

## ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: ME SABE A PERÚ: A HISTORY OF SALSA  
IN THE MANY LIMAS

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This thesis analyses the history of salsa music's reception and mediation in Lima, Peru from the 1960s to the 1990s. Considering local political, social, and economic changes, the multivalent understandings in its reception throughout the decades, adds nuance to notions of transnational cultural flows, Latin American identity, and the shift of mass media consumption from the public to the private sphere. Even in its most globally appealing form of the 1970s, salsa's reception by a Limeño public was still informed by the national political situation and local class-based affinities. Amidst an ongoing intense urbanization in the late 1960s, salsa became a voice and the local musical identity of the working class yet cosmopolitan port of Callao in Lima. After its political turn in the late seventies, salsa gained the middle and upper classes' attention and was increasingly present in the national mass media. Finally, in the mid-eighties, this attention reached its peak during salsa's most depoliticized form, a romantic iteration enjoyed across classes and groups in neo-liberal Lima.

ME SABE A PERÚ: A HISTORY OF SALSA IN THE MANY LIMAS

by

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## Introduction

**“For the Chalaco born in the 1970s, they know the Jibarito’s voice as well as they know the sound of the waves of the ocean.”<sup>1</sup>**

As recently as 2017, an independent study by Peruvian market research firm GFK reveals the significance of Salsa music to Limeños. While the country indicated cumbia as its preferred musical style, salsa came in close second nationally. In Lima, however, salsa was a clear number one across all socioeconomic levels.<sup>2</sup> Peru is an Andean country on the Pacific coast of the continent, with ostensibly few cultural connections to Cuba or Puerto Rico, much less the United States, where the music par excellence of Pan-Latinidad hails. Its capital, Lima, has two golden busts dedicated to Héctor Lavoe, the enigmatic salsa legend, another of Cuban legend Celia Cruz, and various murals of other foreign salsa artists. Lima began its ascent in the 1960s to become one of Salsa music’s major centers of culture.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mario Aragón, *Salsa y Sabor En Cada Esquina: Mi Visión de Héctor Lavoe En El Perú*, Primera edición, Selección Gallera (San Borja: Ediciones Altazor, 2015). 18.

<sup>2</sup> GFK Perú, "Las preferencias musicales de los peruanos: Encuesta nacional urbano Rural." Pdf. Lima: GFK Perú.

2017.[https://www.gfk.com/fileadmin/user\\_upload/country\\_one\\_pager/PE/documents/GfK\\_Opinio\\_n\\_Enero\\_2017-Los\\_peruanos\\_y\\_la\\_musica\\_2.pdf](https://www.gfk.com/fileadmin/user_upload/country_one_pager/PE/documents/GfK_Opinio_n_Enero_2017-Los_peruanos_y_la_musica_2.pdf).

Cumbia: a dance style from Colombia with stylistic and rhythmic influences from the Caribbean. The music was popular throughout Latin America, particularly in live settings and working-class neighborhoods from the 1960s onward. For more see: Héctor Fernández L’Hoeste and Pablo Vila, *Cumbia!: Scenes of a Migrant Latin American Music Genre* (Duke University Press, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> Andres Espinoza Agurto, "Una Sola Casa: Salsa Consciente and the Poetics of the Meta-Barrio" (Ph.D., United States -- Massachusetts, Boston University, 2014), <https://search.proquest.com/pgdtglobal/docview/1556761003/abstract/E5B57E1BA3AE47ACPQ/1.413>. Espinoza mentions that Peru is today considered the capital of timba, a type of salsa, "that has become the dominant popular style in Cuba during the periodo especial, the name given by Fidel Castro to the dramatic economic crisis that followed the demise of the Soviet Union...shows remarkable parallels with African-American hip-hop." 2 in Vincenzo Perna, *Timba: The Sound of the Cuban Crisis* (Routledge, 2017).

The poetics and lyrical aesthetics make it a type of Cuban neo-Salsa dura, see Salserísimo Perú, "Pirulo: 'La timba no es más que la evolución de la salsa,'" *Salserísimo Perú | Salsa es Cultura* (blog),

In her 2001 work, *Latinos, Inc.*, anthropologist, and American studies scholar Arlene Dávila argues that Latinos in the United States have been historically codified as an "other" by American marketing institutions.<sup>4</sup> These corporations produced knowledge of an immigrant Latin American ethnocultural identity regardless of birthplace.<sup>5</sup> Viewed from this lens, it is not surprising that scholarship on the musical marker of pan Latin American identity, salsa music, recognizes its commercially produced nature and its role in the construction of a collective identity. As the music of an imagined metabarrio, a symbolic space where salsa is a vehicle for latinidad (Latin American identity), did this hold true in Lima, where audiences venerated and appropriated salsa as a local musical identifier?<sup>6</sup> Was salsa music a way for the North American culture industry to reach South American audiences? <sup>7</sup> How did the music

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September 19, 2016, <http://www.salserisimoperu.com/pirulo-tribu-peru-timba-mas-evolucion-salsa-noticia-19-06-2016/>. As proof of more current discourse on its scene in Lima

<sup>4</sup> I will primarily subscribe to Deborah Pacini Hernández's nomenclature and apply the term Latino to music and individuals of Latin American or Hispanic descent but from the United States. Pan Latin as a term refers to Spanish speaking transnational community in the Western Hemisphere as a whole. Deborah Pacini Hernández, "The Name Game: Locating Latinas/os, Latinos, and Latin Americans in the US Popular

Music Landscape", in *A Companion to Latina/o Studies* (eds J. Flores and R. Rosaldo), Blackwell Publishing Ltd,

Oxford, UK. 2017 doi: 10.1002/9781405177603.Ch. 5

<sup>5</sup> Arlene M. Dávila, *Latinos, Inc: The Marketing and Making of a People* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001).

<sup>6</sup> Andres Espinoza Agurto, "Una Sola Casa: Salsa Consciente and the Poetics of the Meta-Barrio"

(Ph.D., United States -- Massachusetts, Boston University, 2014),

<https://search.proquest.com/pqdtglobal/docview/1556761003/abstract/E5B57E1BA3AE47ACPO/1>.

defines the term as: ".semiotically constructed meeting spaces where Latinos and Latin Americans interact and advance Latino ethnic consciousness, and where Salsa consciente functions as the engine for these advances". (14). I push back and use this term as an imagined space and pan latin identity is not necessarily the outcome.

<sup>7</sup> As Witkin helps disentangle in Robert W. Witkin, *Adorno on Popular Culture*. International Library of Sociology. London; New York: Routledge, 2003., Adorno's issues with popular culture are the specific mechanisms and technologies that make its mass diffusion and production possible more so than the popular culture itself. "The Products of the culture industry, in Adorno's view, did not come from the people, were not an expression of the life process of individuals or communities but were manufactured and disseminated under conditions that reflected the interests of the product and

of the Puerto Rican diaspora take hold in Lima? These questions initially catalyzed my research interest in salsa music.

A localized analysis of salsa music's reception and integration into Lima's popular culture contributes to understanding the music's relationship with the broader Latin American community and notions of Latinidad outside of the United States. Through its multivalent understandings from the late 1960s through the 1990s, salsa's reception was informed by local social conditions and life in Lima.<sup>8</sup> The study of salsa in Lima, Peru does not contradict the resonance of salsa as a larger global cultural transnational flow. However, it recognizes that these international linkages and currents were not a case of cultural imperialism or a monolithic idea of Latinidad, but more so understood in a local context. If a Pan Latin American identity is fundamentally built from an internationally inclusive anti-US differentiation, this was not a necessary understanding of salsa's textual corpus in Lima. Even in its most transnationally aware political form of the 1970s, salsa's appeal to a Limeño public was still informed by the national political situation and local class-based affinities. Thus, the music of the Puerto Rican diaspora in New York became a musical

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exigencies of the market, both of which demanded the domination and manipulation of mass consciousness.”

<sup>8</sup> Pablo Palomino, *The Invention of Latin American Music: A Transnational History*, *The Invention of Latin American Music* (Oxford University Press), accessed September 9, 2020, <http://oxford.universitypressscholarship.com/view/10.1093/oso/9780190687403.001.0001/oso-9780190687403>.

“In Latin America...nationalist art music, folklore research, and urban commercial music—developed almost synchronically and consolidated in the 1930s. Marginal urban commercial genres became, through multiple interactions with art and folklore music, national symbols. Hence, popular legitimacy turned this music into national music—*música del pueblo*, *do povo*, popular—exactly when the very idea of Latin American music was taking shape. The “people” was identified with each specific nation and at the same time evoked as a wider regional cultural source—a wider regional, transnational Volk not yet politically organized” (introduction)

identifier of a local Peruvian community, music of cosmopolitan social resistance, and a populist cross-cultural form of escapism. Amidst an ongoing intense urbanization in the late 1960s, salsa became a voice and the local musical identity of the working class yet cosmopolitan port of Callao in Lima. After its political turn in the late seventies, salsa gained the middle to upper classes' attention and was increasingly present in the national mass media. Finally, in the mid-eighties, this attention reached its peak during its most depoliticized form, a romantic iteration enjoyed across classes and groups in Lima.

Salsa music in Lima challenged prior notions of commodified mass products as only cultural imperialism. Tradition and commodity did not necessarily have to contradict each other. Salsa's initial growth in 1960's Lima took place during a crescendo of urbanization and its related socioeconomic issues (i.e., overpopulation, lack of infrastructure). General Velasco Alvarado's military dictatorship was committed to nationalism and the reimagining of the rural indigena (indigenous native) as an ideal Peruvian citizen.<sup>9</sup> Although mass migration to the city dated back to the social reforms and populist politics of President Odria in the 1940s, Velasco's self-proclaimed revolution intensified the process. Over forty years, the nation went from an almost seventy percent rural population to seventy percent urban, with an almost forty percent of Lima comprised of urban settlements in the 1980s.<sup>10</sup> Amidst this historical context, through television and other nascent cultural reproduction

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<sup>9</sup> Carlos Aguirre and Paulo Drinot, eds., *The Peculiar Revolution: Rethinking the Peruvian Experiment under Military Rule*, First edition (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017).

<sup>10</sup> José Matos Mar, "A City of Outsiders" in *The Lima Reader: History, Culture, Politics*. Ed. Carlos Aguirre, and Charles Walker, translated by Jorge Bayona, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017). 207 – 213.

technologies, newer, foreign cultural offerings became available to Limeños, first in public spheres like salsa bars in the port of Callao to progressively private spheres like home television sets and private radio stations of the 1980s.

### *Defining Salsa, its History, and Historiography*

This novel music had three chief characteristics: the use of the *son* as the primary basis for its development (especially in the long and aggressive *montunos*); arrangements that were modest in terms of harmonies and innovations but markedly bitter and violent; and the imprint of the marginalized barrio. This was music produced not for the luxurious ballroom but hard life on the street. Music no longer aimed to reach a general audience. Now its only world was the barrio, the same barrio where Salsa music would be conceived, nurtured, and developed. That is where it all started.<sup>11</sup>

Scholarship chronicles the genealogy of salsa (in Spanish, literally "sauce" or "spice") music's origins in New York City.<sup>12</sup> Music legend and salsa pioneer Tito Puente famously said on various occasions, "Salsa is what I put on my Spaghetti". As a style and a culture, salsa emerged from the transnational Latino community of postwar New York City and their experience of socioeconomic marginalization.<sup>13</sup> Salsa music has a sonic aesthetic tracing back to transnational Afro

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<sup>11</sup> César Miguel Rondón, *The Book of Salsa: A Chronicle of Urban Music from the Caribbean to New York City*. Univ of North Carolina Press, 2008., 16.

For a more musicological definition, "Its main characteristics are call-and-response song structure; polyrhythmic organization with abundant use of syncopation; instrumental variety with extensive use of brass and percussion, and strident orchestral arrangements; jazz influence; and above all, a reliance on the sounds and themes of lower-class life in the Latin American barrios of US and Caribbean cities." in Jorge Duany, "Popular Music in Puerto Rico: Toward an Anthropology of 'Salsa,'" *Latin American Music Review / Revista de Música Latinoamericana* 5, no. 2 (1984): 186–216, <https://doi.org/10.2307/780072>. 187.

<sup>12</sup> For example, Juan Flores, *Salsa Rising: New York Latin Music of the Sixties Generation* (Oxford University Press, 2016); Peter Manuel, "Representations of New York City in Latin Music," in *Island Sounds in the Global City: Caribbean Popular Music and Identity in New York*, ed. Ray Allen and Lois Wilcken (New York: New York Folklore Society, 1998), 23–43).

<sup>13</sup> Arlene M. Dávila, *Barrio Dreams: Puerto Ricans, Latinos, and the Neoliberal City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=119327&site=ehost-live>. for more on defining these concepts of a mostly Puerto Rican/Nuyorican Barrio space and identity(ies).

Cuban sounds as well as a sociocultural history in New York's Latino diaspora.<sup>14</sup> Musically while Salsa is polyrhythmic, some of its ubiquitous musical characteristics include a 3-2 clave and the *sonero*. The former is a percussive beat syncopation, while the latter is the singer's improvisational action as part of the call and response portion by the singer called the montuno. Most salsa compositions follow the structure of the son, a popular Cuban style throughout Latin music groups in New York.<sup>15</sup>

As a way to understand popular culture in general, salsa helps reconsider the relationship of the consumer audience with the mass-produced commodities of the culture industry. The culture industry was a term coined by Theodor Adorno to describe products of mass reproduction which he believed were not art, but commodities to financially benefit the producers, antithetical to true art.<sup>16</sup> Mass produced salsa, consumption, poetics, and its use in identity formation complicate previous critical understandings of mass reproduced art and the culture industry. Salsa scholars believe that the music's early success resulted from deliberate incorporation of diverse, international musical elements, ubiquitous in various national styles.<sup>17</sup> It would be disingenuous to overlook the fact that the artists' commercial intentions are very much an essential part of this history. Audience reception, interpretation, and

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<sup>14</sup> Flores, *Salsa Rising*.

<sup>15</sup> Christopher Washburne, "Chapter 6: "They are going to hear this in Puerto Rico. It has got to be good!": The Sound and Style of Salsa" in *Sounding Salsa: Performing Latin Music in New York City* ed. Christopher Washburne, (Philadelphia :, 2008), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/inu.30000122939998>. 165 – 206. 168. See chapter for a comprehensive discussion of salsa's musical form and related issues in academic discourse and in its performance (i.e., the clave as a musical cultural marker).

<sup>16</sup> See Witkin on Adorno, 16.

<sup>17</sup> Marisol Berrios-Miranda, "The Significance of Salsa Music to National and Pan -Latino Identity" (Ph.D., United States -- California, University of California, Berkeley, 2000), <https://search.proquest.com/pqdtglobal/docview/304601916/abstract/18A3C9BA5497EPQ/1>.

appropriation are all still important to consider towards an understanding of the other side of the hegemonic relationship with the mass cultural products, something that Stuart Hall refers to as decoding.<sup>18</sup>

However, scholars have long dismissed popular musical styles, even in musicology, on the basis of lack of quality, particularly in comparison to other more normative traditional forms of art. Even if this stance were objectively correct, the social, political, and cultural contexts informing the aesthetic and textual products of popular music are in many ways similar to those of more traditional musical art forms.<sup>19</sup> Subjective experiences like romance as well as collective ones such as the African diaspora that inform Peruvian folk musical styles like Huayno and Festejo, respectively, also inform salsa music, even in its most commercial forms.<sup>20</sup>

This is part of the ethos that motivated salsa artist Ruben Blades' attempt at the first original salsa opera, a form of urban popular high art. This ethos also informs my intentions with this study, not only to help legitimize the art itself and the artists of

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<sup>18</sup> Stuart Hall, "Encoding and decoding in the Television Discourse" in Ann Gray and Jim McGuigan, eds., *Studying Culture: An Introductory Reader*, 2nd ed (London; New York: New York, NY: Arnold; Distributed exclusively in the USA by St. Martin's Press, 1997). The model of encoding and decoding (how audiences interpret, or in other words, reconstruct the messages from the text), in Hall's case television programs, is useful here. Also see Hebdige, p. 116.

<sup>19</sup> Ignacio Corona and Alejandro L. Madrid, "Introduction: The Postnational Turn in Music Scholarship and Music Marketing," in *Postnational Musical Identities: Cultural Production, Distribution, and Consumption in a Globalized Scenario* eds. Ignacio Corona and Alejandro L. Madrid (Lanham, Md: Lexington Books, 2008), 3 – 22. 6.

<sup>20</sup> Huayno music is a traditional and of the most popular social dances of the Peruvian highlands. Musically, it is characterized by binary rhythm, pentatonic melodies and modal harmonies. For a discussion see:

Santiago Alfaro Rotondo, "La Música Andina Como Mercado de Consumo" in *Música popular y sociedad en el Perú contemporáneo*, Primera edición Raúl R. Romero et al., eds (Lima, Perú: Instituto de Etnomusicología, PUCP, 2015). 133 – 188.

Festejo: An Afro Peruvian "music and dance genre characterized by a brisk compound-duple rhythmic accompaniment, festive song lyrics, displays of percussive virtuosity, and lively choreography." Javier F. León, "Mass Culture, Commodification, and the Consolidation of the Afro-Peruvian 'Festejo,'" *Black Music Research Journal* 26, no. 2 (2006): 213–47. 218.

this industry but also its significance to a larger public in the city. Salsa may be one of the most popular dance styles worldwide, regardless of nation, culture, or ethnicity. However, for Latin Americans, it arguably became a form of twentieth-century urban folklore. Aesthetically and poetically, "Struggle is embedded in the evolution of salsa".<sup>21</sup> As a popular dance style taught in clubs and schools to people of all cultures, nationalities, and ethnicities, it is one of the most commodified global dance forms. For Latin Americans, it is closer to traditional folk dance as it is collectively handed down from one generation to another without the need for formal education.<sup>22</sup> The independent New York City label Fania Records is present throughout this paper as they became synonymous with the music, particularly in Latin America. Not only were they the recording label for the subjects of my first two chapters, but their message of pan ethnic latinidad was very much inclusive of its African roots. After all, their artists were part of the historic 1974 boxing event, the "Rumble in the Jungle" in Zaire, not only a sporting event but a celebration of pan Africanism.<sup>23</sup> As we will see, in Lima, this was not what necessarily resonated as part of the audience's reception and identification with the music.

### "El Barrio"

The problematic term "Barrio" is worth unpacking as I will make extensive use of it throughout this study. The barrio can refer to a physical location, or in the case of salsa, metaphysical "semiotically constructed meeting spaces where Latinos

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<sup>21</sup> Sheenagh Pietrobruno, *Salsa and Its Transnational Moves* (Lexington Books, 2006). 31.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 1 – 20.

<sup>23</sup> Lewis A. Erenberg, "'Rumble in the Jungle': Muhammad Ali vs. George Foreman in the Age of Global Spectacle," *Journal of Sport History* 39, no. 1 (2012): 81–97. For more on this 1974 sporting event, but also a celebration of black pan nationalism, to which the Fania All Stars were invited to perform.

and Latin Americans interact and advance Latino ethnic consciousness.<sup>24</sup> The metaphysical imaginary barrio and the politics in the music's lyrics were key to the genre's early success. The literal translation is neighborhood, but the term can be problematic as it connotes different understandings, some even pejorative and used to marginalize lower-income, working-class, or immigrant communities.<sup>25</sup>

El Barrio initially referred to East Harlem's Latino community specifically, an essential place in salsa history.<sup>26</sup> Heavily Puerto Rican, this was not the only “barrio” in New York, nor in the world. My intent is not to conflate nor essentialize these communities across the United States, much less in Latin America. I do not wish to reaffirm insensitive reductions of barrios as crime-ridden spaces. My research focuses on a specific moment in the development of Latin American popular music in Spanish. Commercially successful artists drove this development as agents for an imagined urban barrio space and experience. Despite their intentional commodification of the barrio, these artists considered themselves authentic exponents of its musical and aesthetic reifications.<sup>27</sup> My mission is not to validate or critique their convictions that, “challenged an oppressive value system that ignored the worth of barrio culture”.<sup>28</sup> Rather, I hope to chronicle the various cultural and

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<sup>24</sup> " Espinoza Agurto, 2.

<sup>25</sup> Adrian Burgos, Frank Andre Guridy, and Gina M. Pérez, *Beyond El Barrio : Everyday Life in Latina/o America* (New York: NYU Press, 2010), <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=343816&site=ehost-live>. discusses the problematic use that others and marginalizes communities. This collection looks to problematize prior conceptions with nuance. Regardless, he recognizes the positive use by artists in particular, as an imagined space.

<sup>26</sup> Dávila, *Barrio Dreams*

<sup>27</sup> Keith Negus, *Music Genres and Corporate Cultures* (Psychology Press, 1999).133. for an explanation and genealogy of the problematic catch-all term for various musical styles and genres.

<sup>28</sup> Berrios-Miranda, 165.

social interactions with the musical representation of the barrio and the understandings of a global Pan Latin music in understudied locations like Lima, Peru.

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<sup>29</sup> " Espinoza Agurto, 2.

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commodification of the barrio, these artists considered themselves authentic exponents of its musical and aesthetic reifications.<sup>32</sup> My mission is not to validate or critique their convictions that, “challenged an oppressive value system that ignored the worth of barrio culture”.<sup>33</sup> Rather, I hope to chronicle the various cultural and social interactions with the musical representation of the barrio and the understandings of a global Pan Latin music in understudied locations like Lima, Peru.

### *Salsa and Lima, Peru*

As a framework for understanding salsa in Lima throughout the years, selected excerpts from three seminal albums in salsa music's history. *Lo Mato (Si no Compra este LP)*, *Siembra*, and *Solista...Pero no Solo* serve as central primary sources. These three albums are each an indicative example from the eras in my revised periodization of the genre: salsa dura (hard salsa) of the sixties and seventies, salsa consciente (conscious salsa) of the late seventies and eighties, and salsa romantica (romantic salsa) of the eighties and nineties. Scholarship generally focuses on the distinction between the more romantic and pop influenced salsa of the eighties and the original conscious and sometimes political versions of salsa.<sup>34</sup> A more

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<sup>32</sup> Keith Negus, *Music Genres and Corporate Cultures* (Psychology Press, 1999).133. for an explanation and genealogy of the problematic catch-all term for various musical styles and genres.

<sup>33</sup> Berrios-Miranda, 165.

<sup>34</sup> Espinoza for example, refers to all of salsa before the romantic turn as consciente: song texts and musical markers that poetically express political, historical and class awareness of the shared Latino/Latin American existences, identities and experiences: *Latinidad* and a metaphysical common, *metabarrio*. 3.

Lise Waxer, in the glossary *Salsa Dura* as, “...the rougher-edged sound of the 1970s, with driving rhythm section, punchy brass, usually some kind of social message in the lyrics.” Lise Waxer, ed., *Situating Salsa: Global Markets and Local Meanings in Latin Popular Music*, *Perspectives in Global Pop* (New York London: Routledge, 2002).

granular distinction between the styles allows for a more nuanced analysis of the various understandings that the music had. While I generally treat these styles as temporally discrete for the purposes of advancing the chronology and parallel history of Lima forward, all three musical periods overlapped. The selected subgenres are three examples of various types of salsa music, and while the most indicative of a specific time, they did not exist exclusively in a single period. The earliest salsa, the salsa dura, informed by the toughness of city life in Latino New York City, with its brash musical aesthetics and urban tales often centered around crime. While this type of salsa was informed by the politics and awareness of subaltern life in the city, it is worth distinguishing it from the more political salsa consciente that developed after. Together with Limeño voices, textual analysis helps consider and compare the messages' understandings and its resonance with Lima's diverse audiences. While in its more traditional salsa dura iteration, the music cemented itself as a local identifier of the port neighborhood of Callao, for example. However, salsa music's popularity in Peru peaks when it is in its most commercial form, with a depoliticized romantic salsa of the 1980s as escapism across classes.<sup>35</sup> A particular focus on the texts in a context outside of Puerto Rico or New York City adds to the larger understanding of Pan Latin consciousness and *Latinidad*.<sup>36</sup>

As several Peruvian and salsa scholars mentioned through personal communication, academic work on this topic does not exist.<sup>37</sup> Salsa is noticeably

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<sup>35</sup> Waxer, *Situating Salsa*, 318.

<sup>36</sup> Latinidad in the context of salsa: "...a significant connection built upon language, common historical pasts, ethnic makeup, and a shared situation of oppression, marginalization, poverty and social consciousness not national differences or alliances, but rather the shared social adversities of Latinos and Latin Americans whether in New York, Caracas, or Medellin" Espinoza, 79-80.

<sup>37</sup> Javier F. León, Andrés Espinoza Agurto, and Jesús Antonio Cosamalón Aguilar to name a few.

absent in the literature of Lima's many musical scenes. This is likely due to the fact that unlike other foreign styles to Peru like rock or cumbia, a distinct performative style did not arise in the city. This is not a study about salsa production or salsa music as a dance, despite its fundamental nature as a dance music. As salsa insiders in Peru mentioned, there is no such thing as Peruvian salsa, but rather salsa in Peru.<sup>38</sup> As Peruvian salsa bandleader Johnny Correa explains, "historically, our music won't get played on the radio if it isn't a cover (song).<sup>39</sup> Notwithstanding, its place in the historical musical map of the city is worth including even if the focus is solely on audience reception. Its appropriation and re-signification in the port of Callao informed by local contexts pushes back on understandings of Latin American identity, particularly hinting on a muted blackness in criollismo.<sup>40</sup> If musical fusions in Peru were opportunities for upper white class Limeños to reflect, reconsider, and relocate themselves in the socio racial hierarchy of the city, then the political more highbrow conscious salsa of the 1970s provided this opportunity almost three decades prior to fusions of foreign and traditional Peruvian music like Andean rock.<sup>41</sup> Ethnomusicologist Raul R. Romero suggests that the Peruvian fusion,

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<sup>38</sup> Salserísimo Peru, *DEBATE: ¿Existe La SALSA PERUANA?* accessed September 8, 2020, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kz\\_PV0jOmgg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kz_PV0jOmgg).

<sup>39</sup> "La Exclusiva: 'Si no hacemos covers la radio no toca nuestra música,'" *Salserísimo Perú | Salsa es Cultura* (blog), June 13, 2017, <http://www.salserisimoperu.com/johnny-correa-orquesta-la-exclusiva-si-no-hacemos-covers-emisoras-radio-no-tocan-musica-salsa-noticia-13-06-2017/>.

<sup>40</sup> Heidi Feldman, *Black Rhythms of Peru: Reviving African Musical Heritage in the Black Pacific* (Wesleyan University Press, 2006). Feldman here proposes that blackness in Peru is part of a a "black pacific" double consciousness both outside of Peruvianess and Pan Africanism. See for a comprehensive look at blackness in Peruvian musical culture despite a resurgence of the artforms in the twentieth century.

<sup>41</sup> Fiorella Montero-Díaz, "White Cholos?: Discourses around Race, Whiteness and Lima's Fusion Music," in *Cultures of Anti-Racism in Latin America and the Caribbean*, ed. Peter Wade, James Scorer, and Ignacio Aguiló (University of London Press, 2019), 167–90, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvk8w0pj.12>. In this paper, Montero-Díaz argues that fusion (Peruvian) musical styles from the 1990s, "constitutes a resource for personal reflection, social agency, and the

tecnocumbia of the late 1990s, “for the first time in the twentieth century, a cultural product of a subaltern group came to occupy center stage, front pages, and prime-time television in a strongly divided country like Peru.”<sup>42</sup> Salsa music in the 1980s played this role decades before, a music identified with the *barriadas* (slums) of Lima and working class neighborhoods like Callao, yet fundamentally a foreign music, maintaining a cosmopolitan appeal for neo liberal upper classes in the domestic media. Even though the global product salsa did not produce a particular Limeño or Peruvian style, the ongoing construction of a collective memory in Lima and its reception informed by local culture and politics deserve further interrogation within the frameworks of popular music in Lima, a few which I have listed.

Scant as they are, I introduce chronicles from Limeños still at home and in the United States into the discourse. Notwithstanding, much more fieldwork is still necessary. As far as what is considered insider knowledge, what is currently available is primarily anecdotal.<sup>43</sup> Fan collective *Salserísimo Perú*’s online collection, for example, is an indispensable source.<sup>44</sup> This group of record collectors and salsa lovers, many from

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elaboration of new forms of citizenship among upper class whites.” 169. I’d argue that salsa offered these opportunities for white upper classes in the 1970s as a fusion, albeit not from Peru.

<sup>42</sup> Raul R. Romero, “Chapter 10: “Popular Music and the Global City: Huayno, Chicha, and Techno-Cumbia in Lima” in *From Tejano to Tango: Essays on Latin American Popular Music* ed. Walter Aaron Clark, (New York: Routledge, 2013), <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=536235&site=ehost-live>. 217 – 240. 237.

<sup>43</sup> For example, two national news reports in 2007 highlight Salsa culture in Peru, “Descarga En El Barrio - Cuarto Poder Part.1 - YouTube,” accessed May 24, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EDbnTaUIEs0> and “Descarga En El Barrio - Salsa Reportaje - YouTube,” accessed May 24, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HL30ujGYMDo>.

<sup>44</sup> “Salserísimo Perú | Salsa es Cultura,” Salserísimo Perú | Salsa es Cultura, accessed May 21, 2020, <http://www.salserisimoperu.com/>. A note on this unorthodox source, Dr. Cosamalón Aguilar from the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú found it a valuable source towards an unsuccessful project, a monograph on this topic. While other fan collectives exist online, this is seemingly the most comprehensive with the most reputable insider sources.

Callao, chronicles the history of salsa in Peru, curating oral, written, and recorded testimonies from journalists, performers, and Radio DJs throughout various online platforms.

Chapter one focuses on the port city of Callao, its relationship with salsa's earliest forms, and its antecedents. The story in this historically cosmopolitan yet working class area of Lima is one with foreign products of mass culture and the equipment available for its mainly public consumption. As sociologist Lise Waxer observed in the similarly non-Caribbean city of Cali, Colombia, advances in reproduction technologies, like vinyl records and radio, served as some of the first mediums for the distribution of foreign music from the Caribbean and its appropriation. The result in Colombia was the creation of a local collective memory of Cali as "the Salsa capital of the world".<sup>45</sup> A somewhat similar development took place in the Peruvian port. The memorialization of the Puerto Rican salsa dura artist Héctor Lavoe in Callao is a larger focus of this chapter. It provides more insight into the music's resonance in this period, suggesting why and how it became a local marker of this neighborhood's identity. With growing options for popular cultural consumption, particularly indigenous culture promoted by the government and linked to the growing migration, Chalacos (demonym for people from Callao) gravitated to this music of a subaltern class experience that resonated with a historical coastal Criollo tradition during this time of intense demographic change. Salsa dura as a reaffirmation of their local criollo identity is an example of the relationship of global

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<sup>45</sup> Lise Waxer. *The City of Musical Memory: Salsa, Record Grooves, and Popular Culture in Cali, Colombia*. Music/Culture. Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 2002.

transnational currents intrinsically tied to local influences (Appadurai). Amongst competing national cultural projects, chalcos chose to identify musically with the global music of salsa, not because of its message of a pan Latin identity, but because of local influences and understandings. Further, this failure of an inclusive pan ethnic identity like *latinidad* and salsa that strongly spoke to pan Africanism as well was an example of the muted blackness in Peruvian criollismo.

The second chapter centers around salsa's most political style, *salsa consciente* of the late 1970s. While the earlier *salsa dura* resonated with the residents of Callao and other lower-class neighborhoods in Lima, the expansion of the subject matter in salsa addressing a more inclusive pan Latin pueblo, allowed for the growth of salsa's presence and appeal to other classes.<sup>46</sup> More middle and upper classes took to this type of salsa, with similar political influences as other political popular music at the time like the *nueva canción* movement.<sup>47</sup> Although this increase in popularity of a foreign sound may seem contradictory given the nationalist political moment in Peru, the music and the populist military government espoused similar anti-imperialist messages. Salsa's leftist countercultural messages, however, were still resonant for a larger populace whether they supported their national government or not. Salsa transcended the barrio, and Peru as a nation began a gradual yet difficult return to

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<sup>46</sup> Espinoza on page 83 explains, as a consciousness, "The use of *El Pueblo* as a neo-Marxist political term in Latin America incorporates differential claims under one guise (Laclau 2005), even though they might be opposed in principle."

<sup>47</sup> Nancy Morris, "Chapter One: New Song in Chile: Half a Century of Musical Activism" in *The Militant Song Movement in Latin America: Chile, Uruguay, and Argentina* ed. Pablo Vila, (Lexington Books, 2014).

The *nueva canción* is largely influenced by Chilean musicians and their reactions to the Allende and Pinochet governments, "Latin American New song is generally known as fusion of politically conscious lyrics with traditional musical styles." 19.

democratic rule as intense urbanization continued. While salsa's international political and countercultural messages were at its most resonant and influential during this period, its growth from the barrio to a larger radio media, recording industry, and more upper-class circles was not possible without considering the changes in the city and the nation.

Finally, the third chapter explores salsa music in Peru at the height of its popularity during Lima's complicated social moment of the 1980s. Salsa was at its popular and commercial peak in Lima and the rest of the world during this neoliberal moment. Opportunities for salsa's local production in Peru were at their height, as were its visibility and consumption across classes and neighborhoods. While domestic fusions like chicha spoke more to the subaltern living social conditions at the period, the national mass media focused on distancing from any particular nationalist tradition found a depoliticized salsa as a common denominator for the subaltern and middle to upper class populace.<sup>48</sup> This was a time of high cultural pluralism as the technologies for reproduction allowed for a more personalized and private experience, and with-it cultural identities. However, commercially, salsa was king. This chapter considers the role that this music played for Lima's citizens at the time, including a form of escapism during difficult, violent years in the city, at the height of cultural diversity. Even in its most toned-down form, what was the appeal and resonance of this fundamentally social dance style? The heavy use by national

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<sup>48</sup> Romero, "Popular Music and the Global City: Huayno, Chicha, and Techno-Cumbia in Lima" defines this Peruvian musical fusion as Peruvian style cumbia (itself a transnational dance music from Colombia) that incorporated Andean musical elements, particularly huayno. "Many of the songs were huaynos adapted to the rhythm of the Peruvian cumbia...lyrics were similar in character to the huayno's, dealing primarily with romantic love and only secondarily with other themes relevant to the everyday life of Lima's migrants for example, social, political, and labor issues." 228.

mass media and upper classes as Lima's de facto popular music speaks to its simultaneous populist and cosmopolitan appeal and its innocuous nature as a depoliticized, more conservative textual tradition. By this point in time, through incredibly popular concerts, a large presence in the national media and in “New Limeno” neighborhoods where it was previously absent, salsa was the many Limas' unifying sound.

In these chapters, the common historicizing thread is unprecedented hypermigration from the highlands of Peru to the capital city, closely related to a moment of growing political crisis and a growing diversity of mass cultural products in Peru's national media. These themes represent the historical context of postwar twentieth-century Lima. They also help consider the Latin American experience and affinities, usually taken for granted as a monolith in the scholarship. As a history of this global and cultural capital flow, this study focuses on the increasing presence of salsa in Lima and Peru's mass media industry and situates salsa music within a larger geography of Lima's popular music scenes. The intersection with Lima's racial and social hierarchies, cultural identities, and politics helps consider these domestic currents that influenced salsa's integration into Limeño culture. Any exploration of salsa culture in Peru must begin in Lima's port of Callao, where its residents consider themselves true bearers of the Limeño criollo culture, yet choose the foreign salsa as their musical identifier.

## Chapter One: Salsa Dura and El Callao



Figure 1: Map of Callao

**Esperando mi  
suerte  
quedé yo  
Pero mi vida otro  
rumbo cogió  
Sobreviviendo  
en una realidad  
De la cual yo no  
podía ni escapar  
Para comer hay que  
buscarse el real  
Aunque se una regla  
Sociedad  
cambiará Oye verás<sup>49</sup>**

***Waiting for my luck I stayed  
But my life took  
another course  
Surviving in a reality  
From which I could  
not even escape  
To eat you have to  
look for the dollar  
Although it is a society rule  
My friendship writes  
you in jail  
Do not worry your  
luck will change  
You will see***

The gold bust erected by Callao's municipal government in August of 2003 reads, "The port of El Callao for Héctor Juan Pérez Martínez. Héctor Lavoe. The singer of all singers. 1946 – 1993". This is a bust for a man who visited Peru on only one occasion in 1986; towards the end of his twenty-five-year career. This monument is a testament to a more popular and inclusive social memory of the people in Callao. This bust was also the first of two memorials to the salsa legend in Lima's port, and the city would later add one for the Cuban salsa legend Celia Cruz as well. This port community in the Andean country has a long history with the musical sounds of the Caribbean, and Hector Lavoe is its popular urban saint.

In order to understand and historicize salsa as a sociocultural phenomenon in Lima, one must begin in its port of Callao. A local contextualization of salsa music helps understand how Limeños dealt with twentieth-century modernity brought on by nascent technology in the public sphere, increasing urbanization, and contentious

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<sup>49</sup> Willie Colon & Hector Lavoe, "El Dia de Suerte" track B2 on Lo Mato (Si No Compra Este LP) Fania Records 1973, Vinyl.

national projects centered around a criollo/indigena duality. General Velasco Alvarado staged a military coup in 1968, ushering in a period of economic nationalization, centered around indigenous culture imagery and aesthetics. This was particularly telling as the vast majority of the migrant population was indigenous. A similar pattern of urban migration took place in Puerto Rico and throughout Latin America at this time, thus attributing to a Latin American experience that salsa vocalizes.<sup>50</sup> For the people of Callao however, the reception of salsa music did not result in a pan ethnic Latin American identity. For cultural products to have transnational appeal, they must be understood and appropriated in local, national contexts. How did salsa, a music informed by the heavily Puerto Rican yet pan Latin diasporic experience in New York City, become the music of Lima's port? The answer deals with transnational global currents evidenced in the port's history with foreign culture and nascent technologies, but also with local identification seen through the memorialization of salsa dura artists from Fania Records like Hector Lavoe. In an increasingly diverse Lima, Callao's population found a voice in the foreign yet very much coastal criollo early salsa with its rough aesthetics, syncretic African influences, and as an urban tradition that reflected life in the increasingly competitive city. Mediated by early technologies of mass reproduction in the public sphere and the nascent mass media, the transnational salsa music reaffirmed a local creole identity in Callao. This Peruvian form of criollismo where blackness is essential yet muted, problematizes essentialization of Latin American identities. Salsa

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<sup>50</sup> Espinoza Agurto, 147.

demonstrated that tradition and mass popular culture do not have to contradict each other and can reinforce local identity through its reception.

### *El Callao/Lima and Modernity*

That the Limeño port city/district of El Callao is at the center of the story of Salsa music in Peru should come as no surprise. It historically serves as the major port of entry for imports, including those from the culture industry. If Lima, Peru is one of the centers of salsa music, Callao is its capital. Callao has a long history as an important port in South America and the Pacific, serving as a point of entry for trade and people both foreign and domestic.<sup>51</sup> Lima's international airport is currently located in Callao, about eleven miles from downtown. Callao has been the port of entry for popular mass entertainment as well, such as soccer and foreign music.<sup>52</sup> Politically, Callao is a pseudo autonomous constitutional province, yet still part of Lima's greater metropolitan region. Thus, historically, a local Callao identity that is separate yet not necessarily different than Lima's has been important to its citizens. As a port town, the Callao community is also historically international. Various municipal papers available from the early twentieth century reveal an international presence in local commerce and politics.<sup>53</sup> Lifelong Callao resident Lucho Albornoz

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<sup>51</sup> Carlos Aguirre and Charles F. Walker, *The Lima Reader: History, Culture, Politics* (North Carolina, UNITED STATES: Duke University Press, 2017), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/umdcpl/detail.action?docID=4822052>.

<sup>52</sup> El Comercio, "The Growing Popular Taste for Soccer (1908)" in *The Lima Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, ed. Carlos Aguirre and Charles F. Walker (North Carolina, UNITED STATES: Duke University Press, 2017), 113 – 114. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/umdcpl/detail.action?docID=4822052>. This is a translated and transcribed (by Jorge Bayona) primary source from Peruvian Newspaper El Comercio in 1908.

<sup>53</sup> Boletín Municipal [Callao], 28 Febrero 1953, British Library, EAP498/4/3/4, <https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP498-4-3-4>. For example, page 11 enumerates a list of commercial

substantiates the international essence of the city in his oral testimony. He mentions that in the early fifties, Callao had various neighborhoods of mostly Italian families, and he would, "go and sell fish that I would catch with my friends to all the Italian ladies of Cantolao".<sup>54</sup> Albornoz also serves as a testimony to the working-class makeup of the port community. While eventually going on to an office career, he spent his earliest teenage and adult years laboring in various jobs on the docks, loading and unloading cargo in the evenings and early mornings, while attending college in the afternoons. Municipal bulletins and papers from the city provide insight into the significance of the labor class in the community and ongoing modernization throughout these decades.<sup>55</sup> The ongoing potable water infrastructure project that was still ongoing as late as 1953 is evidence of a modernizing city in general, not just in foreign consumer technology and mass reproduction. Callao was also Lima's gateway for vinyl records from all over the world. In the early twentieth century, mainly from the United States, but from around other American markets like Venezuela, Mexico, and Argentina as well. These early records included Afro Cuban musical precursors to salsa like tangos, and boleros.<sup>56</sup> This influx would eventually also include salsa

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organizations and families that donated to the funds for local social events, including "Colonia Japonesa" and several English name families.

<sup>54</sup> Luis Albornoz, interview by author, Callao/Falls Church, VA, May 7, 2020.

<sup>55</sup> Boletín Municipal [Callao], British Library, EAP498/4/3/1 – 4/3/4, <https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP498-4-3-1>

<sup>56</sup> Tango: Popular Argentine urban dance of the twentieth century, that María Susana Azzi defines as: "the national music of Argentina, a metaphor and a metonymy, a shaper of identities, an umbrella for diverse sonorities and plural vocalities, and the expression of a profoundly emotional repertoire." 26. María Susana Azzi, "Chapter 2: The Tango, Peronism, and Astor Piazzolla during the 1940s and '50s" in *From Tejano to Tango: Essays on Latin American Popular Music* ed. Walter Aaron Clark, (New York: Routledge, 2013), <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=536235&site=ehost-live>. 25 – 41.

records from New York. This was a period of nascent exposure to these "Tropical" sounds. Limeños and Peruvians referred to these styles as "Música tropical" (tropical music), which was mostly used as a codification for afro Cuban rhythms.<sup>57</sup>

Not only did the records unload in Callao, but so did the earliest technology that could play these records, the phonographs, record players, and jukeboxes, or *vitrolas* and *rocolas* as Limeños would interchangeably call them. That most of these early jukeboxes were found in this part of Lima meant that the genealogy of salsa music in the country traces back to these first bars, restaurants, and *Salsodromos* (salsa bars) in Callao.<sup>58</sup> In this sense, Lima and Callao's citizens experienced a similar type of vernacular modernism that Cali, Colombia did.<sup>59</sup> Because they were a large portion of what was available to play on new mass-produced technology, these foreign musical styles in Spanish would become an integral part of the interactive and novel experience with this new technology. As one resident mentioned, "as a kid we would stand outside because they wouldn't let us in and just feed the rocola all day.

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Bolero: The Latin American Bolero, more specifically for the purposes of this paper, the Romantic Bolero, is a musical fusion of various Spanish and Afro Cuban traditions. Particularly of note is its vast popularity throughout Latin America throughout the twentieth century and its melodramatic lyricism.

<sup>57</sup> Matthew B. Karush, *Musicians in Transit: Argentina and the Globalization of Popular Music* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017). 211 – 212. Karush on Música tropical, a catch all term for various styles of popular foreign music in Spanish: "...as applied to cumbia, chamamé, and cuarteto (two of which had no direct connection to the tropics) not only linked these genres to frivolity, but also had the effect of "othering" them..."

<sup>58</sup> Eloy Jáuregui, *Pa' Bravo Yo: Historias de La Salsa En El Perú*, (Lima: Mesa Redonda, 2011).

<sup>59</sup> Miriam Bratu Hansen, "Fallen Women, Rising Stars, New Horizons: Shanghai Silent Film as Vernacular Modernism," *Film Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (October 1, 2000): 10, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1213797>. Explains that vernacular modernism as a concept is one of a "sensory reflexive" experience of modernism in new mediums other than in print by strangers in public spheres like these. In other words, an experience with a new form of media and technology.

That's all we would do: play soccer and dance and listen to the music all day. That's how I first heard Salsa".<sup>60</sup>

Like the very music they played, these coin-operated machines, with their mesmerizing colorful lights on display, were a novel, modern import and were more accessible for establishments in the Callao area first. Access to the port meant access to both rocola and musica tropical records. The concentration of collectors and avid listeners was in Callao, and thus, a tropical music scene that included salsa became associated with the port city.

### *A Pan National Industry*

Given the ongoing capacity for mass production of the technology and audio medium, international companies mainly from North America began to notice South America as potential markets for growth as early as the 1930s. Even as they contemplated and produced indigenous genres to each Latin American country (like Huayno and musica criolla in the case of Peru), film and record multinationals first envisioned a transnational, Latin American market for popular music in Spanish during these decades. Bolero music became one of the tropical transnational musical styles for Latin America that these companies envisioned.<sup>61</sup> Bolero's transnational nature in Latin America traces back to a trajectory from Cuba in the late 1800s, first around the Caribbean and then Mexico via traveling theatre and circus performers,

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<sup>60</sup> Luis Albornoz. Interviewed by Author. Callao/Falls Church, VA. May 8, 2020.

<sup>61</sup> Karush, 211 -214.

Música Criolla (Creole Music) is the term applied to an urban popular music from Lima, and encompasses a number of styles and more local rhythms such as vals, marineras and polcas, and eventually even Afro Peruvian styles such as festejo and landó.

who included musicians as part of their group.<sup>62</sup> Throughout Latin America, its dissemination continued but not before integration into more urban Mexican national popular culture through radio, movies, and records. Bolero has several of the same aesthetics as salsa, particularly its Afro-Cuban percussive elements.<sup>63</sup> The more romantic aspect of the music is reinforced by a transformation when it arrives in Mexico. The “Trio Romántico” style, characterized by Mexican groups like *Los Panchos*, would gain the most international notoriety and fame for the genre and had an association with ballrooms and cabaret-like locations.<sup>64</sup>

Bolero music was arguably the most ubiquitous Latin American popular musical tradition throughout the twentieth century. Héctor Lavoe, the famous urban patron saint of El Callao, not only came up as a bolero singer, but would go on to make bolero records and albums, including a cover of a song written by Peruvian composer Mario Cavagnaro<sup>65</sup>. Bolero music was a significant tropical antecedent to salsa in Callao and Lima as well.

By the forties and fifties, the corpus of foreign music in Lima included various proto salsa tropical sounds. A wave of international artists like Benny More and La

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<sup>62</sup> Vanessa Knights, “El Bolero y La Identidad Caribeña”, *Caribbean Studies* 31, no. 2 (2003): 135–50. 139. As material evidence, an example is a poster of a multinational variety show in Ponce, Puerto Rico including Mexican performers: Erasmio Vando Papers, 1896-1996. Teatro Rex announces two presentations of Viva Mexico!: ErVa\_b03\_f02\_0001\_front. Center for Puerto Rican Studies Library & Archives, Hunter College, CUNY. Web. 20 Jun 2020.

<sup>63</sup> Knights, 142.

<sup>64</sup> George Torres, “The Bolero Romántico: From Cuban Dance to International Popular Song” in *From Tejano to Tango: Essays on Latin American Popular Music* Walter Aaron Clark, eds., (New York: Routledge, 2013), <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=536235&site=ehost-live>. 151 – 171.

<sup>65</sup> Hector Lavoe, “Emborrachame de Amor,” track #2 on *La Voz*, Fania, 1975, vinyl. A cover of Mario Cavagnaro y Su Orquesta Sensacion Tropical, “Emborrachame de Amor,” track B2 on *Salsa Picante*, Sono Radio, 1960, vinyl.

Sonora Matancera was increasingly popular in the city. These artists even eventually made visits to Lima.<sup>66</sup> Technically, they played rhythmic precursors to salsa like son montuno, mambo, and boleros. These styles were stylistically influential antecedents in salsa's trajectory but also informed the ears of future salsa enthusiasts, potentially attributing to its eventual success in the port. Cuban bands like the Sonora Matancera were wildly popular throughout Latin America as early as the 1930s but mostly taking off in the 1940s.<sup>67</sup> Peruvian artists would perform these sounds in the coming decades as well, many from the port of Callao.

### Early Tropical Artists in Lima

In a heavily male-dominated chronology like salsa, the accomplishments of important women such as Vicky Zamora can tend to get lost. She was known as the "Guarachera del Perú", as she sang the proto salsa sound Guaracha during the 50s and 60s. Zamora was one of the first female tropical music acts from Peru and reached international acclaim as a singer with the legendary Cuban pioneers, the *Lecuona Cuban Boys*. This group had an almost 40-year trajectory (1930s to circa 1971), and much like the Sonora Matancera toured Latin America regularly. Zamora achieved national success by the late 1950s, recording with the likes of Lucho Macedo, arguably Peru's most historically famous and internationally known Tropical music artist. While working with another group, the *Sonora Sensación*, she was invited by

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<sup>66</sup> Martín Gómez, "Lima gozó con el Bárbaro del Ritmo," *Salserísimo Perú | Salsa es Cultura* (blog), June 20, 2018, <http://www.salserisimoperu.com/benny-more-llegada-lima-peru-conciertos-embassy-brujas-cronica-olimpico-salsa-noticia-20-06-2018/>.

<sup>67</sup> Hailing from Matanzas, Cuba, the group had at various points of their trajectory, an international roster including Argentine, Puerto Rican lead singers, for example.

the *Lecuona Cuban Boys* to join them on a European leg of their tour as lead vocalist. This tour was the height of her success, even drawing comparisons to the legendary Celia Cruz.<sup>68</sup>

Before Zamora began her career with Peruvian labels like MAG and Sono Radio, *Danila y Sus Magnificas* were the first all-female tropical act in Peru and arguably all of South America in the early 1950s.<sup>69</sup> The contributions of these and numerous other female tropical acts were evidence of a Pan Latin market to some degree already established in the early days before salsa with Cuba as the central transnational cultural hub.

Limeño Salsa pioneer Pacho Nalmy for example, began his career in 1962 with the band Papo y Su Combo Sabroso. Papo mostly played boleros, covering a famous Cuban artist, Panchito Riset, a tactic that proved to be a large part of his success. With their incorporation of the trombone, this band is instrumental as one of the first, if not first, true Peruvian salsa acts. The trombone played in a particularly brash style characterizes the initial salsa sound. This Callao band even covered some of the pioneering salsa artists like Eddie Palmieri, Mon Rivera, and Richie Ray, appearing on musical variety shows throughout these decades and recording for the Peruvian label El Virrey. Additionally, he was eventually instrumental in the success of the nascent Salsa scene as an acquaintance between *melomanos* (music lovers and

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<sup>68</sup> Martín Gómez, "Vicky Zamora: desde la Sonora Capri hasta Lecuona Cuban Boys [VIDEO]," *Salserísimo Perú | Salsa es Cultura* (blog), March 13, 2018, <http://www.salserisimoperu.com/vicky-zamora-sonora-capri-hasta-lecuona-cuban-boys-salsa-noticia-13-03-2018/>.

<sup>69</sup> Martín Gómez, "#SalsaEsCultura: con éxito se desarrollan los conversatorios que organiza Salserísimo Perú," *Salserísimo Perú | Salsa es Cultura* (blog), October 3, 2019, <http://www.salserisimoperu.com/salserisimo-peru-salsaescultura-exito-desarrollan-conversatorios-organiza-noticia-03-10-2019/>.

collectors) like Luis Rospigliosi and radio DJs like Yolvi Traverso with local bands like the Sonora de Nelson Ferreyra, Sonora Casino de Hugo Macedo, Sonora Callao, Sonora Mocambo to name a few.<sup>70</sup>

### Mass Media in Lima

It is crucial to keep in mind that salsa music, even in its most political, grassroots, and subversive forms, is fundamentally a mass product of the culture industry. As such, a survey of the growth of the culture industry in Peru's nascent mass media is worth unpacking. Carlos Torres Rotondo presents a useful synthesis of the national culture industry and the media heavily centralized in Lima from the 1950s onwards. With the introduction of the *Nueva Ola* (New Wave), rock and roll movement primarily marketed to youth, there was a conflation of foreign music marketing in Peru.<sup>71</sup> One of the first rock artists to visit Lima in the late 1950s was Mexican star Lucerito Barcena. Not only was this covered heavily by the conservative newspaper *El Comercio*, but Lucerito's repertoire included tropical styles like mambo and cha cha. This illustrates how Peruvians in general understood and interpreted tropical music. It had a novel allure, part of the vernacular modernism experience that is intrinsic to foreign records. Because it was foreign, it was an attractive novelty both stylistically and demographically. Carlos Granda, a lifelong

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<sup>70</sup> El Comercio Perú, "Pachito Nalmy: el adiós a una leyenda de la salsa en el Perú," El Comercio Perú, February 4, 2015, <https://elcomercio.pe/luces/musica/pachito-nalmy-adios-leyenda-salsa-peru-184719-noticia/>.

<sup>71</sup> A popular music development by the record industry to grow and in many ways create a specifically youth market in South America, beginning in Argentina. As Karush states, "...a group of singers who appealed to a young audience with local versions of rock and roll and other foreign genres." (page 92). See Valeria Manzano, "Ha llegado la 'nueva ola': Música, consumo y juventud en la Argentina, 1956 - 1966," n.d., 42 for more.

Peruvian musician, mentions about his time in the 60s and 70s playing in Lima, "we played everything, cumbia, rock, salsa, we didn't discriminate, whatever was popular at the time, we enjoyed it all".<sup>72</sup> This provides insight into how Limeños consumed these popular foreign styles during these decades. Radio and television would only augment this modernistic novelty.

Discos MAG released the first recording by a Peruvian rock artist in 1957, Mike Oliver's curiously but aptly titled, "Mambo Rock/Razzle Dazzle" yet another example of this understanding.<sup>73</sup> The introduction of rock and roll, first in English via movies from the United States, Mexico, and Argentina, catalyzed national production and distribution. Peruvian record labels included Discos MAG El Virrey (the oldest), Sono Radio, IEMPSA, FTA, Dis-Perú, Dinsa, to mention a few.<sup>74</sup> In 1962, IEMPSA records established the first vinyl record production company in Peru. Before IEMPSA, Peruvian artists would have to travel to Argentina or the United States to record in a studio. Even with the inclusion of Peruvian artists, foreign music was a large part of the market and would remain so throughout its history.<sup>75</sup> The Nueva Ola was significant in developing the domestic Peruvian popular music market in the twentieth century. This genre introduced Spanish language rock via pop-inspired music, usually covering popular American tracks in Spanish. Nueva Ola was the de facto genesis of a youth market in Peru and throughout South America at the cusp of

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<sup>72</sup> Carlos Granda, interview by Author, El Paso, TX/Falls Church, VA. May 8, 2020.

<sup>73</sup> Torres Rotondo, 28.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 30.

<sup>75</sup> El Comercio, "Perú: La época de oro de los discos de vinilo fabricados en Perú | NOTICIAS EL COMERCIO PERÚ," El Comercio Perú (NOTICIAS EL COMERCIO PERÚ, December 23, 2014), <https://elcomercio.pe/economia/peru/epoca-oro-discos-vinilo-fabricados-peru-182277-noticia/>.

television's boom in the 1960s. The Television industry also played a role in the promotion of popular musical styles like salsa. From its inception in 1958, private broadcast stations like America Television significantly invested in the popular music market's success. The owners of this first television broadcast company were the Radio Broadcast union and had ownership of about 28 radio companies alone at this time already. By the 1960s, rock and other newer foreign styles became a part of the musical landscape of Lima, included in popular music variety shows in Television and Radio, and as part of the musical repertoire in popular parties of every day Limeños alongside Música Criolla and established Latino music like boleros. Ruben Carbajal, another salsa pioneer and bolero singer, brother of salsero Luisito from the famed Mito Barreto family, would imitate a famous bolerista Lucho Barrios. He did this so well that listeners would attend shows just to see his covers. Peruvian performers mostly played international artists' covers, something not uncommon in 1960s popular music in South America. As Peruvian Salsa expert and collector Rigoberto Villalta believes, "There is no such thing as Peruvian Salsa, there is only Salsa in Peru."<sup>76</sup> Some of the earliest radio shows playing salsa in Lima dated back to Callao of this decade.

Much of the groundwork for the salsa industry in Lima was forged during these years by who many consider its forefather, Luis Rospigliosi Carranza. The purveyor and collector of records provided the physical material for the still nascent and local radio stations in Lima and Callao. Further, he was the proprietor of "El

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<sup>76</sup>Salserisimo Peru, *DEBATE: ¿Existe La SALSA PERUANA?* accessed September 8, 2020, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kz\\_PV0jOmgg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kz_PV0jOmgg).

Sabroso” (the tasty one/the flavorful one), a famed bar on Calle Constitución in Callao that was the apocryphal birth of Peru’s Salsa scene.<sup>77</sup> From the 1950s and as late as the 1970s, access to foreign tropical records still ran through Callao's port area. El Sabroso was the epitome of the early proto-salsa scene throughout Callao. Establishments like this local bar were sights for introducing foreign sounds, people, and technology. Sailors, mariners and dock workers from all over the world, but mostly the Antillean region and the US, would come to El Sabroso, change into street clothes, and enjoy a drink while listening to the latest musica tropical records. This crowd would bring these types of records to Rospigliosi themselves, but they were not the only visitors to Callao. Jukeboxes, regardless of brand, were a staple in these early cantinas and the salsa scene in Callao, as it made commercial sense for owners like Rospigliosi include in their establishments.<sup>78</sup>

With music lovers from Callao like Rospigliosi, access to salsa increasingly grew as did the number of radio programs showcasing this type of music.<sup>79</sup> He became well known within the burgeoning local radio industry, forming relationships with popular music radio DJs. The radio program Hit Parade Latino on Radio Libertad led by Jorge Eduardo Bayacan would eventually take salsa's popularity to heightened commercial success in the 1970s. However, smaller, more local radio

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<sup>77</sup> Redacción El Comercio Perú, “Pachito Nalmy: el adiós a una leyenda de la salsa en el Perú,” El Comercio Perú, February 4, 2015, <https://elcomercio.pe/luces/musica/pachito-nalmy-adios-leyenda-salsa-peru-184719-noticia/>.

<sup>78</sup> Albornoz interview.  
Jáuregui

<sup>79</sup> Yolvi Traverso, “Yolvi Traverso recuerda las emisoras salseras de los 70,” Salserísimo Perú | Salsa es Cultura (blog), January 4, 2017, <http://www.salserisimoperu.com/yolvi-traverso-recuerda-emisoras-salseras-70-noticia-17-07-2015/>.

shows from DJs like Lucho Muro, Lucho Ballesteros, and Manuel Traverso were already playing salsa music in 1965. This salsa was primarily produced and indebted to the rise of the independent New York City record label, whose name became synonymous with salsa's earliest periods, Fania Records.

### *Fania's Salsa Dura*

Fania Records' impact on the success and visibility of salsa music is indisputable.<sup>80</sup> Their rise from a small record company operating out of the founder's home in 1964 to playing concerts at Yankee Stadium by 1973 was a microcosm for salsa's international growth. Fania boasted an international roster of artists based out of New York City. Johnny Pacheco, co-founder and artist, was from the Dominican Republic, Pete "El Conde" Rodriguez was Puerto Rican, Joe Bataan was Filipino and Larry Harlow was a Jewish American, affectionally known as "El Judio Maravilloso" (the Wonderful Jew). Fania's international makeup, including the musical incorporation of diverse stylistic elements, played a role in salsa's appeal as a more inclusively Pan Latin style than its mainly Cuban antecedents. While the genesis of the term salsa is apocryphal and not credited to Fania Records, the term is synonymous with their music as their intervention was the hybridity of musical styles and the use of the poetics of the metabarrio, beginning with their early, classic iteration, *salsa dura*.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Vernon Boggs, *Salsiology: Afro-Cuban Music and the Evolution of Salsa in New York City*, Contributions to the Study of Music and Dance, no. 26 (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992). 104.

<sup>81</sup> On the term Salsa: Latin music musicians in the sixties used the term to refer to music that had "flavor" and was easy to dance to. The first album to use the term was Venezuelan, Federico Y Su Combo's 1966, *Llego La Salsa*. Tommy Muriel, *Fania All-Stars: Salsa, Inc.: [Cuatro décadas (y pico) de Nuestra Cosa Latina]* (Tommy Muriel, 2016). 86 – 87.

Fania built its early success on the sounds of a doo-wop/ Latin style (mainly cha-cha music) hybrid, Latin boogaloo. Also known as Latin Soul, it was the first Latino music style in New York City that was not a deliberate mimesis of a traditional Afro-Cuban genre. This was music primarily for teens by teens, and its biggest star was one of Fania's first signings, Joe Bataan.

Salsa's essential rebellious and populist street consciousness begins at this stage, with Bataan's songs like "Young, Gifted and Brown" and his album *Riot!*. The cover depicts the singer sitting in a New York City block surrounded by several teenagers from various races, fighting each other, carrying various weapons.<sup>82</sup> Along with its teenage rebelliousness, its linguistic and stylistic hybridity reflected this particular generation's experience in transcultural 1960s New York.

The introduction of a young Nuyorican trombonist from the Bronx with 1968's album *El Malo* (The Bad Guy) was a seminal moment for Fania Records.<sup>83</sup> Willie Colón would become one of the more critically acclaimed, influential salsa artists of all time. Never using the term explicitly, the album was one of the first purely salsa projects as it was particularly, "distinguished by its brash, urban, or "street" barrio sound and lyrics that departed from the Cuban-influenced musical arrangements performed in ballroom setting in New York at the time."<sup>84</sup> The

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<sup>82</sup> Espinoza Agurto, 69 – 74.

<sup>83</sup> The term Nuyorican refers to Puerto Ricans in the New York city diaspora and their hybrid identity. Regina Bernard-Carreño, "Nuyorican Identity," *Counterpoints* 366 (2010): 77–94 explains, for example, "Nuyorican poetry and writing responded to the disenfranchisement in the United States, and the dislocation of culture by not being accepted in Puerto Rico as Puerto Rican. Nuyorican identity became its own culture composed of bicultural and bilingual people". P. 80.

<sup>84</sup> Wilson A. Valentin Escobar, "El Hombre que Respira Debajo del Agua, Trans-Boricua Memories, Identities, and Nationalisms Performed Through the Death of Héctor Lavoe" in Waxer, *Situating salsa*, 161-187. 165.

untrained Colón's production style and aesthetics set the tone for salsa's growth. Thus, whether intentional or not, his salsa dura style, associated with the barrio, along with the syncretic inclusion of Puerto Rican indigenous rhythmic styles like the Plena was the most visible during Fania's earliest era.<sup>85</sup> It was specifically the salsa dura of this era and its artists that are the subjects of Callao's memorialization and adoption as an identity.<sup>86</sup>

The release of *El Malo* marked another significant moment for salsa music. Colón, a trombone player, and his band for this album included a young singer from Puerto Rico who had just arrived in New York but two years prior. This album included his first recordings as a vocal lead singer. For many within the culture, he was the most iconic and revered singer. One need only to notice his veneration in Peru, an Andean nation outside of the Nuyorican and Caribbean transnational space. This singer was Héctor Juan Pérez, better known as Héctor Lavoe (a transliteration of "La Voz" (the voice)), "el cantante de los cantantes" (the singer of all singers).<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Another example of this was their "album covers establishing his identity as a "bad" street tough." Juan Flores, "Cha-Cha with a Backbeat: Songs and Stories of Latin Boogaloo" in this same collection, *Situating Salsa*.75-101. 94. Back to Escobar in this same collection, 167: "Colón and Lavoe's album covers were in intertextual dialogue with cinematic representations of New York City organized crime."

<sup>86</sup> Mario Aragón, *Salsa y Sabor En Cada Esquina: Mi Visión de Héctor Lavoe En El Perú*, Primera edición, Selección Gallera (San Borja: Ediciones Altazor, 2015).

<sup>87</sup> Rondón, *Book of Salsa*, heavily covers Fania recordings and artists in his book; however, he does so mainly from a poetics framework. Escobar, in Waxer's *Situating Salsa*, writes, "For Puerto Ricans living within and outside of Puerto Rico, Lavoe's corpse transforms into a trans-Boricua effigy that embodies and interpolates overlapping nationalist and diasporic narratives, enacting a surrogate process constituted by a diasporicity, transnationalism, and collective memory." 163.

The release of *El Malo*, was not the first record released by Fania. However, it did catalyze a rapid global commercial ascent of the Colón/Lavoe partnership, the label itself, and salsa music.<sup>88</sup>

### Héctor Lavoe

Héctor Lavoe was born Héctor Juan Pérez Martines in 1946 in Ponce, Puerto Rico, only 2,196 miles from Callao. Almost sixty years later, he would be immortalized in the Limeño port with a golden bust, during a commemoration by the city's mayor. It is not uncommon to find comments like the following when one looks up Hector Lavoe performances or songs on YouTube:

Héctor, el Patrono del Callao. El único salsero al que las abuelitas de mi barrio le piden milagros. El alma de Lavoe todavía se pasea por las esquinas del Callao, lo sé porque siempre escucho su voz cantando en cada esquina. No hay un solo día en el que no se le oiga. En el Callao la gente no respira aire, respira salsa.<sup>89</sup>

*Héctor, the Patron of Callao. The only salsero that the grannies in my neighborhood pray to for miracles. Lavoe's soul still walks around the corners of Callao, I know this because I always hear his voice singing in every corner. There is not a single day that he is not heard. In Callao people don't breathe air, they breathe salsa.*

Coming from a humble family of provincial musicians, they attempted to groom young Héctor into a more formal musician. Young Lavoe, however, hoped to become a bolero singer, the major popular music of the time throughout Latin America. This led him to double down on his aspirations and move to New York City

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<sup>88</sup> Marv Fisher, "Andean Bloc: Increased Stability Points to Optimistic Future," *Billboard* (Archive: 1963-2000); *Cincinnati*, November 3, 1979. ; Agustin Gurza, "Latin: Latin America Hails Salsa," *Billboard* (Archive: 1963-2000); *Cincinnati*, July 16, 1977. In the beginning of the article, mentions that from a trip to Peru in 1977, "You couldn't believe the explosion of salsa in the country it is everywhere and bands everywhere." This was seemingly unexpected to the market.

<sup>89</sup> *Hector Lavoe - Mentira*, accessed June 24, 2020, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8r4sjW2yT\\_Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8r4sjW2yT_Y).

at 17. Johnnie Pacheco, one of Fania Record's first artists and co-founder, eventually noticed him.<sup>90</sup>

The remainder of his life, in particular the latter years, reads like a tragedy. Lavoe was unlike Willie Colón, Ruben Blades, or even Pacheco, all still living and continued to have commercial success, cultural relevancy, and the opportunity to relish in their honors. Other than in places like Callao, Lavoe's idolatry came mostly after his death from AIDS in 1993 at the age of 46. This came after a financial and commercial collapse, failed suicide attempts, several family deaths, and bouts with drug addiction.<sup>91</sup>

Regardless, his two decades with Fania Records (1967 – 1987) mirror the record label's success and, by proxy, salsa's earliest iteration. His impact was very much felt in Peru. As one particular record executive of Infopesa (Industria Fonográfica Peruana) mentions, Hector Lavoe was the reason why they had to stop selling just singles and start pressing and distributing salsa LPs as well.<sup>92</sup> He was globally considered the most iconic and significant front man in salsa's history. He is also arguably the most beloved, charismatic, and revered salsa artist of all time. A look at how beloved he was to the people of Callao in Lima, Peru, is a perfect example, for not only is he memorialized in El Callao, but he is a saint like figure. As one article and interview from conservative national newspaper, *El Comercio*

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<sup>90</sup> Mario Aragón and Juan Gómez Rojas, *Un Jibarito y el Callao: Breve Imagen de Héctor Lavoe*, (Lima, Gómez & Aragón Escritores Asociados, 2010). 9 – 47.

<sup>91</sup> Escobar, "El Hombre que Respira Debajo del Agua" in Waxer's *Situating Salsa*, for more on his life. Similarly, what his memorialization means in the context of Boricua nationalism.

<sup>92</sup> "Héctor Lavoe y La Profunda Huella Que Dejó En Su Paso Por El Perú - YouTube," accessed May 28, 2020, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9\\_xDsTUUnus](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9_xDsTUUnus).

mentioned, Lavoe represents el Callao as much as Sport Boys its local soccer team in the national first division.<sup>93</sup>

*The Legend of Héctor Lavoe in El Callao*

Sociologist Valentin Escobar theorizes that the practice of memorializing Lavoe represents the construction of a transnational and diasporic Puerto Rican national identity tied to place<sup>94</sup>. I would expand this notion to include a resonance with the transnational *metabarrío*, present in the sounds of salsa dura's class-based consciousness of the marginal urban experience. The state of the memorialization of Héctor Lavoe in Callao merits attention as an example of salsa's resonance with a Limeño public in this particular barrio and their understanding of salsa dura's message.

The urban tales of his visits to Callao, murals, busts, art, and even a semi-pro soccer team bearing his name memorialize Lavoe. In Peru's top-flight soccer league, the Sport Boys' fans, Callao's squad, typically include Lavoe's image in their banners and flags. Aragón, a Chalaco writer, explains that, "El Callao has adopted Lavoe as one of their sons. Perhaps because of the lyrics of his songs are true images of our port."<sup>95</sup> He mentions that the barrio in one of his most infamous songs, "Calle Luna, Calle Sol", could be any barrio in Latin America:

Mire señora, agarre bien su cartera  
¿No conoce este barrio?, aquí asaltan a  
cualquiera  
Mete la mano en el bolsillo, saca y abre tu  
cuchillo, y ten cuida'o

*Look ma'am, get a good grip on your  
wallet  
Don't you know this neighborhood? They  
assault anyone here*

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<sup>93</sup> Aragón, *Salsa y Sabor En Cada Esquina* 41.

<sup>94</sup> Escobar, "El Hombre que Respira Debajo del Agua."

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, 123.

Pónganme oído, en este barrio a muchos  
guapos lo han mata'o  
Calle Luna, Calle Sol; Calle Luna, Calle  
Sol  
En los barrios de guapos no se vive  
tranquilo  
Mide bien tus palabras o no vales ni un  
kilo<sup>96</sup>

*Put your hand in your pocket, take out  
and open your blade, and be careful  
Listen to me, in this neighborhood many  
pretty boys have been killed  
Calle Luna, Calle Sol; Luna Street, Sol  
Street  
Life isn't easy in the bad boy barrios  
Watch your words well or you are not  
worth a kilo*

Lavoe's combination of wit, guile, and a recognition of life's various struggles made the citizens of Callao's tough neighborhoods identify with him. He was part of the genesis of the growth of salsa in Peru.

#### *Callao's Criollismo and Muted Blackness*

The question naturally arises: why this strong resonance with salsa in Callao specifically? If the answer is in part to technology, it may also be one of culture, especially in the face of growing urbanization and contending nationalisms. Salsa, as a popular expression of a *meta-barrio*, an imagined space with the music as its catalyst for a pan ethnic latinidad may help further interrogate why salsa took such a hold in Callao and its eventual identification with the music.<sup>97</sup> Early salsa's roughness in message and musical delivery was an expression of the working-class community. This grit was a reflection of resilience in the tough streets and Latin American communities, given the increased urbanization and demographic diversity.<sup>98</sup> This grit

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<sup>96</sup> Willie Colon & Hector Lavoe "Calle Luna Calle Sol," track #A1 on *Lo Mato (Si No Compra Este LP)*, Fania, 1973, vinyl.

<sup>97</sup> Espinoza Agurto, 14. El Callao is a part of the shared experience of this imagined meta-barrio, which he defines as: "semiotically constructed meeting spaces where Latinos and Latin Americans interact and advance Latino ethnic consciousness, and where Salsa consciente functions as the engine for these advances".

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

and toughness were evident in the gangster visuals in their iconic album art, but also from their earliest lyrics in songs like "El Malo":

"No hay problema en el barrio, que quién se llama "El Malo"	<i>There is no problem in the barrio, for who they call "The Bad One"</i>
Si dicen que no soy yo, te doy un puño de regalo	<i>If they say it's not me, I'll give you a fist as a gift</i>
¿Quién se llama "El Malo"? No hay ni discusión	<i>Who is called "The Bad One"? There is no debate</i>
"El Malo" de aquí soy yo, porque tengo corazón	<i>I'm "The Bad One" here, because I have heart</i>
Échate pa' allá, que tú no estás en na'	<i>Get outta here, cuz you got nothing</i>
Ehh, camina, camina, camina loco	<i>Ehh, keep walking, keep walking man</i>
Pero que échate pa' allá, porque tú no estás en na'	<i>But get outta here cuz you got nothing</i>
Échate pa' allá, que tú no estás en na'	<i>Get outta here, cuz you got nothing</i>
Que no te guilles de Watusi, que yo me guillo	<i>Don't front like a Watusi, cuz I front like I'm Superman</i>
Yo me guillo de Superman	<i>I'm Superman</i>
Échate pa' allá, que tú no estás en na'	<i>Get outta here, cuz you got nothing</i>
Con tanta labia y con tanto puesto, pero que tú	<i>So much talking and so much posturing, but you, you got nothing</i>
Pero que tú no estás en na'	<i>Get outta here, cuz you got nothing</i>
Échate pa' allá, que tú no estás en na'" <sup>99</sup>	

However, the identity that criollos reaffirm through the adoption of salsa was not inclusive, much less embracing of afro Latinidad, an example of a muted blackness in Criollismo and Peruvianess. Although the 1960s saw a surge of Peruvian black culture and art, this was also a period of contested nationalisms between a duality of criollo and indígena culture.<sup>100</sup> Even though Callao was one of the oldest working-class neighborhoods of Lima, and did not receive as much of an influx from the highlands as other parts, it was still very much part of a changing city. Callao has its "barrios bravos" (tough neighborhoods). The people of *barriadas* (slums) like Castilla, Loreto, Ancash, Apurímac lived in precarious situations in the sixties and

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<sup>99</sup> Willie Colon, "El Malo" Track B1 on *El Malo*, Fania Records 1968, Vinyl.

<sup>100</sup> Feldman.

seventies. Residents reported that the youth, in particular, had territorial quarrels and their involvement in low level crime and pickpocketing was not all uncommon. But there was something that brought together and cemented the spirit of the majority of the Chalaco youth: salsa music.<sup>101</sup> Lima, at this time, was becoming ever more heterogeneous culturally and in living conditions. The 1940 census reported that the city had 645,172 inhabitants, which tripled two decades later, reaching 1,652,000 inhabitants in the sixties. By salsa dura's heyday in Callao, it had quintupled to 3,302,523 (1972).<sup>102</sup> As a Lima of many Limas, local identities and representations were important in this diverse city. It would not be too farfetched to conclude that part of the resonance of Hector Lavoe and his gangster imagery was its use of the local barrio as an identifier, even if it was a generic metaphysical barrio. The resonance of this music was not necessarily tied to the criminal allusions of the music. However, as we have seen, the increasing diversity of cultural representations in a growing media industry mainly presented upper-class mimesis of Euro American pop and early rock and roll. Amidst these options, the youth of Callao saw themselves in salsa, and not in the music of other higher-class youth. As one Chalaco put it, salsa represented "the feeling of the youth, the stevedores, the housewife, and the people of the neighborhoods".<sup>103</sup> Callao poet Cesar Gallardo y Guido mentions that the

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<sup>101</sup> Mario Aragón, *Salsa y Sabor En Cada Esquina: Mi Visión de Héctor Lavoe En El Perú*, Primera edición, Selección Gallera (San Borja: Ediciones Altazor, 2015).

<sup>102</sup> José Matos Mar, "A City of Outsiders" in *The Lima Reader: History, Culture, Politics*. Ed. Carlos Aguirre, and Charles Walker, translated by Jorge Bayona, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017). 207 – 213.

<sup>103</sup> Aragón, *Salsa y Sabor En Cada Esquina*

people's poetry lived in Lavoe's singing. Callao's historically ample access to tropical foreign sounds only made Fania and Lavoe's appropriation that much easier.

Lifelong Callao resident Lucho Albornoz, who lived and worked in the port during these earliest years of the music's rise, believes that, "us Chalacos are the true criollos, unlike those living in Lima, we are actually criollo".<sup>104</sup> He specifically mentioned the word "vivesa" (wit, clever, astuteness) when further unpacking this definition, best translated to a type of street smarts, guile, or social awareness. He mentions that they are true criollos because they are "listos" (shrewd), the life of the party, cosmopolitan, always hip to vernacular slang, and music. The elements of salsa's metabarrio aesthetics and semiotics of tough city life and struggle resonated with the Callao community on a significant level, as did the urban folkloric nature of the music.

Criollo literally translates to creole, and originally applied to identify and distinguish those Spanish citizens born in America from Peninsulares born in Spain. It developed into a cultural term, first for coastal popular culture, and later at times for a national Peruvianess, regardless of racial and ethnic association.<sup>105</sup>

Comedy, gossip, tales of quotidian life in an urban setting, and a "Coqueteria urbana" are fundamental parts of texts from both the Peruvian criollo tradition and salsa as urban folklore. Coqueteria urbana literally translates to urban flirtation, better understood as a guile, boldness, and wittiness inherent to Lima's urban life. This

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<sup>104</sup> Luis Albornoz, interview by author, Callao/Falls Church, VA, May 7, 2020.

<sup>105</sup> Ozzie G. Simmons, "The Criollo Outlook in the Mestizo Culture of Coastal Peru," *American Anthropologist* 57, no. 1 (1955): 107–17. and Gonzalo Espino, *Tradición oral, culturas peruanas: una invitación al debate* (UNMSM, 2003).

coqueteria, or vivesa in the writings of Criollo writer Ricardo Palma for example, can similarly be found in the wit, satire, and comedy of salsa music.<sup>106</sup> Tales of political corruption can be found in salsa songs like “Juanito Alimaña” as well as in “Tradiciones” like ¡A LA CÁRCEL TODO CRISTO! Proverbs like “*aceituna, una; mas si es buena, una docena*” in ACEITUNA UNA, can be similarly be found in salsa songs like Willie Colon and Hector Lavoe’s “Abuelita”: “Palo que nace doblado Jamas su tronco endereza”.<sup>107</sup>

When it came to music, Criollo music is a term for various localized styles from primarily lower and middle-class neighborhoods in Lima. In 1944, the national government declared October 31<sup>st</sup> as Dia de la Cancion Criolla (Creole Music Day). By the 1950s Peruvian presidents like Manuel Odría openly supported and enjoyed Música criolla, inviting criollo groups to the Presidential residence. Música Criolla was also the national musical style most promoted on state radio from its inception in the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>108</sup>

Criollo music went through a historical change with the cultural influx tied to Andean migration as it intensified in the twentieth century. The 1940s saw the gradual aristocratization of the music as well as criollo identity as a whole in an effort for Limeños to distance themselves from an association with indigeneity, sometimes code for a conflated understanding of a racially and socially inferior migrant group

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<sup>106</sup> Ricardo Palma, “The Project Gutenberg eBook of Tradiciones Peruanas, Por Ricardo Palma.,” accessed April 5, 2020, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/21282/21282-h/21282-h.htm>. Originally released as serials in the 1870s, this collection of pseudo historical local urban legends focusing on common everyday people and events like love affairs, crime, and gossip in Lima. A canonical work in Peruvian literature.

<sup>107</sup> Willie Colon, “Abuelita”, 1970, Track B2 on *La Gran Fuga*, Fania, 1970 Vinyl.

<sup>108</sup> Emilio Bustamante, *La Radio En El Perú, 1. ed, Colección Investigaciones* (Lima: Universidad de Lima, Fondo Editorial, 2012).

settling in shantytowns in the outskirts of the city. To do so, a reconsideration and creation of an imagined, more inclusive Criollismo took place. While a growing AfroPeruano cultural presence was evident in Criollismo and the overall popular national psyche, this did not translate to significant social mobility. Furthermore, the inclusion and conflation of foreign Afro/Afro-Cuban aesthetics in the music as mystified stereotypes reinforced the social and racial hierarchy.<sup>109</sup> What began as a popular cultural expression of Lima, became usurped by upper, mostly white classes as a symbol of a conflated racial class superiority in a coastal/highland binary.<sup>110</sup> The musical lyrics that had once been folk tales and love stories of the popular masses shifted to themes of nostalgia for a regal, colonial, and Hispanic Lima with a paternalistic inclusion of other racial identities.<sup>111</sup> Given the explosion of rural indigenous migration to the city, the demographic change made Criollismo an incompatible and alienating representation for a growing portion of Lima.

Later criollo artists' lyrics alluded to a more romanticized, idealized memory of colonial and Hispanic Lima of the past.<sup>112</sup> Música criolla originally sang to and about the plebeian, the seamstress, and the local soccer team, artists in the fifties like

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<sup>109</sup> Leon, 233.

<sup>110</sup> Richard W. Patch, "A Serrano Family in Lima" in *The Lima Reader: History, Culture, Politics*. Ed. Carlos Aguirre, and Charles Walker, translated by Jorge Bayona, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017). 185 – 193. For an example of this binary and how Limeños on both sides understood the terms Criollo (creole) and Serrano (highlander) as confluents of racial and class hierarchies.

<sup>111</sup> Raúl R. Romero, "Música y poder: aristocracia y revolución en la obra de Chabuca Granda" in *Música popular y sociedad en el Perú contemporáneo*, Primera edición, Raúl R. Romero, et al. (Lima, Perú: Instituto de Etnomusicología, PUCP, 2015). 100 –130.

<sup>112</sup> Jose Antonio Llorens Amico, *Música popular en Lima : criollos y andinos* (Lima, Perú: IEP, Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1983), [http://repositorio.iep.org.pe/bitstream/IEP/576/2/llorens\\_musicapopularenlima.pdf](http://repositorio.iep.org.pe/bitstream/IEP/576/2/llorens_musicapopularenlima.pdf). 84 – 90. Llorens, among others, recognize the different periods of her career overall, but her largest and long-lasting contributions come in this first "aristocratic" period of her career. For a nuanced periodization, see Raúl R. Romero in *Música popular...*, 100 – 130.

Chabuca Granda sang to the Hacendado (landowner).<sup>113</sup> This change also drew an even harder line between Andean/Indigenous identity of the new migrants living in the edges of the city and those who saw themselves as true Limeños.<sup>114</sup> To take a specific textual example from an analysis by Llorens:

¡Oh Lima virreinal / que en tus balcones guardas el encanto del ayer...!  
 Callecitas de antaño / callejas por doquier Virreyes encumbrados / recuerdos  
 del ayer Claveles y jazmines / perfuman el jardín de esta atañera tierra / de  
 Lima virreinal.

*Oh viceregal Lima / that in your balconies you keep the charm of yesterday  
 ...! Little streets of yesteryear / alleys everywhere High viceroys / memories of  
 yesterday Carnations and jasmynes / scent the garden of this land / viceregal  
 Lima.*

(Delgado C., M.: Callecita de Antaño)

As Llorens further discusses, this was a marked departure from songs about popular everyday characters and neighborhoods of the earlier criollismo tradition.<sup>115</sup> “Periodico de Ayer”, was not a romantic love song for a beloved, but rather a scorned lover's lament. The salience of this particular song in our discussion is the imagery of love as a newspaper. As banal as this may seem, this song is an example of city life imagery by Fania and salsa, also very much present in typical criollo music. The past love as an old newspaper, something that Limeños would consume and throw out as part of their daily lives.

“Sensacional cuando salió en la madrugada A mediodía ya noticia confirmada Y en la tarde materia olvidada Tu amor es un periódico de ayer	<i>"Sensational when it came out at dawn  By noon, news confirmed  And by the afternoon a forgotten topic  Your love is a newspaper from yesterday</i>
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<sup>113</sup> Espino, 236 – 238.

<sup>114</sup> Raúl R. Romero et al, *Música popular y sociedad en el Perú contemporáneo*, Raúl R. Romero et al., eds., Primera edición (Lima, Perú: Instituto de Etnomusicología, PUCP, 2015) several of the authors in this work including Romero, Mendivil, and Leon touch on this, as well as other scholars like Llorens.

<sup>115</sup> Llorens, 84 – 85.

Fue el titular que alcanzó página entera...  
¿Y para qué leer un periódico de ayer? Tú no  
serviste pa' nada mami, y al zafacón yo te  
eché.”<sup>116</sup>

*It was a headline that covered the full page....  
why read a newspaper from yesterday?  
You weren't good for anything mami, and I  
threw you out in the trash. "*

Like Música criolla, this bricolage of musical styles is also quite racially inclusive of blackness and African diasporic traditions in its syncretism. However, in Peru, neither of these musical genres emphasized a heightened collective pan African identity or African nationalism like salsa in Colombia for example.<sup>117</sup> Further, the voices in my research from Callao either disregarded or were oblivious to a message of either Afro Peruvianess or Afro Latinidad. This omission in its reception and appropriation as part of a criollo identity is an example of muted blackness not just in latinidad, but more so in Peruanidad.<sup>118</sup> Regardless, the syncretic essential nature of salsa is significant as a parallel musical tradition of creole culture. Whether whitewashed or not, criollismo in Peru is fundamentally inclusive and conscious of Afro Peruvian culture, a missing factor in other cultural offerings of the time. Through images of picardia (mischievousness), comedy, and limericks, as a literary voice of city life, although foreign, salsa was a creole tradition for Lima at this time. The literal poster child for this urban folk salsa, with his face plastered on the walls of Callao's streets, was the port's popular patron saint, Hector Lavoe.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Hector Lavoe, "Periodico de Ayer", Track #3 in *De Ti Dependes*, 1976 Fania Records, Vinyl.

<sup>117</sup> Waxer, *City of Musical Memory*

<sup>118</sup> Feldman. In particular mentions that Afro Peruandidad/Peruvianess tends to exist outside of Peruvian national identity and Pan Africanism, in an imaginary "Black Pacific".

<sup>119</sup> Anibal Lopez y La Unica, "Pancho Malandro" Track A on *Pancho Malandro/Jamas Impediras* (Single), 1984, Bambú, Vinyl. For an example of this sonic and aesthetic textual tradition from a Peruvian act.

## Lo Mato



Figure 2: Album Cover, *Lo Mato* by Willie Colon

The aforementioned “Calle Luna, Calle Sol” is the opening track from the provocatively titled, *Lo Mato (Si No Compra Este LP) (I’ll Kill Him, (If you Don’t Purchase this LP))*. Even more provocative is the actual album cover where bandleader Willie Colon recreates a variation of an infamous National Lampoon magazine cover from the same year. Known as the “Death” issue, the magazine cover includes the caption, “If You Don’t Buy This Magazine, We’ll Kill This Dog”.<sup>120</sup> Colon is dressed in typical 70’s gangster style garbs that had characterized his albums’ aesthetic up to that point ( previous album titles, like *Cosa Nuestra*, *La Gran Fuga*, and *El Juicio* as examples). In this case, Colon held a gun up to an older, more well dressed and groomed gentleman. The class-based connotations in this image alone inform us about the subversive semiotics that Fania, and the Colon/Lavoe duo in particular, wished to communicate and informed by the conditions of a large Puerto

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<sup>120</sup> *National Lampoon Magazine*, January 1973, vol.1, No. 34.

Rican diaspora similar to Lima's urbanization. Settling mostly in New York City, a third of the population in the island migrated to the United States from the 1940s to the 1970s. Operation Bootstrap sought to industrialize the largely agrarian and impoverished island. One of the results of increased U.S. investment in the island were job opportunities in a transnational economy. The children of the migrants to large U.S. cities grew up in cities during a time of racial strife, precarious living conditions, and underfunded social services.<sup>121</sup> This was the environment that spawned salsa music, and not that much different from Lima at the time. Colon and his lead singer Lavoe communicated a subaltern and rebellious identity with the criminal imagery. The opening track fittingly sets the scene for this dangerous barrio that for Chalacos represented their streets' harsh realities. Although Lavoe and Colon used crime as a constant thematic tool as expressions of a subaltern voice. It was not only the criminal imagery as part of city life that resonated with Chalacos, but rather, the wit, astuteness, and aggressive nature of the particular counterculture. For example, the chorus of the track "Señora Lola" reads,

aconseja aconseja a tu marido anda	<i>advise your husband go advise him</i>
aconsejalo lola	<i>lola</i>
lola aconsejalo lola	<i>Lola advise him Lola</i>
es que si el tiene un machete yo	<i>that if he has a machete, I have a</i>
tengo una metraladora	<i>machine gun</i>
lola aconsejalo lola	<i>Lola advise Lola</i>
me dicen que vieron a su marido	<i>they tell me they saw her husband</i>
en Santo Domingo bailando una	<i>in Santo Domingo dancing up a</i>
bata ola	<i>storm</i>
lola aconsejalo lola	<i>Lola advise him Lola</i>
ve pero guapo que va guapoo	<i>go but pretty boy, there goes the</i>
guapo que va guapoooo	<i>pretty boy</i>

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<sup>121</sup> JOHANNA FERNÁNDEZ, "COMING OF AGE IN THE 1960S:: The Emergence of the New York Young Lords," in *The Young Lords, A Radical History* (University of North Carolina Press, 2020), 49–90, [http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9781469653464\\_fernandez.5](http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9781469653464_fernandez.5).

lola aconsejalo Lola  
anda y aconsejalo porfavor anda  
aconsejalo ahora  
aguantalo antes que le sople una  
galleta<sup>122</sup>

*Lola advise him Lola  
go and advise him please go advise  
him now  
hold him back before I blow a  
cookie off him*

The aggressiveness of the singer's threats followed the gangster aesthetic that Colon and Lavoe chose to emphasize and speak to an awareness of crime as a reality in the city, one of the challenges one would need to survive. The wittiness of lines such as "si el tiene un machete, yo tengo una metralladora" (if he brings a knife, I'll bring a machine gun), are part of this criollo "vivesa" in the bombastic lyrics. To be fair, not all of the music on the album followed the criminal counterculture thematic. Tracks like "Todo Tiene Su Final" and "El Dia de Mi Suerte" tell of a more general struggle and overcoming the adversity of everyday life. The album's back cover is also very telling about the general spirit of the metabarrío, and the overall Salsa Dura period. The man that Colon had the gun pointed at now stands gun in hand over Colon's corpse. This ironic twist of fate and dark humor completed an image of the uncertainty, struggle, and danger of living in the barrio. The city in this urban folk music required wit and cunning to survive its various struggles and salsa, similarly to Limeño writer Julio Ramón Ribeyro during these same years wrote, "rather dark and murky portraits he offered of lower-class people in Lima: poor, hard-working, ordinary people who struggled to find a voice in a city that seemed forever divided between the very rich and the extremely poor"<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Willie Colon & Hector Lavoe "Señora Lola" track #B1 on *Lo Mato(Si No Compra Este LP)*, Fania, 1973, vinyl.

<sup>123</sup> Carlos Aguirre, and Charles Walker, "The Banquet" in *The Lima Reader: History, Culture, Politics*. Ed. Carlos Aguirre, and Charles Walker, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017).180.

Between the 1980s and 1990, Peruvian emigration more than doubled, with the United States home to the largest Peruvian emigre population. The once historically industrial city of Paterson, New Jersey was its enclave. Paterson is home to the largest Peruvian population in the US, and the vast majority hail from Lima's port, El Callao. As Salsero Jorgiño Mendoza, part of the group, El Combo Espectacular Creacion that wrote and recorded "Callao, Puerto Querido" (Callao, Our Beloved Port) in 1987 mentioned, "Whenever they invite us to perform in Paterson, this song makes the crowd tear up".<sup>124</sup>

In a crude home recording from the 1980s, we find an unscripted and candid Carlos Loza addressing the public in a Callao restaurant/bar, *El Jibaro* (named after Hector Lavoe).<sup>125</sup> Loza was one of the pioneers of salsa music on Lima radio, starting as an assistant in Callao's local radio in the 1960s. By the eighties, Loza was hosting his own radio shows, some of the most listened to in the city. In this particular video, Loza is standing in the seafood restaurant/salsa club. The wall is adorned with murals of salsa greats, both international and Peruvian, as he operates as master of ceremonies for a small intimate concert. In between bands playing, he addresses the crowd, stating, "thank you for supporting El Callao, and because Latin music says, Callao is here. With this music, we relive those wonderful years of the music of our

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<sup>124</sup> Martín Gómez, "Así nació 'Callao, Puerto Querido,'" *Salserísimo Perú | Salsa es Cultura* (blog), August 20, 2017, <http://www.salserisimoperu.com/combo-espectaculo-creracion-asi-nacio-callao-puerto-querido-noticia-29-10-2015/>.

<sup>125</sup> Jibaro is a term identifying, "rural subsistence population of the inland regions of Puerto Rico." Heather K. Thiessen, "Jíbaro," in *Encyclopedia of Latin American History and Culture*, ed. Jay Kinsbruner and Erick D. Langer, 2nd ed., vol. 4 (Detroit, MI: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2008), 28–29, [http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CX3078902983/GVRL?u=umd\\_um&sid=zotero&xid=07c47523](http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CX3078902983/GVRL?u=umd_um&sid=zotero&xid=07c47523). It would later also become a term for Puerto Rican nationalist identity, particularly in the diaspora. Hector Lavoe was known as El Jibaro, or El Jibarito de Ponce, playing on the identity of the rural, more "authentic" man of the people within the city.

beloved Callao...”.<sup>126</sup> The video is in quite a crude state, as it cuts off shortly after cutting to the unnamed band's performance. Loza's address is proof of the identity that Chalacos have built around salsa music, making a foreign sound a local identifier. “For the Chalaco born in the 1970s, they know the Jibarito’s voice as well as they know the sound of the waves of the ocean”.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> *INEDITO: Carlos Loza En Los 80s*, accessed March 2, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IRCFalp2gxE>.

<sup>127</sup> Aragon, 18.

## Chapter Two: Salsa Consciente

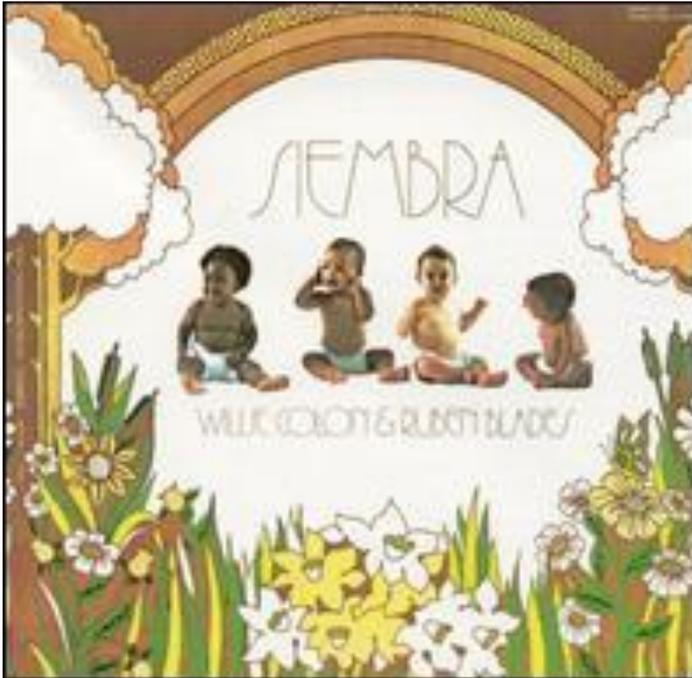


Figure 3: Album Cover, *Siembra* by Ruben Blades and Willie Colón

**“Ella era una chica plástica de esas que veo por ahí  
De esas que cuando se agitan sudan  
chanel number three”<sup>128</sup>**

***“She was a plastic girl, those that I see around  
Those that when they get fluttered, they sweat  
Chanel number three”***

These lyrics opened the 1978 album *Siembra* (plant, to plant), and with it a new era of salsa. The second album of the new Willie Colón and Ruben Blades duo became the highest-selling salsa album of all time, a title it still holds today. After its initial commercial rise, playing globally from Yankee Stadium to Japan, Fania Records shifted its approach. While still representing a voice for a marginalized pueblo subaltern, the setting and context expanded to a more inclusive and global

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<sup>128</sup> Willie Colon & Ruben Blades, “Plástico” track #A1 on *Siembra*, Fania, 1978, vinyl.

worldview. With this salsa consciente or intelectual (conscious or intellectual salsa), the imagined barrio became more inclusive, represented as the pueblo, encompassing a pan Latin identity in the face of increasing foreign cultural and economic presence. Salsa consciente alludes to a type of salsa from the 1970s that, "refers to song texts and musical markers that poetically express political, historical and class awareness of Latino/Latin American existences, identities and experiences: *Latinidad*."<sup>129</sup> Even though Fania Records were reluctant to support Blades' political salsa, this salsa was the most profitable, keeping the label afloat during some difficult years.<sup>130</sup> The resonance of the music's message in Latin America, given the political and social climate, was evidenced in Lima's growing popularity.

However, this political turn took place during an equally populist historical moment in Peruvian politics. The military governments of Velasco Alvarado and Morales Bermudes in the 1960s and 1970s were two different phases of a national populist project. Velasco Alvarado was committed to a redefinition of the Peruvian citizen and nationalization of various industries, including a heavy promotion of indigenous musical styles and the censorship of foreign imperialist music. Morales Bermudez focused on a departure from leftist politics towards an eventual return to democratic rule from 1975 to 1980. However, he was unable to wrangle the worsening inflation that reached seventy-five percent in 1978 when it had only been at seventeen just four years prior. This economic situation led to cross-class mass mobilization, evidenced

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<sup>129</sup> Espinoza Agurto, 3.

<sup>130</sup> Tommy Muriel, *Fania All-Stars: Salsa, Inc.: [Cuatro décadas (y pico) de Nuestra Cosa Latina]* (Tommy Muriel, 2016).

by the national general strike on May 22 and 23 of 1978.<sup>131</sup> These are examples of Arjun Appadurai's belief in the close relationship between the local and the global.<sup>132</sup>

Particularly in contrast to Hector Lavoe and heavily barrio class-based salsa dura from my last chapter, consciente artists like Ruben Blades were concerned with a cross-class pan-ethnic musical expression. My focus on Blades and Fania's music in Lima reveals that this international development represented a specific point in time in Latin America. It was a moment "under the supposedly inward-looking populist nationalisms of the second third of the twentieth century that musical markets, platforms, pedagogies, and mythologies enabled the emergence of a Latin American culture that continues thriving".<sup>133</sup> Although Blades' anti-imperialist, socially leftist prerogative was part of a transnational current, its successful reception cannot be divorced from the in the local national development of populist music. Locally, salsa consciente in Lima was a form of dance music with conscious lyrics, a combination that allowed for its increased presence in sectors other than working class neighborhoods. Along with the progressive shift of media consumption from the public to the private sphere, this made his music more appealing and available to educated, middle, and higher classes of Lima. This was a period where many Limenos heard salsa for the first time. The continued influx of migration from the rest of the country to Lima and the growth of foreign commodities during the second military government meant an increasing number of identities and Limas, particularly

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<sup>131</sup> Aguirre and Drinot, *The Peculiar Revolution*

<sup>132</sup> Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Public Worlds, v. 1 (Minneapolis, Minn: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

<sup>133</sup> Palomino, Introduction.

for white more upper class Limeños.<sup>134</sup> As a foreign commodity, from the United States no less, salsa music was ostensibly contradictory to national populism during this period. However, its political cross-class, anti-imperialist consciousness facilitated its growing commercial success in Lima as Morales Bermudez increasingly opened up a national economy that had been insular for the last dozen years. Peruvian record companies previously focused on national styles began pressing Fania Records LPs during these years and growing radio presence by industry insiders from Callao mediated its presence. Salsa consciente although strongly informed by global musical and social political movements cannot be essentialized when it comes to its identities and reception.<sup>135</sup> This chapter considers and interrogates the global currents that influenced consciente's transnational success in the continent, but emphasizes the local context that allowed for its growing consumption across classes towards its apex in popularity in the 1980s.

### Societal Changes

Although a push for inclusion of indigenismo in national politics traces back to Augusto B. Leguia's Patria Nueva (new nation) of the 1920s, it would not be until the 1960s, that a "second independence" as a national citizenship project occurs, with Juan Velasco Alvarado heavily using indigenous culture like the image of Tupac Amaru during his tenure.<sup>136</sup> With his coup of 1968, General Velasco Alvarado touted

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<sup>134</sup> Montero-Diaz, "White Cholos?: Discourses around Race, Whiteness and Lima's Fusion Music," i In this paper, Montero-Diaz argues that fusion (Peruvian) musical styles from the 1990s, "constitutes a resource for personal reflection, social agency, and the elaboration of new forms of citizenship among upper class whites." 169.

<sup>135</sup> Karush, *Musicians in Transit*, introduction.

<sup>136</sup> Carlos Aguirre, "Chapter 1: The Second Liberation? Military Nationalism and the Sesquicentennial Commemoration of Peruvian Independence, 1821 – 1971" in *The Peculiar Revolution: Rethinking the*

indigenismo and a reconsideration of the Peruvian national citizen as the crux of his military dictatorship. This included, among other measures, a strong agrarian reform in 1969 in an attempt to put the land in the hands of rural workers. Velasco prioritized social justice and domestic Marxism over economic efficiency, and most of all, the native "Indio" (native) as the ideal Peruvian. Historian James Higgins mentions that,

The Velasco era also raised the expectations and self-esteem of lower-class Peruvians and helped bring about a cultural shift with regard to the racism which had always been at the root of social relations in Peru. Official discourse adopted a new terminology intended to signal respect for social sectors who had previously been stigmatized. Thus, the term "Indian" was replaced by campesino (peasant).<sup>137</sup>

Culturally, Velasco's politics and use of imagery were in line with the period's general revolutionary and socialist tendencies. Socio Political movements like liberation theology, with its concern for the oppressed subaltern, and cultural products like Alfredo Bryce's *Un Mundo Para Julius*, an allegorical tale of the aristocracy's demise, are but two additional Peruvian cultural representations of the ethos of the time. This was evident in the realm of salsa as well, with songs like Ruben Blades' 1970 track, "Juan Gonzalez", about a guerilla fighter, are relevant for two reasons. At the risk of conflating a fragmented left, although antigovernment, these guerillas were similarly concerned with leftist Marxist ideologies loosely in the spirit of Velasco or the Jesuit Catholic church's liberation theology.<sup>138</sup> It was also relevant as the allegorical tale of this guerrillero includes direct lyrics about the sierra and its

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*Peruvian Experiment under Military Rule*, First edition, eds. Carlos Aguirre and Paulo Drinot, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017). 25 – 48.

<sup>137</sup> Higgins, 184.

<sup>138</sup> Guillermo Rochabrun Silva and Anibal Yanez, "Crisis, Democracy, and the Left in Peru," *Latin American Perspectives* 15, no. 3 (1988): 77–96. For a more granular look at the Peruvian left and its fragmentation during this age.

ongoing defense thereof.<sup>139</sup> While certain Andean groups opposed Velasco for his revolution from above and his increasingly heavy hand, political music resonated with the contemporary Peruvian audience, even as a foreign music that the regime did not necessarily oppose.

The music of Ruben Blades and other political salsa represented the leftist societal sentiments of the twentieth century in Lima, evidenced in the above examples and the experiences of Limeños like student activist Maruja Martinez. Her group marched in against North American intervention but feared that even leftist governments like Velasco's were fascist. The type of music that the increasingly leftist youth listened to was changing as well. She mentioned that she started listening to leftist music like the artists of the nueva cancion, opting for them over her old favorite, the Beatles.<sup>140</sup> More generally, these together were examples of a parallel leftist social climate during these two decades, reflected in the lyrics of conscience's music as well as Blades' unexpected commercial success worldwide. Music like salsa, was informed by the Puerto Rican diaspora tied to Operation Bootstrap, an industrialization project. The offspring of this increased migration to New York included conscious music informed by the radical political movements in East Harlem like the Young Lords.<sup>141</sup> The leftist organization was inspired by the U.S. civil rights movement and witnessed a city that was increasingly racially polarized. Although political salsa would not crystallize in the market until later in the 1970s,

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<sup>139</sup> Espinoza Agurto, 217 – 220.

<sup>140</sup> Maruja Martinez, "A City of Outsiders" in *The Lima Reader: History, Culture, Politics*. Ed. Carlos Aguirre, and Charles Walker, translated by Jorge Bayona, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017). 198-202.

<sup>141</sup> Espinoza Agurto.

the Young Lords were another example of the similar left leaning social ideology throughout the continent. Latin Americans, even in the U.S. like the heavily Puerto Rican Young Lords, emphasized not just an identity tied to their homeland, but radical societal reorganization.<sup>142</sup> The militant spirit of the Young Lords and the Peruvian government and Peruvian leftist groups hint at a similar Latin American experience during the period of political salsa. Even for those Limeños who were not as politically active, the presence of political salsa during the 1970s was an identifying feature of their experience in that decade.

Testimonials from rural migrants to Lima during this period such as Richard Medina, may clue us into audience reception of salsa consciente. The majority of the citizens from the ongoing highland migration settled in undeveloped fringes of Lima's city, commonly referred to as conos (cones), such as Comas. Medina mentions that in his rural Andean working class of Comas, the music that he mostly heard growing up mostly reflected the Andean populace of these neighborhoods, the Peruvian folk musical style, Huayno.<sup>143</sup> Medina goes on to mention that he first heard Ruben Blades and Hector Lavoe in elementary school, and “the combination of the lyrics that weren't so in your face, but it resonated with the sectors that felt like they were outsiders, outcasts...it was a great combination between the messages and a dance music, that's when I remember it blowing up”.<sup>144</sup> Salsa's largest record label and the

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<sup>142</sup> JOHANNA FERNÁNDEZ, “COMING OF AGE IN THE 1960S:: The Emergence of the New York Young Lords,” in *The Young Lords, A Radical History* (University of North Carolina Press, 2020), 49–90, [http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9781469653464\\_fernandez.5](http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9781469653464_fernandez.5).

<sup>143</sup> Romero, “Popular Music and the Global City” for a definition of Huayno: the most popular of Andean recorded genres, becoming a cultural symbol, generally duple meter, syncopated. Eventually fused often with Peruvian cumbia.

<sup>144</sup> Richard Medina, interview by Author, Spokane, Washington/Falls Church, VA. May 2, 2020

owner of almost eighty percent of the market was also going through changes at this time.

Fania Records

**“If boogaloo is cross-cultural, integrationist music, a product of the utopian sixties, then Salsa is identity politics music, music to reaffirm the specificity of cultural heritage.”<sup>145</sup>**

The scholarly and cultural consensus is that Fania Records, starting as a local label from New York, was the driving influencer in salsa’s popularity and boom in the 1960s and 1970s. Salsa scholars like Rondón identified Fania as creators of a grassroots salsa, and the sounds of the barrio, the record label controlled the salsa culture industry in the 1970s.<sup>146</sup> This market included print and video production related to salsa. Because of this synergetic control of the culture and the sound of the genre, I consider and include Fania records as part of the culture industry, despite its conviction in a self-proclaimed authentic barrio and grassroots essence.<sup>147</sup> The founders infamously delivered and sold records from the trunks of their cars, but they were very keen on making calculated choices to best maximize the label's market and profits. At its height in the mid to late 1970s, Fania controlled the Latin Music market worldwide, all as an independent record label, having bought up most of its direct competitors, absorbing their artists into its roster.

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<sup>145</sup> Jonathan Goldman, “Fania at Fifty,” *The Paris Review* (blog), October 9, 2014, <https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2014/10/09/cha-cha-with-a-backbeat/>.

<sup>146</sup> Rondon.

<sup>147</sup> Marisol Negrón, “Fania Records and Its Nuyoric Imaginary: Representing Salsa as Commodity and Cultural Sign in Our Latin Thing: Our Latin Thing,” *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 27, no. 3 (September 2015): 274–303, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jpms.12129>.

Fania Records controlled salsa culture from the late 1960s until the 1980s. From signing marquee names like Celia Cruz to its self-proclaimed roster of “All-Stars”, to its association with the major Latin and Salsa magazine, *Latin NY*, and even the sound of the music itself, they dictated the trajectory of the music.<sup>148</sup> After producing a successful documentary film and playing in the historic Rumble in the Jungle boxing event in Zaire, the label's eyes were set on the United States English language market.<sup>149</sup> Although they established a distribution deal with Venezuela in 1973, their focus was on crossing over to the mainstream (i.e. the English market), not necessarily Latin America. In this context, music associated with a socially revolutionary ethos, critical of the United States, and speaking to a pan Latin American consciousness was not the most attractive prospect for owner Jerry Massucci. In fact, some of Blades' political music was held back from release until the 1980s.<sup>150</sup>

Amidst internal label issues and an exodus of artists due to expiring contracts, 1978 marked a watershed moment in Fania and salsa music's history, with the release of another Colón collaboration, this time with a different young singer. *Siembra* was the highest-selling Salsa album of all time (selling more than 3 million copies) and included a young Panamanian law school graduate, Rubén Blades as its main

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<sup>148</sup> Felix M. Padilla, “Salsa Music as a Cultural Expression of Latino Consciousness and Unity,” *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 11, no. 1 (February 1, 1989): 28–45, <https://doi.org/10.1177/07399863890111003>.

Padilla goes as far as to present it as an “oligopoly” on page 31 to argue for their production of culture.

Finally, on *Latin NY Magazine*: I found many copies in the Rubén Blades archives; they mostly covered and promoted Salsa records. Editor of the magazine Izzy Sarabria was the graphic designer for the iconic Fania record covers depicting gangster, tough street imagery.

<sup>149</sup> Erenberg.

<sup>150</sup> Muriel.

vocalist.<sup>151</sup> A couple of major musical features may speak to the album's success. First, a more international sound via incorporation of more sonic influences and rhythms to an already polyrhythmic style that some consider as a deliberate move by Colón and Fania to appeal to a wider audience.<sup>152</sup> The release of *Siembra* also marked a moment of textual development. The focus of more socially and politically critical lyricism known as salsa consciente, was a significant evolution. With the barrio aesthetic, salsa music already intentionally voiced a social consciousness with working - class, urban and metropolitan experience prior to this album. In fact, a few early examples of more direct social commentary in songs like “Justicia” by Eddie Palmieri, can be found as far back as 1969.<sup>153</sup>

Justicia tendrán,  
 Justicia verán en el mundo,  
 Los desafortunados.  
 Con el canto del tambor  
 Del tambor la justicia yo reclamo  
 Justicia tendrán,  
 Justicia verán el mundo,  
 y los discriminados,  
 Recompensa ellos tendrán  
 No serán, no serán perjudicados  
 Si no hubiera tiranía  
 Todos fuéramos hermanos  
 Dulce paz y armonía  
 Alegría, tú lo veras.  
 Justicia tendrán,  
 Justicia verán el mundo,  
 y lo que deseamos

*Justice they'll have,  
 They will see justice in the world,  
 The unlucky ones.  
 With the song of the drum  
 From the drum, justice I claim  
 Justice they'll have,  
 They'll see justice in the world,  
 and the discriminated,  
 Reward they will have  
 They will not be, they will not be harmed  
 If there were no tyranny  
 We were all brothers  
 Sweet peace and harmony  
 Joy, you will see.  
 Justice will have,  
 Justice will see the world,  
 and what we want*

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<sup>151</sup> Willie Colon & Ruben Blades, *Siembra*, Fania Records, 1978, JM00-537, Vinyl.

<sup>152</sup> Rondón, 94. Here he presents his disillusionment with what he considers more experimentation and Aura is lost when they attempt to intentionally create art, incorporate other commercial genres, or further historicize the music back to a mystified African genesis (“world” codes this) and straying from the true barrio culture. For a further discussion of the musical coding of “World” music see Hernandez’ “Amalgamating Musics.”

For discussion on Fania’s deliberate “Latinization” specifically, see Padilla, “Salsa Music as a Cultural Expression of Latino Consciousness and Unity”

<sup>153</sup> Espinoza Agurto, 111 – 112.

Con el canto 'e mi tambo  
Oye mi tambo,  
La justicia yo reclamo...<sup>154</sup>

*With my drum 's song  
Hey my drum,  
Justice I claim...*

*Folk/Revolutionary Latin American Commercial Music*

In a clearer sense, the *consciente* brand, “poetically express political, historical and class awareness of the shared Latino/Latin American existences, identities and, experiences”.<sup>155</sup> Although most salsa is essentially socially conscious, I prefer a periodization that emphasizes the aggressive nature of earlier salsa, referring to it explicitly as “Salsa Dura” (Hard Salsa), that still recognizes the sociocultural idiosyncrasies of the lyrics.<sup>156</sup> I propose a periodization that begins with Fania’s Salsa Dura style of the 1960s and early 1970s, followed by the Salsa Consciente turn beginning in the late 1970s, and lasting until about 1980s, and finally, the 1980s’ Salsa Romantica that lasts until modern day. This is not a strict temporal periodization as much as a stylistic categorization, given that these periods do overlap. There are songs from the *dura* stylistic period that do not fall so neatly into the Conscious salsa category, but still have that characteristic rough New York sound, with its strong brass section.<sup>157</sup>

The Panamanian Blades was the poster child for political salsa. He became a voice that reflected the rest of the continent's broader political and social issues at the

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<sup>154</sup> Eddie Palmieri, “Justicia”, Track A1 on *Justice/Justicia*. Tico Records, 1969, Vinyl.

<sup>155</sup> Espinosa Agurto, 3.

<sup>156</sup> Waxer, ed., *Situating Salsa*

<sup>157</sup> Ibid, 318. In this glossary, Waxer defines Salsa Dura as, “...the rougher-edged sound of the 1970s, with driving rhythm section, punchy brass, usually some kind of social message in the lyrics.”

time.<sup>158</sup> In addition to the growingly tense relationship between the populace and the military dictatorships in Peru, the period from the 1970s onward in Latin America saw, for example, Pinochet's violent rule in Chile and civil war conflicts throughout Central America (i.e., Nicaraguan Revolution). Blades looked to unite and represent populist struggle, mass mobilization, and discontent with mainly U.S.-backed governments and interventions, like in Chile via an inclusive imagined expression of *Latinidad*. One of the better examples of this connection is his ode to Salvadorean Archbishop Oscar Romero, assassinated in 1980 due to his speaking out against civil rights abuses in his country's civil war. In the song, "El Padre Antonio y el Monaguillo Andrés" in the album *Buscando America*, Blades sings,

Para celebrar	<i>To celebrate</i>
Nuestra libertad	<i>Our freedom</i>
Porque un Pueblo unido	<i>Because a united people</i>
No será Vencido	<i>Will not be defeated</i>
De Antonio y Andres	<i>From Antonio and Andres</i>
Venga y suénala otra vez <sup>159</sup>	<i>Come and play it again</i>

With the allusion to the famous populist rallying cry from the nueva cancion (New Song) tradition, "El Pueblo unido, jamas sera vencido", Blades locates his salsa corpus within this more political tradition in an attempt at his unifying *Latinidad*.<sup>160</sup> Morales Bermudez's heavy hand as Peru's military dictator, compounded by the increasing economic crisis, produced an environment for transnational, cosmopolitan

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<sup>158</sup> "Conversando con Rubén Blades: Hace 20 Años", interviewed by Dr. Luis Delgado-Aparicio Porta, Canal 9 television, Peru; interviews and musical segments, includes appearance by Mario Vargas Llosa. The Rubén Blades Archives at Harvard University: A Finding Aid, AWM Spec Coll 100. Eda Kuhn Loeb Music Library. <https://id.lib.harvard.edu/ead/c/mus00027c00031/catalog> Accessed December 12, 2019

<sup>159</sup> "El Padre Antonio y el Monaguillo Andrés" Track B2, on *Buscando America*, Elektra 1984, Vinyl.

<sup>160</sup> "El Pueblo Unido, jamas sera vencido" references to Quilapayún, "El Pueblo Unido, Jamas Sera Vencido", Track B5 on *El Pueblo Unido, Jamas Sera Vencido*, Dicap, 1975, Vinyl.

nationalism as in other countries throughout Latin America at the time, like Argentina. The nueva canción movement, as a music inspired by socialist politics, acting as a voice an oppressed mass and a transnational identity, was a model for salsa in general, most evident in its consciente subgenre. Not only were both the nueva canción and salsa consciente the soundtrack of a social consciousness, but in Latin America specifically, born out of a reaction to authoritarianism and acting as voices for the civil rights of a transnational pueblo. More than just protest music, the ethos of the nueva canción was also a revindication or reaffirmation of Latin American identities in the face of United States cultural and political influence.<sup>161</sup> In this sense, salsa consciente was an analog to the nueva canción, with the urban salsa taking the place of the usually rural folk tradition in the nueva canción formula. The significance of consciente's popularity in Latin America was telling as it was unexpected for Fania Records' commercial plans. After several failed more commercial attempts, Ruben Blades resonance with the Latin American public almost single-handedly kept Fania records afloat in the later seventies and early eighties.<sup>162</sup>

What took place locally in Peru informed salsa's reception evidenced in salsa's growing presence in mass media. Blades, along with bandleader Willie Colón, made their first appearance in Lima, Peru in 1978, performing in the home stadium of the historic working-class soccer team, Alianza Lima.<sup>163</sup> The choice of venue alone is

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<sup>161</sup> Fabiola Velasco. "La nueva canción Latinoamericana. Notas sobre su origen y definición". *Presente y Pasado. Revista de Historia*. Año 12. N° 23: 139-153. <http://www.saber.ula.ve.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/bitstream/123456789/23057/1/articulo9.pdf>.

<sup>162</sup> Muriel.

<sup>163</sup> Willie Colón and Rubén Blades in Peru, live concert, 1978. The Rubén Blades Archives at Harvard University: A Finding Aid, AWM Spec Coll 100. Eda Kuhn Loeb Music Library. <https://id.lib.harvard.edu/ead/c/mus00027c00008/catalog> Accessed October 08, 2020. The two largest soccer clubs in Peru have a class binary history: Universitario de Deportes, founded by

very telling, not only as evidence of his concerted attempt at a more populist resonance but because it was outside of Lima's salsa hub of El Callao. Blades helped take salsa outside of the barrio and captured the attention of broader socioeconomic classes while maintaining some of the more urban/barrio populist sensibilities. Blades accomplishes this by transcending the lower barrio class and reaching a new audience with his "teatro del Pueblo" (theatre of the people). Salsa he says is, "a way of writing and expressing oneself in an urban way, a voice that is needed. This is the purpose of "Salsa. It comes from a corner in a barrio, and I wanted to send it to the entire city, not just the barrio, but the whole city."<sup>164</sup> Shortly after the release of *Siembra*, and Fania's first concert in Lima, both in 1978, salsa music became more ubiquitous in Peru's Lima centric mass media.

*Music During the Revolution*

Salsa music was commercially viable as its appeal was heterogenous, both to the leftist sentiment of the 1970s and as a higher-brow artform. As salsa advanced throughout the 1970s, the social consciousness in its lyrics was increasingly pan-ethnic and international:

Usa la conciencia latino  
 No la dejes que se te duerma  
 No la dejes que muera...

*Use your consciousness Latino  
 Don't let it fall asleep  
 Don't let it die ...*

Recuerda que el tiempo pasa no da fruto  
 árbol caído

*Remember that time passes no fallen tree  
 bears fruit  
 Always fight for your race, never give up*

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University Students and Alianza Lima, based in the working-class neighborhood of El Victoria, founded by the workers from the Horse Stud Union.

<sup>164</sup> "Conversando con Rubén Blades: Hace 20 Años" The Rubén Blades Archives at Harvard University, Archive of World Music, Harvard Music Library. <https://id.lib.harvard.edu/ead/mus00027/catalog> Accessed December 12, 2019

Lucha siempre por tu raza, nunca te des por vencido	<i>When bad things disturb you and cloud your heart</i>
Cuando lo malo te turbe y te nuble el corazón	<i>Think of Latin America and repeat my proclamation</i>
Piensa en América latina y repite mi pregón	<i>And according to the seed, the fruits will be</i>
Y de acuerdo a la semilla así nacerán los frutos <sup>165</sup>	<i>born</i>

Politically, it was an anti-imperial (code: anti U.S.), a sentiment shared by the Peruvian national government of the 1960s and 70s. Like the nueva canción, salsa was an innocuous musical culture to the populist presidential regimes in Peru's heavily nationalist twentieth century.<sup>166</sup>

For citizens like writer Juan Gomez Rojas it was during these years in the late 1970s when Salsa artists like Lavoe came to a more considerable Limeño knowledge. There were many nights with state-imposed curfew, so more time to spend with his family and he discovered Lavoe by listening to records his children brought home, and the radio.<sup>167</sup> Salsa was a genre that was more readily available to audiences than in the prior decade.

Part of salsa's popularity in Lima may be attributed to its role as an innocuous, if not a useful cultural ally in what Aguirre and Drinot call the "Peculiar Revolution" of the military governments.<sup>168</sup> The Peruvian government enacted a mandate in 1975 to include a daily minimum of thirty minutes of national folk, non-urban musical programming for all radio stations.<sup>169</sup> Even an ardent supporter of

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<sup>165</sup> Willie Colon & Ruben Blades, "Siembra" track #B4 on *Siembra*, Fania, 1978, vinyl.

<sup>166</sup> Fernando Rios, "Andean Music, the Left, and Pan-Latin Americanism: The Early History," n.d., 13. He mentions that Velasco held nueva canción concerts in Lima despite this being a revolutionary music.

<sup>167</sup> Aragón, *Salsa y Sabor*, 110.

<sup>168</sup> Aguirre and Drinot, eds., *The Peculiar Revolution*

<sup>169</sup> Llorens, 127.

Andean indigenismo like Velasco, whose revolution rested on it, had not one, but two criollo songs commissioned as inclusive national popular rallying cries.<sup>170</sup> The military governments commissioned these productions with the Peruvian national soccer team in mind. Radio heavily played these songs throughout their golden years in the decade that saw their qualification to two FIFA World Cups, becoming de facto popular national anthems.<sup>171</sup> While the fact that these songs were criollo music may seem coincidental, this is an example of the significance of popular music at the time, particularly to the government. Regardless of the preference of identity in their national project, populism was a valuable tool for these administrations. In this context, salsa's place is that of a potential unifier as populist music, inclusive of diverse cultures.

By the end of the 1970s, the number of stations dedicated to playing salsa in Lima grew exponentially as well, including Radiomar, Libertad, Universal, Callao, Victoria, Onda Popular, Excelsior, Lima, Moderna, R700.

In the context of Velasco's national project, salsa was not part of a national identity project on either side of the historical hierarchical binary of Andean and Coastal culture. It was a popular musical style, yet not tied to a specific public as a means for differentiation or subculture and did not carry the political baggage that

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<sup>170</sup> For a specific example of Velasco's use of indigenismo see Charles F. Walker, "Chapter 2: The General and His Rebel: Juan Velasco Alvarado and the Reinvention of Túpac Amaru II" in *The Peculiar Revolution: Rethinking the Peruvian Experiment under Military Rule*, First edition, eds. Carlos Aguirre and Paulo Drinot, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017). 50 – 67.

<sup>171</sup> Janice Llamoca, Maria Hinojosa, hosts, "With You, Peru" *Latino USA* (podcast), July 13, 2018, accessed May 23, 2018, <https://www.latinousa.org/2018/07/13/withyouperu/>

criollo music, Andean music, or even the hybrid Chicha.<sup>172</sup> As one of the two most predominant foreign popular musical traditions in Lima, it had the most potential as an option that could transcend the imposed limits of the national identity binary.<sup>173</sup> Rock music was the other significant musical import of the twentieth century. These two foreign traditions ostensibly followed opposite socioeconomic trajectories, rock working its way in exposure from the upper classes to a more inclusionary socioeconomic and racial audience. Salsa also expanded its listener base, but like Música Criolla, it started in the *barriadas* of neighborhoods like Callao, and La Victoria.<sup>174</sup> Rock was formally denounced by the military governments, focused on populist anti-imperialism and an example of Velasco's censorship in mass media.<sup>175</sup> The two military governments promoted and influenced the production of national music above all else.

American and British rock was inherently associated by language to the United States and its hegemonic relationship with Latin America. Velasco publicly made this association and saw rock as antithetical to his anti-U.S. economic stance.

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<sup>172</sup> Santiago Alfaró Rotondo, "La música andina como mercado de consumo" in *Música popular y sociedad en el Perú contemporáneo*, Raúl R. Romero et al., eds., Primera edición (Lima, Perú: Instituto de Etnomusicología, PUCP, 2015), 130 – 182.

<sup>173</sup> Urpi Montoya Uriarte, *Entre Fronteras: Convivencia Multicultural, Lima Siglo XX* (Lima: CONCYTEC : SUR, 2002).

<sup>174</sup> This is the general perception and generally true, although Rhoner in "Una aproximación a la generación de Felipe Pinglo" problematizes these notions.

<sup>175</sup> Even in its earliest stages of appearance, we find a government dismissal/disdain of state seeing it as low art. Ex: A state radio in 1957 (Radio Mundial) cancelled a planned rock and roll contest, the radio's director: "Creame usted que de organizar o autorizar concursos de baile para jlos carnavales no estan precisamente aquellos cuyos ritmos o letras son inapropiados a la formacion cultural de nuestra juventud. Radio Mundial, radiofusora del Estado, harbria dado logica preferencia a los bailes tipicos peruanos como manineras, valeses, etc.; muy superieories en todo a esos ritmos francamente lamentables" (La Prensa, 31 de enero de 1957). 459 in Bustamante.

Carlos Santana's failed performance in December of 1971 is a prime example of this tension. Although the concert organizers had the necessary permits from local and national authorities, they had not secured the approval of the national Department of the Interior. Santana and his band were detained by Velasco's State Police (PIP) upon arrival to Lima and promptly deported after hours of interrogation. The only explanation given to the public was that Santana and his band were antithetical to the Revolutionary government<sup>176</sup>

Fania Record's earliest records were not pressed in Peru, but by the release of *Siembra*, in 1978 Peruvian companies were pressing these records. One of the first exclusively Salsa radio shows to go on air on a national stage was aptly titled "Maestra Vida", after Ruben Blades' album. The host was Saravá, the same host of the interview special produced for Peruvian television two years later.

### Blades

Looking specifically at Peruvian interviews with Blades and *melomanos* (music lovers/collectors), we understand his goal: to bring a high art paradigm to popular music from the barrio, or rather, to galvanize a pan Latin identity and consciousness by legitimizing a type of urban folklore. Focila (Folclore de Ciudad Latinoamericana), as Blades calls it, located salsa in the larger world of Latin American and Hispanic high art. This political shift may have played a role in

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<sup>176</sup>Conservative paper El Comercio chronicled this episode: Redacción El Comercio Perú, "Así Ocurrió: En 1971 suspenden concierto de Santana en Lima," El Comercio Perú, December 10, 2014, <https://elcomercio.pe/luces/musica/ocurrio-1971-suspenden-concierto-santana-lima-181523-noticia/>. And corroborated by the public in material like, "Santana y el concierto en Perú que no pudo ser," *Garaje del Rock* (blog), December 11, 2018, <https://garajedelrock.com/articulos/santana-y-el-concierto-en-peru-que-no-pudo-ser/>.

and consistently mentioned as an anecdote in my oral history testimonies.

integrating salsa music in Peru's larger mass media industry. The political focus and locating it within a broader literary tradition served a dual purpose of class inclusivity. Blades claimed to bring high art to the barrio. However, he also spoke to higher classes that may have been turned off by the gangster aesthetics or other barrio representations of the previous salsa dura period.<sup>177</sup> In an over two-hour-long video interview with Peruvian radio broadcaster and journalist Lucho Saravá, Blades mentions, "What I intended to do with *Maestra Vida* (his following work) was to take advantage of *Siembra's* success and combine the theatre with the urban reality. Popular culture unfortunately finds itself disconnected from the theatre and doesn't have a theatre because it is something elitist"<sup>178</sup>. In this interview produced for Peruvian audiences, Blades further contextualizes the impact of his recordings and what Salsa music offers to the listener as a product. While *Siembra* includes arguably the most iconic salsa song, "Pedro Navaja", a dark satirical commentary on the surprise and danger of city life, 1980's *Maestra Vida* was the continuation of salsa's social commentary. Blades locates salsa music within the broader Spanish speaking literary consciousness, an unprecedented endeavor for salsa. *Maestra Vida* was conceptually, a salsa opera, something that as Blades explains, attempted to bring a high-class artform to the "people."

While *latinidad* as a collective racial or ethnic identifier may not have necessarily resonated as with the people of Lima, the textual political turn was in line

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<sup>177</sup> Karush. This is a similar strategy that Karush explains happened with Argentina's folk (and Nueva canción) singer, Mercedes Sosa: "Philips's strategy for folk music was aimed at appealing to higher-class record buyers at home as well as in Europe and North America." 163

<sup>178</sup> Ibid

with one of the transnational musical currents in Latin America, particularly in folk music, a commercially viable genre by this point.<sup>179</sup> The voices in Peruvian oral histories available substantiate this fact. For many Peruvians, Ruben Blades and Salsa Consciente represents their first-time hearing salsa. For others, songs like "Plastico" and "Pedro Navaja" included some of the more memorable lines from music in the seventies and even the early eighties.<sup>180</sup> It is during these years that Peruvians noticed an increasing presence of Salsa music on the airwaves and in parties. Even as a fundamentally commercial music, salsa consciente challenges what a folk and revolutionary Latin American music can be. The populist cultural sensibilities evident in the politics of the twentieth century made their way even to the most commercial of dance music. Lyrics like:

Ojos	<i>Eyes</i>
De jóvenes y viejos	<i>Of young and old</i>
En todos laos' del mundo	<i>In all parts of the world</i>
De todos los colores	<i>Of all the colors</i>
De rey o vagabundo	<i>Of king or vagabond</i>
Ojos que ríen, ojos que lloran	<i>Eyes that laugh, eyes that cry</i>
Ojos que piden, ojos que imploran	<i>Eyes that ask, eyes that implore</i>
Ojos que están llenos de esperanza	<i>Eyes that are full of hope</i>
Dando gritos de hasta cuándo	<i>Screaming until</i>
Que dicen la calle está dura	<i>They say the streets are tough</i>
Ojos del pobre esperando	<i>Eyes of the poor waiting</i>
Ojos de aquel que se aleja y	<i>Eyes of the one who turns away and</i>
espera su libertad	<i>waits for his freedom</i>
De América Latina, ojos llenos de verdad	<i>From Latin America, eyes full of truth</i>
Ojos	<i>Eyes</i>
Siguiendo los pollos en las esquinas	<i>Following the chickens in the corners</i>
O mirando papeles en la oficina	<i>Or looking at papers in the office</i>
	<i>Happy eyes, like the eye of the neighbor</i>

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid 142 – 178 for more on the Folk Music in Revolutionary Latin America, with Mercedes Sosa as a case study. `

<sup>180</sup> Luis Albornoz, interview by author, Callao/Falls Church, VA, May 7, 2020., Richard Medina, interview by Author, Spokane, Washington/Falls Church, VA. May 2, 2020, and Carlos Granda, interview by Author, El Paso, TX/Falls Church, VA. May 8, 2020.

Ojos dichosos, como el ojo 'e la vecina<sup>181</sup>

and

Solo el tiburón sigue despierto  
Solo el tiburón sigue buscando  
Solo el tiburón sigue intranquilo  
Solo el tiburón sigue acechando

*Only the shark is still awake  
Only the shark keeps searching  
Only the shark remains uneasy  
Only the shark keeps stalking*

Tiburón que buscas en la orilla tiburón  
Que buscas en la arena  
Tiburón que buscas en la orilla tiburón  
Lo tuyo es mar afuera  
Tiburón que buscas en la orilla Tiburón  
Eh Tiburón el canto de sirena  
Tiburón que buscas en la orilla Tiburón  
Serpiente marinera  
Tiburón que buscas en la orilla Tiburón  
Hay tu nunca te llenas  
Tiburón que buscas en la orilla Tiburón  
Cuidao con la ballena  
Tiburón que buscas en la orilla Tiburón  
Respetá mi bandera<sup>182</sup>

*Shark that searches the shore, shark  
That searches in the sand  
Shark that searches the shore, shark  
Yours is the sea  
Shark that searches the shore, shark  
Hey Shark the siren song  
Shark that searches the shore, shark  
Sea serpent  
Shark that searches the shore, shark  
You never fill up  
Shark that searches the shore, shark  
Be careful with the whale  
Shark that searches the shore, shark  
Respect my flag*

These two Blades works are examples of his Latin American Teatro del Pueblo vision of a popular Latinidad. The songs are also examples of how political and revolutionary music could be between 1978 and about 1986. The latter song in particular, "Tiburón" (Shark), alludes to the U.S. interventions in the Caribbean and Central America in the early eighties in particular, with the image of the U.S. as a predatory shark. Although it was not about Peru specifically, Blades mentioned about the song:

the purpose of the song was to express my and our dislike for intervention. Now, U.S. foreign policy has been intervening in the region all this time so of course this song would directly be placed on the U.S. But then a funny thing happened; England had a problem also with Argentina. Then the song all of

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<sup>181</sup> Willie Colon & Ruben Blades, "Plástico" track #B2 on *Siembra*, Fania, 1978, vinyl.

<sup>182</sup> Willie Colón & Ruben Blades, "Tiburón", track A1 on *Canciones Del Solar De Los Aburridos*, Fania, 1981, Vinyl.

the sudden is not a song that can be applied exclusively to the U.S. I am also opposed, If the Russians would walk in, send an army and walk inside of any Latin American country, you know like just walk in to put order and what not, I'd scream, of course I'd scream,<sup>183</sup>

While by this time in 1984, the military anti U.S. hegemonic governments were over, on top of government ideology, the memories of U.S. intelligence's collaboration in anti-subversive enforcement and civil rights abuses would be fresh on people's minds.<sup>184</sup> More pertinent to the conversation in Peru, particularly the first song, "Ojos" they are examples of the cultural inclusivity of Blades' salsa, making it both commercially attractive and popular. It alludes to the youth, the old, the street, Latin America, and people of all races. Like the nueva cancion, salsa consciente was a protest and revolutionary genre, but more importantly an identifier to counter the cultural and political dominance of the United States. Unlike the nueva cancion, salsa music was political and conscious while maintaining its fundamental essence as social dance music. This combination successfully broadened its appeal to Lima's more general audience that included the middle and upper class. This expansion of theme, context, and even musical styles that *Siembra* catalyzed also lead to the ultimate downfall of Fania Records. "Plástico" for example, starts with a thirty-second disco/funk instrumental interlude that opens up *Siembra* before a Salsa descarga abruptly interrupts. Blades juxtaposes the hegemonic western foreign sound

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<sup>183</sup> Ruben Blades quoted in Andres Espinoza Agurto, "Una Sola Casa: Salsa Consciente and the Poetics of the Meta-Barrio" (Ph.D., United States -- Massachusetts, Boston University, 2014), <https://search.proquest.com/pgdtglobal/docview/1556761003/abstract/E5B57E1BA3AE47ACPQ/1.264>.

<sup>184</sup> J. Patrice McSherry, "Tracking the Origins of a State Terror Network: Operation Condor," *Latin American Perspectives* 29, no. 1 (2002): 38–60. For more specifics about U.S. action in Peru as late as 1980 during Morales' ostensibly anti U.S. government: "Southern Cone Rendition Program: Peru's Participation," accessed October 9, 2020, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB244/index.htm>.

of the increasingly consumerist time with a sound of a Spanish speaking pueblo. In his experimental blending of sounds and styles, the irony is that writing for a wider, more general audience would lead salsa to its most commercial and commodified sound, the salsa romantica (romantic salsa). The growing international culture industry would find an extremely marketable pocket later in the 1980s, thus breaking the record company's control of the market.

In more affluent neighborhoods of Lima proper, like Jesus Maria, residents like Jorge 'Koki' Jáuregui recall Ruben Blades' works fondly, as he mentions, "I never had the opportunity to see him live, like I did Hector Lavoe and others, but if I did, I think I'd even cry". Koki recalls opening his Christmas gift, Blades' salsa opera, *Maestra Vida*, as a child in 1980. This was his very first salsa record. This salsa consciente work resonates even now in his own work as an artist himself, using the characters of the opera as subjects. He mentions, "I use this as a subject and love salsa because I had friends who lived in that barrio lifestyle, and some that didn't. What connected us was salsa. Salsa is a feeling that we all share. The music is just a vehicle, a pretext".<sup>185</sup> These two testimonies from very different parts of the city speak not only to the resonance of the music's message across classes but also to the music's availability and popularity at this point. Salsa was no longer just music played in a niche group of working-class neighborhoods like the port of Callao, but now a popular foreign commodity embraced by masses and the nationalist government alike.

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<sup>185</sup> *Maestra Vida de Rubén Blades En Un Cuerpo Pintado*, 2016, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FVju6RWZUpw&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FVju6RWZUpw&feature=emb_title).

1978 saw the end of the military Marxist experiment and a painful move towards a return to electoral democracy. General Morales Bermudez took over control of the presidency with yet another coup in 1975, ushering in what turned out to be an unexpectedly repressive regime. As part of the goals of his auto denominated "Second Phase", he promised a return to democracy and more austere economic measures. The slow shift towards democracy would include a new constitution in 1978, a return to open elections in 1980, and a more conservative, privatized economic sector. These economic measures were not enough to salvage the nation from its economic woes that had intensified throughout the 1970s and would continue to worsen in the 1980s. Regardless, this increased access to foreign investment meant for multinational producers of music was a spike in potential consumer audiences. Not necessarily a new audience, but an opportunity to export salsa into an unexpected region of popularity.<sup>186</sup> A region that had reencountered economic stability at least in the eyes of the United States, and a sensibility to transnational "tropical" musical styles.<sup>187</sup> In 1980, the man who was deposed in 1968 by a leftist military revolution returned to power. Belaunde Terry's conservative neo-liberal economic measures did not do enough to curb the worsening inflation that quickly soured a general excitement and optimism of a return to liberal democracy and led to more civil unrest across the city in an even tougher 1980s.

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<sup>186</sup> Agustin Gurza, "Latin: Latin America Hails Salsa," *Billboard (Archive: 1963-2000); Cincinnati*, July 16, 1977.

<sup>187</sup> Marv Fisher, "Andean Bloc: Increased Stability Points to Optimistic Future," *Billboard (Archive: 1963-2000); Cincinnati*, November 3, 1979.

## Chapter Three: Salsa Romántica

Lima of the late eighties was one of salsa's global hotspots, a profitable stop for international artists. During these years, some of the concerts brought in crowds of hundreds of thousands, numbers unprecedented for this type of music.<sup>188</sup> For Lima residents, no longer was salsa music confined to the port of Callao; it was music heard, seen, and played throughout the city. Lima in this decade was also much different demographically from three decades prior. By 1984, the greater metropolitan area included almost six hundred recognized *barriadas* (shantytowns), with over two million residents making up thirty-six percent of the city. Thirty years prior, these numbers were much lower, with only fifty-six *barriadas* making up less than ten percent of Lima.<sup>189</sup> National political leaders failed to address the economic hyperinflation carried over from the prior decade. The first president of the eighties, Belaunde, saw a devaluation of the national currency from two hundred soles to the dollar to twelve thousand soles to the dollar.<sup>190</sup> Continued social unrest led to more violence from the state and guerrilla and terrorist groups active in the highlands for years but concentrated in Lima during this decade. In this particular period, salsa's popularity was most indebted to commercial changes in a neoliberal era, appealing to

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<sup>188</sup> Casa Editorial El Tiempo, "Después 30 años buscan que Grupo Niche tenga récord Guinness en Perú," El Tiempo, April 29, 2019, <https://www.eltiempo.com/colombia/cali/buscan-record-guinness-para-el-grupo-niche-por-concierto-en-peru-en-1989-353100>. 30 years later, the Colombian group Grupo Niche lobbied for the world record for the most massive salsa concert for the 1989 performance that reportedly brought in a crowd of over 400,000.

<sup>189</sup> José Matos Mar, "A City of Outsiders" in *The Lima Reader: History, Culture, Politics*. Ed. Carlos Aguirre, and Charles Walker, translated by Jorge Bayona, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017). 207 – 213.

<sup>190</sup> Carlos Contreras and Marcos Cueto, *Historia del Perú contemporáneo: desde las luchas por la independencia hasta el presente* (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 2004).

a more general audience as popular culture shifted towards a more individual private appeal. The hangover from a cultural and political nationalist moment was felt in the national mass media. The neo liberal moment demanded an inclusively appealing music for all Peruvians and the national mass media chose the depoliticized salsa romantica (romantic salsa) as the de facto populist musical style. Although the city was increasingly characterized by “new limeños”, a foreign style like salsa was chosen over domestic musical fusions associated with this subaltern group like chicha as the ideal populist music of 1980s Peru.<sup>191</sup> Its more general appeal in its romantic form made it innocuous to political and social cultural associations and its fundamental characteristic as a foreign music made it appealing to cosmopolitan sensibilities.

The baladized salsa romantica a depoliticized, softer form of salsa, provided a form of escape for the city's heterogeneous population during a challenging decade of economic instability and violence affecting all classes. Its presence as popular music in lower-class neighborhoods that previously did not embrace it and its heavy use in the national media are two testaments to this fact. Even at its furthest from its barrio essence, salsa adapted in the 1980s while still maintaining its populist essence as unifying music of the masses across Lima's cultures and classes. This chapter will start with an exploration of salsa romantica (romantic salsa) as commercial development and departure from the other two styles of salsa, dura (hard salsa), and

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<sup>191</sup> Romero, “Popular Music and the Global City” defines new limeños as: “social sector made up primarily of non-traditional Limeños: the population that migrated to Lima from the provinces after the 1950s (or were born in Lima to recent migrants), and who did not integrate fully into the cultural trends or residential patterns of the traditional elite sectors.” Music like chicha, peruvian cumbia and huaynos were associated with this group in the 1980s. 219.

consciente (conscience salsa) amidst a changing national political climate. The music's general growth in Peru is then considered, including what meanings the residents of the time ascribed to this music and how they understood it. Even with a market farthest away from a focus on national styles and collective identities, the global salsa's reception is mediated by national more local contexts and agents.

Hector Lavoe's first and only visit to Peru was in the “Feria del Hogar” (the Home Fair), which took place during this decade.<sup>192</sup> This series of six concerts was such a momentous event that America Television, one of the major national broadcast networks, aired these concerts, a rare musical performance occurrence. Salsa took the national stage as a potential populist unifier. While the festival itself did not take place in the port of Callao, site of his veneration (the grounds were in Chorrillos, about 14 miles from Callao), Lavoe purportedly visited the streets of Callao often during his stay. Lavoe was a firm believer of his image as a man of the people: “Yo me meto a donde quiera en los barrios pobres, Lower East Side. Para que vean yo en esos sitios, nadie se mete conmigo, me tratan chévere” (I go wherever I want to in the lower-class neighborhoods, on the lower east side. So, they could see that nobody messes with me in those places, they treat me cool).<sup>193</sup> Several apocryphal stories from these visits to the roughest of neighborhoods and salsa bars in Callao are urban

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<sup>192</sup> Feria del Hogar: a major annual festival held in Lima akin to a state or world's fair “¿Recuerdan a La Llamita Que Invitaba a Una Feria? - Huellas Digitales | Blogs | El Comercio Perú,” September 2, 2012, <https://web.archive.org/web/20120902080119/http://blogs.elcomercio.pe/huellasdigitales/2010/07/recuerdan-a-la-llamita-que-inv.html>. For more on the festival itself.

<sup>193</sup> “Héctor Lavoe y La Profunda Huella Que Dejó En Su Paso Por El Perú - YouTube,” accessed May 28, 2020, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9\\_xXDstUnus](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9_xXDstUnus).

legends chronicled in the pages of local Chalaco (demonym for Callao residents) writers memorialize Lavoe.<sup>194</sup>

1986 also marked the visit of another important salsa icon to Peru's capital. If Hector Lavoe was the poster child for salsa dura (hard salsa) and Fania Records, then Frankie Ruiz, another Boricua (Puerto Rican) artist, was the poster child for salsa romantica.<sup>195</sup> Ruiz was one of the most popular salsa artists at the time, while Lavoe, battling drug addiction and family tragedies, was attempting a comeback to his heyday of the 1970s. Both had troubled lives that ended tragically a few years later (Ruiz died of AIDS in 1998). However, at this juncture in 1986, Lima was where two opposite trajectories met in a particularly tumultuous time for the city.<sup>196</sup>

### *Politics in Neo-Liberal Lima*

Scholars attribute the phenomenon of salsa's popularity in 1980s South American countries like Peru to indicate a reflection of a political return to democracy and liberal markets in the 1980s. Salsa may have been a celebratory

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<sup>194</sup> He was already an urban legend to the people of Callao upon his arrival. Small run books like *Un Jibarito y el Callao: Breve Imagen de Héctor Lavoe* and *Salsa y sabor en cada esquina: mi visión de Héctor Lavoe en el Perú* are not only evidence of this adoration but provide historical insight into this relationship. These two works are collections of vignettes by poets, reporters, and El Callao residents that eulogize the singer. They chronicle his life but also include personal accounts of the impact of his 1986 visit. Mario Aragón, *Salsa y Sabor En Cada Esquina: Mi Visión de Héctor Lavoe En El Perú*, Primera edición, Selección Gallera (San Borja: Ediciones Altazor, 2015). 15, 41, 111

<sup>195</sup> Fania Records (New York City) was Hector Lavoe's record label and an instrumental one in the genre's early development. They purportedly had almost eighty percent of the salsa market during the 60s and 1970s.

<sup>196</sup> Salserísimo Perú, "Maisonave: el mánager del Cantante de los Cantantes," *Salserísimo Perú | Salsa es Cultura* (blog), August 4, 2017, <http://www.salserisimoperu.com/hector-lavoe-especial-feria-hogar-hector-maisonave-rompio-miedo-que-los-peruanos-tenian-ese-momento-salsa-noticia-04-08-2017/>.

Hector Lavoe's manager reminds us that no one could have expected the popularity of this series of concerts in Lima at this point in Lavoe's career.

soundtrack for a decade of post-military dictatorship embracing a new era.<sup>197</sup> A resurgence of generally conservative neoliberalism dominated the geopolitical landscape of the west. In 1988, hyperinflation reached 1,700 percent, only to increase to 2,700 in 1989. Average real wages for urban workers sank fifty percent from 1985 to 1990.<sup>198</sup>

Two radical left movements took foot in the country's rural areas during this period: the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) and the Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso). Both groups can trace their antecedents to before Velasco's military dictatorship. However, the eighties saw their violent presence increase, particularly in Lima, as an issue for the national government to address throughout the eighties.<sup>199</sup> Guerrilla violence, social unrest, and terrorism affected Limeños from all classes and areas, including barrios like Villa El Salvador, where the shining path murdered community leaders and destroyed soup kitchens. The group also set car bombs all over the city, particularly in the middle to upper-class neighborhoods, causing almost daily blackouts.<sup>200</sup> The violence of the internal conflict facing the nation even reared its face in mass media. MRTA took over local and national radio

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<sup>197</sup> Espinoza Agurto, throughout the paper, but mostly on page 303. He is concerned with Salsa Consiente (Dura) specifically. He sees the 80s, not as the rise of Salsa Romantica/Sensual, but rather the fall of the former and the beginning of salsa's fall overall.

<sup>198</sup> Cyrus Ernesto Zirakzadeh, "From Revolutionary Dreams to Organizational Fragmentation: Disputes over Violence within ETA and Sendero Luminoso," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 14, no. 4 (December 1, 2002): 66–92, <https://doi.org/10.1080/714005641>.

<sup>199</sup> For example, MRTA's presence in Lima was first strongly felt in 1985 with simultaneous attacks on police stations and a car bomb set near the Department of the interior. Comisión de La Verdad y Reconciliación, "1.4 El Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaru" accessed October 25, 2020, <http://www.cverdad.org.pe/ifinal/index.php>.

<sup>200</sup> Carlos Aguirre and Charles F. Walker, "Chapter 6: The Many Limas (1940 -)" in *The Lima Reader: History, Culture, Politics* ed. Carlos Aguirre and Charles F. Walker (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017). 168 – 256.

stations to propagate its message on various occasions throughout the decade.<sup>201</sup>

When Hector Lavoe arrived in Lima on an early morning on a red-eye flight in 1986, he had to wait close to 3 hours for the nightly city-wide curfew to end in order to finally exit the airport. These were curfew orders put in place due to the terrorist violence that the city experienced at the time.<sup>202</sup> The eighties were tumultuous and a time of growing insecurity and disparity for all classes. Throughout this period, depoliticized salsa music was seemingly sounding everywhere, regardless of class, acting as escapism from the everyday violence and tense political climate.

Alberto Fujimori would be in power for the totality of the 1990s as his authoritarian neoliberal mandate saw the defeat of terrorism but also a period of macroeconomic stability and growth. His campaign slogan, "Un presidente como tu" (A President like you), reflected a populist appeal of this neoliberal period as an outsider to the political status quo. His victory over cultural icon Mario Vargas Llosa represented the public's disillusionment with the traditional elite after returning to democratic rule in the eighties.<sup>203</sup> Musically, for the most part, the popularity of various foreign popular sounds reflected the focus on an international economic resurgence. The continued popularity of salsa romántica, ever more amalgamated

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<sup>201</sup> Emilio Bustamante, *La Radio En El Perú*, 1. ed, Colección Investigaciones (Lima: Universidad de Lima, Fondo Editorial, 2012) Chapter 4. On several occasions, they even kidnapped radio executives and hosts for ransom.

<sup>202</sup> "El Contrato Que Permitió Traer a Héctor Lavoe a La Feria Del Hogar [VIDEO]," accessed July 7, 2020, <http://www.salserisimoperu.com/hector-lavoe-peru-contrato-que-permitio-traerlo-feria-del-hogar-salsa-noticia-05-08-2016/>.

<sup>203</sup> MIGUEL LA SERNA, "Fujishock," in *With Masses and Arms*, Peru's Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (University of North Carolina Press, 2020), 145–56, [http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9781469655994\\_laserna.19](http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9781469655994_laserna.19).

with pop and balada, served as part of the soundtrack to nineties Lima under a government looking outside the globe, rather than insular nationalism.<sup>204</sup>

*Salsa Sensual/Romántica/Erotica*

**Tú con él, el tiempo corre yo te espero  
Pero tú con él  
Ya no recuerdas mis locuras ni el amor aquél  
Estas tranquila lo mereces siempre fuiste fiel<sup>205</sup>**

***You with him, time keeps going, I wait for you  
But you with him  
You no longer remember my madness or my love  
You are at peace, you deserve it, you were always faithful***

Salsa dura and consciente alienated those audiences who did not find resonance with a working-class Pueblo (the people), counter-culture, or leftist politics. Already a commodity, once salsa distanced itself from political attempts at Latino unity, it became even more widespread throughout Latin America.<sup>206</sup> There was an increase in artists sprawling from outside of the New York City mecca and the backing of Fania Records, in particular from Puerto Rico, and Colombia.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Espinoza Agurto, 303 – 305. The epigraph by Felipe Luciano explains the escapist entertainment that the Latin American populace found in this type of dance, lively music, even if it was a commodified exoticized form.

<sup>205</sup> Frankie Ruiz, “Tú Con Él”, track A4 on *Solista...Pero No Solo*, Rodven 1985, Vinyl.

A cover of Los Iracundos, “Tú Con Él”, track A1 on *Tú Con Él*, RCA International 1984 Vinyl.

<sup>206</sup> Waxer, “City...” 8.

El Pueblo: Espinoza claims it as a "neo-Marxist political term in Latin America incorporates differential claims under one guise (Laclau 2005)", citing Dussell, 2008: “a category that can encompass the unity of all the movements, classes, sectors, etc., in political struggle. Thus, the people are that strictly political category (since it is not properly sociological or economic) that appears as essential, despite its ambiguity (and indeed, this ambiguity does not result from a misunderstanding but rather from inevitable complexity). 83.

<sup>207</sup> *Me Sabe a Perú - La Historia de La Canción Del Grupo Niche*. Accessed December 12, 2019.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uLYhQj850TI>. In 1989, the Colombian Salsa Group, Grupo Niche recorded an ode to Peru, "Me Sabe a Peru," after a performance in Lima that same year.

This newer brand of salsa capitalized on balada's (Ballad) success quite literally at times as Frankie Ruiz covered Spanish ballads "El Camionero" (Roberto Carlos), "Tú Con Él" (Los Iracundos), "Lo Dudo" (José José), the two-former appearing on his album *Solista.... Pero no Solo*. Salsa of the 1980s can most directly trace its lyrical origins to the mid-twentieth century's popular balada (ballad).<sup>208</sup> Music historian David Metzger defines the ballad in general as a cross-genre style that, along with lyrics of love and loss, are generally slower in tempo, formulaic verse-chorus structure, and harmonies as accompaniments that highlight the sung melodies.<sup>209</sup> Part of balada's success was due to its nature as a denationalized music. Latin American singers performed their versions (not covers) of a combination of pop and doo-wop western musical styles. By this time, rock and pop music, both in English and Spanish, were increasingly ubiquitous in the global musical landscape, influencing more commercial amalgamations (like rock en español, for example).<sup>210</sup> The rock and pop elements mixed with local traditions, making Chicha music in Peru, or salsa romantica were examples of the parallel hybridizations globally, not as cultural imperialism, but rather as cultural exchange and avenues for alternative identities.<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> Balada: a spanish-language variant of the international pop music ballad.

<sup>209</sup> David Metzger. "The Power Ballad." *Popular Music* 31, no. 3 (2012): 437-59. Accessed July 3, 2020. [www.jstor.org/stable/23325787](http://www.jstor.org/stable/23325787). 438.

<sup>210</sup> See Karush, *Musicians in Transit: Argentina and the Globalization of Popular Music* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017). Chapter 6: "The Music of Globalization: Gustavo Santaolalla and the Production of Rock Latino: 179 – 215. For more on this development.

<sup>211</sup> Gisela Cánepa, "Chicha and Huayno: Andean Music and Culture in Lima," in *The Lima Reader*, ed. Carlos Aguirre and Charles F. Walker (Duke University Press, 2017), 232–35, <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822373186-057>. For a primer on the music and culture.

Also see: Montero-Diaz, "White Cholos"

Salsa Romántica presented a more synthetic sound when compared to its previous stylistic iterations. Elements such as the songs' improvisational portions were very much toned down, if not wholly absent. The sounds like brash horns became increasingly softer as a backdrop for a crooning singer. The focus shifted from the improvisational *Sonero* (call and response singer) engaging with the instrumentation to the singer, their verses, and the chorus. However, the lyrical content compared to the previous periods of salsa truly set the romántica style apart:

No se da ni cuenta que cuando la miro por no delatarme	<i>She doesn't even realize when I look at her, as to not give me away</i>
Me guardo un suspiro que mi amor callado	<i>I hold back a sigh that my silent love It lights up when seeing her that I'd</i>
Se enciende con verla que diera la vida para poseerla	<i>give my life to possess her She does not even realize that my eyes</i>
No se da ni cuenta que brillan mis ojos	<i>light up</i>
Que tiemblo a su lado y hasta me sonrojo	<i>That I tremble next to her and I even blush</i>
Que ella es el motivo que a mi amor despierta	<i>That she is the reason that my love awakens</i>
Que ella es mi delirio y no se da ni cuenta <sup>212</sup>	<i>That she is my delusion and she does not even realize</i>

Love songs were historically a feature of Spanish language popular music in some shape or form. Pan Latin styles like bolero and even Peruvian domestic styles like música Criolla (creole music) or Huayno have rich traditions of melodramatic texts and vocal performances. The classic suit and tie bolero crooner's visual aesthetic as the archetypal balada performer was also present in the salsa of the eighties, as evident in album covers and television performances. One of these performances was by Frankie Ruiz' on Panamerica TV during his visit to Lima in December of 1986. His visit included three live performances and a televised one on the weekly Friday

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<sup>212</sup> Frankie Ruiz, "Esta Cobardia" Track A2 on *Solista...Pero No Solo* Rodven, 1985 Vinyl.

primetime variety hour, "La Gran Revista"<sup>213</sup> Donning the suit and tie as part of his clean-cut pretty boy aesthetic, a departure from that of the streets of salsa's barrio, this performance aired on the coveted Friday night slot indicates salsa's ubiquity in Peru's popular culture.

Musicologist and historian Rigoberto Villalta believes that salsa romántica was far too commercial and an overall low effort musical product. He reminds us that a large factor to Frankie Ruiz's success leading to his visit to Lima was his music videos on national TV stations throughout the decade to appeal to a mostly female audience. With his romantic aesthetics and lyrical tropes, Ruiz was marketed to women, thus broadening salsa's audience. I would disagree with Villalta that this was a necessarily less aggressive, less masculine tradition. The names salsa Romántica, sensual, and erótica (Romantic, sensual, and erotic) were used interchangeably by Limeños. However, the distinctions in lyrical content worth pointing out. A sensual song like 1988's "Ven Devorame Otra Vez" by Lalo Rodríguez that explicitly alludes to sex, "Y haciendo el amor te he nombrado sin quererlo yo, Porque en todas busco lo salvaje de tu sexo amor" (I've called your name inadvertently while making love, because I search for the wildness of your sex in other women, my love) is not the same as a song like Jerry Rivera's 1989 song, "Nada Sin Ti" where he sings, "También los hombres lloran, voy al fútbol no lo veo, abro un libro no le leo, como poco..." (Mean also cry, I go to soccer and don't watch it, I open a book and don't read it, I don't eat...). The former is an example of a Salsa Erótica or Sensual, and the

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<sup>213</sup>. "FRANKIE RUIZ - LA RUEDA - EN LIMA PERU, accessed October 15, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qpA1F-N7Qpk>.

latter a safer, more Romantic variety.<sup>214</sup> Ruiz' songs like "Deseandote," "Desnudate Mujer," and "Mirandote" objectify women with the male as the dominant, usually aggressive partner

The distinctions in salsa complicate the generalization of salsa romantica as merely a more commercial and bubblegum sound. Romance is a historically pervasive theme in criollismo, for example. The permanence of this masculine gendered point of view in salsa along with explicit allusions to passion and sex are examples of an edge, vulgarity, and brashness that made it an enduring representation of urban vivesa and picardia criolla (creole mischievousness) even in this form. Boldness, shrewdness (vivesa), and daringness may have found an extension even in salsa romantica. It is easy to make the connection between the earliest salsa dura and the picardia of popular criollismo.<sup>215</sup> Songs like "Juanito Alimaña" tell the story of corrupt characters in the barrio that get away with criminal activity, in this case, bribes.<sup>216</sup> Nevertheless, even the more subdued and antithetical style, salsa romantica could have some edginess and vulgarity, in line with the vivesa criollo culture.

Despite this continued masculine point of view, the change in the aesthetic of salsa's masculinity reflects South America's neoliberal moment. Neoliberalism's impact on masculinity in the Latin American world was felt most by the working-class population as males found stable employment challenging to obtain and keeping

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<sup>214</sup> Lalo Rodriguez, "Ven, Devorame Otra Vez" 1988, track #1 on *Un Nuevo Despertar*, Rodven Records, 1988, Vinyl and Jerry Rivera, "Nada Sin Ti" 1990 track #3 on *Abriendo Puertas*, CBS Discos, 1990, CD.

<sup>215</sup> Ozzie G. Simmons, "The Criollo Outlook in the Mestizo Culture of Coastal Peru," *American Anthropologist* 57, no. 1 (1955): 107–17.

<sup>216</sup> Willie Colón & Hector Lavoe, "Juanito Alimaña" track B2 on *Vigilante*, Fania Records 1983, Vinyl.

their status as primary earners for the family.<sup>217</sup> Unionized working-class professionals had experienced the smallest growth percentage from 1970 to 1990, while the largest growth in employment type during these years had been street vendors, at an almost fifteen percent growth.<sup>218</sup> Not only was the clean-cut, aggressively seductive singer a sign of conservative masculinity and subordination of women, but it could also have spoken to a reactionary expression of masculine frustration. The reaffirmation of male sexual dominance in the eroticism of this escapist music is a clue into the masculine frustration. The singer was a reactionary voice to a loss of male power, particularly socioeconomically. Men had to increasingly compete with women in the workplace as the economy worsened, jobs became limited.<sup>219</sup> Masculine virility, accentuated in this type of salsa, a gendered social dance, became an explicit way to reaffirm their supposed power. Additionally, the conservative look of the heteronormative depoliticized male with short hair, mustache, and clean suit and tie was more acceptable for a general national audience and an older audience. In stark contrast, the violent male of the counter-culture salsa of the 1960s and 1970s expressed a more youthful frustration against the status quo rather than upholding conservative values in line with the climate of the neoliberal 1980s. All in all, these factors made the salsa romantica a profitable, marketable, and representative art form across classes, ages, and even genders. This understanding of

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<sup>217</sup> Mara Viveros-Vigoya, "Masculinities in the Continuum of Violence in Latin America," *Feminist Theory* 17, no. 2 (August 2016): 229–37, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700116645879>.

<sup>218</sup> Francisco Verdera V, *El mercado de trabajo de Lima Metropolitana: estructura y evolución 1970-1990 (Documento de Trabajo, 59. Serie: Economía, 19)*. (IEP, 2000).

<sup>219</sup> Mara Viveros Vigoya, "Contemporary Latin American Perspectives on Masculinity," *Men and Masculinities* 3, no. 3 (January 2001): 237–60, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X01003003002>.

salsa romantica indicates its more cross-cultural and inclusive appeal as a genre across various cultures, classes, and tastes in Lima. Frankie Ruiz was one of the more exemplary examples of the romantica period as his catalog included all of these subgenres.

Frankie Ruiz, Solista



Figure 4: Album Cover, *Solista...Pero no Solo* by Frankie Ruiz

Frankie Ruiz' *Solista...Pero no Solo* (Soloist, but not Alone) is in many ways a quintessential 1980s salsa album. Recorded in Puerto Rico, and not in New York City like most Salsa productions prior to the eighties, this album was released by Rodven, a Venezuelan subsidiary of Universal Music Group, and not Fania Records like the first two albums mentioned in this study. The release of this album by Rodven was an example of the further internationalization of the salsa industry. Frankie's artistic trajectory itself is particularly telling of salsa's changing industry as well. Frankie was actually born and raised in Patterson, New Jersey, and as an up-and-coming teenage singer in the late 1970s, had a difficult time breaking into the

Fania dominated market. It was fortuitous that his family moved to Puerto Rico, where he found success in the more competitive and open local scene. In the context of global Salsa stars up until that point, Ruiz's ascendance was undoubtedly an anomaly to the traditional immigrant in New York Salsa archetype. Although most of the market continued to be heavily dominated by Puerto Rican artists both from the island and the United States, the 1980s saw the rise of artists from previously underrepresented nations, most prominently, Colombia.<sup>220</sup> Los Titanes, Fruko y sus Tesos, Grupo Niche, and Joe Arroyo were just some of the hugely successful acts during this decade from Colombia. Lima experienced a similar process like that in Cali, Colombia, a boon in salsa groups and singers after a generation of intense salsa vinyl record collection and subsequent memorialization.<sup>221</sup> The legacy that their Colombian counterparts of the eighties had on the international stage far outweighed those of Peru, as the acts mentioned above were more commercially successful and canonized. Notwithstanding, this was the decade where salsa was the most popular in Lima. The domestic scene came into its own as far as national media presence in radio, television, and local salsa groups such as la Progresiva del Callao and Aníbal López y la Única.

Finally, the album cover for *Solista.... Pero no Solo* was not an attempt at an aggressive statement of identity politics or underground gangster counter-culture

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<sup>220</sup> Martín Gómez, "Fruko: «Fuimos los pioneros en llevar la salsa colombiana a Lima» [VIDEO]," *Salserísimo Perú | Salsa es Cultura* (blog), April 20, 2017, <http://www.salserisimoperu.com/fruko-fuimos-los-pioneros-en-llevar-la-salsa-colombiana-a-lima-noticia-20-04-2017/>. As early as 1975, Colombian artists like Fruko visited Lima for the first time.

<sup>221</sup> Lise Waxer, *The City of Musical Memory: Salsa, Record Grooves, and Popular Culture in Cali, Colombia*, Music/Culture (Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 2002).

aesthetics. It is literally a picture of Frankie laughing, smiling from ear to ear, well-groomed in a clean white suit and tie evoking the aesthetic of ballroom crooners like Sinatra. In a post-Fania era, this album is Ruiz's debut as a Solo artist after years as a bandmember. Blades' consciente brand had shown the potential for the music outside of the barrio semiotics. They had proven the lyrical potential and dynamism of the music as long as the genre remained a fundamentally danceable party music. Further, the shift of focus from the band and composer to the solo artist, with *Solista... Pero no Solo* as a prime example allowed for a higher return on investment in the industry. The prior period of salsa marketed both the bandleader, often not the singer, and the singer. The works from Willie Colon (bandleader and trombonist) and Hector Lavoe (singer) are examples of this model. With a shift of focus to the solo singer alone, no longer would a label have to fly an entire nine-piece band to Lima. Now, as with Frankie Ruiz's performances in Lima, the singer is flown out to play with a local backing band. It is fitting that Ruiz's album opens with a track, "Ahora Me Toca a Mi" (It's My Turn Now), very much in the style of *Salsa Dura*, both musically and in the braggadocious lyrics stating his artistic emancipation as a soloist. Even more fitting is that the remaining seven tracks that follow to complete the album are all love songs including covers of Spanish language ballads played to a salsa musical arrangement. This album led to Frankie Ruiz's visit to Lima, and make several television appearances, an example of the peak of salsa's inclusion in the national mass media.

Peru's Mass Media and the 80's

The 1980s overall were a time of a more commercial sound for popular music, including salsa. What we find in Peru is an inflating and diversifying culture industry given that technologies for mass media consumption were both more accessible and allow for a personalized experience in the private sphere. In the most accessible medium, a type of radio overflow occurs with the emergence of all types of radio stations and programs, be they commercially backed, national, or even underground.<sup>222</sup> The radio industry sought specialization in stations to appeal to a growingly heterogeneous listener market, including a large space for salsa. Shows like Walter Rentería Zárate's "Pueblo Latino" on R700 continued to play salsa dura. The earlier, more "authentic" sound speaks to the diversity and specialization of the radio at the time and the space afforded for this salsa music. Despite this specialization, national mass media outlets were specifically concerned with a broader more public appeal and found an ideal product in salsa romantica.

One of the more telling developments of salsa's incorporation into broader Limeño popular culture was its increasing television presence. In the 1980s, salsa would dominate the national television airspace and, given the more massive national spotlight. It was coincidentally right at the beginning of the decade in 1981 that Callao radio DJ Luis Delgado Aparicio Porta, better known as "Dr. Saravá" and his show, "Maestra Vida" (named after Ruben Blades' 1980 LP) first went on air nationally. Dr. Saravá first appeared on station Radio America on both AM and FM, transitioning to Radio Mar the following year, a station that would become (and is to this day) a

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<sup>222</sup> Bustamante.

mainstay for salsa in Peru. Saravá was a salsa lover and insider by association. His professional background was actually in Law, and he was an avid salsa enthusiast from Callao from the early days in the sixties. He was an assistant to the radio DJ pioneer Bayacan, a friend of Sabroso's owner Rospigliosi<sup>223</sup> Saravá was more than just a tastemaker and pioneer in salsa. An instrumental insider and ambassador for Peru within the larger international Salsa community, Saravá was also an influential public figure in Callao. By 1989 Saravá had political aspirations that would come to fruition in the nineties, first as a councilman for his native Callao, and later as a congressman for Movimiento Libertad Party. This party was a right-wing liberal party that Peruvian Nobel Laureate Mario Vargas Llosa founded in the late eighties. Vargas Llosa's party's affiliation during his presidential run in this period and salsa speaks to the changing class politics of the music. Salsa romantica centered on a general trope of romance appealed to even more conservative classes. However, its populist appeal endured, something that Vargas Llosa attempted to appeal to with his affiliation with Saravá, even appearing on his television specials. His radio show "Maestra Vida" played a significant role for a couple of reasons, but mainly for its transition to television. With the military's censorship and government influence in the rearview, the national media conglomerates found salsa, with the romantica in particular, to be a significant cultural product with wide national appeal.

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<sup>223</sup>a purveyor of rare foreign records for other salsa establishments and DJs in the industry.

The television show “Baila con Saravá” debuted in the 80s as well, a spinoff to his daily radio program, and a showcase for local salsa talent.<sup>224</sup> Saravá took the show’s cameras on site to various Limeño neighborhoods and served as an opportunity for local groups like La Progresiva del Callao, La Clave, La Sociedad de Barranco, and La Peru All-Stars to have national exposure. These types of opportunities catalyzed the growth of a local product, market, and culture. In 1984 he produced a project akin to the Fania All-Stars, itself an iteration of the longer Afro Cuban music's All-Star tradition of supergroups. He formed the Saravá All-Stars, a collection of the more recognized Peruvian salsa acts like La Candela de Carlos Tapia, recorded on El Virrey records. By this point in time, the salsa scene and the acts catching Sarava's attention were from Callao and other neighborhoods like Comas, one of the larger communities in the fringes of the city.<sup>225</sup>

Another wildly popular show was *Risas y Salsa* (Laughs and Salsa) that debuted in 1980. This was a primetime Saturday comedic sketch show, including musical performances. Panamericana TV, one of the major national broadcasting stations, had gotten into the burgeoning domestic record distribution and production market, thus carrying an explicit interest in incorporating Salsa into Television, synergy in the similar vein of Fania and *Latin NY*'s relationship in the 1970s.<sup>226</sup> The

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<sup>224</sup> Antonio Alvarez Ferrando, “Saravá: Un personaje irrepitible en la historia de la salsa,” Salserísimo Perú | Salsa es Cultura (blog), September 28, 2017, <http://www.salserisimoperu.com/luis-delgado-aparicio-Saravá-personaje-irrepitible-historia-salsa-noticia-03-04-2015/>.

<sup>225</sup> Referred to by the Limeños as “Conos,” as explained by Richard Medina in Richard Medina, interview by Author, Spokane, Washington/Falls Church, VA. May 2, 2020. “Comas is one of the many cones that exist in Lima. They call them cones because they’re basically located in a radius of twenty kilometers from the center of Lima.”

<sup>226</sup> Redacción El Comercio Perú, “La época de oro de los discos de vinilo fabricados en Perú,” El Comercio Perú, December 23, 2014, <https://elcomercio.pe/economia/peru/epoca-oro-discos-vinilo-fabricados-peru-182277-noticia/>.

show carried salsa in its name and using the Venezuelan Oscar D'Leon's "Que Cosa Tan Linda" as its theme song, included performance segments for both local and international artists. *Risas y Salsa* was almost immediately popular at a time when television was king of all media. The show lasted well into the 2000s.

Another example of salsa's place in the broader Limeño culture outside of Callao and salsa fans was Radio Moderna's show *Salsa Matadora*. The show had renowned Salsa pioneer DJ Yolvi Traverso and included a popular outsider figure, Volleyball player Cecilia Tait as one of its co-hosts.<sup>227</sup> Prominent capital newspapers like *Ojo* and even the more prominent, *La Republica*, both with a national readership, began including content from Peruvian salsa insiders and journalists. This recognition from institutions outside of salsa spoke to the place that salsa occupied in the public space. The 1980s cemented the Limeño salsa industry as several other industries started recognizing and leveraging salsa. Yolvi Traverso tells us more about the synergy that television and salsa forged in this decade:

In 1984, I was offered a four-month contract to host a Salsa program that would air on Channel 4, América Televisión. At that time, the owners thought of standardizing television with radio, so they decided that the space would be called the same as the one that Hugo Abele had on Radio América at that time: "Sonido Latino".<sup>228</sup>

He emphasizes that seventy percent of the performances showcased on his show were actually from local groups speaking to the growing local salsa industry both in Callao and outside of the port.

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<sup>227</sup> Bustamante, 620 -621.

<sup>228</sup> Yolvi Traverso, "Los 80: La época dorada de la salsa en el Perú, según Yolvi Traverso," *Salserísimo Perú | Salsa es Cultura (blog)*, August 14, 2015, <http://www.salserisimoperu.com/peru-salsa-yolvi-traverso-epoca-oro-noticia-14-08-2015/>.

By then, salsa had gained national awareness across various classes, not just the working-class barrios like Callao. Lima also gained international awareness of the international salsa community as an essential stop for artists, with the growth of a stage to showcase their talents, La Feria del Hogar (the Home fair).

### *Feria del Hogar*

Part of Cali, Colombia's local culture, included one of the world's largest annual salsa festivals. Like the "Festival de Cali," Lima's "Feria del Hogar" was a huge annual event and by the late eighties became synonymous with salsa domestically and internationally as it showcased some of the world's most prominent artists. Music, much less salsa for that matter, was not originally the focus of the fair. Branded first as the "Feria Internacional del Pacifico" (International Pacific Fair) by the home appliance industry as a commercial expo fair, in 1966, it added the adjacent "Feria del Hogar." The focus of this complimentary festival was strictly towards a general family audience. The fair included rides and other carnival games. What truly characterized the fair and why it would draw up to 100,000 people in 1997 was its main headliner concert with artists like Héctor Lavoe, Celia Cruz, Marc Anthony, and Tito Puente gracing the stage throughout the eighties and nineties.<sup>229</sup>

Concerts like the Feria del Hogar's headlining mainstage, the "Gran Estelar," were avenues for publicity to maximize profit from the growing audience, demonstrating just how big the musical style had become in Lima. These types of

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<sup>229</sup> "¿Recuerdan a La Llamita Que Invitaba a Una Feria? - Huellas Digitales | Blogs | El Comercio Perú," September 2, 2012, <https://web.archive.org/web/20120902080119/http://blogs.elcomercio.pe/huellasdigitales/2010/07/recuerdan-a-la-llamita-que-inv.html>.

commercial opportunities and ventures were common during this decade. Along with the Feria del Hogar, some of Lima's largest venues booked salseros as a massive attraction.<sup>230</sup> The country and city adopted salsa as a significant part of its musical landscape during the genre's transition to its most commercial iteration. Globally, it strayed the furthest from its Pan Latin ethnic lyrical tradition that it became the most internationally inclusive.

### Romantic Escapism

The city's crisis at the time provides further insight as to why salsa music also took hold of Peru when the music was losing its supposed cultural and musical aura.<sup>231</sup> Lyrical romanticism has a long tradition across various styles and genres in Spanish language music. In the context of Peruvian balada specifically for example, scholars believe that the public's affinity may be indicative of an expression of emotion in the face of repression and dominance.<sup>232</sup> What sort of resonance did Limeños find with these lyrics, and why is it one of the most pervasive components? Historian James Higgins posits an interesting hypothesis regarding the Peruvian urban popular folk tradition: the Vals Criollo (creole waltz).<sup>233</sup> For Higgins, this music

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<sup>230</sup> "Niche 3/89: el documental de Salserísimo Perú se estrena en Cali," *Salserísimo Perú | Salsa es Cultura* (blog), May 29, 2019, <http://www.salserisimoperu.com/niche-3-89-documental-salserisimo-peru-estrena-cali-salsa-noticia-29-05-2019/>.

<sup>231</sup> Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" trans. Harry Zohn <https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/ge/benjamin.htm>. Describes aura. For salsa historian Rondón, its aura is lost with this iteration, meanwhile Pietrobruno (in *Salsa and Its Transnational Moves*, questions if salsa can ever really "sell-out" commercially as it is an inherently commercial creation.

<sup>232</sup> Alexander Hurta-Mercado, "La Odisea de Homero: Cantando Balada Romántica en el Perú" in *Música Popular y Sociedad en el Perú Contemporáneo* Primera edición ed. Raúl R. Romero et al, (Lima, Perú: Instituto de Etnomusicología, PUCP, 2015). 406 – 423. 415.

<sup>233</sup> Primarily referring to the Peruvian appropriation/derivative of the European waltz in Peru, a traditional and popular form of *Musica Criolla*.

represents defeatism and impotence in both the societal power hierarchy and, on a more existential level, controlling life on this earth. These sorts of longings for unrequited love and other romantic music were a form of working-class escapism:

the vals expressed genuinely felt emotions. Although its repertoire consists mainly of love songs, the lyrics were a vehicle whereby the lower classes verbalized their experience of life.... In general terms, its prevailing tone of anguished despair would seem to be a response, not just to the love situation evoked, but to their challenging conditions of the working-class life. The vals perpetuates traditional gender relations in that a male voice addresses a silent woman, but he is never a master of the situation...<sup>234</sup>

In the case of salsa, Alejandro Neyra, the Director of the Biblioteca Nacional del Perú, reminds us that it was liberating escapism in the 1980s across Lima because sadly it was a sound accompanied by (car)bombs:

The eighties were an intense and challenging time in Peru. Domestic violence reared its ugly face in the daily news. Especially after 1985, curfews, power outages, and subversive attacks were a part of life for Limeños.... Shows like *Risas y Salsa* and *Salsa* in general, of course were like the exhaust valve for a nation facing a social crisis.<sup>235</sup>

### *Salsa as a Social Unifier*

Through romance, comedy, and dance, all part and parcel of the musical tradition, salsa provided a space for the various identities and groups in a diverse Lima to fraternize.<sup>236</sup> Salsa during this period, in particular, demonstrated its versatile appeal to Limeños across classes and cultures. The heterogeneous appeal was significant as demographic growth from the Andean highlands was going into its fifth

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See: Fred Rohner. "Una Aproximación a la Generación de Felipe Pinglo: la Guardia Vieja y el rol de las Industrias Culturales en la Configuración del Canon Musical Criollo" in *Música popular y sociedad en el Perú contemporáneo*, Primera edición Raúl R. Romero et al., eds., (Lima, Perú: Instituto de Etnomusicología, PUCP, 2015). 69 – 99.

<sup>234</sup> Higgins, 155 – 156.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

<sup>236</sup> Montoya Uriarte, 135.

decade in the eighties. As Lima continued to diversify with many popular sounds, for example, the presence of cumbia and its more specific, national hybridized Andean iteration, chicha had been growing over the years.<sup>237</sup>

Chicha music was a result of the increased Andean rural to urban migration of twentieth-century Peru. It is an urban fusion of Huayno with cumbia, other tropical musical instrumentations, and rock and pop. Cumbia music, originally from Colombia, was impactful in the 1960s Peru, especially in middle-class youth. This music became increasingly identified with the children of the new migrants to the capital in the seventies, termed by some as “new Limenos “. <sup>238</sup> As an emblem for “a new Peruvian identity fusing images of Andean roots, modernity and urbanity,” anthropologist Uriarte considers chicha as more exclusive music and culture, or rather salsa as to be the more inclusive urban cultural option for Lima of the late twentieth century. chicha’s socially charged text speaking to the social subaltern conditions in the fringe neighborhoods of the city was too politically charged for a neoliberal mass media and market attempting to distance itself from national or political music. (cite)

As foreign pan-ethnic music, salsa avoided alienation that other popular musical traditions may have triggered with specific groups in the city. The African diasporic musical traditions in salsa have been well covered in the historiography as a large factor in the music's resonance throughout Latin America. Although salsa's afro diasporic nature was not as emphasized in salsa in Peru by the artists and its

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<sup>237</sup> Cánepa, “*Chicha and Huayno: Andean Music and Culture in Lima,*” in *The Lima Reader*, ed. Carlos Aguirre and Charles F. Walker (Duke University Press, 2017), 232–35, <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822373186-057>. For a primer on the music and culture.

<sup>238</sup> Peter Wade, *Music, Race, and Nation: Música Tropical in Colombia*, 1 edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000). 174.

consumers as in other countries like Colombia, it had become ubiquitous in other popular forms like *Música criolla*. Antonio Cartagena was Peru's best-known *salsero* in the late eighties and early nineties, and Afro Peruvian was born in El Callao. Signing with the successful RMM Records, a Universal subsidiary, did not sing about slavery or diaspora like Colombian Joe Arroyo did in his international hit, 1986's "Rebelión"<sup>239</sup> Cartagena made his name by doing what most Peruvian singers have from the time of salsa's antecedents: covers. Not only did Cartagena sing covers, both domestic and from international *baladas*, but his music was almost exclusively romantic. Historically, popular music provided a space for Afro Peruvian contributions, visibility, and opportunities; however, the cultural or political consciousness of Afro Peruanismo was never quite catalyzed in this space. Antonio Cartagena is an example of how tropical sounds like salsa were some of the most welcoming for Afro Peruvian performers.<sup>240</sup>

The heavily Andean working-class neighborhood on the fringes of Lima, Comas, and the rise of salsa in this community is another telling example of salsa's populist appeal and inclusivity. Local Comas native Richard Medina mentions that the eighties were when salsa blew up in this area and throughout the city as he remembers hearing it everywhere. Its presence in Comas is an interesting difference from when he was younger and remembered some of the neighbor's prejudices about communities like Callao and their love for salsa. Medina mentioned that his family

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<sup>239</sup>. " Joe Arroyo y La Verdad, "Rebelión" Track B1 on *Musa Original*, Discos Fuentes 1986, Vinyl.

<sup>240</sup> Raul R. Romero, "Black Music and Identity in Peru: Reconstruction and Revival of Afro-Peruvian Musical Traditions," accessed January 2, 2020, [https://www.academia.edu/13259474/ Black Music and Identity in Peru Reconstruction and Revival of Afro-Peruvian Musical Traditions.](https://www.academia.edu/13259474/Black_Music_and_Identity_in_Peru_Reconstruction_and_Revival_of_Afro-Peruvian_Musical_Traditions)

"wrongly believed that those from the port liked the easy life, they were all about partying and not hard working like us"<sup>241</sup> By the late eighties, the perception of salsa for Comas had changed, as had access to the music itself. Musician Amador Rios, bandleader of Comas' Son de León reminds us that in the earlier decades, it was hard to acquire this music at first. He and his local friends began playing the music they heard from other Lima areas and friends with foreign records in El Callao.<sup>242</sup> Salsa then, especially in these years where its popularity spread to other regions, was a way for fraternization between social classes and groups, like criollos and Andean descendant Limeños. As another Andean migrant to Lima and a lifelong musician, Carlos Granda mentions that he has never felt discriminated against through music. "I played all styles, whatever the people wanted we played, and we played it all"<sup>243</sup> This was a sentiment also shared by Comas resident Medina when it came to the topic of popular music. Granda sees salsa as a social unifier through the collective performance in his case and the crowd's participatory dancing. Romantica recordings favored melodic elements rather than virtuosic periods of vocal and instrumental improvisation.<sup>244</sup> Live performances were a different story, as even Frankie Ruiz performed periods of "Soneo" (improvisation) with various guest Peruvian Salsa artists as part of Lima's concert appearance, allowing for periods of visceral listening

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<sup>241</sup>." Richard Medina, interview by Author, Spokane, Washington/Falls Church, VA. May 2, 2020.

<sup>242</sup> "Comas: Más de Cuatro Décadas de Sabor," accessed July 9, 2020, <http://www.salserisimoperu.com/comas-cuatro-decadas-de-saborsalsa-noticia-11-03-2019/>.

<sup>243</sup>." Carlos Granda, interview by Author, El Paso, TX/Falls Church, VA. May 8, 2020

<sup>244</sup> Washburne, "Chapter 6: "They are going to hear this in Puerto Rico. It has got to be good!": The Sound and Style of Salsa" details the stylistic changes in salsa going into the Romantica iteration of the 80s and 90s, for example the change in the fundamental use of the clave percussive rhythm.

and dance.<sup>245</sup> Voices like Granda's identify salsa as a genre with cross cultural appeal. Although they do not mention salsa romantica specifically, this was the type of salsa that filled the airwaves and parties in the problematic eighties. More importantly, by this time, salsa seemingly avoided the associations to class, race, or location that it previously had in the past.

Lima's success and realization as a salsa capital during the 1980s period of salsa romantica is an ostensibly contradictory development to unpack. On the one hand, this was when the musical style was at its most commercial and loses what many in the scholarship consider its true essence. It was a moment where historically socially conscious music strayed from its political lyrics. Musically, it lost some of its intentionally brash and harsh sound representing the gritty barrio and city life. Instead, it opted for a more synthetic sound to accompany a melodramatic romantic singer. However, salsa's potential as a catalyst for cross-class and cultural resonance for Lima's citizens endured. Most evident in its flooding in mass media and its loose association with the right-winged party in the 1990 elections, the upper classes saw salsa as the general public's de facto music. Salsa's place as the popular music of the Limeño public was validated, although Mario Vargas Llosa ultimately lost to neophyte Fujimori. Fujimori was able to appeal to the working and lower classes in ways that the Noble Prize-winning upper-class Limeño writer did not. The type of salsa that Peru's media executives pushed was a more depoliticized romantic sound

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<sup>245</sup> Martín Gómez, "Frankie cantó 'La Cura' y 'Viajera' con la Perú Salsa All-Stars», afirma César Loza [VIDEO]," *Salserísimo Perú | Salsa es Cultura* (blog), December 27, 2016, <http://www.salserisimoperu.com/especial-frankie-ruiz-canto-la-cura-viajera-con-peru-salsa-all-stars-afirma-cesar-loza-salsa-noticia-27-12-2016/>.

that was not a challenge to status quo cultural, societal, and political structures and united classes through escapism. However, the city and the nation were in a crisis, suffering from violent internal conflict and the 1990 election was a referendum for a cultural change in politics. Amidst a period of economic and political neoliberalism, salsa music represented a fluid populism similar to Fujimori's initial popular appeal.

## Conclusion

**“La salsa es una bacteria divina y su efecto celestial provoca pandemias, sobre todo en las personas que habitan frente al mar. Porque el mar es el límite del placer. La tierra, al encontrarse con el mar movido, se produce la fricción, como en el baile. La tierra baila con el mar y se penetran. Por eso en el Callao, la música no es sonido, sino quejido. Se trata del más hermoso y delicioso quejido que lanzan las parejas al hacer el amor, al llegar al climax”....**<sup>246</sup>

*Salsa is a divine bacterium and its heavenly effect causes pandemics, especially in people who live in by the sea. Because the sea is the limit of pleasure. The land, when meeting the moving sea, causes friction, like that of dancing. The land dances with the sea and they penetrate each other. That is why in Callao, music is not sound, but a moan. It is the most beautiful and delicious moan that couples make when they make love, when they reach the climax”....*

As a foreign music style, salsa music in Lima, Peru, during a historic moment of national political crisis, and its consumption amidst this backdrop demonstrates the ways that the various neighborhoods, classes, and races in the city identified and understood their experience through choices in cultural consumption. Despite the variance in these meanings and understandings, salsa historically maintains its essence as a music informed by the social condition and politics of Lima and Latin American urban population throughout the continent in the twentieth century. This study contributes to the growing scholarship on salsa, addressing a lacuna recognized by other salsa historians. It adds Lima, Peru to the list of salsa’s epicenters, bringing material not currently present in the scholarship. In doing so, we learn about the impact of salsa for Latin Americans, not just as exotica or banal escapism, but also a

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<sup>246</sup> Salserísimo Perú, “Eloy Jáuregui: ‘La salsa es una bacteria divina,’” *Salserísimo Perú | Salsa es Cultura* (blog), August 25, 2015, <http://www.salserisimoperu.com/eloy-jauregui-salsa-bacteria-divina-conversatorio-noticia-25-08-2015/>.

cultural folk expression of local and global identities. We learn how salsa's decoding was not the same in every country, or even class within the same city, depending on the type of salsa. Together the three chapters demonstrate how national historical contexts also influence understandings of a simultaneous transnational cultural current, serving to impulse collective and individual identities. It also demonstrates how tradition and cultural reproduction are not mutually exclusive; neither are folk and mass culture. Although produced within the United States system, the salsa of Ruben Blades worked to foment a transnational Latinidad, something that José Martí once thought to be antithetical.<sup>247</sup>

Salsa's popularity in Lima developed during an ongoing tense period of a military dictatorship led first by General Velasco Alvarado and Morales Bermudes. With Velasco's national agrarian reforms and other nationalist policies, the ongoing hyper migration to the city from the highlands increased, as did the presence of shantytowns with precarious living conditions in Lima. Local and national projects attempted to address the economic and cultural issues that this social change brought about.<sup>248</sup> Changes in the city's demographics took place during a time of new technological advances in the mass media industry and its products, with salsa as one of the new, successful foreign offerings.

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<sup>247</sup> Sebastian Edwards, "On Latin American Populism, and Its Echoes around the World," *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 33, no. 4 (2019): 76–99.

<sup>248</sup> Carlos Aguirre and Charles F. Walker, *The Lima Reader: History, Culture, Politics* (North Carolina, UNITED STATES: Duke University Press, 2017), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/umdcpl/detail.action?docID=4822052>. 161 – 165. During this period, several mayors and presidents attempted to address issues of infrastructure in these popular urbanizations and settlements, albeit unsuccessfully.

South and Central America, Mexico, and the Caribbean were increasingly urban throughout the twentieth century. As an area that was ninety percent rural at the beginning of the twentieth century to one with an almost fifty percent increase in urban populace by 1950, which only heightened after that (3.5 percent per year), salsa music riddled with urban and diasporic themes and aesthetics resonated with this audience.<sup>249</sup> Almost a century after the proliferation of mass audio media and technology through radio and record industries, this type(s) of culture deserves more attention as part of the modern urban experience in Latin America.

As a part of the broader history of music, salsa in Lima is an example of the cultural industry's homogenization and hegemony. Even as urban folk music similar to the traditions of Peruvian Criollismo (creole culture), salsa was commodified and adjusted for a more general and profitable audience.<sup>250</sup> In this Adornoian reading, the culture industry has successfully commodified the working-class leisure culture, selling it back to them. Dialectally, however, this music may also fit as an Adornoian "authentic" form of music. In its first stage, *salsa dura*, it is critical, reflective, and, although collectively identified and commodified, identifies an alienation to a mainstream totality.<sup>251</sup> Regardless, at its most commodified, Lima citizens in the eighties still found potential cultural meanings in the consumption of this escapist product that is also participatory through dance. The history of salsa's impact in Lima

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<sup>249</sup> Jorge A. Brea, "Population Dynamics in Latin America," *Population Bulletin* 58, no. 1 (Washington, DC: Population Reference Bureau, 2003). 25.

<sup>250</sup> *Salserisimo Perú*, 2020. "Expediente Salsa - EP. 22 - Nuestro sueño". February 19, 2020. <https://www.facebook.com/salserisimoperu/videos/608935499683749>, for example, chronicles how Colombian salsa group Grupo Niche made the calculated effort to broaden their audience and profits to a more teenage audience by writing a love song to salsa.

<sup>251</sup> Max Paddison, "The Critique Criticized: Adorno and Popular Music," *Popular Music* 2 (1982): 201–18.

challenges interpretations of the culture industry that disregard these mass reproduction products as cultural imperialism.<sup>252</sup>

Salsa becomes an urban folk dance is one that is performed by the collective community, handed down generationally, and does not require formal instruction or choreography. Salsa is fundamentally and, above all, danceable. Its nature as popular music in the collective participatory activity is inherent.<sup>253</sup>

The modes of production should not negate the cultural experiences and spaces that this mass-produced art offered both their musicians and their audiences. As Walter Benjamin tells us in his criticism of mass production, modern technologies for reproductivity ironically make way for a new kind of art and, "For the first time in world history, technological reproducibility emancipates the work of art from its parasitic subservience to ritual"<sup>254</sup>

For Limeños and Chalacos, salsa provided a way to express their twentieth-century experience and frustrations with urbanization and globalization. The culture industry may take away the aura from the art form. However, through nostalgia, memorialization, and identity formation, audiences create aura, even in its most commercial and homogenized manifestation of the eighties and nineties. The reproduction technologies allowed a group of Latinos from New York City to create a cultural and independent infrastructure for a popular sound. More importantly,

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<sup>252</sup> Corona and Madrid, introduction.

<sup>253</sup> Petrobruno, 3-6.

<sup>254</sup>." Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" trans. Harry Zohn <https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/ge/benjamin.htm>

reproduction was the medium for the expression of an overlooked experience of Latinidad.

Methodologically, while not initially a goal of this project, I hope that this study's interdisciplinary nature inspires future students and scholars in all fields to incorporate a plurality of analytical vantage points in the humanities. My professional ethos as a budding cultural archivist was a catalyst for historicizing salsa in Peru using more inclusive and participatory cultural collections in the historical field.

There is a plethora of further research opportunities for the topic of salsa in Peru. One example is Sheenagh Pietrobruno's interpretation of salsa dancing as a manifestation of urban folklore that deserves further exploration. More fieldwork would be welcome from social scientists and anthropologists on salsa as a device for informing its role in national identity, politics, and individual identities for all Peruvians, not just Limeños. A more proper systematic ethnographical study would be a welcome addition.

While I argue for salsa music as representative music of twentieth-century Lima, I concur with Peruvian scholarship's proposal of a Lima of many Limas.<sup>255</sup> Rock, Música Criolla, Andean, Afro Peruvian, cumbia, all were significant popular musical traditions in twentieth-century Lima. If a musical style transcended the geographic and cultural demarcations in Lima, it was salsa. Thus, Lima was a microcosm of salsa in a Pan Latin transnational context, as well (the "global" music of a diverse heterogeneous group).

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<sup>255</sup> Mendivil, "Lima es Muchas Limas."

As Stuart Hall reminds us, identity is an ongoing active process with actors, not just essentialization.<sup>256</sup> In a period of increased specialization and diversity of production, salsa did not become a way of understanding Pan Latin consciousness only because multinational corporations or agents thereof hoped to commodify a form of Spanish language entertainment and global musical style. It was the music of a metaphysical and material experience. Salsa's identification with a larger Latinidad came from the actors themselves: the musicians and the consumers. This is a relationship that is ever-changing and continuously reconstructed as the music and the world changes.<sup>257</sup> In the latter half of the twentieth century, salsa music became a part of the idea of a larger Latinidad and at a local level, as part of the Limeño experience.

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<sup>256</sup> Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay, *Questions of Cultural Identity: SAGE Publications* (SAGE, 1996). For example.

<sup>257</sup> Kattari

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