a closer look at Ginastera’s description:
La segunda etapa, o período subjetivo, tiene como punto culminante la Pampeana No. 3 para orquesta. En esta obra, así como en el Primer Cuarteto de Cuerdas, en las dos primeras Pampeanas un estilo que, sin abandonar la tradición argentina, se había hecho más amplio o con una mayor ampliación universal. Ya no estaba como en la etapa anterior ligado a temas o ritmos genuinamente criollos, sino el carácter argentino se creaba mediante un ambiente poblado de símbolos.97

Here again, a by now all too familiar theme: the composer seeks to create a national musical style that is both particular and universal at once. What is potentially new here is the manner in which Ginastera saw the problem in this period. References to folklore have disappeared. National character is now present in form rather than content. As he says himself, the key to these compositions is the environment (ambiente) in which musical symbols find themselves. This was true of Allende’s Tonadas. In both the Argentine and Chilean pieces, there is a distinction made on the surface between formal manipulation and thematic material. Ginastera’s move is, no doubt, more subtle as he is unwilling to reduce the particular to the folk. The gambit of the Tonadas is impossible for him. Folklore by midcentury had fully turned into kitsch. Bourgeois nationalism was now its own generality, the effect of intensive commodification. Folklore, therefore, could not be a symbol for subjective nationalism. Its particularity was lost.

This loss, I want to claim, is essentially the difference between objective and subjective nationalisms in Ginastera. What motivates the transition is what

Stanley Cavell would call the avoidance of fraudulence. The gaucho dance forms on which much of Ginastera’s early work was based turned out to be fraudulent in Cavell’s sense. The implicit audience they project, that of an authentic national community bound by a common heritage, can no longer be taken seriously. In different terms, this music has its objects for itself. It is not essentially skeptical. It is in this sense that we should understand ‘objective nationalism.’ The nation is objective, transparently available for genuine representation. The corollary, ‘subjective nationalism,’ is reflective, skeptical. More accurately, it sees skepticism as something to be overcome. Music is now tasked with something and has become properly modernist.

At the level of the music, this appears as the question of material. The engine of the gaucho genre from the beginning has been the dissatisfaction incurred by a nature (geography) that has been somehow de-natured. A music that can no longer immediately rely on its materials is analogously de-natured. Ginastera’s solution is akin to a Kantian Copernican turn. The only way to save the objectivity of musical materials is to have them be subjectively justified. It is no longer a question of finding a musical language for Argentine composers that would make them something more than mere epigones of their European counterparts. Style must now be individual. Its specific mode of presentation is the responsibility of the composer. Ginastera arrived at artistic modernism with all its essential attributes: the composer genius, abstraction, the overcoming of skepticism. The road he followed, however, was specific to a peripheral culture.

98 Stanley Cavell, Must We Mean What We Say? (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969).
For all its austerity, Ginastera’s subjectivism is still fully in line with the

*gauchesca*.

That the *Pampeanas* take up a natural setting as their topic is not an accident and the stakes are high. As a response to the challenge of the *gauchesca*, these pieces attempt to incarnate in matter the conditions for the possibility of meaningfulness in modernity. Astrada’s mythical poetry is replaced here first by a violin and piano (*Pampeana No. 1*, 1947), then by a cello (*Pampeana No. 2*, 1951), then by the orchestra as a whole (*Pampeana No. 3*, 1954).

The second of these works will do as an example. It is arguably the most successful and the one that enjoys the most contemporary performances. The division of labor between piano and cello is clear. The piano is given a series of chords arranged in cells. Rhythmic cells alternate between ones that defy bar lines. Some kind of triad is virtually omnipresent in the right hand and most of the piano part is strictly homophonous. It is an accompaniment to be sure, but not just that. The overwhelming impression is of machinic mindlessness. The part trundles along with no clear progressive intent or possible conclusion. Its harrowing aspect is countered by a cello line designed after a vocal part. The string part swells and swirls, speeding up and slowing down seemingly without cause. Repeated notes suggest the articulation of absent words. Constant virtuosic tricks indicate that there is something to be *expressed* or told, but without text, this is impossible. What we are left with is a *stile rappresentativo* without any hope of direct representation, merely its conditions. This is what the work thematizes: an un-voiced voice attempting to graft itself onto an overly
thing-like frame. The two parts come together at the end. The piano part bends
toward melody and the cello part gives up much of its rhythmic, metric and
dynamic flexibility. The gesture makes for a conclusion, but it is hardly
triumphant. No solution is found, only a kind of broken compromise. Nothing in
the piece is free from alienation. The cello is all-too-human and the piano never
works up enough substance to hold our attention independently.

How, then, is this work a success? It is, after all, fragmentary and
disjointed. Its conclusion is too formal to be organic, which veils the wholeness of
the whole. In other words, it is dead. Its being dead is the substance of
Ginastera’s success. The life that invigorates every bar of his early songs and
ballets is replaced here with its determinate negation. We are given life back, to
be sure, but negatively.

The term ‘life’ here is derived from the idea of the organic work of art, but
it is my word here for meaning. The concept comes with the curious demand that
we care about it and its preservation. If we do not, it is not exactly life that is,
finally, at issue. An artwork that is not about death, but is in some inescapable
way itself dead, nonetheless moves. It is animate. What is animated, however, is
not a semblance of life, but a dead-ness that points toward life. They are the
material carriers of the possibility of meaning. And that materiality is key. It was
Nature, after all, that was threatened in the Pampa. In Sarmiento and Astrada, an
unnatural geography pushed the subject back into itself. In Ginastera, because he
is an artist, works upon nature itself to find a key to the subject. The subject has
to be object as well.
This chapter outlines the history and meaning of the Nueva Canción movement as it occurred in Chile from the 1960's through the start of military dictatorship in 1973. The latter date is of particular significance. A “new song” movement grew up in many countries throughout Latin America and the world during this period. They demonstrated a shared set of musical elements and all displayed an explicit relationship to, while nonetheless experimenting with, ‘folk’ forms. The Chilean version was not the first nor did it last the longest. While it does distinguish itself at the level of composition and form, Nueva Canción’s unusually broad dissemination and high moral stakes are to a great extent the result of the political circumstances to which it is bound as well as those that determined its end. Salvador Allende’s attempt to construct a modern socialism through parliamentary democracy in the wake of Popular Front politics appeared to many as the most significant contribution to Latin American anti-colonialism since the Cuban Revolution of 1959. The violent repression unleashed to reverse the attempt secured for posterity the symbolic importance of those three years of Unidad Popular government (1970-1973). The political, however, does not creep into music by osmosis by virtue of proximity to profound circumstance. There were, to put it somewhat crassly, musical reasons for Nueva Canción’s amenability with respect to Left politics. And it is just this amenability that has consequences for the larger story being told.
The Popular: Baroque, Commercial and Folk

That being said, moving from Chavez and Ginastera to commercial folkloric music seems an abrupt shift. The work of deeply and self-consciously learned composers is placed on the same plane for examination as the homespun of self-styled troubadours. What is more, the architectonic that has structured the chapters thus far would suggest that something about a ‘conflict’ between Chavez and Ginastera’s modernisms is resolved or revealed in Nueva Canción. This, however, would be hard to gauge given that the categories that are typically employed both to analyze and, indeed, to evaluate a lettered repertoire on the one hand and a mass cultural phenomenon on the other would hardly coincide. The juxtaposition appears as a category error.

One need not throw out this reasoning at first glance, dismissing it perhaps as elitist. The objection is, in a sense, correct: There is a real, historical divide between art music and folk music repertoires both in terms of their genesis and consumption. The divide, however - and this is the key - is historical. The concepts do not precede that which falls under them. The divide arises at a moment when art is fashioned apart from the quotidian and can establish its value at least in part with respect to its difference from the artisanal. What conceptually determines art negatively determines artisanry. And as with all conceptual determination, it forms an integral part of a material reality: in this case, a struggle between a class of owners and consumers, and a laboring class to whom are entrusted, by and large, the duties of societal reproduction. As has
been emphasized over and over again throughout this study, the history of
aesthetic diremption and modern artistic self-consciousness is the history of
capitalist modernity with its characteristic class conflict. The artisanal is the
product of technicities proper to labor, caught in a matrix of the useful, the
decorative, and the totemic. The artistic, by contrast, takes its absoluteness from
its material isolation. It is progressive and enjoys the refinements it inherits from
past stages of social evolution.

This crude - yet historically effective - dichotomy maps onto the native and
the imported in Latin America. From the period of initial colonization and the
birth of an America that would be European and non-European at once, what
arrived with those who arrived from the Peninsula was a division of class and
labor that would re-articulate itself until our own day. As has been remarked on
many times before, the fall of the colonial order was not the end of class
domination, nor did it spell an end to the material reality that authorized the
difference between the artisanal and the artistic that allowed for a Latin
American aesthetics to be thought through and invested in in the first place.

As Rubén Babeiro Saguier and Miguel Rojas Mix have pointed out, the
distinction between art and artisanry is complicated by a third concept that
mediates both, namely the popular:

Las nociones, pues, de popular y culto han de precisarse dentro de
la dialéctica “dominación/liberación,” y en el contexto de la
dependencia. [...] Desde este punto de vista, el arte culto fue,
originariamente, el arte del vencedor; pero éste, justamente para
imponer su ideología, necesitó dar al mimo un carácter
“popular.” [...] Tal es el caso del barroco, arte culto que aspira a imponer el poder de Dios y el rey en el nivel popular.99

What is meant by “popular” here is not what is familiar from a term like ‘popular music,’ which is indistinguishable from mass culture and, what is more, oscillates between pointing to a brute number of appreciators/consumers and defining something about the content of what it describes. Following their example, in order for the art of the colonial baroque to become ‘popular’ in the sense meant here, it must have a certain relationship to life. It must help organize the social as such: the individual’s relationship and participation in a cultural whole and the meaning of that totality. The ‘popular’ is both expression of and a regulatory device for the ethical life of a community. The ‘national popular’ is just this in the context of the modern nation-state. Art must make some claim to the popular just as artisanry does. When art makes this claim, it bends towards the reproductive tendency at the surface of artisanry. When artisanry makes it, it bends toward the self-sufficiency of art. The concept of the popular, then, mediates the divide between the concepts such that something of their identity can be glimpsed.

It is not clear, however, that artisanry can ever make this claim given the relationship of power assumed to be structuring its intelligibility. If it is the reality of political domination that allows for a split between the quotidian and artisanal, and the artistic in the first place, then art is in a position to call the shots, as it were. Indeed, this is the project of art from the moment of the Conquest through to the twentieth century. In most of the Spanish colonial

possessions, indigenous ‘literature’ was all but entirely destroyed and in the Southern Cone where the Araucanian resistance lasted well into Independence, there was hardly an opportunity to preserve indigenous oral culture even if such a preservation held much appeal. Even missionaries, whose experience in the colonial order came closest to native life, literally built Marian hymns with the raw material of Quechua words.\textsuperscript{100} American Indians excelled in singing - and then composing - devotional polyphony.\textsuperscript{101} A colonial popular art was fully in force.

This period saw the spread throughout colonial society of Spanish \textit{romances} of medieval cast that had been an integral part of both oral and literate culture on the Peninsula. The origins of the \textit{romance} are disputed, but the poems that were avidly collected into volumes on the Peninsula at the same time as Spanish possessions in America were being consolidated, have deep roots in courtly medieval culture, perhaps seeing their birth in epic poetry orally disseminated as early as the tenth or eleventh century. Crucially for our topic, the \textit{romance} persisted as a part of popular culture throughout most of the last century. What persisted largely, however, were not the epic narrative \textit{romances} or those that depended on classical allegory. Rather, what maintained relevance were narratives with religious themes (encounters with the Virgin, for example) and tales of harrowing or bloody historical events.\textsuperscript{102} Those poems whose content

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{100}] One need only think of the first published music in Latin America.
\item[\textsuperscript{102}] See Julio Vicuña Cifuentes, \textit{Romances populares y vulgares} (Santiago: Imprenta Barcelona, 1912).
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
had no referents for the colonial were dismissed. Poems in strict octosyllable
lines and divided into four line verses - in other words, holding all the formal
pretensions of the literate life of a politically dominant class - regulated popular
understanding. These poems sustained deformation by virtue of their oral
transmission and the poems which survived in the rural repertoire were not
arbitrarily chosen. We ought to conclude that the romance tradition was
mediated by use and therefore, life. However, the moment of this mediation, that
is, the moment art finds its place in life, life appears suffused with art-form. The
popular as such is nowhere to be found.

The coming of political independence saw an abrupt shift in the nature
and ideals of the dominant class. The development of print culture at the close of
the eighteenth century allowed periodical circulation to make available
increasingly enlightened literature for lettered elites. At the same time, neo-
classical art and architecture was institutionalized in newly emerging academies
in the recently emancipated states. Poetry turned from its medievalisms to
embrace a new mimetic stance associated primarily with Andrés Bello.\(^\text{103}\) The
latter’s call, in his silva to the tropics for example, to renew Man’s essential
relationship to the natural world and to disabuse himself of pompous ornament,
which is but a cultural and therefore artificial interference in human destiny, is
an essentially Romantic one. It depends on the dismissal of the style that

\(^{103}\) One finds a fine discussion of the significance of the literary developments of this period in
Andrew Bush, “Lyric poetry of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries” in Roberto Gonzalez
characterized colonial-period art. Nonetheless, however, for all these changes (and they are significant) the dialectic at hand, that between art and artisanry mediated by the popular, has not changed. If anything, a newly self-reflective art in Bello attempts to bypass the artisanal reproduction of life through its immediate appeal to nature. He writes in his Silva: “Oh! si al falaz ruido, / la dicha al fin supiese verdadera/ anteponer, que del umbral le llama/ del labrador sencillo, / lejos del necio y vano/ fasto, el mentido brillo/ el ocio pestilente ciudadano!” What laborer does he have in mind? The agricultural proletariat, a population that will grow with that first century of American independence that Bello sends off, is quite casually overlooked here. The laborer he cites is literally not able to read his poem. Beginning with the Romantic turn in Latin American aesthetics, the ability of art to be popular in our sense is damaged by its own need to control the implied relationship.

If what I have here called the ‘Romantic turn’ is just a becoming conscious of the absence of and the need for a popular art, that is, for a new bourgeois order to find expressive force on its own terms, then the modernism - including poetic modernismo - that succeeds this moment (logically, if not always in time) is faced with an unhappy choice. Either artistic expression can retain its internal coherence at the expense of popularity, departing from life, or it could find its way to conservative recovery. There emerges a progressive and a regressive modern art. The name for the latter is ‘folklore.’ Crucially here, both are products of bourgeois ideology. The divide upon which they rely is internal to the class.

dynamics of capitalist society in which, classically, even laborers are alienated from the ‘artisanal’ reproduction of the material of daily life. Folklore is also an urban phenomenon. Songs that would be recognized as ‘folkloric’ by Santiaguino folk enthusiasts and scholars had been sung on the outskirts of cities like Chillán or in the Colchagua Valley presumably since the days of the Spanish colony without any claims to nationalism, authenticity, folk genius or conservative preservation.

The bourgeois folk, however, was not open to all societies and nations incorporated into the world system, as Matthew Gelbart points out in his book on the genealogy of folk music.\(^{105}\) Neither France nor England could stake out much space for elaborate folk traditions, despite each enjoying a rich medieval poetic legacy. A truism of the genre is that it is quintessentially German. It was Herder, after all, who coined the term *Volkslied*, or folk song. And it was in terms of a specifically German Romanticism that the stakes of the designation must be understood. Herder himself was engaged throughout his philosophic life in a debate with French Encyclopedists and the version of Enlightened rationalism they represented. For all of their secular, empirical exactness they had - and here, he simply followed his mentor Hamann - failed to understand the world in its concrete specificity. The truth of the French Enlightenment was an abstract one. There was something ‘more,’ so to speak, in Nature herself that had to be grasped in terms of quality rather than quantity, in its plurality and unity at once. The

unity of human life, for example, was manifest in a plurality of qualitatively distinct nations delivered up by Nature. The members of these nations, through all of their actions and products, expressed what was essential to their kind. The nations of Man, in other words, are expressive in precisely the same way artworks are expressive. The human being was her own representation of collective existence. Collecting and studying the folk song, that is, the unreflective song proper to a given human collective and therefore expressive of its substance, was just one of they ways the modern subject could come to know the truth of her belonging to a people. This thought, in some form or another, is at the heart of all folkloric traditions (including the one upon which Nueva Canción was built). It is not accidental, though, that it should come from a German with his eye on events on the other side of the Rhine. As England and France moved toward political and economic modernity, the German states remained in relative backwardness. With no greater political unity and holding all too firmly to feudal and monarchial traditions, Germans came to regard themselves as a peripheral people whose cultural unity and modernity could compensate for their material underdevelopment: a land of poets and thinkers. This tendency intensified throughout the nineteenth century, making its way through the philosophic reflections of Hegel to the economics of Karl Marx and Richard Wagner’s aesthetics. We can, then, speak of a German model for cultural peripherality,

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always concerned with finding its way to universality through national particularity.

It is in this spirit that one finds the Chilean Julio Vicuña Cifuentes collecting and publishing folk poetry just as his central European counterparts had done. From roughly the turn of the century to the end of its first decade, Vicuña sought out recent immigrants to Santiago from the countryside who could recite poetry from memory. He also made several journeys out of the capital to build his collection. What he found was the remnants of the romancero popularly disseminated in the colonial period. As mentioned above, these only survived selectively and, in most cases, in clearly corrupted form. Having no originals to compare them to, however, the scholar published multiple juxtaposed versions of romances that he transcribed from his informants’ recitations. He explains the need for his project:

Es urgente recoger los viejos romances que hay esparcidos en nuestros campos y cidades, antes que el turbión de versos líricos de factura moderna que propagan los cantores populares, acaben por barrerlos de la tradición, perdiéndose un caudal de poesía que no volveremos a encontrar.

And as if anticipating an objection, he goes on:

Y esa poesía es tanto de España como de Chile, porque los cantos que viven secularmente en un pueblo, toman por sí mismos carta de naturaleza, con más derecho que otros, nacidos en el país, pero que por no corresponder a su idiosincrasia, por no haber penetrado en el espíritu de la colectividad, parecen siempre extranjeros.\textsuperscript{107}

The folkloric claim seems to be clearly laid out. That cultural work that serves as natural link to the specificity of the collectivity at hand (in this case, the Chilean

\textsuperscript{107} Vicuña Cifuentes, p. xxvii.
nation state) is rescued by the urban man of letters so that artifice will be prevented from fully eclipsing spirit. The thesis, however, runs into a number of revealing obscurities. The objection Vicuña is presumably anticipating is that the *romancero* is hardly native to Chile, but a remnant of a cultural moment when the dominance of a foreign power determined literary production. Even when some *romances* take on content that is specific to Chilean experience, the very form is a mark of dependence. Poetry written in the country since the end of the colony strikes as a more intuitive choice for the basis of an art practice truly ‘native’ to the nation. But poetry that is undeniably modern, bearing on its surface the self-consciousness of artifice, cannot sustain recoding as a folklore, which depends at the very least on the appearance of immediacy of invention. A return to Nature, after all, cannot be the result of studied reflection. The popular *romancero* is the best candidate available to fill the German model for peripheral particularity. It’s perdurance in rural society - an index of the people’s commitment to the form - lent it further credibility. This leads Vicuña to affirm the effective reality of appearances: native-born compositions will always seem foreign while the Baroque lyrics will take on “carta de naturaleza.” He has effectively given the octosyllabic line a passport.

The move Vicuña makes should not be confused for a valorization of rural laborers through a documentation of their sung poetry. The scholar himself is openly hostile to his informants whom he blames for being impatient with his work and overall having a taste for the perverse. If the popular *romance* is being saved from the ravages of time, it is also being saved from the ravaging of
agricultural laborers, without the consciousness or skill to know the value of what they carry in their memories. This attitude is not simply a peculiarity of this influential critic. Rather, it is written into the class character of the folkloric as such. An authentic relationship to life can be found for art if it is effectively borrowed from a time when the separation of art from artisanry was less powerfully in force. The goal is not to realize a regression, but to allow for satisfaction in the authority of art by controlling the representation of its supposed opposite.

The web of concepts I have been tracing so far encounters a significant complication beginning soon after Vicuña publishes his study: the folk becomes a genre of commercial music. In 1940, while she was serving as Chile’s ambassador to Brazil, the poet and soon-to-be Nobel laureate Gabriela Mistral published a short essay in El Mercurio praising the work of a folk ensemble called Los Cuatro Huasos. The group had formed twenty years earlier and represented the first such ensemble to professionalize as folk musicians. For Mistral they are not only disseminators and salvagers of that which is authentically Chilean, they are nothing short of the embodiment of the Bolivarian dream of Latin American unity. The first of these accomplishments is achieved through research. “Harto les costó rehacer el cuerpo desgranado de la vieja canción chilena;” she writes, “mucho tendrían que expurgar; habían visto en bastantes piezas el desgarrón de
los giros intrusos; y en otros la adulteración lisa y llana.” Mistral is suspicious of precisely the same adulterations that Vicuña worried over. The Cuatro Huasos are to be commended here for having refined the material they found. The second achievement is more subtle, but for the writer, more important by far. Her prose is elegant:

> Cuando la fusión de las patrias indoespañolas se logre - ya no son los tiempos de decir ‘nunca’ sino de decir ‘mañana’ - se hará el recuento minucioso de las herramientas que trabajaron en el duro milagro. Sé muy bien que se darán columnas de nombres políticos y que tal vez se olvide en el repertorio de la honra a la música popular criolla y a sus maestros y ejecutantes. La música, parecida a la luz, es divina e inasible y se parece al huésped sin cuerpo que domina a todos aunque no se le nea la mano alzada ni se le oigan correr los pies del aire. Pero entonces alguien habrá que nombre a la gran soldadora de la gente americana, a la que nos probó sin palabras nuestra comunidad de pasión, de dolor o de alegría.

From the final rendez-vous of victory over the forces of regional dissolution, Mistral insists that we will look back on folkloric music in particular as not only an expression of that unity, but a force for binding Latin America together.

> What is described represents a vast expansion of the popular. If folkloric music is able to produce the effects Mistral wants to reserve for it, then everything that might have separated art from artisanry has disappeared and the art that is produced is robustly regulative of life. To be sure, how all of this happens is mysterious, but what is important here is the change of stakes for a musical folk popular that has taken place. Music has moved from the merely expressive to the political realm the moment she allows it a place - even a

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109 Ibid. p. 213.
privileged place - in the realization of a modern, Romantic political ideal of grand national unity and independence. The essential conceptual scheme that makes the Nueva Canción movement intelligible is all in place here, decades before it began.

What makes possible Mistral’s excitement about a folkloric popular is the commercial success that the Cuatro Huasos enjoyed from the 1920’s through the mid 1950’s. In order that the folk might be regulative, it must be accessible to broad swathes of the population it is meant to help politically unite. Mediating this accessibility is the, at the time, newly burgeoning radio and recording industry. By 1927, the group had cut 20 78’s at studios in Argentina and by the time that Mistral was writing her article, they had signed with CBS in the United States. The 1939 World’s Fair in New York saw them perform as Chilean cultural ambassadors. They made famous an approach to the rural lyric, but their repertoire included a variety of musical genres from bolero to Swing. In short, they demonstrated that the Chilean folk could be marketable: consumed as a commodity.

Commodification significantly alters the status of popularity. Although quantitatively more people are consuming this music, that consumption is no longer immediate or potentially participatory. The very medium that allows folk music mass dissemination in Chile is that which replaces a musical practice with a musical object. It is true that neither the radio or the 78 as technologies nor any peculiar agency on the part of the Cuatro Huasos is responsible for this change. Neither can be said to have introduced reification or the profit motive to the
country. All of that existed already. What changed at this moment, though, was internal to the logic of a folk popular: a kind of fulfillment of its representative and normative promise. Severed from the lived conditions appropriate to music making in the Chilean countryside, the placeless folk could be everywhere at once. It’s representation of particularity, referring specifically to a tradition found in and proper to a determinate place, is manifested as a generality: national folk particularity as such. One such particularity being like another, the Cuatro Huasos could take their place singing a *tonada* next to other nation-state-themed tents at a World’s Fair one day and sing a Mexican *corrido* on the radio the next. Mistral sees in this generality in specificity a herald of eventual Bolivarian regional unification. It is overly simple and, indeed, false to deny this. Rather, it is born of a contradiction she does not see.

As one would expect, this contradiction did not remain unnoticed. By the time the Cuatro Huasos were wrapping up their three decades of success, scholars and musicians increasingly saw them as impostors. The Huasos and the other ensembles that modeled themselves off of them such as Los Huasos Quincheros were referred to by Nueva Canción musicians and their precursors as producers of “postcard” music, fit for the tourist industry. What had made this folk music so successful had also made it unable to sustain the robust identification demanded by the folk popular itself. Whatever else Nueva Canción was, it was an overt attempt to overcome the contradictions endemic to the folkloric by means of a radicalization of its claim to popularity. This meant changing the status of folkloric popularity with respect to its origins. The
traditional was no longer something immaterial to be gleaned from sources and carefully refined. Rather, it could be met with outright and adopted directly. What began in the research and performances of Margot Loyola came to full fruition in the hands of Violeta Parra. They not only sang as their sources did, they became indistinguishable from their sources and appeared to be creating the music they salvaged spontaneously and of themselves. The movement that would give itself the title ‘New’ would overtly take its cue from this more complex relationship to the past. In short, the solution found to the ‘falsity’ of what the Huasos Quincheros - dressed in bright red and blue ponchos and strumming well-tuned guitars to accompany close and crooned vocal harmony - produced was to be found in making explicit what was present and contemporary about the folkloric. The to some degree unintended consequence of an insistence on the present was the emergence of politics, specifically Left revolutionary politics, as a privileged basis on which to make a case for contemporaneity. What had, in a distant past before the emergence of art, guaranteed the popular, the artisanal, was replaced by the political. The political, in turn, would attempt to force an abdication by art of its project to control the aesthetic parameters of life, a control it could no longer have with the development of mass media consumption.

What Can Be Consumed During Import-Substitution?

There was another material factor that contributed to this change in the status of folk art. The Great Depression produced a crisis of capitalism as it had formed in the export-led economies. During the war years, Chile, like many other
Latin American states whose economies suffered when demand for their raw material exports fell, began to invest in industrialization. The development model, referred to as ‘import-substitution’ as the new enterprises would presumably substitute demand for imported manufactured goods, precipitated migration away from the countryside to urban centers, especially Santiago. An increasingly modernized agricultural capitalism also pushed rural laborers to abandon their livelihoods on the land and seek employment in the city. The very campesinos who had been Vicuña’s despised sources had now entered the city in the form of a growing mob. New jobs in the capital could hardly keep up with the rapid migration and the shanty towns that would become a focus of the Allende years began to crop up around mid-century. The ‘import-substitution’ model in Chile fell into characteristic difficulties, including limits relating to credit and investment and the relative technical efficiency of nascent industry. Industrial development appeared, when it did, in a series of small bursts and long lulls.110 Those who had retained in their memories the Baroque popular now found themselves in urban slums, juxtaposed to urban consumers. Spacial proximity became temporal presence.

Chile was not alone in experiencing either the economic and social transformations described or the logical transformations internal to music traced above. In fact, as most of the few histories of the movement mention, Argentine popular musicians initially served as a model for their Chilean Nueva Canción

counterparts. In 1963 a group of Argentine folk musicians that included Armando Tejada Gómez, Tito Francia and Mercedes Sosa published a document in the press called “Manifiesto del Nuevo Cancionero.” In it, they outlined a set of prescriptions for the development of music making that would not fall into the illegitimacies that plagued commercial music. In making their case, they called up an obvious foil: Tango. Because of this latter genre’s market success and identification with an urban audience, it could stand for the dominance the port city of Buenos Aires historically held over the rest of the country. The capital had in this period developed enough of an industrial sector to support a large middle class who, in turn, served as a consumer base for commercial popular music. Tango was classed, as it were, responding to specific social tendencies on its very surface. The new Argentine folklorists named the dominance of the port city over the provinces a “geo-sociological deformation” that could only corrupt music. And that corruption came in the form of a diminishment in substance brought about through commodification. “Es que el tango,” they write, “merced a su buen buerte, ya había caído del ángel popular a las manos de los mercaderes y era divisa fuerte para la exportación turística. Fue entonces cuando lo condenaron a repetirse a sí mismo, hasta estererotipar un paía de tarjeta postal, farolito mediante, ajeno a la sangre y el destino de su gente.”

All the failures of popular music up until this moment are summed up here. Even the characteristic reference to postcards, those mass-reproduced

images that are sold to document individual experience, is present. Pointing out that Tango had been forced to do nothing but reproduce itself in its own image goes to the heart of the critique. What is constantly new in repetition has no history or future (neither sangre nor destino), even when its very consistency is meant to mark its traditionalism. What Sosa, Tejada and company suggest is a coming into self-consciousness, “una toma de conciencia,” for music that would be inherent to its development: “El nuevo cancionero [...] no nace por o como oposición a ninguna manifestación artística popular, sin como consecuencia del desarrollo estético y cultural del pueblo y es su intención defender y profundizar ese desarrollo.” They are bringing the organic development of Argentine music to its close. The way in which they chose to do so, however, was determined by the same migratory pattern as seen in Chile: “debido al auge industrial que se inicia a raíz de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, la capital, recibió el aporte masivo de inmensos contingentes humanos del interior del país. Ellos traían junto a la esperanza de una vida mejor en la gran ciudad, sus raídas guitarras.”

Chilean Nueva Canción grows up parallel to Argentina’s Nuevo Cancionero and many of the former’s most important musicians benefited from artistic and intellectual exchange with their counterparts across the Andes. Chile’s case, however, differed from the Argentine. Santiago did not have the relationship with the provinces that Buenos Aires had with the Argentine interior. Economic

\[112\] “Conciencia here does not translate directly as ‘self-consciousness.’ The context, however, makes it clear that this is the appropriate concept. Later in the manifesto, they write: “El país existe. [...] La conciencia de ese ser en el país es irreversible y sus implicancias más profundas de las que el cancionero nativo es sólo su forma más visible, informarán y conformarán en adelante su destino distórico.”
conditions had not produced the port city’s burgeoning middle class. There was no equivalent to the Tango. The commercial music that reached Chilean audiences was almost entirely of foreign origin and much of it from parts of Latin America which had more successfully transitioned to mass urbanization and industrialization. After a devastating earthquake that wrecked Chillán and Concepción in 1939, Mexico’s Lorenzo Cárdenas sent a delegation of aid and cultural figures to Chile as a demonstration of solidarity.\textsuperscript{113} For years afterwards, Mexican commercial popular music, mostly disseminated through film, consumed Chilean popular culture, competing at an advantage with American and Argentine products. For Nuevo Cancionero musicians, Argentine music had to move logically from a commercial to a folk popular. The Chilean Nueva Canción, by contrast was attempting a move not only from a false folk to an authentic one, but also from a foreign dominated popular to a native one. “Déjate de corcoveos,/que no nací pa’ jinete/Me sobran los Valentinos,/los Gardeles y Negretes,” sings Violeta Parra, referring to international media starts Rudolph Valentino, Carlos Gardel and Jorge Negrete.

All the same, both Argentine and Chilean movements responded to the problem of consumption under a new economic regime. The market privilege of exchange over use value had foundered on a fundamental contradiction of value. Without a clear use-value, that is, a concrete role for the commodity in life such that it might be desired, exchange-value evaporates. What made the Tango

\textsuperscript{113} Cárdenas was not just showing solidarity with another Latin American nation, but with a fellow Popular Front government in Pedro Aguirre Cerda was was president of Chile from 1938 until he died in office three years later.
infinitely repeatable and the colorful, upper-middle-class musicians in *huaso* costume exchangeable had also bled them of relevance. This could no longer be avoided once the very presence of a *campesino* labor force demonstrated that the rural past was now an urban present. It is this very presence that is the key to the contradiction of consumption that music encountered, as it were, of itself.

Three years after the Argentine Manifesto appeared in print, Patricio Manns, already one of the best known Nueva Canción musicians having been celebrated for his song “Arriba en la Cordillera” the year before, published his own. Manns’s *Primer manifiesto de la nueva canción* is at once a complement and response to its ultramontane predecessor. Insisting that songs, if they are to have any hope of justifying themselves, must do so of themselves and without the help of extramusical apologies, he attempts to profile the circumstances that accompany the songs in question. His text is poetic and elliptical. Rather than provide an account of anything like the *Zeitgeist* that had made possible Nueva Canción, Manns lays a prose poem beside the sung poems of the genre in order that they might illuminate one another. The manifesto centers on this passage:

Ante todo, éste es un libro cantado, un libro que guarda tierra, aire, piedra, árbol, elementos. Que atesora elementos desatados también: tempestades, relámpagos. Que recorre los caminos de la tierra, pero no mirando los caprichos del polvo, sino la evolución misteriosa de los pájaros en el espacio y al leñador luchando contra un roble que se defiende, que combate crismando todas sus grandes raíces mansas y que, sin embargo, sucumbe truchado por el hacha. Y aún antes, es un libro donde se cantan aspectos particulares de la gran tragedia humana: están aquí, en estos surcos del disco, que vagamente recuerdan el paso humano: están aquí en estos surcos del disco, que vagamente recuerdan el paso del arado mecánico por la tierra, la miseria: el trabajo suicida; la ley ancha y angosta a la vez; el amor amargo, (siempre olvido y ausencia, nunca plenitud);
The imagery is thrilling. A book becomes song before transforming into the stuff of the natural world and the markers of rural life and labor. Human tragedy in song becomes the very grooves of a long playing record, which are at once the grooves of tilled earth. Most importantly, the ‘book’ of Nueva Canción is an echo of the scream heard in the midst of lived night. The echo, the scream turned into narrative, rather than the scream itself, is what shakes the listener to moral response. For Manns, Nueva Canción is primarily a giving meaning to human suffering so that it might fulfill a pre-modern artistic demand: the tutoring of ethical consciousness. It does so by referring narrative meaning to a certain kind of rural life. The reproduction of society in the cordillera, along the plowed fields, between swings of the ax, contains within it a weapon against meaninglessness.

“Esta es una hora de combate,” Manns writes at the end of his essay, “y en un combate en que está empeñada la humanidad entera, hasta una canción es filosa arma de batalla.” The battle is at once a spiritual and political one.

Manns’s early songs, for the most part, are poetic reflections on the suffering of rural labor. His best known piece tells the story of a peasant who is summarily shot for stealing sheep. “¿Qué sabes de cordillera/si tú naciste tan lejos?/Hay que conocer la piedra/que corona al ventisquero.” The octosyllabic

114 Manns.
verses that open the song assumes the listener needs to be shown something about a world she is removed from, born, as she presumably is, in the city and far from the everyday reality of the mountains. One could mistake what happens in the song as recuperative. In the midst of urban migration and agricultural proletarianization, the lived experience of the campesino must be recovered and brought within reach. The meaning of this experience, however, is only relevant in terms of the political and ethical conjuncture of Manns’s present. A rapidly growing labor movement that is the direct result of import-substitution economics demands representation of the ethical stakes proper to it. In other words, for Manns - just as was the case for Tejada and Sosa - there is something utterly of the moment in folklore. Socio-economic conditions have torn its inheritors from an imagined past and placed them in the factories and slums of the present. It is already clear how the political begins to be a touchstone for presence. Manns does not have to extend Tejada and Sosa’s logic very far - he merely makes explicit an ethical commitment implicit in their response to new class relations and consumer society - in order to find himself at the doorstep of the Latin American revolutionary tradition.

A Folk Vanguard

If the Argentine and Chilean cases are versions of one another, it seems that Chile is less representative of the logical progression here. Developing less rapidly than its larger neighbor, Chile’s consumer base for music consumption was smaller. As a result, Chilean popular music is less easily separated into that
meant for middle-class entertainment and the emergent neo-folk. The step from Carlos Gardel to Mercedes Sosa is less marked than the step from Los Cuatro Huasos to Violeta Parra. The very absence of a Tango equivalent, however, makes the Chilean move to neo-folklore more explicitly a move to the avant-garde. It was Violeta Parra’s brother, Nicanor Parra, Chile’s most important modernist poet since Vicente Huidobro and Pablo Neruda and a writer who constructed his aesthetic position in direct response to the latter’s perceived sentimentalism, who invited Violeta to the city and encouraged her to seek out the remnants of the romancero as a basis for new musico-poetic production. From the time of her move to Santiago, Violeta positioned herself as a complement to her brother’s take on the avant-garde.

To be clear about what this means, something must be said about the category of the avant-garde. As a descriptor for art, it is not simply synonymous with modernism. Very broadly, modernism can be said to be in place for as long as individual subjective autonomy imposes itself as a constitutive principal in artistic production. The classic example is, of course, the novel, which schematizes the world in terms of the trajectory of an individual life. Musical analogs can be found in early modern monody and, later, the symphony. Subjective autonomy can hold sway in the realm of art only inasmuch as the latter as an institution is severed from all others. This is made possible by the development of a market-ordered society. As long as art can be said to be ‘autonomous’ in these twin senses, it cleaves itself into the halves that make up the problematic subject since Descartes: mind and body, noumenal and

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phenomenal, content and form. The avant-garde emerges as a subset of modernism when content and form are no longer reconcilable. The avant-garde is a “self-criticism of art.” One might follow Peter Bürger’s insight here: the avant-garde “no longer criticizes schools that preceded it [such as the criticism the theoreticians of French classicism directed against Baroque drama, or Lessing’s of German imitations of classic French tragedy] but criticizes art as an institution, and the course its development took in bourgeois society.” To be sure, many incarnations of modernism in art have included a moment of social critique. What changes with the avant-garde is the fitness of art to critique in the first place.

The self-criticism of art is the explicit concern of Nicanor Parra’s poetic career. His famed collection from 1954, Poemas y Antipoemas, strikes out at poetry in its very title. In order to avoid the absorption of the poem into either ethereal sentimentality or bleak surrealism, Parra’s ‘anti-poems’ return to the quotidian, the emphatically present. He “seems determined to incorporate poetry into the fabric of ordinary human existence, to graft that everyday experience onto the leisure time of reading, so that the act of reading poetry, too, takes on the quotidian significance of doing the laundry, brewing coffee, or eating lunch,” writes one critic. This is a partial, but significant, abdication on the part of poetry of its privilege. Nicanor Parra abdicates, significantly, from within poetry itself. The tools the poet uses to avoid poetry vary, but one of them is the

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adoption of forms from the Baroque popular. His first book includes both an octosyllabic “Canción” and a “Madrigal.” He also wrote a number of lyrics meant for his sister to set. One of them is “La cueca de los poetas:”

\[\begin{align*}
Pablo de Rokha es güeno \\
pero Vicente \\
vale el doble y el triple, \\
dice la gente \\
huifa yai yai \\
Dice la gente, sí \\
no cabe duda \\
que el mas gallo se llama \\
Pablo Neruda \\
huifa yai yai \\
¡Corre que ya te agarra, \\
Nicanor Parra!\end{align*}\]

Apart from Parra himself, none of the other poets the cueca mentions turned explicitly to folk art. The folk lyric, like the other objects of everyday life that Parra refers to in his “Advertencia al lector,” is the closest that poetry comes to being present and non-transcendent:

\[\begin{align*}
La palabra arco iris no aparece en él en ninguna parte, \\
Menos aún la palabra dolor, \\
La palabra torcuato. \\
Sillas y mesas sí que figuran a granel. \\
¡Ataúdes! ¡útiles de escritorio! \\
Lo que me llena de orgullo \\
Porque, a mi modo de ver, el cielo se está cayendo a pedazos.\end{align*}\]

Violeta Parra welcomed the association of her aesthetic project with that of her brother. She went as far as to write a set of “Anti-cuecas” to compliment her brother’s “Anti-poemas.” Both enact an overt desublimation of art through

\[\text{117 Nicanor Parra, Poemas y Antipoemas (Santiago: Editorial Nacimiento, 1954).}\]
recourse to poetry that smacks of the quotidian, the non-refined, indeed, the artisanal. To be sure, Nicanor’s goals differ from Violeta’s. The former has, throughout his career, sought to break molds (“quebrar moldes”) as he himself puts it. The ‘anti-poema’ is a formally negative enterprise. Violeta’s desublimation of the folk popular is an attempt to create an artisanal art fit for life, a project of positive affirmation of life in the here and now itself.

Creating an art fit for present life, however, quickly becomes indistinguishable from creating a life fit for art, what I have called an ethical project in its most basic sense. In 1964 she was interviewed on Swiss television. A formally dressed interviewer sits across from Violeta on the floor as the latter works on a tapestry. The tapestry is filled with allegorical types figured with brute primitivism. Violeta is wearing what appears to be a hand-made dress of quilted patterns. She wears no makeup. Her hair is unkempt. She speaks in broken French and maintains a childlike demeanor throughout. The interviewer speaks to Violeta as an entirely foreign personality, a curiosity from a far away land. Parra here has effectively transformed into one of her campesino informants while maintaining all the authority of an artist. The tapestry she weaves and the songs she is invited to sing on the air are art and artisanry at once. Maintaining the indistinction between the two, however, requires her to assume an identity not her own. The Violeta that appears on the screen is a naif savant. She speaks of how her art flows directly from her sentiments and producing art is simply a

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118 Desublimation here does not refer to any theory of the ‘sublime.’ It simply refers to the gesture of undermining, or at least qualifying, art’s claim to autonomy. Artistic autonomy is autonomy from what I have termed ‘life,’ meaning concrete, everyday existence.
requirement of the way in which she lives life. She describes her childhood far from the capital and her poverty. These are guarantors of desublimation. Hers is neither a high-art nor a refined and nostalgic folk. She is immediately living a life fit for art, a piece of Nicanor’s “fallen sky” (“el cielo se está cayendo a pedazos”).

When in the mid-1950’s she was invited to record the musical materials she collected as a researcher, she included her own compositions alongside those of her sources. While Violeta Parra is often praised for salvaging *tonadas* and *cuecas* that would otherwise have been lost to the ravages of time, it is less often mentioned that she rigorously blurred the line between research and self-expression. She became medium, mediation, and mediator, all in one. On the cover for the label Odeon’s eighth volume of *El Folklore de Chile*, Parra is said to be “atrayante por su originalidad espontánea.” Similarly, her treatment of folk material “logra traducir con muchísima mayor intensidad el espíritu que les dió origen.” Her own compositions serve as a magnifying lens for the Chilean folk popular. In a sense, she is her own most authentic source.

In the person of Violeta Parra, the folk vanguard reaches an impasse. Fashioning a folk that would not inspire dissatisfaction by virtue of its overt commodification became a self-fashioning. In order to maintain the presence of a musical artisanry, she embodied the life into which art might disappear. Parra devoted the last years of her life to building a center for folk art in La Reina, a Santiago neighborhood. The creation of ‘La carpa de la Reina,’ a space proper to her folk popular was the natural extension of her project. Physical place would stand for temporal presence. Largely ignored, it languished. Out of despair at a
lost love and facing a Chilean public generally apathetic to her project, Violeta Parra shot herself in February of 1967.\textsuperscript{119}

Violeta Parra’s influence is not to be underestimated. Osvaldo Rodríguez, who founded a \textit{peña}\textsuperscript{120} in Valparaiso - one that would sponsor some of the most important Nueva Canción musicians beginning in the late 1960’s - writes that she was nothing less than “el tronco fundamental de la Nueva Canción Chilena.” The Cuban Nueva Trova singer Silvio Rodríguez is quoted in an interview: “Violeta is fundamental. Nothing would have been as it is had it not been for Violeta.” The ensemble Inti-Illimani have recorded a cantata narrating her life. Her own son and daughter have contributed markedly to sustaining their mother’s status in the history of the movement. Nueva Canción musicians generally agree that something changes with Parra, even while most are at a loss to say exactly what. Patricio Manns, in an interview he gave in 1977, provides a characteristically more complicated account:

Todo el mundo se declara ahora, discípulo de Violeta Parra, siempre cerca, fue el tipo que estaba más cerca, fue el tipo que aprendió todas sus lecciones, fue el tipo que canta exactamente igual. Eso es una gran mentira. Violeta no tiene ni antecesores ni continuadores, lo digo yo como analista musical. Sí, en este caso

\textsuperscript{119} I do not claim that these are the ‘reasons’ for her tragic death, merely the circumstances. By contrast, the documentary film \textit{Viola Chilensis} (2003) presents a series of interviews with family and friends with a view to explaining her suicide as a response to these two ‘causes.’ The psychological state that ultimately drove her to mortal despair is less crucial here than the symbol of her untimely death. Nueva Canción musicians explicitly attempted to keep alive an aesthetic project prematurely cut short.

\textsuperscript{120} The word \textit{peña} came to refer in this period to a coffee house or bar that served as a performance venue for Nueva Canción musicians. \textit{Peñas} were founded in many cities throughout Chile before 1973, but the most important for the dissemination and consolidation of the genre were in Valparaíso and Santiago. The latter, \textit{La peña de los Parra}, was run by Violeta’s two children and was reportedly a favorite haunt of Salvador Allende before his presidency.
Despite declaring that one need have musical expertise to understand the claim, Manns does not elaborate as to what he has in mind. His statement nonetheless rings true. No other musician after Parra or before her was able to occupy both the positions of ethnographic researcher and source. The claim she meant her own life to elaborate was strictly unrepeatable and definitely without precedent. She was the last folk musician to display a decidedly untutored vocal style. Even her children, and especially her daughter Isabel, sang with precision and often virtuosically. When it comes to composition proper, Parra stuck very closely to traditional song forms, only very rarely altering their predictable versification and harmonic profile. All the Nueva Canción composers who came after her developed personal styles and often employed learned techniques.

Apart from all of these reasons for buying Manns’s somewhat polemical statement, there is a more important sense in which Parra closes off precisely the aesthetic avenue she opens. I have so far sought to demonstrate, first, that Nueva Canción’s version of the folk popular grows out of the organic, historical development of art music itself and is not part of a parallel history; second, that the form it takes at mid-century is conditioned by a determinate social and economic experience proper to a new dispensation of the division of labor; finally, that the first moment of Nueva Canción, one that is only appropriated by

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its narrative at a later date, corresponds to a vanguardist move to desublimate art and return to things that are emphatically present. Parra alone serves to carry out this latter moment. However, since a careful cultivation of her personal identity served to stitch together a diverse set of aesthetic commitments - to both personal and folk genius, to an art practice that is both desublimated and non-alienated, to an avant-garde that is also a fierce traditionalism - the absence of her person forced those who came after her to position themselves within Nueva Canción along different lines. In this sense, Parra does offer what in the end was a clear, if contradictory, solution a crisis of folk, one that responded to the exigencies of its moment. She could not, however, produce followers.

Arte y sus compromisos

It is worth noting that ‘Nueva Canción’ as a term was not widely used until the Catholic University in Santiago organized an event they titled *El primer festival de la nueva canción chilena* in 1969. Invitations went out to a very diverse set of musicians. Both those who would be associated with the label and those who represented the bourgeois folklore of a different era were present. One of the prizes went to a song called ‘Plegaria a un labrador,’ and the award helped solidify the reputation of its author, Victor Jara.

Levántate y mira la montaña
De donde viene el viento, el sol y el agua.  
Tú que manejas el curso de los ríos,  
Tú que sembraste el vuelo de tu alma.

Levántate y mírate las manos
The song takes the form of an inverted prayer. Rather than express the Man’s desire for the mercy of the Godhead, Jara’s speaker pleads his fellow Man to fulfill her historic - and emphatically not divine - mission. The text even makes explicit reference to the Lord’s Prayer: “Hágase por fin tu voluntad aquí en la tierra” replaces “Hágase su voluntad en la tierra como en el cielo.” This replacement suggests an alternative. If the addressee of this secular prayer is to manifest her will, she ought to do in on earth rather than in a projected heaven.

‘Plegaria’ is an emblematic product of Chilean Nueva Canción. It falls into a clear folk genre: the tonada canción. Divided into two parts, one is in a slow compound duple and in minor, the other in a much quicker tempo and switches to major. A traditional hemiola in the fast section is intermittent and the lyric is not octosyllabic or divided into ten-line décimas, but enough of the markers of the genre are present to make the form of the composition unmistakable. A sung prayer is also characteristic of folklore. The velorio del angelito, for example, a prayer offered at the passing of a small child was a song genre often cited by folk researchers in this period as well as one revived by Violeta Parra.  

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122 See, for example, Luis Gastón Soublette, “Formas musicales básicas del folklore chileno.” Revista Musical Chilena 16/79 (1962): 49-59. The velorio del angelito was also the basis for Violeta Parra’s composition, “Rín del angelito.”
tonada, however, is not strictly folklore. It does not even present itself as an excised part of rural life. In fact, the addressee is an agricultural laborer, one who might be integrated into a fundamentally urban political struggle to establish socialism in Chile, just as the campesinado had been brought to the revolutionary cause in the Soviet Union and China. The traditionalism of folklore is compromised by a ‘neo-folk’ popular that points to a political future. In ‘Plegaria,’ we have arrived at arte comprometido. The organic quality of the composition does not rely on any intrinsic elements. The form is borrowed and rather than be perfectly suited to a ‘content’ it might express or embody, the song itself merely contains. The differences between it and its model do not constitute a refinement, nor does Jara personalize his song, allowing his person to stitch together its diverse elements. The case is exactly the opposite. The speaker is anonymous and the addressee a nameless worker, the agricultural proletarian as such. What gives the piece its organic quality and makes it, ultimately intelligible, is its political engagement.

Politically engaged art is the step beyond Parra’s personalized folkloric vanguardism. During a recorded concert, Jara tells his audience that Violeta Parra “marcó el camino y por allí seguimos.” He further describes Nueva Canción as “una canción que surgió de la necesidad total del movimiento social en Chile; no fue una canción aparte.” Parra had not invented engaged art. Rather, her version of folklore and the demands it responded to both from within and without the formal development of style, opened a space for engagement and made it necessary. This step is made clearer if one compares ‘Plegaria’ to one of
Parra’s politically-themed songs. The speaker of “La carta” sings of receiving news that her brother has been incarcerated for having backed a recent strike. After condemning the magistrate and the brutality of the police, the speaker affirms her family’s political commitment in the song’s last line: “También tengo nueve hermanos/fuera de él que se engravilló./Y todos son comunistas,/con el favor de mi Diós, sí.” At the level of the text, the song describes a personal experience that inspires a human, ethical response. The speaker’s own political engagement is merely hinted at, but even if the implicit commitment were made explicit it would still be individual subjectivity and biographical narrative that ultimately hold the song together. The setting is sparse and psalmodic. It is more chanted than sung. In fact, the form is much like that of a psalm tone, with repeated pitches ending in a terminus that indicates the end of the poetic line. The accompaniment outlines a scaffold-like progression, I-II-I-II, which by virtue of eliminating the root from the dominant lends the song a lilting, unstructured quality. Parra’s song is intentionally stays close to basic and ancient traditional song form, shot through as it is with the aural culture of Hispanic colonialism. “La carta” does not reference folklore, it embodies it. Jara’s composition evokes the persistence of the relevance of folklore for the present, but adopts political engagement as the piece’s purposive element. “Plegaria” is precisely what Jara knew his own music to be: in line with Parra’s folklore, but a step further along

123 While one might naturally be curious to know if the narrative is true, it’s veracity makes no difference to the point being made here.
the path indicated by the former and no longer itself folklore proper, a political container more than the living embodiment of folklore.

While it has ceased to be the folk popular itself, Jara’s politically engaged songs as well as those of his contemporaries in the Nueva Canción movement who adopted the same claim for the organic unity of their output, return to the same problematic from which the folk popular arose. It remains an emphatic return of art to life. “Plegaria,” unlike “La carta” comes close to propaganda. It’s purposiveness is instrumental, although not merely so. Nonetheless, it plays the role of Manns’s “filosa arma de batalla” quite well. Indeed, Nueva Canción after Parra has often been criticized for being mere propaganda. The Chilean musicologist Gabriel Castillo Fadic puts the point clearly in his magisterial study of twentieth-century art music in Latin America:

Née comme une profonde réflexion artistique de reprise du matériel populaire ‘authentique,’ la Nueva Canción Chilena coïncide avec une accélération du processus de réformes à tous les niveaux de la société, aboutissant au gouvernement de Salvador Allende et à l’Unité Populaire. Le rôle historique joué par le mouvement comme support de l’idéologie officielle de la période lui a valu une connotation négative, peut-être irremédiable, pour que celui-ci puisse être étudié dans une perspective esthétique. En fait, les rares travaux connus à présent sur le sujet, centrent son analyse sur une sociologie du message mais ils négligent toute perspective critique considérant le rapport de ce message aux contenus formels et leurs fonctions.124

Perhaps irremediable, indeed: the very fitness of Nueva Canción to its political moment robs it of its aesthetic detachment, which, troubling for both Castillo and myself, is the condition for its study. Nueva Canción takes aesthetic

desublimation to a new extreme. A frontal attack on the ability of art to regulate life (a move Nueva Canción takes from the avant-garde), it attempts to calibrate art to the exigencies of the present.

Sergio Ortega’s “El Pueblo Unido” is the most widely known product of Nueva Canción. While its text is specific to Chile, the piece has made its way to protest movements the world over and has even acquired some fame as the basis for a set of variations by the U.S. virtuoso pianist and composer Frederic Rzewski. The composition has stripped the legacy of the folk popular from its surface entirely. It is a rally march, plain and simple. Despite its obvious divergence from the stylistic tendencies of Nueva Canción generally, it nonetheless should be heard at the center of the movement’s conceptual motion. The song is a tool of political mobilization as well as its result. The piece’s ability to self-refer is as undermined as it can be without abandoning itself to cynicism or banality.

As political engagement took center stage as the organizing principle of the genre, individual subjective experience was replaced by that of historical subjects: Violeta Parra’s personal voice gives way to Ortega’s united pueblo. The national historical experience, in turn, was increasingly traded in for the trans-national struggle of a ‘Latin America’ attempting to free itself from neo-colonialism and embrace internationalist socialism. This shift induced Nueva Canción to quickly assimilate a broader range of extra-national musical forms. The first of these was Andean folkloric music. The latter had been cultivated by a number of Chilean
bourgeois folk ensembles for roughly a decade. The group Comparsa Sierra Pampa, formed in Santiago in 1952 and lasting the next seven years, was one of the most successful.\textsuperscript{125} Andean music was so strongly associated with Bolivian and Peruvian folk populars, indeed, the popular expression proper to nations with large indigenous majorities, that a case had to be made for the assimilation of the quena, the zampoña, and charango into a Chilean folk. The space opened up by Nueva Canción’s political orientation and instrumental character provided just this. A political popular proper mobilizes folklore on behalf of an extramusical struggle. The specificity of the Chilean, which had served to save the popular from class, market and foreign determination and domination, could easily be abandoned in favor of a ‘Latin Americanist’ specificity which serves the same purpose while expanding the scope of the political program. A crossing from nationalism in Latin America to a Latin Americanism is a conceptual move as old as Independence and a relatively predictable consequence of Nueva Canción’s political ambitions. The move is a classically anti-imperialist one and, to the extent that anti-imperialism is seen as part and parcel with anti-capitalism, a communist commitment. If the dichotomy that regulated both the Argentine Nuevo Cancionero and Chilean Nueva Canción was the relationship of rural life to urban experience, one that resulted in an insistence on the presence and relevance of the former, then the new dichotomy was that between Latin America and its neo-colonial masters - most importantly, the United States. Again,

\textsuperscript{125} For a detailed history of the development of Nueva Canción’s musical origins, including the growth of Chilean Andean bands, see Juan Pablo González, \textit{Historia social de la música popular en Chile, 1950-1970} (Santiago: Ediciones Universidad Católica de Chile, 2009).
nothing about the internal consistency of the movement is changed, merely the scope of its perspective. So it came about that iconic groups such as Quilapayun and Inti-Illimani would take up Andean instruments and don ponchos in a self-conscious display of pan-Latin Americanist solidarity. Eduardo Carrasco, founding member of Quilapayun recalled in an interview that it was Victor Jara who suggested that the ponchos they wore should be black. That is, they should reflect no specific national or regional specificity, but represent the continent as such. Inti-Illimani’s first album released in Chile was a collection of songs from the Mexican Revolution. By the 1970’s, they had music from regions as far apart as Chiloé (an island off the Chilean coast) and Cuba in their repertoires. The move from an individual to an abstract musical ‘subject’ was complete.

La Cantata Popular

The specificities of the political circumstance into which Nueva Canción sees itself emerging shapes the moment of ‘message’ in those songs simultaneously closest to life and to propaganda. Left social movements in Chile were as old as the century by the 1960’s. Luis Emilio Recabarren had founded the Partido Obrero Socialista in 1912 and a decade later the Communist Party had general ideological and material control over the labor movement, with support from its Argentine counterpart. The class struggle in the early decades was centered on the northern mining region, which saw many strikes during this period including a general strike in Tarapacá, Antofagasta and Iquique in 1927. All were repressed, sometimes with horrific violence. The Chilean Left grew
before the Second World War quite apart from any influence by the Comintern and maintained its relative independence even thereafter.\textsuperscript{126} After the war, when the class struggle had grown to such a degree as to seriously concern Chile’s ruling elites, a segment of conservatives in the country turned to a changing Catholic Church doctrine as an alternative to the secular, revolutionary Left. The Church had been increasingly speaking out on social justice since the Great Depression and was an obvious ally in the fight against communism. The work of the Jesuit Alberto Hurtado was pivotal in transforming Catholic social doctrine into a program to ease class conflict, erecting organizations such as the Acción Sindical Chliena in 1947 which posed a direct challenge to the organizational model of communists. What began as a fringe movement on the Chilean Right, soon emerged as the dominant centrist reform movement in the country. In 1964, the Christian Democrat Eduardo Frei, a longtime confidant of reform-minded Jesuit intellectuals, was elected president, beating out Salvador Allende and his overtly Marxist coalition. That year, the Christian Democrats introduced the slogan “Revolution in Liberty,” playing on the fears aroused by the then recent Cuban Revolution. The slogan is telling. Revolution, all seemed to assume, was necessary. What was left to struggle over was who would lead it and what the political outcome would be. The struggle of Catholicism against Communism that characterized the political divide of the decade makes clear the stakes of Jara’s post-Feuerbachian prayer and Parra’s suggestion that God looks kindly on the

communist labor movement. There are other examples in the Nueva Canción repertory that directly takes on the subject of religion. Most do not advocate simply for any version of atheism. Rather, they often make use of religious language in order to allow it to metaphorize the non-religious Left.

Religion was contested political territory not just because Chile was and remains a predominantly Catholic nation. Catholicism was also an integral part of the colonial legacy Nueva Canción actively retrieved and revised. For the arts, this meant taking on the legacy of the Baroque. The most imaginative, certainly the most startling, reimagining of the Baroque musical legacy was the invention of the *cantata popular*, whose most influential creator was Luis Advis. Advis, a university trained, lettered composer was but one of a generation of *música docta* composers to see in Nueva Canción an aesthetic event that was as relevant to self-consciously learned composition as it was to its supposed opposite, mass music production and consumption. There resulted what those involved have characterized as a rapprochement [“acercamiento’] of *música popular* and *docta*. The 1960’s saw art composers embrace an overt Romanticism. “Creo que visto bajo este aspecto [el folklore] se crearía una corriente renovadora en la música chilena a la que no se le pueda aplicar el mote de chilenista,” Gustavo Becerra, professor of composition at the National Conservatory and Advis’s

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127 One of particular poignancy is Violeta Parra’s “Ayúdame Valentina” in which the speaker calls on the female Soviet cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova to return from space travel to let religious leaders here on earth know just how little heaven exists above the clouds.

128 Composers statements reflecting on this rapprochement can be found in Varas, Gonzales, p. 40-47.
teacher, told an interviewer in 1964. “El modelo que seguiría,” he reveals, “son los trabajos folklóricos de Brahms.”

As I noted in Chapter 1, Brahms is hardly an accidental reference: a composer who famously avoided confronting head-on the music historical challenge represented by Beethoven’s symphonic achievement and found an alternative to the messianism, represented above all by Richard Wagner, in academic music history and nostalgic folklore. Brahms would take up both Baroque compositions and the Volkslied, providing each with his own revisions. The same basic impetus underwrites Brahms’s interest in both aspects of the German musical tradition. They are both ways of returning the past to the present. When Advis decides to write a cantata whose musical elements are based in the folkloric appropriations of Nueva Canción, he follows the same line of thought. He demonstrates the closeness of the Baroque popular to the folk popular. The cantata he has in mind is not that which reached the New World from Spain in the 18th century. These were relatively simple compositions, often for solo voice. Advis’s model is closer to Bach and Handel. In both Advis’s Santa María de Iquique and his Canto para una semilla, spoken relatos replace recitative. Canciones replace arias and these are interspersed with instrumental interludes and choral commentary. The Baroque cantata appears here in translation, as it were.

The twentieth century Chilean and nineteenth century German cases, however, are not simply parallel. The point here is that art music composers who knew themselves to be inheriting European historical baggage directly in the

129 Ibid. p. 262.
urban conservatory system were amenable to influence from Nueva Canción because parallel aesthetic commitments were native to the central European experience those composers knew so well. Significantly, it was not art music composers who first tried out the genre of a folkloric Baroque. Five years before Luis Advis premiered his *Santa María de Iquique*, Angel Parra released his *Oratorio para el Pueblo* which similarly arranged folkloric song according to a borrowed historical model. Along with Raúl de Ramón’s *Misa Chilena* of the same year, one sees that a basis in sacred composition is key to this genre. Even when the model is not itself derived from music actually heard or composed in the Spanish colony, the colonial legacy is present in the reference to Catholic art. In the hands of a Marxist composer, the inversion of the religious message appears as central to the political import of a piece. “La ley del patrón rico es ley sagrada,” the narrator of *Santa María* tells us, relating the oppressive conditions of nitrate miners in the early century. The status of sacred law is precisely what the cantata is meant to displace in its culminating call for brotherhood.

Advis’s composition is a paragon of refinement. Musical elements drawn from the Andean tradition, including pentatonic melodies and standardized rhythms, are written on top of a *basso* part that runs the whole length of the piece. This alone lends the cantata a musical consistency missing from preceding compositions. The music is often harmonically complex and unexpectedly chromatic. Quenas ring out in imitative counterpoint and charangos strum dissonances. Moreover, the narration allows the piece to hold itself together, a coherence that is reflected musically as themes recur and transform throughout.
The same occurs at the level of the text as lines are recalled and given revised content. Despite these aspects, the gifts of lettered music making with its emphasis on the organic artwork, the cantata does not escape the instrumental logic its Nueva Canción inspiration ultimately demanded. Advis himself, although convinced that his elegy to Violeta Parra, *Cantata para una semilla*, was artistically superior, admitted that it would never have the same impact that *Santa María* enjoyed.

*Santa María* was written and premiered at the National Stadium in 1970, the year Allende ran successful for office on an explicitly revolutionary platform. The performance was essentially a campaign event. The piece tells the story of a strike at a nitrate mine in 1907 during which workers rebelled against being paid in company store vouchers rather than money, ultimately traveling to the nearby port of Iquique and occupying a school called Santa María so that they might accrue support for their cause. All those occupying the school including women and children, 3000 in all, were shot by military forces sent in to quell the uprising under pressure from the North American mine owners. The cantata warns that without radical political change, massacres like this one will happen again. The warning sounds prophetic in light of the fact that the stadium where the cantata was premiered would be turned into a concentration camp by military forces only three years later. Victor Jara would be tortured and shot there.
Song Is Not Enough

Santa María’s self-consciousness with respect to its instrumental character compels a kind of abdication by art of its self-sufficiency: “Ustedes que ya escucharon/la historia que se contó/no sigan allí sentados/pensando que ya pasó/No basta solo el recuerdo/el canto no bastará/no basta solo el lamento/ miremos la realidad.” The artistic movement at its most honed reveals itself ultimately to be a movement beyond art. This motion is Nueva Canción last step, its final development. Everything that followed the genre’s violent end, the careers of those musicians who were lucky enough to continue their work in exile, were bound to a different kind of emphasis on the past than that which inspired the turn to folklore. Nueva Canción musicians largely turned to keeping alive the memory of their own artistic movement. In light of the all too literal demise of the Left in Chile, the instrumentality of Nueva Canción evaporated and its self-perpetuation, the very opposite of development, emerged as critical. Eduardo Carrasco, who in 1970 sang with the rest of Quilapayun that “song is not enough” would, after years of exile in France, reverse his stance. In his monograph retrospective on Quilapayun he claims that it is only in art that authentic revolution is finally possible. This is especially true, he notes, after the fall of the Berlin Wall.130

Nueva Canción’s last deep thought - that art can clear itself away as a service to political action and progress - is most elegantly summed up in a song

130 Eduardo Carrasco, Quilapayun: La Revolución y las Estrellas (Santiago: RIL, 2003).
written by the Cuban songwriter Pablo Milanés in his 1969 song “Si el poeta eres tú.” Reflecting on a line from a poem entitled “Che” that Miguel Barnet published two years earlier that reads “No es que yo quiera darte/pluma por pistola/pero el poeta eres tú,” Milanes writes:

\[
\text{Si el poeta eres tú} \\
\text{-como dijo el poeta-} \\
[...] \\
\text{¿qué puedo yo cantarte, Comandante?}
\]

Aptly, the song is brief. A short reflexion on an end for art in the end of art. The artisanal, become political, drives art itself to the limit of its conceptual determinacy. This limit, however, is not quite what we might think of as a Hegelian *aufhebung*. The art/life dichotomy is not transcended. The very act of abdication on the part of the *cantautor* demonstrates the necessity of the poet. The *comandante* can only be heard as a poet in the *cantante*’s song.

And so the conceptual evolution of Nueva Canción ends enmeshed in the very contradictions which gave it birth. Moving from the Baroque popular to the folkloric, from the artistic to the political avant-garde, the genre rehearsed the identity in contradiction signaled in the Carpentier essay evoked at the beginning of this text. At every moment it sought to overcome its own conditions of possibility and in so doing, embodied what is concrete and peculiarly Latin American about aesthetic modernity.
EPILOGUE

The preceding chapters represent an experiment in the philosophy of Latin American music history. By way of both theoretical exposition and selected historical narratives, I have sought to render intelligible the constitutive material, conceptual, and aesthetic conditions of an object in a constant state of becoming through history. The central theoretical claim of the dissertation as a whole falls into two parts. The first is that the progressive development of a Latin American music was made possible and meaningful by the region’s economic, political and cultural peripherality vis-à-vis the (neo-)colonial metropole, Western Europe and the United States. As the first chapter made clear, that peripherality was manifest as an attempt to find in Latin American particularity the grounds for universal significance. Understanding this attempt in (Kantian) terms of conceptual determination, it appears as an aesthetics - one that musical compositions, genres, and practices sought to complete or transcend.

The second part of my claim is that those musical responses to the aesthetic problem of Latin American peripherality were ultimately consumed by the very duality of universality and particularity they sought to overcome. This is not to say that the music history of the region falls under a trans-historical rule. As the case studies make clear, the variety of music and movements that fall within the scope of this project makes such a rule impossible. What they do share is an aporetic structure proper to the eruption of geographical difference onto the historical plane.
As much as this thesis is about music in history, it is equally about music as history. From the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution to the construction of a modern state in Argentina to the heady last days of the Unidad Popular in Chile, certain historical conjunctures have not only produced musical results, but have manifested themselves as musical practices. In other words, Latin America in the last century saw musical art take on a historical role and mission. The history of the region is unthinkable without its musical moments.

Calling this dissertation an experiment attests to its many gaps. The most glaring is the lack of mention of Heitor Villa-Lobos - the third in the triumvirate of Latin American modernists which includes Ginastera and Chavez - and the general absence of comment on Brazil, whose rich cultural history stands apart from that of Spanish America. Nothing is said about Haiti despite the importance for my theoretical exposition of Susan Buck-Morss’s thinking about the slave history of that island. The legacy of African chattel slavery in general and its many and significant musical consequences, especially in Brazil and the Caribbean, are left out here. In order to distill what was structurally significant about the relationship of music to the whole matrix of cultural and material history, a reductive reading is necessary. The divergent national and regional histories in Latin America, the diverse populations are smoothed over in a logic of center and periphery, universal and particular. This is done so that a core ‘logic’ might be made perspicuous and better understood. The task now is to elaborate on that core. For example, while there are important parallels between African
and Latin American colonialities - indeed, they were intimately tied and are part of the same historical process as second and first phases, respectively - neither is reducible to the other. In fact, there exists a dialectical relationship between the two. Fernando Ortiz, in his classic account of tobacco and sugar production in Cuba, elaborated precisely this theme with respect to the division of labor on the island. There is also the complexity of the North-South divide. The cultural history of the United States is just as much a history of coloniality and peripherality. The process by which one former colony comes to colonize other former colonies itself deserves theoretical unpacking. Any just account of jazz manages just this problem. Jazz is just another name for the contradictory logic of a periphery become metropolis, on behalf of which a musical expression rooted in racial and social exclusion was spread across the globe, as it were, at gunpoint.\footnote{For important commentary on this history see Timothy Brennan, \textit{Secular Devotion} (London: Verso, 2008)} As one steps closer to the detailed history of the region, contradictions proliferate.

Given this, the ultimate contribution of this dissertation is primarily methodological. Academic Musicology in the United States has taken a newfound and growing interest in Latin American music.\footnote{I am referring here to activity within the American Musicological Society. Work by Latin American musicologists has been presented at conferences several years in a row and has been published in translation in the society’s journal. A growing number of American scholars have recently chosen to center their research on Latin America, especially the twentieth-century music that is the focus of my own study.} While a variety of historiographical methods have been employed, this author is not aware of any work that attempts to construct a critical method specific to this material. Rather,
the prevailing implicit assumption is that Latin American music arrives in academic musicology as the result of an expansion of the latter’s “borders”. Expanding musicological borders either involves the application of traditional methods to new musical terrain, or abandoning restrictive familiar methods in order to take in a more expansive object of investigation. Both approaches ignore what this dissertation seeks to make plain, namely, that Latin America’s peripherality (it’s lying on the other side of a border) makes the very objectivity of its music - perhaps irremediably - problematic.

Important political changes have shaken the region in our young century: the generally accepted failure of Cold War era revolutionary projects, the rise of the Pink Tide and widespread and successful economic cooperation in the region, the retreat (if not the disappearance) of U.S. political and military intervention, the rise of indigenous rights movements, to name just a few of the most significant. While the last few decades have produced a large body of scholarship on postmodernity as that concept might apply in and of Latin America, current events seem to point to the conclusion that modernity - at least as that term has been applied in the present study - is alive and well in the region. The musical aspect of that contemporary modernity is harder measure, but given the short circuit that has Latin Americanist musical projects spark against dependency and underdevelopment, one might well hope for a possible Latin American future in which music as such has no role left to play.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


