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Music

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Music has long served as an essential conduit of Latina/o self-expression and social organization within the United States, and a primary vehicle through which Latinas/os are sonically, visually, and kinesthetically registered within the U.S. popular imagination. It constitutes a cultural vector through which Latinidad is rendered legible to both non-Latinas/os and Latinas/os alike, albeit not always in the most nuanced of terms. These processes possess demonstrable historical roots not only in more contemporary phenomena such as the most recent Latin(o) music "boom" of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, but also in earlier moments such as the rumba craze of the 1930s and the mambo fad of the late 1940s and 1950s, among others. Significantly, these historical junctures are best understood not necessarily as signs of an increased acceptance of the Latina/o presence within the United States, but rather as market-driven responses to shifting demographics and political conditions throughout the hemisphere, such as the enhanced (although not unprecedented) incidence of transnational activity prompted by greater Latina/o (im)migration throughout the twentieth century. The latest Latin(o) music "boom" is thus in part a market-driven media phenomenon predicated upon the commodification of Latinidad and Latina/o audiences, or an attempt to capitalize on the monetary resources of Latina/o consumers and engage in the management of social identities (Levine 2001). Current market environments and genre categorizations notwithstanding, Latin(o) musical forms may be conceptualized as incisive social mirrors that lend greater insight into the communal values and practices of a given moment, particularly with respect to normative notions of ethno-racial identity, gender, sexuality, class, and nation.

In contemporary scholarship, the term "Latin(o) music" has been used to underscore the tensions between the designators "Latin" (the label that much mainstream U.S. media employs) and "Latina/o" (a grassroots designator utilized by many Latinas/os themselves), without privileging either. This terminological approach emphasizes the symbolic gaps between the category of "Latin music" and the social groups that presumably produce and consume these forms (Aparicio and Jáquez 2003). Indeed, the divergent messages reflected in this overlapping yet conflicting nomenclature echo the underlying character of the transnational Latin(o) music industry, which has long been dominated by crossover narratives and their attendant discourses of discovery. While cutting across all categories of difference, the dynamics of crossover have particularly reflected a black/white ethno-racial binary and the rigid understandings of "American" identity adhered to within the U.S. popular music industry, which has traditionally catalogued Latin(o) genres and Latina/o performers under "foreign," "ethnic," or "World" musics. Crossover, or the movement by Latina/o artists into the coveted Anglo market (wherein even veteran Latina/o performers are "discovered" by and in turn packaged as novel entities for mainstream consumption), demands considerable critical reflection. Crossover is not simply a question of assimilated Latina/o performers entering new markets because they now perform in English, reside in the United States, and record music that incorporates genres more widely associated with the Anglo/English-speaking world, such as rock or pop (D. Vargas 2012). To

adhere to such logic is to ignore the realities of Latina/o musical production over time, during which hybridity has constituted the norm as opposed to the exception, and "hybrids of musical hybrids" such as bugalú, bachatón, salsatón, vallenato moderno, and crunkiao (to cite but a few examples) have been constantly surfacing under the expanding influence of globalization's time-space compression. Moreover, to question the logic of crossover is to challenge the highly gendered, raced association of rock and pop in particular with the musical production of Anglo males, a critical stance that ultimately reaffirms Latinas/os' well-documented historical contributions to global genres not typically associated with Latin(o) musical production.

The workings of the Latin(o) music industry further reveal the markedly gendered structural elements of its modes of production, representation, and dissemination. While numerous women such as Victoria Hernández, Celia Cruz, and Gloria Estefan have played pivotal roles as promoters, business owners, composers, and musicians (Glasser 1995; Aparicio 1999a, 2002; Guevara 2003; Cepeda 2010), most often the popular vision of Latinas in the industry has been exclusively limited to that of lead vocalist or back-up singer/dancer. The very notion of what constitutes Latin(o) music in the United States has also been historically informed by class, as the initial samplings of Latin American genres deemed fit for production in the United States (such as the European-inflected Puerto Rican danza and the Colombian bambuco) were selected by more privileged Latin American industry executives who generally had little contact with the local musicians whose talents were featured on these early recordings. Finally, inter-Latina/o tensions, lack of Latina/o upper management or ownership within the U.S. recording industry, and regional rivalries have also shaped the character and distribution of Latin(o) music across time, as witnessed throughout the brief, conflict-ridden history of the Latin Grammys (Cepeda 2010; Pacini Hernandez 2010).

Despite its often vexed relationship with the transnational recording industry, Latin(o) music has also long served as a productive site for the exercise of Latina/o political and artistic agency. Key periods such as the lively jazz scene of wartime and post–World War II Los Angeles, the heyday of politically oriented salsa in the New York City barrios of the 1970s, and the rise of hip-hop culture in the same city during the late 1970s and 1980s underscore the frequency and depth of these communal artistic efforts (Rondón 1980; R. Rivera 2003; Macías 2008). For example, the emergence of Latin jazz in the 1940s and 1950s under figures such as Machito and his Afro-Cubans and Chico O'Farrill demonstrates the intimate relationship between broader structural factors and the development of Latina/o artistic movements. In the case of Latin jazz, inequitable New York housing policies such as redlining fomented the musical social ties and cultural practices that arose as both a product of and a response to institutional discrimination (Valentín-Escobar, forthcoming). Throughout the United States, Latin(o) musics have thus contributed to vital place-making processes within and across various Latina/o communities. However, until recently these movements have passed with little acknowledgement of the multifaceted artistic collaborations forged between Latinas/os and other ethno-racial minorities, particularly African Americans, throughout their trajectories. That said, much like Latinas/os themselves, Latin(o) musical genres cannot be read exclusively through the lens of African, Indigenous, and Spanish hybridity. To the contrary, (im)migration from around the globe has contributed to the transculturated sonic and dance forms that have emerged with Latina/o communities, as noted in genres such as the wide-ranging norteño, whose accordion-based instrumentation can be traced

to the arrival of Polish immigrants in northern Mexico during the nineteenth century.

Just as Latin(o) musical forms are most accurately conceptualized as inter- and multi-ethnic creations, so must they be understood as direct products of vibrant transnationalisms. Indeed, the genres themselves, much like their modes of production and distribution, clearly illustrate the impacts of transborder flows. The extensive mobility of genres such as the cumbia (originally of the Colombian Caribbean, but now existing in myriad localized versions around the globe) epitomizes the impact that the movement of bodies, the long arm of global media, and the introduction of new technologies in general often have on once distinctly regional expressive forms (Pacini Hernandez 2010; Fernández L'Hoeste and Vila 2013). Nevertheless, the singular sonic qualities, visual vocabulary, and kinesthetic character of now globalized Latin(o) musical genres cannot be entirely divorced from the socioeconomic, political, and cultural conditions from which they originally arose, which inevitably encompass colonialism proper as well as internal colonialism. Shaped by the interracial and class tensions that have long defined life for those of Mexican descent in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, the conjunto music of Texas of artists such as Lydia Mendoza and Leonardo (Flaco) Jiménez offers a prime example of how many Latin(o) musical forms have arisen in direct response to the material circumstances of internal colonialism (M. Peña 1985).

Reflecting the hybrid underpinnings of the genres themselves, current scholarly investigations into Latin(o) music have largely been interdisciplinary. Much of this work has borrowed from the cultural studies tradition, and specifically its tendency to celebrate the more agential and/or transgressive facets of Latin(o) musical production, performance, and reception. Latin(o) musical genres more readily recognized as "ethnic" contribute to the bulk of the scholarly corpus, although in recent years research on more so-called commercial forms such as hip-hop, reggaetón, pop, punk, and rock has also materialized (R. Rivera 2003; Pacini Hernandez, Fernández L'Hoeste, and Zolov 2004; Habell Pallán 2005; Rivera, Marshall, and Pacini Hernandez 2009; Cepeda 2010; Pacini Hernandez 2010). These latter studies acknowledge the impossibility of truly extricating economic concerns from any type of musical production, regardless of genre; the fact that ethnic forms and the communities from which they arise do not exist as static entities; and the error of treating ethnic genres as somehow more aesthetically "Latina/o" or "authentic" in character, a move that ultimately erases the multiple historic contributions of Latinas/os to mainstream musical forms and bypasses the intrinsically hybrid foundations of Latin(o) music as a whole. In sum, the growing scholarly emphasis on commercial forms and/or the commercialization of ethnic genres underscores the arbitrary nature of such strict categorizations.

While much of the existing scholarship focuses primarily on the question of Latina/o ethno-racial identity, some scholars have opted to engage in more comprehensive approaches to categories of difference within Latin(o) music, and to examine the intersecting roles of gender, sexuality, class, nation, and language. Major (inter)disciplinary influences on the contemporary analysis of Latin(o) musics in addition to cultural studies include ethnic studies, ethnomusicology, gender studies, history, literary studies, media studies, performance studies, and queer studies. Relying on a blend of these critical approaches, recent scholarship in the field has at times explicitly embraced a transnational perspective on musical production and performance, just as it has rejected traditional categorizations of Latin(o) music as that which is solely performed in Spanish by Latin

American (im)migrants; as forms that have experienced parallel yet separate trajectories vis-à-vis Anglo music; or as genres possessing neatly defined, irrefutable cultural origins. Increasingly, some scholars have also highlighted the vital musical contributions of lesser-studied Latina/o populations, a perspective that illuminates pan-Latina/o cultural practices just as it expands the parameters of Latinidad writ large (Cepeda 2010; Pacini Hernandez 2010; Vargas 2012). Research exploring the embodied elements of Latina/o musical spaces as vital sites of queer place-making has also emerged as of late (Paredez 2009; Rivera-Servera 2012; Vargas 2012). With few exceptions (Fiol-Matta 2017), however, the scholarship on gender and sexuality in Latin(o) music has centered on heterosexual women. The symbiotic relationship between dance and Latin(o) music constitutes another frequent gap in the scholarly literature.

Given the rapid demographic growth of the various Latina/o populations and the subsequent increased visibility and audibility of Latina/o musical practices in the United States and around the globe, Latin(o) musical forms will certainly persist as one of the more readily identifiable markers of Latina/o identity. As the contradictory site of tropicalized presentations of Latinidad as well as their contestations, Latin(o) music lays bare the frequent conflicts between musical production on the ground as well as the transnational market forces and more localized circumstances that inform its creation, dissemination, and reception. The multifarious genres that fall under the category of "Latin(o) music" thus serve as intensely hybrid sensorial texts that exemplify the complex dynamics of Latina/o cultural production in response to globalization.

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Nationalism

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Is the nation—that famed "imagined community" Benedict Anderson theorized back in 1983—the best way we have to imagine belonging to something greater than ourselves? Notwithstanding Anderson's grave historical inaccuracies in accounting for nationalism in the Americas or his over-reliance on print culture as the means by which nationalism was promulgated (Chatterjee 1993; Lomnitz-Adler 2001; Castro-Klarén and Chasteen 2003), what continues to make his anthropological theory compelling is its emphasis on the discursive nature of the nation (it is imagined) and its profoundly affective orientation (it causes people to feel and act on a wide array of emotions). It's a way of imagining oneself belonging to a community where one will never meet everyone in that community, where that community is limited and not universal. Born of necessity, out of pain, in coming together as a nation, the imagined community redeems itself and that painful past, cementing the cathartic, emotional bonds even further. Thus, the imagined community "invents" an imagined past with its origins in antiquity, narrating its history of travails leading to the redeeming moment of the nation's coming into being.

The powerful, centrifugal force in his anthropological theory hovers across the spiritual-transcendence spectrum: the nation serves as the community's ontological foundation. Religion, argues Anderson (1983), was one of the great affective sources from which the nation drew its seductive power. For millennia,