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The Sonic Archive of Twentieth-Century Nicaraguan Literature: Sound, Music, Technology, and Listening in Selected Works by Rub&#65533;n Dar&#65533;o and Sergio Ram&#65533;rez

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The Sonic Archive of Twentieth-Century Nicaraguan Literature: Sound, Music, Technology, and Listening in Selected Works by Rubén Darío and Sergio Ramírez

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in the Department of Comparative Literature

by

Helga Zambrano

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Sonic Archive of Twentieth-Century Nicaraguan Literature: Sound, Music, Technology, and Listening in Selected Works by Rubén Darío and Sergio Ramírez

by

Helga Zambrano

Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Comparative Literature

University of California, Los Angeles, 2021

Professor Efraín Kristal, Co-Chair

Professor Tamara Judith-Marie Levitz, Co-Chair

In this dissertation, I examine the works of Rubén Darío (1867-1916) and Sergio Ramírez (b. 1942) with the goal of determining their contributions to the construction and representation of sound, music, and sound technology in twentieth-century Nicaragua literature. I consider: 1) the sounds and music represented in their works; 2) the listening practices they establish through prose and poetry; and 3) the social, economic, and cultural contexts of these sonic representations.

My study builds on the work of earlier scholars such as Erika Lorenz, Cathy L. Jrade, and Stephan Henighan who explored music and sound in Darío's and Ramírez's literary works, yet considered them primarily from philological, philosophical, or formal perspectives. In contrast, the approach I develop in this dissertation is rooted in Sound Studies. By becoming more attentive to a wider array of sounds in Darío's and Ramírez's works and their representative

meaning, I am able to offer new pathways toward understanding these authors' methods of curating, listening to, and describing sound.

In the three chapters of this dissertation, I explore three different aspects of sound representation in twentieth-century Nicaraguan literature and poetry. In the first, I evaluate Darío's short stories and one essay, identifying two listening patterns that inform his sound descriptions. I note that he rejects modern city noise in favor of the sound of "beautiful" music as a way of escaping from imperial and neocolonial aggression in Central America. In this chapter, I document Darío creating a sonic archive for *modernismo*. In the second chapter, I explore select poems by Darío to trace how he listens to and sonically imagines Central American landscapes, seascapes, animals, and Greek antiquity. I then compare Darío's sonic archive with the materialized sounds in the concert march Luis A. Delgadillo wrote for Darío's funeral, which represents a critical moment in which imagined sounds were realized in a concert march form. Delgadillo's setting and interpretation of the sounds evoked by Darío's poetry lead me to consider discourses about pan-Latin Americanism, US imperialism, Argentinean intellectualism, and Nicaraguan nationalism. Most importantly, I come to understand how sound representation shifted after Darío's death, as his experience retreated into the past and his achievements came to be memorialized within a national Nicaraguan context. In the final case study I examine Ramírez's short fiction published in the 1990s, evaluating his nostalgic return to the listening practices, sounds, and sound technology of his own family and in Nicaragua earlier in the century. Ramírez's stories give evidence of how the arrival of US recording technology in Nicaragua between 1910 and 1960 shaped the local population's listening practices. By exploring Ramírez's *return* to these soundscapes, I offer a third level of understanding of a Nicaraguan sonic archive, progressing in my dissertation from representation to memorialization

to nostalgic memory of sound in Nicaraguan fiction in the twentieth century. I hope with this methodological intervention based on sound to contribute in a significant way to the study of Central American literature and culture.

The dissertation of Helga Zambrano is approved.

Patricia Arroyo Calderon

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2021

Dedicated to Johanna, Julia, Noomi, and Weston

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INTRODUCTION

Preliminary Remarks

In this dissertation, I examine the works of Rubén Darío (1867-1916) and Sergio Ramírez (b. 1942) with the goal of determining their contributions to the literary construction and representation of sound, music, and sound technology in twentieth-century Nicaragua. I consider: 1) the sounds and music represented in their works; 2) the listening practices they establish through prose and poetry; and 3) the social, economic, and cultural contexts of these sonic representations. In the first chapter, I identify two listening patterns in Ruben Darío's prose and poetry. I note that he rejects modern city noise in favor of the sound of "beautiful" music as a way of escaping from imperial and neocolonial aggression in Central America. In this chapter, I document Darío creating a sonic archive for *modernismo*. In the second chapter, I compare Darío's sonic archive with the materialized sounds in the concert march Luis A. Delgadillo wrote for his funeral, which represents a critical moment in which imagined sounds were realized in a concert march form. Delgadillo's setting and interpretation of the sounds evoked by Darío in his poetry lead me to consider how sound representation shifted after Darío's death, as his achievements came to be memorialized within a national Nicaraguan context. In the final case study I examine Ramírez's short fiction published in the 1990s, evaluating his nostalgic return to the listening practices, sounds, and sound technology of his own family and in Nicaragua earlier in the century. Ramírez's stories give evidence of how the arrival of US recording technology in Nicaragua between 1910 and 1960 shaped the local population's listening practices. By exploring Ramírez's *return* to these soundscapes, I offer a third level of understanding of the Nicaraguan sonic archive, progressing in my dissertation from representation to memorialization to nostalgic memory of sound in Nicaraguan literature in the twentieth century.

Introduction

In *Historia de mis libros* (1919), Nicaraguan author Rubén Darío reflected on the sights and sounds that inspired his 1896 poem "Sinfonía en gris mayor" ("Symphony in Gray Major"):

> La mía ["Sinfonía en gris mayor"] es anotada "d'après nature," bajo el sol de mi patria tropical. Yo he visto esas aguas en estagnación, las costas como candentes, los viejos lobos de mar que iban a cargar en goletas y bergantines maderas de tinte, y que partían a velas desplegadas, con rumbo a Europa. Bebedores taciturnos, o risueños, cantaban en los crepúsculos, o a la popa de sus barcos, acompañándose con sus acordeones, cantos de Normandía o de Bretaña, mientras exhalaban los bosques y los esteros cercanos rodeados de manglares, bocanadas cálidas y relentes palúdicos.
>
> My ["Symphony in Gray Major"] is described as "after nature," beneath the sun of my tropical homeland. I have seen those still waters, coasts as if on fire, and old sea wolves who go to load logwood[1] onto schooners and brigantines, and who depart with set sails, heading for Europe. Melancholic or cheerful drinkers accompanied by their accordions who sing songs from Normandy or Brittany at dusk or from atop the ship's stern, while the forests and nearby estuaries— surrounded by mangroves— exhale hot gusts and malarial dew.

Hardly referring to time and place, Darío offers a snapshot of a romanticized scene of his homeland—one marked by sonic experience. Drunken sailors sing; an accordion plays; even the jungle exhales, in counterpoint. Darío humanizes the forest that bids the sailors farewell. Darío tells the sailors' story through sound.

What Darío hears reflects not only his personal listening experience but also the geopolitical context in which he wrote this poem. He situates what he hears at a seaport—a site of arrivals and departures for people and boats, and of encounters and exchange between

[1] "Maderas de tinte" (dyed wood) resembles the phrase "palo de tinta," which translates to "logwood." Logwood grows in the Caribbean, the Yucatán Peninsula, and Central America. During the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries, logwood was a coveted natural resource for the British and Spanish who at the time occupied and deforested these regions. British and Spanish manufacturers used logwood to dye textiles. See Gilbert M. Joseph's article, "British Loggers and Spanish Governors: The Logwood Trade and Its Settlements in the Yucatan Peninsula: Part I" (1974).

foreigners and natives. The sailors are melancholic, possibly because they are homesick for far-off Brittany or Normandy, or Nicaragua, their home. The ships carry raw materials such as logwood from Central America, linking those regions to Europe and the rest of the world. Darío describes the sounds he remembers as a way of making sense of the emerging modern practice of foreigners expropriating the region's natural resources. He also hears echoes of conquest when the jungle exhales "malarial breezes," reminding of how European colonizers infected the Americas with disease. In essence, Darío sonically registers European imperialism.

Darío's prose poem introduces three issues that inspired my dissertation. First, how are sounds and music described, evoked, or represented in Nicaraguan poetry and prose? Second, what listening practices are supported or encouraged by such texts? And lastly, how do literary representations of sound evoke social, cultural, and economic contexts? In other words, what outside factors shape literary renditions of sound, music, and listening practices? These issues arise in Darío's literary works and carry forward in other Nicaraguan literary and musical works created in the decades after Darío's death.

In my dissertation, I investigate representations of sound, music, sound technology, and listening practices in Nicaraguan poetry, prose, and music. I study works by two Nicaraguan authors, Rubén Darío (1867-1916) and Sergio Ramírez (b. 1942), and a Nicaraguan composer, Luis A. Delgadillo (1884-1961). I chose from Darío's extensive literary corpus works that highlight sound, music, technology, and listening. I study three short stories from *Azul*…(1888): "El rey burgués," "La canción de oro," and "El velo de la reina Mab"; one essay "Marinetti y el futurismo" (1909); and four poems in *Cantos de vida y esperanza* (1905): "Marcha triunfal," "Helios," "Sinfonía en gris mayor," and "Tarde del trópico." I also assess Delgadillo's military march *Marcha triunfal a Rubén Darío* (1916) set to Darío's poem "Marcha triunfal." In the last

chapter of my dissertation, I explore Sergio Ramírez's *Retrato de familia con violín* (1997), sections from his novel *Un baile de máscara* (1995), and three short stories from *Clave de sol* (1992): "Kalimán el magnífico y la pérfida Mesalina," "Volver," and "Pero no lloraré." In each chapter, I also examine press clippings, ads, and literary magazines published in Nicaragua and the US between 1910-1960. These materials illustrate the historical, social, cultural, and aesthetic function of popular music and sound technology in Nicaragua during the first half of the twentieth century.

The works I have selected give a strong impression of how an early and late twentieth century Nicaraguan author imagined listeners, prescribed modern listening practices, and interpreted and narrated sound and music of the present and past. Their approaches reflect their local contexts and call into question the United States' and Europe's cultural and commercial presence in Nicaragua.

Although there is almost a hundred-year gap between Darío and Ramírez, they show similarities in how they engage with sound, music, and technology in their literary works. Rubén Darío was born Felix Rubén García Sarmiento in 1867 in Metapa, Nicaragua (today known as Ciudad Darío). At the age of two, Darío's mother and father, Rosa Sarmiento and Manuel García, gave him up to his maternal great aunt and uncle, Bernarda Sarmiento and Félix Ramírez in León. He received a Jesuit primary school education and spent his adolescence living between Managua and San Salvador. He studied French literature, and worked as a librarian and grammar teacher while developing his skill in poetry. In 1886, Darío departed Nicaragua for Valparaíso, Chile, marking the beginning of what would become a lifelong cosmopolitan lifestyle. His overlapping roles as a traveling correspondent for the Buenos Aires newspaper *La Nación*

(among other news outlets) and his work as a diplomat on behalf of Nicaragua, Colombia, and Spain, resulted in him living and visiting several cities in Latin America and Europe.

Darío's most important works include *Azul…* (1888), *Prosas profanas* (1896), *Los raros* (1896), and *Cantos de vida y esperanza* (1905). Darío drew on European poetic models—mostly French Parnassian, Symbolist and Spanish Golden Age verse—to create innovative poetry in Spanish and validate his experience of the Americas. Cathy L. Jrade suggests that *modernismo* allowed Latin American writers and artists to establish their cultural autonomy, achieve a sense of equality, and respond to Darwinism, positivism, and materialism ("Modernist Poetry," Jrade 9). Overall, Darío motivated contemporary writers to innovate in creating poetry and prose in Spanish.

Sergio Ramírez is a writer and former politician who was born in 1942 in Masatepe, a small rural town located in the Nicaraguan department of Masaya. Of mestizo and indigenous descent, his mother, Luisa Mercado, worked as a local secondary school director, and his father, Pedro Ramírez, owned a hardware store. His paternal family boasted three generations of musicians, but neither he nor his father followed the family's musical legacy. Growing up, Ramírez's family supported the Nicaraguan Liberal Party and frequently socialized with the Somoza family, who ruled the country for nearly four decades (*Sandino's Nation,* Henighan 119). However, Ramírez rescinded his political support for the governing leadership upon witnessing Somoza's national guard massacre students during a protest in León in 1959. At the time, he was attending the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua (UNAN). In response to the massacre, Ramírez co-founded the student-led literary journal *Ventana* (Window), turning to literature as a platform for revolutionary political activism rooted in Sandinista ideals (Henighan 122). At seventeen, Ramírez embarked on a career as a writer and politician that

paired a revolutionary vision for his country with a humanist commitment toward sharing Nicaragua's local history.

For over three decades, Ramírez dedicated himself to public service and political activism in Nicaragua. When the Frente Sandinista de Liberación National (FSLN, Sandinista National Liberation Front) overthrew the Somoza dictatorship in 1979, Ramírez joined the country's new governing leadership. In 1985, he became the country's vice president, but he lost re-election in 1990 and the presidential election in 1995. Throughout his political career, he remained committed to writing literature, publishing novels and short stories that criticized the Somoza dictatorship's hand in allowing the US imperial occupation. When he retired from all political activity in 1995, he turned to writing full time.[2] He has published almost sixty literary works, including novels, short stories, essays, testimonials, and articles. His literary works have garnered international recognition, many of which have been translated into multiple languages. He received several literary awards, most notably Chile's Premio Iberoamericano de Letras José Donoso in 2011, Mexico's Premio Internacional Carlos Fuentes in 2014, and Spain's Premio de Literatura en Lengua Castellana Miguel de Cervantes in 2017.

Literature Review

Only a few scholars have studied the literary and cultural significance of music and sound in Darío's work. Even fewer have considered it in Ramírez's fiction. In 1956, Erika Lorenz was the first to address the metaphysical role of music in Darío's works in *Bajo el divino imperio de la música: Studie zur Bedeutung eines ästhetischen Prinzips.* She begins her study by describing Darío as an ardent aficionado of music. Although she provides little historical evidence to

[2] In addition to retiring from public service, Ramírez has also disassociated himself from the new strain of Sandinismo led by Daniel Ortega and Rosario Murillo post-1990s. He remains as one of the most vocal, public intellectuals who denounces the new regime.

support her assertion, she suggests that he likely attended performances of nineteenth-century French and German music and opera, as well as concerts of impressionist works. Her book surveys the philosophical, musical, spiritual, and literary sources that inform Darío's thematic and formal representations of music in his poetry. She argues that a diverse range of philosophers, music critics, and composers informed Darío's understanding of music, harmony, rhythm, and the "musical idea," among them Greek philosopher Terpander, Edouard Schuré (a French philosopher from whom Darío learned about Pythagoreanism), Eduard Hanslick, Paul Verlaine, Catulle Mendès, and Richard Wagner. Lorenz analyzes Darío's poems to show how he applied ideas about music to poetry. She looks at rhythm, meter, stanza, verse form, assonant and consonant rhyme, diphthongs, alliteration, syntax, and onomatopoeia. She also explores musical accents, rests, rhythmic values, and time signatures in Darío's verses.

Lorenz's study is primarily philological and formalist. Although it received some criticism for its purely formal analysis, it should be praised for foregrounding the study of music in Darío's poetry. Her work influenced a handful of scholars to conduct further philological and formalist studies on Darío's treatment of music. These scholars include José Agustín Balseiro, Richard Skyrme, and Cathy L. Jrade. In his brief essay, "Presencia de Wagner y casi ausencia de Debussy en la obra de Rubén Darío" (1967), Balseiro investigates Darío's references to Wagner and Claude Debussy. He argues that Darío most likely learned about Wagner through Charles Baudelaire's writings, and had a superficial understanding of Debussy's music. He concludes that further study is required to understand the aesthetic and historical significance of Darío's references to Debussy and Wagner.

Raymond Skyrme's *Rubén Darío and the Pythagorean Tradition* (1975) further develops Lorenz's and Balseiro's work by considering the role of Pythagoreanism in Darío's prose and

poetry. Skyrme applies four Pythagorean terms: harmony, number, rhythm, and idea to Darío's poetry. Skyrme offers an illuminating discussion about how Darío formalizes the Pythagorean musical tradition in his prose and poetry. Moreover, Skyrme shows how Darío drew on Victor Hugo, Nerval, Baudelaire, Mallarmé, and Saint-Pol-Roux in formulating his aesthetics of music. Like Lorenz, Skyrme offers a comprehensive discussion of Darío's philosophical framework for understanding music.

Cathy L. Jrade expands on Skyrme's discussion in *Rubén Darío and the Romantic Search for Unity: The Modernist Recourse to Esoteric Tradition* (1983). Jrade asserts that Schuré's *The Great Initiates: A Study of the Secret History of Religions* (1889) had the most impact on Darío, informing his poetry's esoteric symbols and beliefs. She posits that the occult elements in Darío's prose and poetry provide a modernist antidote to collapsing nineteenth-century moral belief systems. She claims that Darío was invested in a Pythagorean concept of universal harmony, in which music would operate according to the same logic as the planets and stars.

Lorenz, Balseiro, Skyrme, and Jrade have informed my reading of Darío's works. I build on their contributions by taking into consideration the representation and historical context of sound and listening practices. I want to know what, when, and where Darío heard sound, shifting attention away from the philosophical foundation of Darío's aesthetics to their geopolitical context.

There has been little to no discussion on music and sound technology in Ramírez's literary works, primarily because scholars have focused on framing his fiction in terms of his disillusioned response to the collapse of the Sandinista Revolution and the aftermath of the

Nicaraguan Contra War from the 1970s-1990s (Henighan 476).[3] While it is reasonable for scholars to examine the complex interplay between his literary works and the historical, biographical, and political implications of the civil war in Nicaragua, this has led them to situate music as incidental to his larger literary and political project. My dissertation shows that music constitutes an essential part of Ramírez's oeuvre.

Leonel Delgado Aburto's *Márgenes recorridos: apuntes sobre procesos culturales y literatura nicaragüense del siglo XX* (2002) offers a post-Sandinista reading of Ramírez's inclusion of music in his prose. Aburto positions Ramírez's *Un baile de máscara* as one of Ramírez's first postmodernist novels to respond to the aftermath of the civil war. Aburto suggests that the novel fixates on Nicaraguan local culture in the 1940s as a way of escaping the present. But even in an era well before the country's revolution, the novel's local reality is "un campo vaciado" (a wasteland) void of meaning (Delgado 43). The masks the characters don to attend a ball serve as a metaphor for meaninglessness. Insomuch as he thinks about the function of music in the novel, Aburto suggests that local music references—Italian opera, Orquesta Ramírez, popular music, record players, the musicians—serve only to highlight music broadcast on mass media and heard passively by the novel's characters.

In *Sandino's Nation*: *Ernesto Cardenal and Sergio Ramírez,* Stephen Henighan offers arguments similar to those of Aburto. For Henighan, Ramírez's *Clave de sol* and *Un baile de mascara* bypass any reference to politics, nationhood, or the war, instead focusing on the author's local and family history in Masatepe during the first half of the century—the era leading up to his birth in 1942 (Henighan 476). The local significance of Ramírez's family of musicians

[3] For further discussion, see: Beatriz Cortez's *Estética Del Cinismo: Pasión y el Desencanto En La Literatura Centroamericana De Posguerra* (2010) and *Intersecciones Y Transgresiones : Propuestas Para Una Historiografía Literaria En Centroamérica* (2008).

is overlooked and instead subsumed under Ramírez's more general efforts to revive Masatepe's local culture during the 1940s. In contrast to these authors, I will unpack Ramírez's literary depiction of local music, sound, listening practices, and technology in my dissertation as a way of highlighting the contradictions between cultures of listening promoted by US commercial ads and adopted by Nicaraguans in the 1940s.

Methodology

The growing field of sound studies in the humanities has informed my research. Jonathan Sterne's *Audible Past* (2003), Veit Erlmann's *Hearing Cultures* (2004), and Mark Smith's *Hearing History* (2004), guided me as I built a sound-based mode of inquiry attentive to history, space, culture, and technology (or materiality). Erlmann's *Reason and Resonance* (2011) and Emily Thompson's *The Soundscape of Modernity* (2002) are foundational for reinterpreting modernism through sound studies. In my dissertation, I aim to apply their approaches to a Nicaraguan context and thus bridge the gap between North American and Nicaraguan scholarship on twentieth-century literature.

In the early 2010s, the sound studies field began to include scholarship on the Caribbean and certain regions in Latin America for an Anglophone audience. The *Sound Studies Reader* (2012), edited by Jonathan Sterne, was one of the first volumes to include an article focused on Latin America, Ana María Ochoa Gautier's, "Social Transculturation, Epistemologies of Purification and the Aural Public Sphere in Latin America." Soon after that, *Media, Sound, and Culture in Latin America and the Caribbean* (2012), edited by Alejandra Bronfman and Andrew Grant Wood, provided a more extensive sampling of studies on Latin American soundscapes. It did not, however, include any discussion on the Central American region. Nevertheless, this anthology marked the beginning of serious consideration of the impact of sound and listening in

the global south. Finally, Ochoa Gautier's *Aurality: Listening and Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century Colombia* (2014) and Tom McEnaney's *Acoustic Properties: Radio, Narrative, and the New Neighborhood of the Americas* (2017) were the first book-length sources to delve into the question of sound in Latin America.[4] Moreover, they were the first to consider a broad repertoire of literary texts informed by sound and listening.

Ochoa Gautier's and McEnaney's sound-based reading of literary texts have inspired my dissertation's methodology. I am especially interested in how Ochoa Gautier and McEnaney analyze the interplay between authors' listening practices and external social, cultural, and racial factors that have an impact on how sound and sound technology appear in literature. For example, Ochoa Gautier posits that Alexander von Humboldt's chronicles suggest a "zoopolitics" of the black voice, based on Humboldt's racially-inflected descriptions of what he heard during his travels along the Magdalena River in Colombia (Ochoa Gautier 9). Humboldt's perception of black slaves' voices as animal-like points to his racially-informed understanding of the human voice. Humboldtcompares the voices of enslaved black workers rowing to animal calls, situating them as nonhuman and uncivilized. His descriptions are the foundation of what became an aural bias toward black voices in anthropology, musicology, literature, and folklore—disciplines that informed the establishment of the Colombian nation in the nineteenth century.

McEnaney's work in sound studies, literature, and the history of radio in the Americas has also influenced my method of reading Nicaraguan literature through the history of the radio,

[4] Following Ochoa Gautier's and McEnaney's groundbreaking works, newer literature has continued to move the sound studies field forward to include Latin America and the global south. They include: Dylon Lamar Robbin's *Audible Geographies in Latin America: Sounds of Race and Place* (2019); the anthology *Remapping Sound Studies* edited by Gavin Steingo and Jim Skyes (2019); and Leonardo Cardoso's *Sound-Politics in São Paulo: Noise, Actors, Networks, and Governance* (2019). In the last five years, scholarly journals specializing in sound studies as well as those dedicated to Latin American cultural, literary, ethnomusicological, and musicological studies have also produced a surplus of articles merging these fields.

jukebox, gramophone, and barrel organ. He assesses US, Cuban, and Argentinean realist novels from the first half of the twentieth century to draw out two concepts: "narrative acoustics" and "acoustic properties." McEnaney investigates what he calls "narrative acoustics" to explore the strategies of writing and listening that American, Cuban, and Argentinean novelists employed after the radio era, and that helped them to formalize a populist voice in their fictional works (McEnaney 6). McEnaney also explores "acoustic properties" or the relationships between sounds transmitted by the radio, phonograph, and graphophone, and tape recorder and real property (McEnaney 186). In this way he sheds new light on the impact of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy by remapping the "new neighborhood" of the Americas. Ochoa Gautier's and McEnaney's groundbreaking works have inspired my dissertation's comparative methodology of analyzing sound in literary texts.

To date, there has been little sound studies-oriented scholarship rooted in Nicaraguan or Central American literature and cultures. To address this gap, a group of scholars and I worked together to begin developing this branch of the field. In collaboration with Antonio Monte, Dr. Amanda Minks, and invited contributors from the US and Central America, we published a special issue, "Música, sonido y cultura en Centroamérica" (2020), in the international ethnomusicology journal *TRANS* circulated by the Sociedad Ibérica de Etnomusicología (SIBE) of the Iberian Peninsula. Our special issue is the first of its kind to merge the study of sound with Central American cultural and literary production. My dissertation aims to build on this dossier's contributions, and to inspire future scholars to continue the vital work of including Central America in the field of sound studies.

My dissertation also draws on rare print material published in Nicaragua and the US between 1910-1960. These materials include musical scores, marketing ads, literary and lifestyle

magazines, and press clippings. I assembled the corpus studied here by doing archival research in Managua, Nicaragua in 2016 and 2017 at the Instituto de Historia de Nicaragua y Centroamérica (IHNCA), Hemeroteca in the Palacio Nacional de la Cultura, and the Fondo de Música Nicaragüense (FONMUNIC). I also conducted archival research at Princeton University's Special Manuscripts Collections to study their abundant selection of Sergio Ramírez's Papers; the Smithsonian National Museum of American History Archives Center to study their holdings of Wurlitzer Company's business records; and Yale University Library's complete digitized collection of Nicaragua's cultural and literary magazines of the 1910s-1940s, *Los Domingos: Revista semanal ilustrada de literatura, comercio, agricultura, y generalidades.* Rich source materials found at the IHNCA, Hemeroteca, and Yale gave me access to some of Nicaragua's journals and newspapers of the time including: *Los Domingos*, *Las noticias Masaya*, *La noticia, Diario independiente e intereses generales, El gráfico semanario nacional, El comercio*, *Juventud femenina, La nueva prensa,* and *Nicaragua informative revista mensual ilustrada.* Careful study of these print materials made it possible to track the social, cultural, and aesthetic functions of popular music and sound technology. As I quickly discovered, the Nicaraguan bourgeois class published and accessed these journals. More significantly, the curated playlists and records that came with American-made gramophones, jukeboxes, and record players directly informed the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie's musical taste. Playlists included American popular music of the 1910s-1940s (the fox-trot, jazz, and blues) and nineteenth-century European art music. In other words, it was via sound technology, not live performance, that music culture and listening practices developed in Nicaragua in the first half of the century. As a result, these rare print materials have helped me in interpreting sound technologies as they are represented in twentieth-century Nicaraguan literature.

Studying FONMUNIC's collection gave me access to original musical scores written by two prominent Nicaraguan composers from the first half of the twentieth century—Luis A. Delgadillo and Carlos Ramírez Velázquez (1882-1976). In the process, I located Delgadillo's original scores of songs set to Darío's poetry including, but not limited to: *El ballet de Rawí*, *Mía*, and *Marcha triunfal a Rubén Darío*. Examining the original scores helped me track minute decisions Delgadillo made as he set Darío's poetry to music. I also accessed the published version of Delgadillo's collection of songs printed in 1953 titled, *Música nicaragüense, Album Num. 3: Luis A. Delgadillo.* This collection contains twenty-one songs, each set to a poem by Darío. The songs are arranged in styles such as romanza, habanera, serenade, berceuse, waltz, canzonetta, and Nicaraguan songs. Although my dissertation only discusses Delgadillo's *Marcha triunfal a Rubén Darío,* inspired by Darío's poem "Marcha triunfal," I share the general contents of FONMUNIC's archive to encourage future scholars to continue studying these essential musical works. Only recently has Delgadillo's work been given critical scholarly attention, as evidenced in Bernard Gordillo's dissertation, *Luis A. Delgadillo and the Cultural Occupation of Nicaragua under U.S.-American Intervention* (2019).

Princeton's Special Collections of Sergio Ramírez's Papers gave me access to press clippings and Ramírez's correspondences from the 1980s and 1990s. These sources informed my study of Ramírez's family history and his process of embedding popular music and sound technology—including the Wurlitzer's jukebox of the 1940s—into the narrative logic of his fiction. The Smithsonian's holdings of Wurlitzer Company's business records gave me access to press clippings published between the 1940s and 1950s in American trade magazines, including *Billboard, Cash Box, Automatic World,* and *Coin Machine Review*. These press clippings tell the story of Wurlitzer Company's aggressive commercial efforts in Latin America following World

War II and during Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy. Over the course of twenty years, Wurlitzer marketed and sold its American-made sound technology products—such as gramophones and jukeboxes—to several regions in Latin America, including Nicaragua. The collection at Princeton offered the necessary historical and cultural context to help me assess Ramírez's representations of sound technology, which is directly informed by North American and US commercial interventions. My research in these US- and Nicaragua-based archives is an essential part of my dissertation, because what I examined in each help enrich and contextualize my sound-reading of Darío's, Delgadillo's, and Ramírez's works.

Terms Defined

In my dissertation, I account for the many ways sound was defined, practiced, and listened in Nicaragua over the twentieth century. The concept of sound guides my literary and historical analysis of Darío's and Ramírez's texts. According to Sterne, "Sound is an artifact of the messy and political human sphere" (Sterne 13). In other words, a person's listening experience is informed by internal and external factors. I read literary representations of sound with careful attention to their social and cultural significance. I also defer to my archival sources to contextualize a text's sonic events. I also examine formal techniques related to sound, including onomatopoeia, rhyme, meter, and alliteration—techniques that foreground how sound is embedded in the formal logic of a text. I explore as well how authors use musical genres, including the bolero, march, symphonic music, opera, fox-trot, and waltz. I consider both music and sound because both shape the characters' listening experience.

One of my main interests in this dissertation is how sound reproduction technology is represented in literary texts. In this sense I am influenced by Johannes Fabian's definition of modernity as a process that "turns relations of space—relations between cultures—into relations

of time" (Sterne 95). Modern sound reproduction enables a return to a past moment in time; it manipulates time. Nicaraguan authors use the graphophone, gramophone or record player, radio, and jukebox to manipulate time. They respond to these machines in local contexts.

Finally, I consider the "listener" and "listening practices" to guide the narration of sound, which I understand in terms of Jonathan Sterne's concept of "audile technique." "Audile" refers to "hearing and listening as developed and specialized practices, rather than inherent capacities" (Sterne 96); that is, to listening practices that denote a learned orientation to sound. "Audile techniques" were developed at the beginning of the twentieth century for the professional domains of the bourgeoisie, medical practitioners using a stethoscope, for example, or telegraphers using telephones (Sterne 98). I am interested in how Darío's and Ramírez's texts prescribe listening practices (or "audile techniques"). I locate how listeners hear, narrate, categorize, and value their sonic experience, whether they listen to music, nature sounds, or sounds emitted through modern technology. Moreover, I identify the figure of the listener in literary characters, narrators, authors, composers, critics, journalists, and commercial advertisers. Listening practices cross between the lived and literary worlds, with one invariably shaping the other.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 1, "Mechanical Sounds versus "Beauty" in Three Short Stories and an Essay by Rubén Darío," examines Darío's short stories "El rey burgués," "El velo de la reina Mab," and "Cantemos el oro," from *Azul…* (1886), and his essay, "Marinetti y el futurismo" (1909). I trace two listening patterns across these four written pieces, showing how Darío hears and situates the street barrel organ, the city, and locomotive din as noise, and how he counters these noises with antique lyres and violins, the human voice, and sounds of nature. Darío prefers to imagine the

sounds of the past in terms of a beautiful soundscape and the present and future in terms of excessive noise. I suggest that Darío's listening practice here draws on that of Victorian, French Symbolist, Spanish, and Italian Futurist writers who reacted to the urban din of their respective European cities. At the same time, Darío's listening practices add a layer of meaning absent from contemporaneous writers in Europe. Like them, he is troubled by city noise. But he adds to that the sounds of imperialist and neocolonial aggression in Central America. He tunes into a West European urban soundscape and anticipates an outcome of cultural and economic dependence and subordination.

Chapter 2, "Marcha triunfal": A Comparative Reading of Rubén Darío's Poem and Luis A. Delgadillo's Concert March," transitions from Darío's fictional representation of European urban soundscapes to four poems by Darío that best exemplify Central American and pan-Latin American soundscapes. These poems demonstrate his commitment to defining a regional Central American and Pan-Latin Americanism defined by his opposition to US imperialism, allegiance to the Argentinean intellectual community, and disillusionment with his Nicaraguan identity. Darío's poem "Marcha triunfal" epitomizes these four layered meanings, followed by "Sinfonía en gris mayor" (*Prosas profanas,* 1896), as well as "Tarde del trópico," and "Helios" (*Cantos de vida y esperanza*, 1905). These poems include the sounds of military bands, Central American landscapes and seascapes, animals, and musical instruments from Greek antiquity. He employs sounds that signal nostalgia for the past while looking forward to a future free from Yankeeism. The chapter then compares the sounds in "Marcha triunfal" with those in Delgadillo's concert march, *Marcha triunfal a Rubén Darío* (1916), which Delgadillo composed for Darío's 1916 funeral, a Nicaraguan government-sponsored public event at which the piece was performed. I raise the question of what happens when imagined sounds become realized, pointing to the sonic

and political contradictions between the poem and the concert march. I suggest that Delgadillo's march—and its government-sponsored reception—reduced Darío's ambiguous political stance and his literary achievements by fashioning him into a symbol of Nicaraguan nationalism. Here, I push further my definition of a Nicaraguan sonic archive to consider how Darío's expansive archive of sounds is reduced to a single march that serves a nationalist project.

Chapter 3, "Ideals of Sound Fidelity: US-Produced Sound Technology in Selected Works of Sergio Ramírez," assesses Nicaraguan author Sergio Ramírez's fictional representations of sound, music, listening, and sound technology, taking into account US trade relations and advertising in Nicaragua between the 1910s-1960s. I analyze Ramírez's essay *Retrato de familia con violín* (A Family Portrait with Violins, 1997), his novel *Un baile de mascaras* (The Masked Ball, 1995), and three short stories in *Clave de sol* (In A Major, 1992): "Kalimán el magnífico y la pérfida de Mesalina" (The Magnificent Kalimán and Mesalina's Betrayal), "Volver" (Homecoming), and "Pero no lloraré" (But I Shall Not Cry). Published in the 1990s, Ramírez's novels and fiction are set after 1940, when US-produced gramophones, record players, jukeboxes, and radios made headway in Nicaragua. On a broader level, Ramírez's stories reflect a level of disillusionment with and cynicism toward Nicaraguan politics. Ramírez comments upon two particular events: the Nicaraguan dictatorship's hand in facilitating economic advantages for the US in the 1930s-1970s and the neoliberal outcome of the Nicaraguan Contra War (1979-1990). My chapter pays attention to the detailed ways Ramírez describes the Nicaraguan listeners' relationship to these US-produced machines. I achieve this by first discussing American advertisers' discourse on "sound fidelity" as a way of guiding Nicaraguans' on how to listen with modern sound technologies. Here I meditate on Sterne's notion of "sound fidelity" by which he describes the listener's faith in a machine ability to produce a perfect

sound, whatever the model (*The Audible Past,* Sterne 274). In my chapter, I show how listeners are called upon in US advertising to praise a machine's achievements. I then examine Ramírez's characters' listening practices and how they relate to the idea of sound fidelity. As I suggest, a clear tension emerges between how US advertisers imagine ideal listeners and Ramírez's understanding of how such listeners in Nicaragua actually responded decades later. My chapter offers a new sound-studies based method of understanding Ramírez's broader political stance and Nicaragua's political and economic circumstances in the second half of the twentieth century.

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CHAPTER ONE:

Mechanical Sounds and "Beautiful" Sounds in Three Short Stories and an Essay by Rubén Darío

Daniel Morat and Mark M. Smith describe the years between 1850 and 1950 as a period of "high modernity" in the United States and Western Europe. As they define it, the term implies rapid urban development and a "maelstrom of change" (Morat, *Sounds of Modern History* 2–3; Smith, *Sensing the Past* 69–220). New communication technologies and machinery generated previously unheard noise, transforming cultural habits of hearing and listening. The globally diverse histories of this modern sonic culture remain to be told (Morat, *Sounds of Modern History* 3). My chapter will focus on one region that changed dramatically in this period: Nicaragua.

In the Central American transisthmian[5] region, any investigation of noise and sound necessitates consideration of imperialist and neocolonial contexts. Since the mid-nineteenth century, Great Britain and the United States competed for concession rights to Central American territory, resources, and capital. The intrusion of foreign investors impacted traditional soundscapes. The clamor of docks, freight trains, agricultural machinery, and construction sites grew. Europeans and Americans brought a confusing inventory of sound technologies to Central America: mechanical barrel organs, train whistles, telephone and telegraph lines, phonographs, radios, musical instruments, and medical tools such as the stethoscope and audiometer. As noted by Daniel Morat in speaking about the industrialized nations of Europe, this resulted in an epistemological shift "from the notion of technology as a prosthetic device to the notion of the

[5] I use "transisthmian" the same way Ana Patricia Rodríguez employs it. The Central American *transisthmus*—an imaginary and material site—merges all nations in the region. The site links literary and cultural production with social and economic flows (2).

body as a technological device" (Morat, *Sounds of Modern History* 49). Against a backdrop of multiple languages, international trade, and scientific progress, a transisthmian and even transatlantic auditory culture emerged in Central America.

Writers in Latin America identified and critiqued this sonic shift in their novels, poems, and short stories. The Nicaraguan author, correspondent, and diplomat, Rubén Darío (1867–1916), was one of the first to express alarm about the arrival of the mechanical sonic age. Darío traveled between Latin American and Western European cities to work as a journalist for the Argentinian newspaper *La Nación* (1889–1910). He was a diplomat for Colombia in Buenos Aires (1893) and for Nicaragua, based in Paris (1902–03) and Spain (1907). As a result, he witnessed the growth of urban clamor in many cities: Guatemala City, Havana, Madrid, Vienna, New York, Berlin, Valparaíso, Managua, Morocco, Buenos Aires, and Paris, to name but a few.

Darío visited and lived in Paris five times between 1893 and 1909. He chronicled his impressions of French society for *La Nación*. In 1900, he reported on the Parisian Exposition Universelle. His short visits to Paris in 1906 and 1909 were his last. Stuck somewhere between a "settled cosmopolitan"[6] and a "marginal"[7] equivalent, as he admitted, Darío felt sidelined at home and abroad. He was an insider and an outsider, operating on the fringes of French culture while dedicating himself to his own country, which had a focal point of international profiteering. Through those same literary fashions, Darío documented his sense of urban sounds

[6] I use Jeff Browitt's and Werner Mackenbach's concept, *cosmopolita arraigado* (settled cosmopolitan), as a starting point in my analysis. They position Darío as a *cosmopolita arraigado,* not in the literal sense of the phrase but rather as someone whose work settles in the Spanish language but incorporates transatlantic cultural trends in Latin America, Western Europe, and even the United States (7–8).

[7] I build on Browitt's and Mackenbach's concept with Mariano Siskind's the *marginal cosmopolitan.* He defines Latin American male intellectuals like Darío as marginal cosmopolitans. He sits in a marginal position of enunciation, which protects him from the global unfolding of modernity. Moreover, he rejects the Latin American cultural field, fixated on nationalistic or peninsular signifiers (8–9).

near and far with pessimism. The cities he heard were all boisterous; global change was not quiet.

Darío's travels exposed him to new auditory experiences that worried and inspired him. He suggested new listening practices in the short stories he wrote. Whereas he described city sounds as discordant, he idealized the human voice and natural sounds, and imagined and idealized mythical echoes of ancient Greek instruments. He privileged harmony over discord and had little faith in progress. Specific texts are especially revealing. "El rey burgués" critiques the sound of a mechanical barrel organ; "La canción de oro" celebrates a street peddler's poetry performance; "El velo de la reina Mab" features an impoverished composer (Ramoneda 164–69, 182–89). Darío tends to validate preindustrial Central American landscapes and the simplicity of human breath as a more genuine foundation of all music. Finally, in his essay "Marinetti y el futurismo," Darío mocks the locomotive and urban din foregrounded in Italian Futurism (Schwartz 398–408). In these texts, he associates mechanical clamor with imperial conquest to a certain degree. He fears Central and South America will lose their uniqueness due to the unforgiving expansion of transatlantic industries. Human and cultural uniqueness will also vanish in their wake. This situation led to his ambivalence about these new developments.

In interpreting these stories, I ask three primary questions: What sounds did Darío capture and what was their meaning? How does Darío critique or validate noise? Last, how do Darío's listening practices contribute to bringing Nicaragua into twentieth-century global modernity?

In the opening section of this chapter, I provide background by describing the history of the mechanical barrel organ, which plays a significant role in the first story under investigation, "El rey burgués," from the collection *Azul* …. In my close reading of this short story, I carefully analyze the ways Darío grapples with the meaning of the mechanical barrel organ and the urban

context in which it operates. I also investigate the images Darío uses to depict musical harmony. I then examine two other short stories from *Azul…*, as a way of solidifying what I see to be Darío's sonic archive. I trace the part of the human voice in "La canción de oro." Moving then to "El velo de la reina Mab," I explain his stance on the fate of a lyre, birds, and human breath in dingy cities. Finally, I unpack Darío's later essay "Marinetti y el Futurismo" (April 5, 1909), where he theorizes noise more precisely in the context of the Western avant-garde to make points that complement his literary representation of music. His take on Futurist methods help him develop new tools to critique modern urbanization and, therefore, better understand the fate of his homeland.

Street Music in Paris, London, Berlin, and Madrid at the Turn of the Century

When Darío read about the mechanical barrel organ in the writings of French symbolists, the instrument was a downsized version of its more "distinguished" antecedents. It has become an instrument primarily played by street peddlers. Once a vehicle for religious worship and experimentation, the organ Darío heard was already taken for granted and even despised by the general public, professional musicians, and composers.

Darío's impulse to distance himself from this instrument was not unique to South America. Victorian English intellectuals and artists such as Charles Dickens, John Leech, and Lewis Carroll criticized street barrel organs.[8] Without acknowledging the street organist's social and labor circumstances, Dickens cast him as a ringleader of the capital's noise. Dickens spoke about "brazen performers on brazen instruments, beaters of drums, grinders of organs, bangers of banjos, clashers of cymbals, worriers of fiddles, and bellowers of ballads" (Storey 388). He

[8] Their works include Lewis Carroll's "Those Horrid Hurdy-Gurdies!" (1861), Arthur Symons' poem, "The Barrel-Organ" (1897), and T. S. Eliot's "Portrait of a Lady" (1915; Picker).

joined other London authors in supporting the legislative movement to ban barrel organ street playing. On behalf of his colleagues and himself, he cowrote a letter to congressional leaders:

> Your correspondents are all professors and practitioners of one or other of the arts or sciences. In their devotion to their pursuits—tending to the peace and comfort of mankind—they are daily interrupted, harassed, worried, wearied, driven nearly mad, by street musicians. They are even made especial objects of persecution by brazen performers on brazen instruments, beaters of drums, grinders of organs … for, no sooner does it become known to those producers of horrible sounds that any of your correspondents have particular need of quiet in their own houses, than the said houses are beleaguered by discordant hosts seeking to be bought. (Storey 388)

At a time when writers frequently lived where they worked, Dickens and his cosignatories believed the open-air playing of street barrel organs would disrupt their quiet domestic offices.[9] Dickens suggested the barrel organ be played only in less desirable areas of the city, emphasizing the class divide between wealthier and poorer neighborhoods (Zucchi 86). In the end, these complaints resulted in a formalized legal movement to ban the instrument in London (Picker 438–41). Although the ban was not upheld, negative attitudes toward it remained among the London upper class for decades.

Like London upper-class intellectuals, wealthy Berliners pursued a similar effort to ban the barrel organ from the 1880s to the 1920s. In June 1886, for example, a dispute occurred between a street organ grinder and a lawyer, reported in the *Berliner Gerichtszeitung*. The lawyer took the organ grinder to court, and the latter was found guilty of "domestic disturbance." Then, in 1906, Berliners established anti-noise ordinances and quiet zones, particularly around schools and hospitals. Finally, in 1908, the German philosopher and cultural critic, Theodor Lessing,

[9] As Picker explains, this also represents a time when English intellectuals were attempting to establish their credibility as professionals and the rightful contributors to Victorian society (a claim commonly reserved for businessmen and lawyers; (441). In total, Dickens' letter was cosigned by a roster of Victorian cultural elite, totaling twenty-eight representative authors, painters, engravers, illustrators, historians, actors, sculptors, musicians, architects, and scientists.

published *Der Lärm: Eine Kampfschrift Gegen die Geräusche unseres Lebens* (1908) and founded the *Deutscher Antilärmverein,* the German Anti-Noise League, which classified barrel organs, and open-air street music in general, a nuisance (Morat, "Sounding Out Urban Space" 332–35).

Madrid's intelligentsia also perceived street barrel organ players, or *organilleros,* as noisy. Particularly in the capital, *organilleros* were held to a double standard: they could play for customers on commercial premises but not on city streets. *Organilleros* were in high demand among customers in taverns, cafés, bars, and restaurants, but once hired, they were required to stay on the property. Nonetheless, players frequently contravened the municipal code to perform outdoors, in search of more generous late-night profit, dragging a parade of noisy customers behind them. Once outside, the organists were often caught, fined, and arrested.[10]

Parisian music critics, composers, and writers also held negative attitudes toward street barrel organs. They attacked organists for their unmusicality, loudness, and ragged appearance. Peddlers were considered to be infesting city streets. Composers, in contrast, remained ambivalent about barrel organs but favored open-air music, which they—paradoxically found both harmonious and discordant. Claude Debussy, for example, claimed street performances were "the best conductor of mediocrity that one can dream of."[11] At the same time, he also believed open-air music could "prolong the harmonic dream in the soul of the crowd." Debussy and his contemporaries agreed the dream of social harmony was enticing but impossible to achieve (qtd. In Miner 405–406).

[10] See Gil Ricardo's *La Caja de Música* (1898), Pío Baroja's trilogy *La Lucha por la Vida* (1904), Ramón Valle-Inclán's *El Yermo de las Almas* (1908), and José Martínez Ruíz's *Castilla* (1912; Llano 200).

[11] My English translation. French original: "le meilleur conducteur de médiocrité qu'on puisse rêver" (qtd. In Miner 405–406: Lesure 45–46).

Like Victorian intellectuals, the symbolist poets Charles Baudelaire, Arthur Rimbaud, and Stéphane Mallarmé wrote negatively about the barrel organ and open-air band concerts. Rimbaud's poem "À la musique" and Baudelaire's poems "Les Veuves" and "Les Petites Vieilles" meditate on the estranging and alienating effect open-air band concerts inflict on city dwellers. In contrast, Mallarmé's prose poem "Plaintes d'automne" (Autumn's Lament) ruminates on the organ's disruptive melancholic tone (Miner 408–410). The narrator in the latter poem hears the wheezing sound of the automaton from his window. Its melody triggers a crucial memory of the funeral procession for his dead lover, Maria:

> So, I was reading one of those beloved poems (their dabs of artificial colour are a greater delight to me than the rosy hue of youth), and I was delving a hand into the pure animal's fur, when a barbarous barrel-organ began to play mournfully and languidly below my window. It was singing in the broad avenue of poplars, whose leaves seem dismal to me even in springtime, now that Maria has passed that way with candles for the last time. (Mallarmé 85)

The melody here conflates past and present. The subject not only remembers Maria's death upon hearing the tune but also imagines it as the accompaniment to her funeral procession. It is now the soundtrack to his deceased lover's memory.

Although the tune allows the narrator to mourn Maria's death, it nonetheless annoys him. The barrel organ disrupts his contemplative, hushed state while reading a verse in his apartment, resulting in confusion:

> Truly an instrument for mourners: pianos glitter and violins illuminate torn fibres, but that barrel-organ, in the twilight of memory, made me dream in despair. Now, when it was murmuring a cheap and cheerful tune, a tune that would gladden the hearts of the suburbs, a banal old-fashioned thing—why did its refrain penetrate my very soul and make me weep as romantic ballads do? (Mallarmé 85)

Mallarmé's poem touches on one more aspect of the barrel organ—the anonymous player behind the machine. Even though the narrator hears the organ's melody, he refuses to recognize the

actual player: “Slowly I savored it, without throwing even the smallest coin out of the window—for fear I would unsettle myself and see that instrument wasn’t singing alone.” He dismisses the street player’s poverty and instead considers their playing a nuisance. The narrator assumes entitled individuals can close themselves in and shut out the public discord below (Mallarmé 85).

European attitudes toward street barrel organs in the late nineteenth century reflect social prejudice, class divisions, and aesthetic assumptions about musical worth. Darío’s story, “El rey burgués,” mirrors and heightens these tensions. Unlike Mallarmé, Darío places new emphasis on the individual making the sounds: the organist. In the socially marginalized street player, Darío sees himself. This is certainly one way of reading one of Darío’s seminal short stories, “El rey burgués.”

Darío’s Noisy City and the Street Barrel Organ in “El rey burgués”

In his short story, “El rey burgués” (1888), from the collection *Azul …*, Darío speaks of the street barrel organ as producing noise rather than music. He represents the automaton’s static and pathetic rhythm through the onomatopoeic phrase “¡Tiririrín!” (“tra-la-la”). He also speaks about the player himself—a starving, yet talented poet turned into a degraded organist who dies at the end of the story. In this tragic story, Darío thematizes the player’s relationship to the machine and the city, while privileging the soundscapes of nature and instruments from Greek antiquity as counterpoints to urban noise. A fable at best, it ultimately cautions against succumbing to modern machines that threaten the artistic production of music and poetry.

The narrative begins by describing a city and royal residence reigned over by a bourgeois king, who represents, in an allegorical register, an economic ruling sector insensitive to the humanity Darío associates to true art, even as he draws on art for the purpose of affirming his prestige. In keeping with the allegory, the country the king rules is anything but grand. Indeed, it

is a wasteland. What may appear as an estate adorned with art objects, paintings, illustrious gardens, ornate salons, and elegant furniture is, rather, a cluttered warehouse. He hoards kitsch objects displayed in poor taste. He also collects artists and intellectuals—actual humans—as he does objects. The narrator describes the situation:

> Era muy aficionado a las artes el soberano, y favorecía con gran largueza a sus músicos, a sus hacedores de ditirambos, pintores, escultores, boticarios, barberos y maestros de esgrima. (Ramoneda 165)
>
> This sovereign was very fond of the arts, and with great largesse, he would favor his musicians, his makers of dithyrambs, his painters, sculptors, and apothecaries, his barbers, and his fencing masters. (Stavans 221)

The king uses these learned individuals and surrounds himself with material things to elevate his social status and to entertain himself. A street barrel organ is among the king's junk, but at first, he has nobody to play it.

The bourgeois king frequently hosts rowdy parties for his courtiers. The narrator describes these celebrations in an ironic tone as elegant, but they are, rather, debauched affairs. The courtiers intoxicate themselves while watching hired dancers:

> Los criados llenaban las copas del vino de oro que hierve, y las mujeres batían palmas con movimientos rítmicos y gallardos. (Ramoneda 165)
>
> His servants would fill glasses with that golden bubble and women would clap their hands and perform elegant, rhythmic dances. (Stavans 221)

Their drunken conversations and the intellectuals' "allusive songs" are likened to the Tower of Babel to underscore this scene of growing discord and pandemonium:

> Era un rey sol, en su Babilonia llena de músicas de carcajadas y de ruidos de festín. (Ramoneda 165)
>
> He was a Sun King, in his Babylon filled with music, laughter, and the sounds of revelry. (Stavans 221)

Ultimately, Darío allows the king and his courtiers to exercise the political right to make noise in the city they rule: a critique on his part of the class privilege to which the fable alludes.

The monarch not only hosts rowdy parties but also engages in the extremely noisy pastime of countryside hunting. As the narrator ironically states, he retreats to the countryside to seek refuge from the urban din. Nevertheless, it is the king and his courtiers who incite clamor when pillaging through peaceful, wide-open terrain:

> Cuando se hastiaba de la ciudad bullente, iba de caza atronando el bosque con sus tropeles, y hacía salir de sus nidos a las aves asustadas, y el vocerío repercutía en lo más escondido de las cavernas. Los perros de patas elásticas iban rompiendo la maleza en la carrera, y los cazadores, inclinados sobre el pescuezo de los caballos, hacían ondear los mantos purpúreos y llevaban las caras encendidas y las cabelleras al viento. (Ramoneda 165)

> When he wearied of the tumult of the city, he would go out hunting, and the woods would ring with the noise of his retinue. Bringing along their shooting rifles and their unruly behavior, they plunder the tranquil countryside: The sounds would frighten the birds on their nests, and the shouts and calls would echo in the hidden depths of the caves. Dogs of elastic gait would race through the undergrowth, parting as they went, and the hunters would strain forward, leaning over the long necks of their horses, their faces flushed, their hair tousled, their purple mantles ripping out behind them as they pursued their prey. (Stavans 221)

Leaving behind their bullet shells and echoes of predatory hobbies, they remain unaware of the sonic and physical disruption they continually cause.

In sum, the King and his attendants—a clannish mob—create commotion, whether in the city or the countryside. Territorial privilege goes alongside the courtiers' right to make noise; they extend their dominance through sound. Their actions create the noisy milieu into which the barrel organ player enters, playing a pitiful machine meant to entertain drunk and rowdy gangsters.

The Poet's Sonic World: Ecological Sounds, Music, and Close Listening

Following this clamorous opening, a bright-eyed whimsical poet enters. Darío casts him as a tragic character, whose dream to write verse is suppressed by the king's demand that he grind the barrel organ. Before the figure's demise, the tale offers a glimpse into his imaginative world, which evokes Greek antiquity (the lyre and the harp), ecological harmonies (birds, ocean breezes, and storms), the rhythms and rhymes of his iambic pentameter, and the human voice itself reciting the lines. Ultimately, Darío introduces this soundscape as a counterpoint to the king's noisy domain, as well as to present a new aesthetic category of music, itself superior to the king's discordant lands.

Here, Darío adopts assumptions about high-art culture shared by nineteenth-century critics and intellectuals alike in Western Europe. He considers the singing voice and instruments in the classical symphony orchestra (strings, woodwinds, brass, percussion, piano, and the like) as superior to the sounds of a modern city. The mechanical barrel organ falls outside this privileged realm; the machine produces nothing but commotion.

The aspiring bard arrives at the royal residence, hoping to secure a gentle patron who will finance his artistic endeavors. He confesses: "Señor, no he comido" (Ramoneda 166; "My Lord, I have not eaten" [Stavans 223]). As expected, the king and his attendants are anything but a compassionate audience. The king objectifies the newcomer as another nameless artist to add to his collection of entertainers; this arrogant attitude will contribute to the poet's demise. The guest is allowed an audition where he must describe his past before the king offers him a task. The poet professes,

> He tendido mis alas al huracán, he nacido en el tiempo de la aurora: busco la raza escogida que debe esperar, con el himno en la boca y la lira en la mano, la salida del gran sol. He abandonado la inspiración de la ciudad malsana, la alcoba llena de perfumes, la musa de carne que llena el alma de pequeñez y el rostro de polvos de arroz. He roto el

> arpa adulona de las cuerdas débiles, contra las copas de Bohemia y las jarras donde espumea el vino que embriaga sin dar fortaleza; he arrojado el manto que me hacía perder histrión, o mujer, y he vestido de modo salvaje y espléndido: mi harapo es de púrpura. He ido a la selva donde he quedado vigoroso y ahíto de leche fecundo y licor de nueva vida; y en la ribera del mar áspero, sacudiendo la cabeza bajo la fuerte y negra tempestad, como un ángel soberbio. o como un semidiós olímpico, he ensayado el yambo dando al olvido el madrigal. He acariciado a la gran Naturaleza y he buscado el calor del ideal, el verso que está en el astro en el fondo del cielo, y el que está en la perla en lo profundo del océano. ¡He querido ser pujante! Porque viene el tiempo de las grandes revoluciones, con un Mesías todo luz, toda agitación y potencia, y es preciso recibir su espíritu con el poema que sea arco triunfal, de estrofas de acero, de estrofas de oro, de estrofas de amor. (Ramoneda 166–67)

> I was born in the time of the dawn, and I have spread my wings in the hurricane. I seek the chosen race that awaits, with hymns upon its lips and lyres in hands, the rising of the great sun. I have fled the inspiration of the unhealthful city and the boudoir reeking of perfume, I have fled the muse of flesh that fills the soul with rifles and covers the face with rice-powder. I have smashed the fawning, loose-stringed harp against the goblets of Bohemian crystal and the pitchers filled with sparkling wine that inebriates without strength; I have put off the mantle that made me appear to be an actor, or a woman, and I have dressed in a more savage, splendid way: my rags are crimson. I have gone to the jungle, where I have become vigorous, sating myself upon fecund milk and the liquor of new life, and to the banks of the harsh sea, where, shaking my head in the black, strong tempest like a proud angel, or an Olympian demigod, I have rehearsed iambs, the ringing madrigal forgotten. I have caressed great Nature, and I have sought, in the warmth of the ideal, the verse that lies in the star at the end of the heavens, the pearl in the depths of ancient Ocean. I have sought to boom, to crash! For the age of the great revolutions is coming, with a Messiah that is all Light, and Agitation, and Power, and we must receive his spirit with a poem that is a triumphal arch, with lines of iron, and lines of gold, and lines of love. (Stavans 223–24)

Sorrowful in tone, the artist mourns a city harrowed by prostitution, disease, soot, and the trivialities of popular entertainment, fashion, and drinking. Indeed, these same frivolities define the boisterous urban soundscape inhabited by the bourgeois king: the real world the poet rejects. The city's synthetic, mechanical sounds deafen him. The "tyrannical" and chaotic clamor impedes him from hearing and creating beauty.

Whereas the city cannot facilitate artistic creativity, mother nature can. A lyricist determines the natural world—jungles, oceans, hurricanes, and rainfall—can inspire beauty, and therefore, musical forms. Here is where ecological sounds and the ancient Greek tradition are

privileged over the violent urban commotion. When organized as verse and vocally performed, sounds serve as building blocks. Moreover, they lead to heightened emotional, psychological, and cognitive forms of human experience. These favored transcriptive forms are assumed to faithfully reproduce these ecological sounds: "con el himno en la boca y la lira en la mano" ("with hymns upon its lips and lyres in hands") from which he recites rhymes—"estrofas de acero, de estrofas de oro, de estrofas de amor" (lines of iron, and lines of gold, and lines of love). In sum, he proclaims an aesthetic manifesto that maps noise and music to urban spaces. Furthermore, the manifesto suggests a linear protocol on who can create music and how to accomplish it. Beautiful music emerges if a writer escapes the city, inhabits the natural, organic world, transcribes the site's sounds into verse, and vocally performs them. More significantly, his body is a privileged instrument, transforming single, separate ecological sounds into unified structured couplets. This aesthetic transformation restores human unity.

The tale's final scene diagnoses the dissonance that results from pairing a mechanical barrel organ with the artist. After his performance, the king orders him to become the organist:

> Daréis vueltas a un manubrio. Cerraréis la boca. Haréis sonar una caja de música que toca valses, cuadrillas y galopas, como no prefiráis moriros de hambre. Pieza de música por pedazo de pan. Nada de jerigonzas, ni de ideales. Id. (Ramoneda 168)
>
> You will turn the hand-crank. You will close your mouth. You will provide us with music from a music-box that plays waltzes, quadrilles, and gallopes, unless you prefer to starve. Piece of music for crust of bread. But no more prattling, and no more talk of ideals. Go. (Stavans 224)

Where the poet once exercised his senses, pen, and voice to orchestrate stanzas, the king now silences and demeans him as nothing more than a single, cranking arm. He is converted into a machine. To this end, the urban dissonance of boisterous parties, hunting games, shallow forms

of entertainment, and now machinery, lord over his pleasant-sounding and harmonious world. Humanity is once again destroyed.

Darío now introduces the most significant sound: the automaton's din configured into onomatopoeia. As it describes,

> Y desde aquel día pudo verse a la orilla del estanque de los cisnes al poeta hambriento que daba vueltas al manubrio; tiririrín, tiririrín …, ¡avergonzado a las miradas del gran sol¡ ¿Pasaba el rey por las cercanías? ¡Tiririrín, tiririrín …! ¿Había que llenar el estómago? ¡Tiririrín, tiririrín! (Ramoneda 168)

> And from that day forth, the starving poet might be seen on the bank of the swans' pool, turning the crank on the hand-organ—*tra-la-la, tra-la-lee* … embarrassed by the glances of the great sun! And when the king strolled anywhere nearby? *Tra-la-la, tra-la-lee!* Was the stomach in need of filling? *Tra-la-la, tra-la-lee!* (Stavans 224–25)

The figure "¡Tiririrín!" reduces a popular Western European dance tradition—the waltz—into a static and repetitive phrase. Its rhythm is cheapened to cliché. Ultimately, the barrel organ as a machine cannot replicate the rich dynamics, virtuosity, and timbral variation of the artist's sonic world.

In the end, the fable's tragic figure dies while cranking the organ. However, it remains ambiguous whether the ending is sad or uplifting. At first one might think the king has abandoned the artist:

> ¡Noche de invierno, noche de fiesta! Y el infeliz, cubierto de nieve, cerca del estanque, daba vueltas al manubrio para calentarse, tembloroso y aterido, insultado por el cierzo, bajo la blancura implacable y helada, en la noche sombría, haciendo resonar entre los árboles sin hojas la música loca de las galopas y cuadrillas. (Ramoneda 168)

> Night of winter, night of revelry! And the poor wretch out by the swans' pool, shivering with cold, insulted by the north wind, covered with snow, standing stiff in the implacable whiteness of the garden, in the gloomy night, turned the hand-crank to keep him warm, and the wild music of the gallops and quadrilles echoed among the leafless trees. (Stavans 225)

Playing the barrel organ is depicted here as excessive, and as a symbol of exploiting those of fewer means. This moving image focuses on the artist's arm, cranking "la música loca" (the wild music) to keep himself warm. Moreover, he is no longer useful to the courtiers, as they cease roaming the gardens in winter. As the story proceeds, however, Darío employs ellipses to restore his ideal musical world and counter the noise of the barrel organ. The text ends with an evocation of Darío's sonic world of nature and mythical harmony:

> y se quedó muerto, pensando en que nacería el sol en el día venidero, y con él el ideal …, y en que el arte no vestiría pantalones, sino manto de llamas o de oro … Hasta que al día siguiente lo hallaron el rey y sus cortesanos, al pobre diablo de poeta, como gorrión que mata el hielo, con una sonrisa amarga en los labios, y todavía con la mano en el manubrio. (Ramoneda 168–69)

> And then he died, thinking that the sun would rise the next day, and with it, the ideal … and that art would wear not wool pants, but a mantle of gold, and flames. … And the next day the king and his courtiers found him there, the poor devil of a poet, like a swallow frozen in the ice, with a bitter smile on his lips, and his hand still on the hand-crank. (Stavans 225)

The story concludes in sonic counterpoint: the combined noise of the mechanical barrel organ and the city clash against the sounds of nature and Hellenic culture. Darío is hopeful and saddened that he cannot reconcile music and noise because, in the end, they must coexist. If one cannot silence city noise (a material reality), one certainly can shut it out temporarily with imagined harmony. Darío's desire to block out the noise reflects Mallarmé's impulse in "Plaintes d'automne." These two authors differ, however, in their ability to keep the city clamor at arm's length. In "El rey burgués," commotion is a violent threat.

"La Canción de Oro"

In this section, I strengthen my analysis of Darío's sonic archive by examining "el cuento en prosa," "La canción de oro," also published in *Azul …* in 1888. This story features a traveling poet, "un mendigo," who lives as a beggar. This time, we find the starving artist on a residential

city street of wealthy homes and gardens. As the story opens: "quizá un poeta llegó, bajo la sombra de los altos álamos, a la gran calle de los palacios" (Ramoneda 185; "Perhaps a poet arrived, under the shadow of the tall poplars, to the grand street of palaces"[12]). A life of riches remains reserved for those who inherit it, but the same existence outcasts the rest, including the poet. In fact, their wealthy lifestyle stays hidden from unwanted outsiders. The narrator describes this class divide thus:

> Había tras los vidrios de las ventanas, en los vastos edificios de la riqueza, rostros de mujeres gallardas o de niños encantadores. Tras las rejas se adivinaban extensos jardines. (Ramoneda 185)
>
> Through the window glass, in the vast buildings of riches, there were faces of dashing women or of enchanting children. Through the rails one could make out extensive gardens.

Behind their glass windows, high walls, and iron bars, the wealthy keep out "mendigos" ("beggars") like the poet. Their message is clear: their world is impenetrable and those who attempt to invade it will face violence.

At dusk, the poet is riled by a class injustice threatening the less fortunate. In response, he recites his poem to raise collective consciousness. He declares,

> Fue la visión de todos los mendigos, de todos los suicidas, de todos los borrachos, del harapo y de la llaga, de todos los que viven—¡Dios mío!—en perpetua noche, tanteando la sombra, cayendo al abismo, por no tener un mendrugo para llenar el estómago. (Ramoneda 186)
>
> It was a sight of all beggars, of those who committed suicide, of the drunkards, of those who are ragged and torn, of all who are alive—My God!—in perpetual night, sizing up the shadows, falling into the abyss, for not even having a piece of stale bread in their stomach.

[12] Unattributed translations are my own.

The poet is enraged by class inequality and expresses anguish about it. The story emphasizes the poet's body and voice as the source of audible outrage. His body serves as the structural and aesthetic anchor for the poem:

> brotó como el germen de una idea que pasó del pecho, y fue opresión y llegó a la boca hecho himno, que le encendía la lengua y hacía entorchar los dientes. (Ramoneda 186)
>
> It came forth like the germ of an idea that passed through the chest, and it was oppressive and came out from the mouth as hymn that inflamed the tongue and made the teeth grind.

The poem travels from the poet's heart, through the chest, up to the mouth, past the tongue, through the teeth, until it is finally vocalized. This process transforms breath into speech; a voice can exhale and create poetry. Ultimately, the tale celebrates poetry's birth, which begins with breath. This universal, profoundly human process transcends class divides.

As this occurs, another action occurs through the body: ingestion. Before he performs, the poet also eats: "Sacó de su bolsillo un pan moreno, comió y dio al viento su himno. Nada más cruel que aquel canto tras el mordisco" (Ramoneda 186; "He took out wheat bread from his pocket, ate it, and then offered his hymn to the wind. There is nothing more distasteful than to sing while eating"). Here, he recites his hymn (born of breath) while he eats. The poet's desire to recite poetry is just as critical as his most basic need for sustenance.

The rest of the story features the poet reciting the line "Cantemos el oro" (Ramoneda 165; "Let's intone gold"). He recounts "cantemos el oro" twenty-two times, each time criticizing the present day. He mourns consumerism, the exploitation of mining laborers, poverty, and war's violence. At the same time, he offers antidotes to these dilemmas. He celebrates Christianity, ancient Greek philosophy, women's peacefulness, and natural water sources. He also praises a collage of sounds. Of note are the voice: "cantemos el oro, porque su voz es música encantada; porque es heroico y luce en los corazones de los héroes homéricos" (Ramoneda 187; "Let's sing

the gold, because their voice is enchanted music, because it's heroic and lights the hearts of Homeric heroes"); the lyre's chords: "de él son las cuerdas de las grandes liras" (Ramoneda 187; "He gives life to the grand lyre's strings"); wrestling bulls likened to a timpani: "dios becerro … bullicioso cuando brota a pleno sol y a toda vida, sonante como un coro de tímpanos" (Ramoneda 188; "a calf god … boisterous when it springs from under the sun, full of life and as sonorous as a timpani choir); and echoes, moaning, and laughter: "Y el eco se llevó aquel himno, mezcla de gemido, ditirambo y carcajada … el eco resonaba en las tinieblas" (Ramoneda 189: "And the echo took the hymn with it, mixing in moans, dithyramb, and cackling … the echo resonated in darkness). The poet champions the human voice, percussive instruments, and Greek Antiquity's musical tradition.

The poet closes his poem by shouting, "¡Cantemos el oro!" into the dark streets. His words are echoed, carrying his message forward to penetrate iron bars, glass windows, and stone walls. He hopes someone behind those walls will hear him. His inhaling, exhaling, cries, laughter, and the remaining traces of his voice—the echoes—all take center stage. The voice not only enunciates class injustices, but attempts to transcend them.

Even though the human voice has a higher purpose, the body is still weak. After his performance to nobody, the poet chews on breadcrumbs and walks away:

> le dio su ultimo mendrugo de pan petrificado, y se marchó por la terrible sombra, rezongando entre dientes. (Ramoneda 189)
>
> he picked up his last crumbs of petrified stale bread and marched into the terrible shadows, muttering under his breath.

His need for physical sustenance is as dire as his need to create poetry. What is more, the privileged individuals behind the barred windows and walls neglect his hunger. It also remains

unknown whether they ever paid attention to his performance. Even so, Darío's story celebrates the human body as a vessel that can produce poetry and music.

"El Velo de la Reina Mab"

The last tale from *Azul …* that I will address echoes Henri Murger's popular novel, *Scènes de la vie de bohème* (1851), which inspired Giacomo Puccini's opera *La Bohème.* Darío's story also recalls Charles Gounod's "Ballade de la Reine Mab" from his opera, *Romeo et Juliette* (1867). Mariano Siskind points out that *Azul …* translates and appropriates French culture to create a modern and universal Latin American sensibility (214).

Darío translates elements from the French novel and two operas to build his narrative. "El velo" recasts Murger's four starving bohemian artists. They become "cuatro hombres flacos, barbudos e impertinentes, lamentándose como unos desdichados" (Ramoneda 182; "four thin, bearded, impertinent men, complaining like wretches" [Stavans 279]). The story also introduces Shakespeare's flighty and devious Queen Mab. She becomes a generous fairy, bestowing hope and joy beneath her blue veil. Most importantly, the narrative challenges the musical traditions found in Puccini's and Gounod's operas. The story proposes new sounds from a Latin American soundscape. When Darío introduces "melodías de la selva" (melodies of the jungle), his story takes a dissonant turn.

The tale introduces four starving artists (sculptor, painter, composer, and poet) living in "una boardilla" (Ramoneda 182; "a garret" [Stavans 279]). They mourn the loss of their artistic inspiration. At the same time, they decry society's inability to value their work. They are too absorbed in fashionable marriage, social vanity, and class mobility to pay attention to art. They read aloud their eulogy, a consequence of their exiled, ultimately impotent state. At the end of the story, la Reina Mab relieves them of petty suffering. She cloaks them in a blue veil stitched

in “suspiros” (breath) and angelic gazes (“de miradas de ángeles rubios y pensativos”). They grow cheerful and hopeful again, dancing and laughing together in eternity. In the end, the four artists die. Their physical existence becomes divine: they can finally make art in the afterlife. Like “El rey burgués,” this narrative offers a tragic and hopeful ending.

In this story, the composer and poet favor the human voice, bird songs, the jungle, and thunderstorms. They prefer natural soundscapes over Western traditions from Terpander’s poetry to Richard Wagner’s operas. The composer, in particular, doubts whether such traditions are the only pathway to beauty. Instead, he believes nature and the body can offer new modes for creating music. The composer’s monologue is worth noting here. He professes,

> Perdida mi alma en la gran ilusión de mis sinfonías, temo todas las decepciones. Yo escucho todas las armonías, desde la lira de Trepando, hasta las fantasías orquestales de Wagner. Mis ideales brillan en medio de mis audacias de inspirado. Yo tengo la percepción del filósofo que oyó la música de los astros. Todos los ruidos pueden aprisionarse, todos los ecos son susceptibles de combinaciones. Todo cabe en la línea de mis escalas cromáticas. La luz vibrante es himno, y la melodía de la selva halla un eco en mi corazón. Desde el ruido de la tempestad hasta el canto del pájaro, todo se confunde y enlaza en la infinita cadencia. Entretanto, no diviso sino la muchedumbre que befa, y la celda del manicomio. (Ramoneda 183–84)
>
> In my great hope for my symphonies my soul is lost, and I fear all disappointments. I listen to all harmonies, from Terpander’s lyre to Wagner’s orchestral fantasies. My ideals shine forth in the midst of my inspired audacities. I have the perception of that philosopher who heard the music of the spheres. All sounds can be caught and imprisoned, all echoes are capable of being combined. Everything fits within the line of my chromatic scales. The shimmering light is an anthem, and the melody of the forest finds echo in my heart. From the deafening noise of the storm to the song of the bird, everything mixes and joins and intertwines in infinite cadence. And meanwhile, I see nothing but the multitude that snorts and bellows, and the prison cell of matrimony. (Stavans 279–80)

The composer lauds two figures for defining and expanding the same tradition: the Greek poet Terpander and the German composer Richard Wagner. Spanning two thousand years, Terpander’s language evokes the genesis of music whereas Wagner’s operatic music reaches the

heights of high art. The composer reveres the entire history of Western music. At the same time, he feels intimidated at the thought of carrying the torch forward.

The category of noise also emerges as a counterpoint to harmony. The composer adjudges that chromatic scales can control and imprison discord. He declaims: "los ruidos que pueden aprisionarse, todos los ecos son susceptibles de combinaciones." (Ramoneda 184; "All sounds can be caught and imprisoned, all echoes are capable of being combined" [Stavans 280]). The story therefore juxtaposes music and noise and art and nonart. The composer also hears beauty:

> La luz vibrante es himno, y la melodía de la selva halla un eco en mi corazón. Desde el ruido de la tempestad hasta el canto del pájaro, todo se confunde y enlaza en la infinita cadencia. (Ramoneda 184)
>
> The shimmering light is an anthem, and the melody of the forest finds echo in my heart. From the deafening noise of the storm to the song of the bird, everything mixes and joins and intertwines in infinite cadence. (Stavans 281)

The composer desires to aestheticize sounds from the jungle, rainstorms, and birds. He hopes to rewrite and celebrate them. However, the composer introduces the idea of noise ("el ruido"). Whereas French readers may not recognize some of the sounds the author introduces, they are widely known in Latin America. Because of his homeland, the composer cannot imprison "noise" within chromatic scales. In detaining this noise, he would imprison himself, too. The chromatic scales he once had faith in fail him. He cannot encompass the "infinita cadencia" through them. The question emerges as to whether Western systems limit the Latin American artist. For Darío, Western musical language falls short of enabling him to express his local experience. It cripples the composer.

Darío moves from this antidote to the composer's dilemma, which is the human voice, its breath, and echo. The poet describes each facet of the voice, which sounds it produces, and how.

The voice morphs into echoes: “todos los ecos son susceptibles de combinaciones” (Ramoneda 184; “All echoes are capable of being combined” [Stavans 280]). The mouth sounds out words: “hallar consonantes, los busco en dos bocas que se juntan” (Ramoneda 184; “And to find consonants, I search in two mouths whose lips come together” [Stavans 281]). The human breath takes shape in la Reina Mab’s veil: “tomó un velo azul casi impalpable, como formado de suspiros” (Ramoneda 184; “And then Queen Mab … took out an azure veil, as impalpable as though it were made of sighs” [Stavans 281]). The artists laugh: “se oyen risas que quitan la tristeza” (Ramoneda 185; “[they] laugh a laughter that banishes sadness” [Stavans 281]). Here the human voice serves as a musical instrument. It creates beauty from speech, echo, breathing, and laughter. Likewise, “el canto del pájaro” (the song of the bird) holds the same privileges as the human voice. As the poet says: “tengo alas de águila que parten a golpes mágicos el huracán” (Ramoneda 184; “I possess the wings of the eagle, which with magical strokes can part the hurricane” [Stavans 280]). Bird songs and the human voice transcend the “muchedumbre” (snorts and bellows) of the noisy, outside world. More importantly, they resolve the limitations of Western music systems. These voices and sounds represent a new aesthetic horizon for Latin American artists.

The narrative concludes by dismissing antiquated tools for creating art. The narrator details certain objects when la Reina Mab cloaks her blue veil on the men. They dance:

> extrañas farándolas alrededor de un blanco Apolo, de un lindo paisaje, de un violín viejo, de un amarillento manuscrito. (Ramoneda 185)
>
> they dance strange capers around a white Apollo, a pretty landscape, an old violin, a yellowing manuscript. (Stavans 281)

In their celebratory dance, they forget about the statue of Apollo, rickety violin, and yellowing parchment paper. These symbols once dictated their means of expression, but they have become

useless. The poet sheds conventions and makes space for new devices like the human voice, bird song, and rainstorms. These new sounds allow him to innovate in music and poetry.

This story questions the techniques of Western classical music and how they can limit the use of sounds outside their privileged realm. The composer's and poet's relationships to their local familiar soundscapes causes them to question whether Western musical language can faithfully express all experience. Indeed, local experience remains outside the Western canon.

Signaling the Political: Mechanical Sounds and Futurism

Nearly twenty-five years after the publication of *Azul …* in 1888, Darío returned to the subject of mechanical resonance in Italian and Spanish Futurism, of which he was skeptical. The two avant-garde documents he critiqued were Gabriel Alomar's *El futurisme* (1904) and Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's "I manifesti del futurismo" (1909). In important ways, these texts complement and consolidate the views that were inchoate in his earlier short stories, and a few observations about the nature of futurism in the Iberian world is necessary to move forward with my argument.

Catalonia's Futurism had a different tradition from Italy's Futurism. On June 18, 1904, Gabriel Alomar (1873–1941), a Mallorcan poet and publisher, delivered "El futurisme" as a lecture to a small audience at Ateneu, a literary society in Barcelona (Merjian 403). His paper appeared the following year in the Catalan vanguard journal, *l'Avenç*, before being translated into Spanish and published on its own (Merjian 403). He opposed the rural and pastoral depictions of Spain and instead affirmed a new and modern era for Catalonia. He aimed to replace old ideals of patriotism and fraternity with the idea of a youthful generation who would develop a new city, unique traditions, and new codes of national pride (Schwartz 404). In the

end, the Catalan avant-garde literary movement, *noucentisme*, superseded Alomar's short-lived Futurist trajectory.

Futurism in Italy resulted in a much longer political and aesthetic legacy than that of Spain. Marinetti most likely read Alomar's essay through Marcel Robin's substantial review in the well-known French journal, *Mercure* (December 1, 1908; Merjian 402). Alomar accused Marinetti of plagiarism when the latter's "I manifesti del futurismo" appeared in Paris's *Le Figaro* just a few months later, on February 20, 1909.[13] From 1909–12, Marinetti and his compatriot followers published thirty manifestos on related artistic concepts. This literary, musical, architectural, theatrical, and visual arts movement sought to encapsulate modern city life: its physiological, psychological, social, and political conditions (Berghaus xix). Marinetti also applied an anarchosyndicalist view by privileging military action and war as revolutionizing the world. His confrontational ideology would inspire Italians to embrace the oncoming First World War as a necessary purging in the name of a resurrected national identity.

In his poetic experimentation, Marinetti built a vast sonic vocabulary to simulate machinery and public spaces. His texts often disregard standard syntax, displacing adjectives and nouns and advocating for infinitives over conjugated verbal forms. He also employs onomatopoeia, synoptic tables, and unconventional spelling (Marinetti et al. xi). Other indicators of urban intensity include mathematical symbols, plus graphic and typographic experiments. One prominent example of this technique appears in Marinetti's collection—*Zang toumb toumb.*[14] In one of its poems, "Correction of Proofs and Desires," an automobile sounds "trrrrrrrrrrrrrrr" and

[13] According to Merjian: "It remains impossible to verify the extent to which Marinetti availed himself of El Futurisme or its subsequent translations and reiterations. The tracing of Alomar's potential influence on Marinetti will necessarily remain speculative. Since Lily Litvak resurrected Alomar's text from relative oblivion a few decades ago, however, scholars have squared off as to the extent of Marinetti's indebtedness to the Catalan's precedent" (402).

[14] Marinetti first published these poems in French in 1912–13 and in Italian in 1914.

"pon-pon-traaak tatatraaak" at 70 km/h (Marinetti et al. 57–61). In another text, "Bridge," a flock of crows sings "caaaaaw," while watering cans of bullets declare "tatatatatata," and a bridge cable is "thrrrrrrobbing." His text embraces the language of machines as a basis for literary experimentation.

Against this backdrop of extreme experimentation, Darío's two essays elaborate his literary and political concerns about Futurism. He first caught wind of Alomar's piece when it was translated into Spanish. One year before Robin's review, he had already acknowledged Alomar's manifesto in the introduction to his collection of poems, *The Wandering Song* (1907; Valle-Castillo et al. 693). Then, less than two months after Marinetti's publication in *Le Figaro*, Darío translated and reviewed the Italian manifesto in "Marinetti y el Futurismo" on April 5, 1909 (*La Nación*).

Darío questions Catalonian and Italian Futurism in three fundamental ways: he rejects mechanical resonance and categorizes it as noise; he salvages the human from the machine; and he claims that any celebration of mechanical din can overlook its negative geopolitical implications. The first two ideals from "El rey burgués" reemerge here. He categorizes mechanical sounds as repellant. However, in this essay, he explicitly elaborates a third point: he warns his Central and South American audiences to be cautious of the industrial development in their homeland.

Marinetti writes about the sounds of transportation: automobiles, tanks, railway stations and trains, steamships, and airplanes. Describing them as "many-hued and multi-voiced tides of revolution," he champions their high-pitched soundwaves and their ability to travel across time and space at a greater speed than ever before (Marinetti et al. 13–14). In summary, he anthropomorphizes industry and technology, drawing parallels with a sniffing nose, a pulsating

heart, a belching stomach, chewing or gnawing teeth, and the fluttering wings of a flying bird or an insect. Unlike Darío's sonic oppositions (e.g., body and industry), Marinetti likens production to the male physique.

Darío, in contrast, considers Marinetti's industrial sounds extremely disconcerting. He also expresses concern that Marinetti has not credited Gabriel Alomar with inventing these ideas:

> Solamente que el Futurismo estaba ya fundado por el gran mallorquín Gabriel Alomar. Ya he hablado de esto en las Dilucidaciones, que encabezan mi Canto errante. ¿Conocía Marinetti el folleto en catalán en que expresa sus pensares de futurista Alomar? Creo que no, y que no se trata sino de una coincidencia. (Schwartz 404)

> The problem is, Futurism was founded by the great Mallorcan Gabriel Alomar. And I have spoken about this in *Dilucidations*, which prefaces my *Canto Errante.* Did Marinetti know the pamphlet in Catalan in which Alomar put forth his *Pensees?* I believe he did not, and that this is just another one of those coincidences. (Stavans 424)[15]

Darío predicts Futurist literature will inevitably attract amateurs, whose literary production will be brash and superficial. He continues,

> Si Marinetti con sus obras vehementes ha probado que tiene un admirable talento y que sabe llenar su misión de Belleza, no creo que se manifiesto haga más que animar a un buen número de imitadores a hacer "futurismo" a ultranza, muchos, seguramente, como sucede siempre, sin tener el talento ni el verbo del iniciador. (Schwartz 407–08)

> Although Marinetti has, with his vehement works, proven that he has admirable talent and is able to fill his mission with Beauty, I do not believe that his manifesto does anything but inspire a goodly number of imitators to do "Futurism" to an extreme—many of them, surely, as always happens without the talent or the poetry of an innovator. (Stavans 428)

In this vein, Darío establishes a set of values for literature that includes prudence, sensibility, and vision. He believes Futurism cannot achieve these values, reserved for an imagined elite. Hence,

[15] In Darío's *Dilucidaciones* in *El Canto Errante* (1907), he states: "Precepto, encasillado, costumbres, clisé …, vocablos sagrados. Anathema sit al que sea osado a perturbar lo convenido de hoy, o lo convenido de ayer. Hay un horror de futurismo, para usar la expresión, de este gran cerebral y más grande sentimental que tiene por nombre Gabriel Alomar, el cual será descubierto cuando asesine su tranquilo vivir, o se tire a un improbable Volga en una Riga no aspirada."

his commitments to French Symbolism, Spanish Golden Age poetry, classical mythology, Greek antiquity, and Catholic religious oratory show his artistic taste.

Darío uses mythology to predict the fate of Futurism. He refutes Marinetti's claim that poetry must sound mechanical to communicate the promise of the future by referencing the fall of Hercules:

> Apolo y Anfión inferiores a Heracles? Las fuerzas desconocidas no se doman con la violencia. Y, en todo caso, para el Poeta, no hay fuerzas desconocidas. (Schwartz 405)
>
> Apollo and Antiphon inferior to Hercules? The unknown forces are not tamed with violence. And at any rate, for the poet there *are* no unknown forces. (Stavans 425)

Regardless of Hercules' mythical strength, he dies; not even a machine's fabled power can outlast the passage of time. Using the example of Apollo and Antiphon, Darío argues that classical poetry and song will guide us to the future. In other words, the future belongs to the idealized ancient past.

Darío's reverence for antiquity and nature leads him to decry dead-end urban growth. Reiterating his reference to Hercules' inevitable death, Darío foresees machinery's physical limitations:

> ¡Oh! ¡Marinetti! El automóvil es un pobre escarabajo soñado, ante la eterna Destrucción que se revela, por ejemplo, en el reciente horror de Trinacria. (Schwartz 406)
>
> Oh, Marinetti! The automobile is a poor carapaced thing in a dream before the eternal Destruction that is revealed, for example, in the recent horror of Trinacria. (Stavans 425)

Not only is locomotive anything but beautiful (a repelling insect, actually), its power will never measure up to nature. Just a few months before Darío's essay, a devastating earthquake occurred in Trinacria (today known as Sicily), leaving it in ruins. Like Hercules' inevitable fall, human-made machinery or cities inevitably succumb to time's passage.

Continuing in the same spirit of "El Rey Burgués," Darío recalls in this essay the sounds of nature and Hellenic culture, referring to the lyre, Apollo, Antiphon, Bellerophontes, Mercury, and the Winged Victory of Samothrace for sonic inspiration. He then asks,

> ¿Qué es más bello, una mujer desnuda o la tempestad? ¿Un lirio o un cañonazo? (Schwartz 405)
>
> Which is more beautiful, a naked women or a storm? A lily or a canon blast? (Stavans 425)

To supplement his query, he believes beauty resides in the realm of Antiquity:

> Si no en la forma moderna de comprensión, siempre se podría volver a la antigüedad en busca de Belerofonte o Mercurios. (Schwartz 405)
>
> If not in the modern way of understanding, one could always return to antiquity in search of Bellerophon or Mercury. (Stavans 425)

These sounds both conjure Hellenic culture and hint at Central and South America's preindustrial landscapes and climates. Darío excludes mechanical sounds from his poetic, geographic, and sonic vision.

Conclusion

If we consider how Darío pits urban sounds against antiquity in *Azul …*, it is not surprising that he had little patience for Futurism. His preoccupation with mechanical urban noise led him to interpret heavy industry as dangerous to Central and South America. As he concluded in his article on Marinetti,

> Dicen en Italia es preciso que deje de ser el "grand marché des brocanteurs". No estamos desde luego en pleno futurismo cuando son profesores italianos los que llaman a ilustrar a sus pueblos respectivos un Teodoro Roosevelt y un Emilio Mitre. (Schwartz 406)
>
> They say that Italy must no longer be the *grand marché des brocanteurs*. We are not, of course, in the full bloom of Futurism when it is Italian professors who call upon

> Theodore Roosevelt or an Emilio Mitre to educate their respective nations. (Stavans 426)[16]

Indeed, Theodore Roosevelt had made a global name for himself by 1913. The US Navy's "Great White Fleet" successfully circled the globe between 1907 and 1909; meanwhile, the Panama Canal, under US occupation, was near completion. Moreover, Darío's poem about resisting US imperialism in Central and South America—"A Roosevelt" published in 1905—had already reached popular readership in Latin America and Europe. Darío was also keen on identifying militarist endeavors led by Latin Americans. Emilio Mitre (1824–93) fell in this category. Mitre, the brother of the Argentinian president, Bartolomé Mitre, was a military general who served under the presidencies of his brother and Domingo Faustino Sarmiento. The battles Mitre led and joined contributed to the formation of the Argentinian nation-state, albeit at the expense of the indigenous population's extermination.[17] Roosevelt and Mitre's militarism ushered in a plague for Darío: "En cuanto a que la Guerra sea la única higiene del mundo, la Peste reclama" (Schwartz 406; "As for War being the world's best and only hygiene, there is always the Plague" [Stavans 425]). War comes at the cost of Central and South American cultural, social, and economic autonomy.

Darío employed sound for political effect. He repeatedly categorized mechanical sounds as repelling and unpleasant, the direct result of neocolonial expansion in Central America. He heard the rumble of a distant storm: war and revolutions. Rather than turn a deaf ear to these sounds, he alarmed audiences of their impending arrival. If Latin America embraced these

[16] A "grand marché des brocanteurs" refers to a second-hand store.

[17] Mitre participated in the nation's civil wars that were near genocidal for the pampas' indigenous communities, including the Catriel, Cachul, and those living in the Ranqueles. He participated in battles such as the Cañada de los Leones (1855), Batalla de Cepeda (1859), La Batalla de Pavón (1861), and la Guerra del Paraguay (1864–70; Ruiz Moreno; Zenequelli).

cacophonous soundscapes—he claimed—the result would be a political, economic, and poetic loss on a grand scale.

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CHAPTER TWO:

"Marcha triunfal": A Comparative Reading of Rubén Darío's Poem and Luis A. Delgadillo's Concert March

On February 6, 1916, the poet Rubén Darío took his last breath. Church bells, pealing like an orchestra, rang from la Catedral de León, and military canons fired from atop the city's Fortín de Acosasco, signaling his death to the public. Soon after, his body was prepared for the lavish funeral ceremony mounted by the Nicaraguan government. The artist Octavio Torrealba completed two portraits of Darío, the first of which depicts his state of agony before death, whereas the second portrait depicts Darío in livor mortis. The sculptor José López created a mold cast of Darío's face and the composer Luis A. Delgadillo adapted Darío's poem "Marcha Triunfal" as a concert march that could be played at the poet's funeral. Having studied at the Conservatorio di Milano, Delgadillo had been contacted by the Nicaraguan government to help with that music. One year later, Delgadillo set 21 more of Darío's poems to music, exploring genres such as the romanza, barcarolle, berceuse, and canción nicaragüense (Delgadillo, *Música Nicaragüense Album Num. 3*). As these examples indicate, the Nicaraguan government and Nicaraguan artists used the opportunity of Darío's death to solidify their vision of a national identity for the country on the basis of his work.

Darío's lavish funeral lasted eight days. On display in the auditorium of the Universidad de León, Darío's body was then transported to the Cathedral for the ceremony (where it is interred to this day). Shortly afterward, the Salvadoran newspaper *Diario del Salvador* published an article by Doña María A. de Bermúdez, an upper-class Nicaraguan, in which she described her personal experience of the funeral. She reported that approximately 5,000 people had arrived from different parts of the country to see the deceased poet's corpse. In her account, Doña María

describes the type of ceremony that accompanies the death of a national hero, but here a hero for all of Central America:

> nos fuimos a la Catedral. Allí fue donde vimos por primera vez el cadáver de Darío. Estaba envuelto en su ropaje blanco, de seda, al estilo griego o romano, con la cara descubierta y la cabeza coronada de laurel. Me impresioné mucho al mirarlo; estaba cambiado mucho; parecía un santo de marfil puesto en veneración ante los fieles. Millares de personas entraban y salían a contemplar el féretro y las ofrendas enviadas de todas partes de Nicaragua y de las demás repúblicas de Centro América. El cadáver estaba colocado en una tarima alta, especie de columna blanca, entre otras cuatro columnas de mármol que sostenían los Pabellones de Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras y Costa Rica, todas ellas con magníficas coronas. Rubén descansaba sobre la columna truncada que representaba a Nicaragua y el Pabellón nuestro caía sobre sus pies. (Bautista Lara 328–34)

> we headed to the Cathedral. There, we saw Darío's body for the first time. He was wrapped in white robe made of silk like the Greeks or Romans. His face was shown and his head adorned with a laurel leaf crown. I felt overwhelmed when I saw him. He had changed so much. He looked like a saintly ivory statue put on display for worshippers. Thousands of people came and went to pay their respects to the deceased. Alms and gifts were sent from all over Nicaragua and the republics of Central America. The body was placed on a dais in the shape of a white column. Four marble columns surrounded it, each bearing a flower crown and draped with the national flags of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Costa Rica. Rubén rested on top of the shorter column designated for Nicaragua. The national flag lay over his feet.

Inside the Cathedral, the funeral service had commenced with a grand procession led by Bishop Pereira y Castellón, followed by dozens of clergymen, priests, and seminarians, all dressed in black robes with five-meter trains dragging behind them. As Doña María noted, the service included liturgical hymns and Delgadillo's march, performed by an orchestra of 80 musicians. At the conclusion of the ceremony, "pole bearers lifted the coffin onto their shoulders" and exited the cathedral to begin the street procession (Bautista Lara 328–34). Dazzled by the mythology surrounding Darío, Doña María speaks as the average spectator may have in how she accepts the production value of this public event. The funeral also presented a paradox, however, in that during his lifetime, Darío had worked for the government but had been poorly compensated and

seldom acknowledged by the state. On the face of it, then, if the funeral is any indication, the state seemed to value him more in death than in life.

Doña María describes the music as one small detail of the funeral in her article, but even this brief mention leads me to ask how the archive of sounds in Nicaraguan poetry expanded and became politicized when composers set Darío's poems to music. What happened when Luis Delgadillo, a leading Nicaraguan composer, turned Darío's "Marcha triunfal"—a formally adventurous poem that created a new sonically-oriented language for the Spanish-speaking world—into a march? And what does it mean for this musical setting of Darío's poetry to be performed in a context that promotes a regional or nationalist agenda?

By investigating sound and sonic references in Darío's poem, Delgadillo's funeral march, and the government-sponsored funeral at which the piece was performed, I hope to explain Darío's ambiguous feelings about his Nicaraguan national identity. Upon a closer reading attentive to sound, it becomes clear that Darío's "Marcha triunfal" pushes against a nationalist or regional framework and instead presents a pan-Latin American, anti-imperialist vision. As I discuss later, the poem is shaped by various circumstances: US imperialism, a dialogue in the Argentinean intellectual community, Nicaraguan nationalist politics, and performances of Giuseppe Verdi's "Gloria all' Egitto" from *Aida.* In this chapter I compare the sounds in Darío's poetry with those in Delgadillo's concert march, and raise questions about what happens when imagined sounds are realized and used to memorialize the dead. To prepare this analysis, I first analyze several other poems in which Darío establishes an archive of sounds, the knowledge of which allows me to give a more nuanced reading of his "Marcha triunfal." Finally, the event of Darío's funeral will allow me to explore how Delgadillo's musical setting of Darío's sonically rich poetry was received, and thus contributed to his commemoration as a national poet. I

suggest that the march—and its government-sponsored reception—reduced Darío's political and literary achievement by fashioning him into a symbol of Nicaraguan nationalism.

Darío's Ambivalent Relationship with Nicaragua

Before I begin my analysis, I would like to consider Darío's relationship to Nicaragua. Upon his death, the Nicaraguan government mythologized Darío in lavish ceremonies, the awarding of national titles, and building of monuments. Along with the funeral ceremony, Darío was accorded honors as a war minister. Moreover, an official commission carried a message of condolence to his second wife, Rosario Murillo (Bautista Lara 328–34). Yet his relationship with Nicaragua while he lived had been ambivalent and one might even say paradoxical; he struggled with this relationship his entire life. Since the age of fifteen, he had separated himself geographically from the country. He felt a degree of insecurity about coming from Nicaragua, especially its "rustic provincialism and the financial insecurity and social marginality suffered by its writers" (Whisnant 10). Yet, he attempted to reaffirm his Nicaraguan identity by taking on several governmental posts abroad. His writings offer few glimpses of what he experienced growing up in Nicaragua, and his poetry seldom thematizes Nicaragua as a poetic subject.[18] Darío's contradictory relationship with his home country was exacerbated by the notion that the government sometimes, in his view, neglected him, in spite of his work as a diplomat and growing fame as an author published across Latin America and Europe (Whisnant 29).

The earliest example of the government's neglect toward Darío occurred when he was an adolescent. A special legislative resolution secured funding for Darío to study abroad in Europe at the state's expense. However, the funding was soon retracted when Darío read his verses at a

[18] According to Whisnant, fewer than 40 of Darío's 450 writings were published in Nicaragua's *Nicaraguan National Bibliography* through 1986. Almost half of those belonged to a series of 30-page pamphlets issued in 1943 for public schools (15).

presidential reception. Darío later describes these poems as "red with anti-religious radicalism" (Darío, *La Vida* 44–45). Because the government and the church held equal power, the president admonished Darío for the ideas he expressed and described him as a national and religious threat.[19]

Nevertheless, Darío continued to rely on government funding to make a living. Following his residence in El Salvador, he held a sinecure in the secretary's office to the Nicaraguan president that allowed him time to write (Darío, *La Vida* 59–60; Whisnant 13). According to Darío's autobiography, the government gave him grudging official recognition as a Nicaraguan delegate to the Columbus quatercentenary celebration in Spain, Nicaraguan consul in Paris, a delegate to the Pan American conference in Rio de Janeiro, Nicaraguan delegate for the centennial celebration of Mexico's independence, and a member of the commission on the Nicaraguan–Honduran border dispute (Darío, *La Vida* 111, 244, 257, 261; Whisnant, 13). Despite his appointments, he still harbored resentment toward his country and hoped never to return. As David E. Whisnant states, "although he yearned for official recognition and support, they were doled out to him in … dribs and drabs until the final guiltily effusive outpouring at his death" (Whisnant, 16). He viewed Nicaragua as a place that had discouraged him from pursuing a literary career, leading him to pursue his career elsewhere in El Salvador, Chile, Argentina, and Europe (Whisnant, 16).

Perhaps Darío was most resentful because his monetary compensation was unreliable, despite the various positions he held. At times, his salary was not paid in full. Once, the government delayed paying him for three months during his tenure as minister to Spain. The

[19] The Nicaraguan president wrote: "My son, if you now write thus against the religion of your parents and your country, what will happen if you go to Europe to learn worse things" (Whisnant 13).

funds provided were not sufficient for him to live as befitted an ambassador (Whisnant, 15). Even leading up to the final days before his death, his salary from previous work was delayed. Darío's friend, Dr. Luis Debayle, advocated on his behalf to President Adolfo Díaz to secure a small monthly sum for Darío's medical expenses. Darío suffered from and died from cirrhosis of the liver. Despite these inequities, one must bear in mind that Nicaragua was a poor country and that most Central American countries had limited ambassadorial representation. At the same time, the Nicaraguan government may have been ambivalent toward Darío's bohemian lifestyle (Whisnant, 15). I want to keep this situation in mind as I analyze the sound archives of Darío's poems.

Darío's Anti-imperialism

I will begin my analysis of the sound archives in Darío's selected poems by first situating them in the context of US–Nicaraguan relations and Darío's anti-imperialism, which I believe are important to how they are conceived. After its defeat in the Spanish-American War of 1898, Spain lost its last colonies—Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines—to the United States. America became the ascendent power in the region and used that influence to serve North American trade and military, economic, and political interests. In 1903, the US government orchestrated Panama's secession from Colombia; by the 1910s, the United Fruit Company (UFCO) oversaw the International Railways of Central America, which ran north–south through the isthmus. Development continued into the next decade (Ana Patricia Rodríguez 6, 48). In 1914, the United States financed the completion of the interoceanic canal in Panama. Finally, UFCO commanded The Great White Fleet and the Grey Fleet transatlantic lines between Europe, the United States, and Central America that ran until WWII (Rodríguez 48). Over the course of a hundred years, the United States and European concessions in Central American territory

transformed the isthmus' social, political, and economic landscape, turning it into a hub of global modernization. But Central America did not benefit from the profits created by it. Countries like the United States kept those profits for themselves.

After the Spanish American War, Latin American intellectuals—among them José Martí, José Enrique Rodó, Rubén Darío, and later, Salomón de la Selva—increasingly criticized unequal north–south relations. They denounced US imperialist actions while also offering a renewed moral, aesthetic, and political compass for Latin America. An example comes to us from the Uruguayan philosopher and essayist José Enrique Rodó whose project took on new moral and philosophical directions. Rodó's seminal text, *Ariel* (1900), received international recognition in the Spanish-speaking world (San Ramón 77). The text draws from the Greco–Latin cultural heritage favored in Europe, while also considering South America's flora and fauna and indigenous histories. Rodó and Darío were involved in a polemic focusing on which discursive categories best represent a modern Latin America. In 1899, just prior to the publication of *Ariel,* Rodó published an essay entitled, "Rubén Darío." It harshly criticized Darío's poems in *Prosas profanas* (1896) for being decadent, escapist, and indifferent toward the growing imperial crisis in Latin America. Rodó's essay impacted Darío and, as a result, he shifted the direction of his writings to bring a new political consciousness to bear on *Cantos de Vida y Esperanza* (1905) and *El Canto Errante* (1907). These poems more explicitly communicate anti-imperialist politics (Jrade 41-42; Echevarría and Pupo-Walker).

Darío foregrounds his anti-imperialist attitude toward the US in poems from *Cantos de Vida y Esperanza* (1905) and *El Canto Errante* (1907), and in his chronicles published in *La Nación* and in the Costa Rican journal *El Heraldo.* In "A Roosevelt" and "Salutación al águila," he uses the figure of US President Theodore Roosevelt and the American eagle to symbolize the

rapacious greed of the United States. In contrast, "Momotombo" allows Central America's volcanic landscapes to function as symbols of resistance to US imperialism. As early as 1891, Darío published several chronicles in *El Heraldo* and *La Nación* that openly criticized US imperialism, Spanish colonial occupation, and European colonialism more broadly: issues that continued to inform his intellectual production.[20]

Darío's essay "Prefacio" in *Cantos* (1905) offers a good example of this. In it Darío discusses why poems in the collection may have a political message:

> Si en estos cantos hay política, es porque aparece el universal. Y si encontráis versos a un presidente, es porque son un clamor continental. Mañana podremos ser yanquis (y es lo más probable). (Ramoneda 334)
>
> If these songs include politics, it is because they are universal. If you find verses dedicated to a president, it is because they resound across the continent. Tomorrow we could become Yankees (and it is very likely).

Darío's dramatic warning became a reality in many respects. The United States occupied the Central American region during the first half of the twentieth century. People in Central America came to embrace US culture due in part to the American-made products they consumed, a phenomenon I discuss further in my third chapter. Darío is able to reflect on these issues because of the distance he had as a cosmopolitan. By the time *Cantos* was published, he had visited and lived in several West European cities, the US northeast, and across Central and South America.

[20] In *El Heraldo*, Darío argues in defense of the Latin American continent in the wake of the US occupation. Articles such as "Bronce al soldado Juan" (1891) and "Por el lado del Norte" (1892) reflect his ardent discussion. In "Bronce al soldado Juan," Darío celebrates Juan Santamaría, a Costa Rican who fought against William Walker's invasion in 1856. In "La insurrección en Cuba" published in *La Nación* in 1895, Darío challenges North American expansionism and Spanish imperialism while expressing his support for Cuban revolutionaries like José Martí. In "El triunfo de Calibán" (*El Tiempo* de Buenos Aires, May 20, 1898) and in "El crepúsculo de España" (*El Mercurio de América* de Buenos Aires, November, 1898) he analyzes US imperialist occupation in Latin America (Sanhueza 308–09).

His travels allowed him to gain a global vantage point that most likely led him to anticipate how the United States would come to dominate Central and South America.

I argue in this chapter that Darío evokes sounds in his poems to communicate his attitude toward imperial aggression in Latin America. I see this attitude in the poems "Marcha triunfal," "Helios," and "Tarde del trópico" from *Cantos* and "Sinfonía en gris mayor" from *Prosas profanas* (1896). These poems include the sounds of military bands, Central American landscapes and seascapes, animals, and musical instruments from Greek antiquity. Sounds determine the poems' moods and temporal orientations, representing Darío's fears in his contemporary moment. He turns back to a nostalgic past or forward to a future free from Yankeeism.

"Helios": Noise and the Sounds of Greek Antiquity and Central America

I begin my analysis with Darío's poem "Helios," which celebrates Helios, the Greek god of the sun, and other Greek mythological figures, as well as Don Quixote and Sancho Panza. Darío draws on sounds associated with Greek antiquity and Central American landscapes to depict Helios, Hyperion (Greek god of light, watchfulness, and wisdom, and Helios' father), and Pegasus (the mythical winged horse). He creates a mood of joy, while pointing to a nostalgic past. The poem uses noise to identify Greek antiquity and Central America. Noise is introduced in the poem's opening and brings the poem to a close:

¡Oh ruido divino!	O divine noise,
¡Oh ruido sonoro! (Darío, *La Vida* 94)	O sonorous noise! (Derusha and Acerdo 95)

Although noise can be disruptive, Darío combines it with beauty and sonorousness, to urge the reader to give it new meaning. The three words "ruido," "divino," and "sonoro" have the

common "o"; their combination allows noise to become divine and beautiful. The poem opens with a lark song and Hyperion's horses trotting, evoking Greek antiquity:[21]

Lanzó la alondra matinal el trino, y sobre ese preludio cristalino, los caballos de oro de que el Hiperionida lleva la rienda asida, al trotar forman música armoniosa, un argentino trueno. (Darío, *La Vida* 94)	The morning lark has launched its trill, and over that crystalline prelude, the golden horses— whose rein the Hyperionid takes up tightly— make harmonious music as they trot along, a silvery thunder. (Derusha and Acerdo 95)

The sound of the bird song ("el trino" and "ese preludio cristalino") creates a foundation for the sound of the horses' carriage ("y sobre ese preludio cristalino"). Following the lark's song, the horses' trotting resounds ("al trotar forman / música armoniosa"). In the next lines, Hyperion's horse carriage strides over the wind, sounding the sacred instrument:

Pasa, pasa, ¡oh bizarro manejador de la fatal cuadriga que al pisar sobre el viento despierta el instrumento sacro! (Darío, *La Vida* 94)	Roll on, roll on, O dashing handler of the fatal chariot that in treading the wind awakens the sacred instrument! (Derusha and Acerdo 95)

The trembling mountains—an erupting volcano—conjure Pegasus in his chariot:

Tiemblan las cumbres de los montes más altos que en sus rítmicos saltos tocó Pegaso. (Darío, *La Vida* 94)	The summits tremble on the highest mountains, which in his rhythmic bounds Pegasus touched. (Derusha and Acerdo 95)

The phrase "tiemblan las cumbres" (the summits tremble) evokes the image of a volcano erupting. The erupting volcano creates a rhythm inspired by Pegasus's touch. Furthermore, "Pegaso" rhymes and rhythmically syncs with "rítmicos saltos tocó." The "o" sound is again privileged here, and the complex rhyme created by the fact that "Pegaso" and "rítmico" are both trisyllabic allows Darío to build the poem's message. Across the three stanzas discussed, sound

[21] Greek comic playwright Aristophanes characterizes the lark in *The Birds.* The lark sings in flight and it boasts to be older than the gods and earth itself.

or rhythm causes further movement: the lark's song generates the horses' trot that moves the carriage forward, causing a sacred instrument to sound, and Pegasus gives the impulse for the volcano's rhythm. The poem concludes by celebrating Helios in an incantation. The second to last stanza offers a series of images of apples, lilies, volcanoes, human bone, and dusk culminating in vibrating rhythm and melodies from dusk:

Gloria hacia ti del corazón de las manzanas	Glory to you from the heart of apples,
de los cálices blancos de los lirios,	from the white calyxes of lilies,
y del amor que manas	and from the love you pour out,
hecho de dulces fuegos y divinos martirios,	made of sweet fires and divine torments,
y del volcán inmenso,	and from the immense volcano,
y del hueso minúsculo,	and from the minuscule bone,
y del ritmo que pienso,	and from the rhythm that I think,
y del ritmo que vibra en	and from the rhythm that vibrates
el corpúsculo	in the corpuscle,
y del Oriente intenso	and from the intense Orient
y de la melodía del crepúsculo.	and from the melody of dusk.
¡Oh ruido divino! (Darío, *La Vida* 96)	O divine noise! (Derusha and Acerdo 97)

The sonic quality of the poem is emphasized through assonant rhyme pairings. "Manzanas" and "manas" are one such example. But more significantly, the poem returns to "ruido divino" and "ruido sonoro," again emphasizing the "o" sound. Examples like "fuegos y divinos martirios," "volcán inmenso," "hueso minúsculo," create an incantory effect. Moreover, "y del" repeats six times, giving a contrast to the "o" sounding words and building to the poem's climactic statement: "¡Oh ruido divino!"

The final verse offers an explanation for the return to the divine noise:

¡Oh ruido divino!	¡Oh divine noise!
Pasa sobre la cruz del palacio que duerme,	Pass over the cross of the sleeping palace,
Y sobre el alma inerme	and over the helpless soul
De quien no sabe nada. No turbes el destino.	of one who knows nothing. Do not upset fate, O
¡Oh ruido sonoro!	sonorous noise!
El hombre, la nación, el continente, el mundo,	Man, nation, continent, and world
aguardan la virtud de tu carro fecundo,	await the virtue of your prolific car,
¡cochero azul que riges los caballos de oro! (Darío, *La Vida* 96)	blue coachmen steering the golden horses! (Derusha and Acerdo 98–99)

The assonant rhyming of “o” reappears and repeats here to demonstrate this “ruido divino.” Words like “el destino,” “el mundo,” “carro fecundo,” “cochero,” and “los caballos de oro” rhyme with “ruido.” On a deeper level, Darío uses “divine noise” to reimagine Central America, referencing “El hombre, la nación, el continente, el mundo.” In this case, looking to the Greek past and landscape offers an antidote to Darío’s present moment of imperial aggression. Darío imagines a modern political subject—himself—who can determine his own criteria for nationhood and continental and global presence. The heavenly noise of nature and the given movement by the Greek gods can give inspiration to Central America without depending on imperial occupation. Darío urges the reader to mobilize noise in pursuit of political freedom.

“Sinfonía en Gris Mayor”: Central American Seascapes and Seaports

“Sinfonía en gris mayor” foregrounds the sounds of a Central American seascape and of Greek antiquity to convey a melancholic, sorrowful sentiment. The poem laments the threat of global capitalism and points to the mortal cost it has on its transatlantic laborers as well as to the ecological cost it has on Central America. The poem evokes the sights and sounds of a seaport and the figure of an aging sailor. The prominent sounds are the bugle, the ocean waves, the cicada that sounds like a guitar, and the cricket that sounds like a one-stringed violin. In addition to these sounds, the poem plays with the oxytone assonant quality of “gris.” At the end of the poem’s alternating lines, “i” repeats in the last syllable of words such as: “zinc,” “cenit,” “clarín,” “gemir,” “país,” “Brasil,” “gin,” “nariz,” “dril,” “el bergantín,” “confín,” “senil,” and “violín.”

Darío wrote "Sinfonía" in 1889 during his visit to Hacienda La Fortuna near Sonsonate, a town near the Salvadoran Pacific coast, Costa del Bálsamo (Trueblood 430).[22] Seaports functioned as entry and exit points for trade and commercial travel by ship among Central America, Europe, and the United States. At the same time, the seaport offers a glimpse into the global market in which Central American countries participated. German, British, French, and US investors and entrepreneurs were granted land in Central America to harvest, develop, and excavate the region's resources. In exchange, they financed railroads, highways, telegraph and electrical lines, and seaports across Central America (Foster 176). In "Sinfonía," Darío laments the damage this infrastructure does to the coastline, which he remembers nostalgically in its precapitalist state.

The poem first describes an ominous, gray coastline. Then, he introduces the first musical instrument: the black bugle ("clarín"). The sounds of the "clarín" drive the wind:

El sol, como un vidrio redondo y opaco, con paso de enfermo camina al cenit; el viento marino descansa en la sombra teniendo de almohada su negro clarín. (Stavans 106)	The sun, a piece of glass, both rounded and opaque, walks toward its zenith with a sick person's steps. The breezes from the sea take a rest in the shade, using as a pillow what their black trumpets play. (Stavans 107)

The breeze is carried by the sounds of the bugle. In other words, the bugle emerges from the breeze. The breeze is met with nature's lament. The ocean waves sadly moan in response:

Las ondas que mueven su vientre de plomo debajo del muelle parecen gemir. (Stavans 106)	The waves, moving their bellies made of lead, seem to be moaning under the great wharf. (Stavans 108)

[22] According to Trueblood, Darío's prose poem "Naturaleza tropical" carries his notation "Hacienda *La Fortuna*, cerca de Sonsonate. Agosto de 1889," which dates his visit on the Costa del Bálsamo during which he presumably wrote "Sinfonía en gris mayor."

Specific references to lead and a wharf symbolize modern industry and trade. At the same time, the waves grieve. The poem personifies the sea breezes, the black bugle, and the moaning waves signaling a distrust toward the sea that channels modern trade and industry.

The lone, aged sailor enters, described with a series of images. His aged body is marked by the many years of physical labor from sailing ships. His face is sunburnt and wrinkled, familiar with the ocean smells of salt and iodine, and athletic and dressed in durable clothing. He finds comfort in smoking his pipe and drinking from a bottle of gin. He is an old sea wolf who has lived a long, seafaring life:

Es viejo ese lobo. Tostaron su cara los rayos de fuego del sol del Brasil; los recios tifones del mar de la China le han visto bebiendo su frasco de *gin.*	That sea-wolf is ancient. The burning rays of light from the Brazilian sun toasted him to a crisp. The harshest typhoons on the South China Sea found him drinking his gin in a protected bay.
La espuma, impregnada de yodo y salitre, ha tiempo conoce su roja nariz, sus crespos cabellos, sus bíceps de atleta, su gorra de lona, su blusa de dril. (Stavans 106)	Iodine and nitrate fecundate the sea-spray that has known his red nose for a very long time, and his curly hair, too, and his athlete's biceps, his hat made of canvas, his shirt ripped in a fray. (Stavans 107)

The poem then shifts to his younger years and contrasts the grey images of the sailors present with the warm, golden images that represent his days of youth. We return to his past, perhaps even to his first sea voyage:

En medio de humo que forma el tabaco ve el viejo el lejano, brumoso país, adonde una tarde caliente y dorada tendidas las velas partió el bergantín … (Stavans 106)	In the midst of the smoke from clouds of tobacco the old man can discern the country lost in fog, where on one afternoon that was golden and warm, the brigantine weighed anchor and sailed away. (Stavans 107)

The sailor is an individual laborer who participates in a global system of capitalism. He has ventured to the seaports of Brazil, China, and everywhere between, serving commercial trade. Darío draws on his experience of sea docks along the Central American coast, which he

thinks provide more inspiration than Theodor Gautier's "Symphonie en blanc majeur," clearly alluded to in its title. In *Historia De Mis Libros,* Darío wrote:

> El recuerdo del mágico Théo, del exquisito Gautier y su "Symphonie en blanc majeur." La mía es anotada "d'apres nature," bajo el sol de mi patria tropical. Yo he visto esas aguas en estagnación, las costas como candentes, los viejos lobos de mar que iban a cargar en goletas y bergantines maderas de tinte, y que partían a velas desplegadas, con rumbo a Europa. Bebedores taciturnos, o risueños, cantaban en los crepúsculos, o a la popa de sus barcos, acompañándose con sus acordeones, cantos de Normandía o de Bretaña, mientras exhalaban los bosques y los esteros cercanos rodeados de manglares, bocanadas cálidas y relentes palúdicos. (Darío, *Historia* 71–72)

> My "Symphony in Grey Major" needlessly evokes in people's mind the magical and exquisite figure, Theo Gautier, and his poem "Symphonie en blanc majeur." However, I scored mine "after nature," beneath the sun of my tropical homeland. I have seen still waters, sizzling coasts, and old sea wolves who load logwood into schooners and brigantines set sail for Europe. I have seen both melancholic and cheerful drinkers who sing at dusk from atop the ship's stern. They keep company by playing the accordion to songs hailing from Normandy or Brittany. Meanwhile, nearby, the jungles and the bay's thick swamps exhale and inhale warm, malarial breezes.

The sailors in the poem are part of Darío's "patria tropical." They dream of a home from afar, but they also pillage the forests and extract raw materials from Latin America. Nevertheless, "Sinfonía" refuses to demonize these sailors. Instead, the poem recognizes the mortal cost sailors pay to keep capitalism functioning. They live as nomads and grow weary of "relentes palúdicos" (malarial breezes). They are exploited. Ultimately, the sailors' story resembles that of Central American locals. They all feel the effects of modern processes of trade and resource extraction: geographic displacement, disease, and estrangement. The sailor is a figure of the seaport—a transient place—a space that is neither here nor there, a space that facilitates comings and goings, departures, and returns. As a transient figure in an in-between space, the sailor is both the victim and product of imperialist expansion, working for the benefit of unseen others and unable to claim ownership of, or comfort in, any particular place or culture.

The moaning ocean waves and the bugle from the beginning of the poem are countered with the cicada and cricket heard at the end of the poem. They serve as an antidote to the bugle. As the sea wolf falls asleep—a gesture that could also represent death—the sounds of the cicada melds with the guitar's sound:

La siesta del trópico. La vieja cigarra ensaya su ronca guitarra senil, (Stavans 106)	Tropical siesta, and the old cicada practices its guitar so hoarse and so senile. (Stavans, 107)

The sonic effect of "rr" from "cigarra" repeats in "ronca" and in "guitarra." At the same time, the poem metaphorically collapses the cicada's repetitive wing clicks with the repetitive strum of the guitar. These two lines also allude to the cicadas Darío heard at the Salvadoran seaport. Darío's prose poem, "Naturaleza tropical," carries his notation "Hacienda La Fortuna, cerca de Sonsonate. Agosto de 1889," he writes,

> Y luego, cuando tras la jornada del día, la tierra caliente se prepara a recibir el rocío de la noche, el *stri, stri* de las cigarras, antes favoritas de las gentes de Grecia, puebla el espacio y se forma un concierto adormecedor en el campo … (Darío, "Naturaleza Tropical," 132)
>
> Then, after a long day, the warm earth prepares to welcome the dampness of the night, the cicada's *stri, stri.* What used to be a favorite among the Greeks, it overtakes the space and plays a sleepy concert over the land.

Although the onomatopoeia "stri stri" does not reappear in the poem, the cicada plays a significant role here as well. The cicada's wing clicks signal alarm, attract mates, and most importantly, establish territory. The cicada charts the territory of the Salvadorean coast and proves itself worthy of aestheticization. The cicadas also offer a comparative entry point that places the sound archive of Central America in relation to that of ancient Greek literary tradition. The cicada is a prominent symbol in the Greek myth of Tithonus (Trueblood 430). Zeus grants him immortality, but not eternal youth. Consequently, Tithonus grows older, but never dies. He

eventually transforms into a cicada and his repetitive wing clicks represent his constant plea to Zeus for death. The figure of the dying sailor and the cicada in the poem could allude to the figure of Tithonus.

The cricket ("el grillo") plays a similar role to the cicada in this poem. Its sound elides with the violin's single playing string:

y el grillo preludia un solo monótono en la única cuerda que está en su violín. (Stavans, 106)	The cricket tries out a monotonous solo on the one-stringed violin it knows how to play. (Stavans, 108)

The cicada and the cricket are both cast as string instruments, countering the bugle and moaning ocean waves. They signal a peaceful emotion that contrasts the danger evoked by the bugle and ocean waves. The poem celebrates the natural insect sounds of the coastline while cautioning against the invasion of winds carried by the sounds of bugles.

"Sinfonía en gris mayor" situates Darío's anxiety about imperial aggression in the context of a local Salvadoran seaport. By aestheticizing this seaport and its soundscape, Darío points to the global system of capitalism that impacts many Central American seaports. Darío laments the current situation through his description of the seaport soundscape.

"Tarde del Trópico": Melancholic Central American Seascapes

"Tarde del trópico" also engenders the sounds of a Central American seascape to evoke melancholic emotions and a state of limbo. The sounds include sea sighing, the violin, a bugle, a lion's roar, and an excerpt from Psalm 51, "Miserere, mei Deus." Darío wrote this poem in May or June, 1892, almost three years after "Sinfonía en gris mayor," while traveling along the

Pacific coast from Costa Rica to Guatemala in the ship "Barracouta" (Trueblood 432).[23] He opens the poem with images that create a dull and heavy mood:

Es la tarde gris y triste. Viste el mar de terciopelo y el cielo profundo viste de duelo. ("Tarde," Darío, Derusha and Acerdo 132)	The evening is gray and sad. The sea is dressed in velvet and the deep sky is dressed in mourning. ("Evening," Derusha and Acerdo 133)

The verse draws attention to the hot and humid climate and likens it to a heavy velvet blanket that traps heat. The "gray" suggests fog. The verse captures the ocean wave dips and rises (Trueblood 433). "Triste," "Viste," and "viste" create one rhyme, while "terciopelo," "cielo," and "duelo" create another, evoking the wave ebb and flow. A cry arises from the depths of the ocean:

Del abismo se levanta la queja amarga y sonora. La onda, cuando el viento canta, llora. ("Tarde," Darío, Derusha and Acerdo 132)	From the abyss arises the bitter and reverberating complaint. The wave, when the wind sings, weeps. ("Evening," Derusha and Acerdo 133)

Coming from the ocean's depths ("del abismo"), the waves and breezes moan and weep. The verse leaves the reader feeling uneasy about what comes from the sea. The ocean is personified as weeping, alluding to the Romantic idea of the sublime. Darío then intensifies this feeling of unease by bringing in the sound of violins and a line from Psalm 51:

Los violines de la bruma saludan al sol que muere. Salmodia la blanca espuma: *Miserere.* ("Tarde," Darío, Derusha and Acerdo 132)	The violins of the mist greet the dying sun. The white foam drones a psalm: *Miserere.* ("Evening," Derusha and Acerdo 133)

As in the previous poems, nature becomes sound. The mist transforms into a violin and the waves mourn the dying sun. The waves drone "Miserere," but omit the "mei." The ocean mourns

[23] Darío also composed the prose piece, "En el mar," during that same voyage on the Barracouta.

rather than Darío himself.[24] Darío references the penitential psalm that opens with "Miserere mei, Deus" ("Have mercy on me, God"), a Gregorian chant set frequently during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[25] He alludes to the rhythm of the chant by emphasizing the "s" and "m" sounds from "Miserere." Darío introduces words like "salmodia," "saludan," "sol," "muere," "espuma," and "Miserere" to emphasize the "s" and "m" consonants. The verse's images and chant-like quality suggest a state of fear when at sea.

Darío then moves to combine the harmony of the sky with the melody of the breeze, which sings a sad, profound song. Again and again, nature becomes sonorous in Darío's poetry:

La armonía el cielo inunda, la brisa va a llevar la canción triste y profunda del mar. ("Tarde," Darío, Derusha and Acerdo 132)	Harmony floods the sky, and the breeze will carry the sad and profound song of the sea. ("Evening," Derusha and Acerdo 133)

In this stanza, the breeze brings the song to the listener's ear. But just as quickly as the song resounds, it fades away when it states, "la brisa va a llevar." These sounds flood the seascape, but at the same time, they fade away. The breeze hushes this rush of noise by carrying it elsewhere.[26] Elsewhere, however, is never clarified, leaving the reader uncertain of where these sounds may land across the abysmal sea.

The bugle sounding a rare symphony resembles the voice of a trembling mountain, perhaps a volcano:

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[24] Trueblood translates Darío's "salmodia" to "psalmsinging." Trueblood also points to an intertextual reference found in Darío's prose poem, "La marea," that he wrote around the same time as "Tarde del trópico." Trueblood notes that Darío writes "salmodia misteriosa de los Muertos" in "La marea," which in the poem transforms into "el sol que muere" (433).

[25] Compositions from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries of Psalm 51 set to Latin-chant form include "Miserere mei, Deus" by Orlande de Lassus (1532–94), "Miserere mei, Deus" by William Byrd (1543–1623), and "Miserere mei, Deus" by Gregorio Allegri (1582–1652).

[26] I credit this analysis to Trueblood's reading: "In the fourth stanza these 'symphonic' voices are drawn together, allowed to swell, and then surprisingly to fade away … The stanza leaves one rather in suspense: one expects a complement to 'llevar'; one wonders in what direction, whereto" (434).

Del clarín del horizonte brota sinfonía rara, como si la voz del monte vibrara. (“Tarde,” Darío, Derusha and Acerdo 132)	From the horn of the horizon a rare symphony booms, as if the voice of the mountain were vibrating. (“Evening,” Derusha and Acerdo 133)

Typically, a bugler works on a military ship, announcing with bugle calls the start of routine or emergency actions. Darío compares the bugle to a volcano in its menacing and fearful roar. This sound is not welcome.

In the final verse, the “clarín” is compared to an invisible, raw sound, and the voice of a lion:

Cual si fuese lo invisible … Cual si fuese el rudo son que diese al viento un terrible león. (“Tarde,” Darío, Derusha and Acerdo 132)	As though it were the invisible … as though it were raw sound given to the wind by a terrible lion. (“Evening,” Derusha and Acerdo 133)

Darío compares the oncoming ship, metonymized by the sounding bugle, to a vibrating mountain and the raw sound of the wind animated by a roaring lion, while the ocean weeps in sadness. The poem’s sound archive of Central America’s seascape and landscape signals imminent danger to the reader.

“Helios,” “Sinfonía en gris mayor,” and “Tarde del trópico” address imperial aggression in slightly different ways. In “Helios,” Darío looks both hopefully toward the future and nostalgically to the past to evade the current reality of Yankeeism. The poem reimagines and celebrates a future that is free from US imperial aggression. In contrast, in “Sinfonía” and “Tarde del trópico,” he uses seascape sounds to address the current impact of imperialism on Central American seaports. Both poems mourn the present moment. Ultimately, all three poems use sound to express Darío’s critical attitude toward imperialism and its consequences.

The Archive of Sounds in "Marcha Triunfal"

I now turn to my analysis of "Marcha triunfal," a poem in which Darío explicitly expresses his desire to resist imperial domination in Central America. This poem uses sounds associated with the military to imagine a hopeful future and nostalgic past. Darío includes again the sounds of a bugle's call, thunder, a bronzed French horn, kettle drums, clanking military armor, and the ghostly voices of dead soldiers. The poem's omniscient speaker opens with an exclamation:

¡Ya viene el cortejo! ¡Ya viene el cortejo!" Ya se oyen los claros clarines. La espada se anuncio con vivo reflejo; ya viene, oro y hierro, el cortejo de los paladines. ("Marcha triunfal," Darío, Derusha and Acerdo 102)	The procession is coming! The procession is coming! The clear bugles are now heard. The sword is announced by a vivid reflection; it is coming, gold and iron: the procession of the paladins. ("Triumphal March," Derusha and Acerdo 103)

Notably, Darío describes the soldiers as "paladins" (paladines), a likely reference to *Don Quixote.*[27] The paladin is a canonical knight-errant figure from the Spanish romance, *Amadís de Gaula,* a figure who Don Quixote reveres and imitates. The figure of the paladin carries a double meaning. It could allude to a valiant knight who defends an empire, but it could also allude to a faithful chivalrous knight who protects the weak and defends liberty and justice. Darío's poem seems to evoke the latter meaning. He seems to want to revalorize Spanish literary traditions at the very moment when Spain had lost its territories to North America. From there, the poem shifts to the clanking sounds of military armor ("el ruido"/"the sound"):

Se escucha el ruido que forman las armas de los caballeros, los frenos que mascan los fuertes caballos de guerra, los cascos que hieren la tierra y los timbaleros, que el paso acompasan con ritmos marciales.	You listen to the sound that the horsemen's weapons make, the bridles the mighty warhorses chew on, the hooves that wound the earth and the kettle drummers keeping in step with martial rhythms. So fierce the warriors pass

[27] Darío's poem "Letanías de nuestro Señor Don Quixote" in *Cantos* also references paladins: "De rudos malsines/falsos paladines."

¡Tal pasan los fieros guerreros
debajo los arcos triunfales! (“Marcha triunfal,” Darío, Derusha and Acerdo 102)

beneath the triumphal arches! (“Triumphal March,” Derusha and Acerdo 103)

This stanza employs assonant rhyming and consonant alliteration; note, for example, “forman”/“armas,” “caballeros”/“frenos”/“fuertes caballeros”/“los cascos,” and “guerras”/“hierren la tierra”/“fieros guerreros.” Darío follows an ABBA rhyme scheme (with “caballeros”/ “timbaleros”; “guerra”/ “tierra”; “marciales”/“triunfales.”) Specific phonetic sounds are repeated.

In the next stanza, Darío highlights again the sound of the “clarín,” as in other poems I analyzed above:

Los claros clarines de pronto levantan sus sones,
su canto sonoro,
su cálido coro,
que envuelve en su trueno de oro
la augusta soberbia de los pabellones. (“Marcha triunfal,” Darío, Derusha and Acerdo 102)

The bugles suddenly raise their voices,
their raucous song,
their ardent chorus,
enveloping in golden thunder
the august magnificence of the pavilions. (“Triumphal March,” Derusha and Acerdo 103)

More than just using the word “clarín” to describe a musical instrument or to serve as a metaphor for song here, Darío emphasizes its phonetic qualities. Traditionally, the bugle calls troops to battle, but here it describes a battle and announces a battle victory. The “cl” of “clarín” is particularly emphasized: “claros clarines” (“clear bugles”), “canto” (“song”), and “cálido coro” (“ardent chorus”). Darío also emphasizes the assonant rhyme of “o” that draws from “claros” and is repeated several times: “los claros,” “de pronto,” “sus sones,” “su canto sonoro/su cálido coro,” “trueno de oro,” and “los pabellones.” Darío forefronts musical instruments and the sounds of military armor, which themselves seem to speak. Sound no longer remains background noise, but rather itself conveys the story of the bloody battle the soldiers fought:

Él dice la lucha, la herida venganza,
las ásperas crines,
los rudos penachos, la pica, la lanza,
la sangre que riega de heroicos carmines

He tells of the fight, the wounded revenge,
the course manes,
the rough crests, the pike, the lance,
the blood that with heroic crimsons waters

la tierra; los negros mastines que azuza la muerte, que rige la guerra. ("Marcha triunfal," Darío, Derusha and Acerdo 102)	the earth; the black mastiffs loosed for attack by deaths, who rules the war. ("Triumphal March," Derusha and Acerdo 103)[28]

Through sound, Darío offers a violent spectacle of battle and death. The next verse shifts from a somber, violent scene to a more celebratory one. The "clarín," described as "los áureos sonidos," announces the arrival of soaring condors:

Los áureos sonidos anuncian el advenimiento triunfal de la Gloria; dejando el picacho que guarda sus nidos, tendiendo sus alas enormes al viento, los cóndores llegan. ¡Llegó la victoria! ("Marcha triunfal," Darío, Derusha and Acerdo 104)	The golden sounds announce the triumphal coming of the Glory; leaving the peak that guards the nest, stretching their enormous wings on the wind, the condors arrive. Victory has arrived! ("Triumphal March," Derusha and Acerdo 103, 105)

The condor mainly resides in the Andean mountains, in Northern Mexico, and the southwestern United States. Darío draws from the condor's geographic placement to symbolize a victorious, pan-Latin America, most likely to counter the bald eagle, the condor's relative and the patriotic symbol of the United States.[29] Here, the "clarín" delivers this image of pan-Latin Americanism.

The poem returns to the scene of the pavilion in which men, women, and children celebrate the returning soldiers. Once again, the "clarín" resounds to signal victory and triumph:

¡Honor al que trae cautiva la extraña bandera; honor al herido y honor a los fieles soldados que muerte encontraron por mano extranjera: ¡Clarines! ¡Laureles! ("Marcha triunfal," Darío, Derusha and Acerdo 104)	Honor to him who brings the strange flag captive; honor to the wounded and honor to the faithful soldiers who met with death at foreign hands! Bugles! Laurels! ("Triumphal March," Derusha and Acerdo 105)

The poem ushers in haunted silence as well. A few stanzas later and toward the end of the poem, Darío introduces an ellipsis. The air is filled with the voices of dead soldiers:

Las trompas guerreras resuenan;	The warlike horns resound;

[28] Derusha and Acerdo's translation uses "It" for this stanza. Although "él" could be translated as "he" or "it," I argue that the correct translation is "he."

[29] Darío's "Salutación al águila" elaborates on this.

de voces los aires se llenan … A aquellas antiguas espadas, a aquellos ilustres aceros, que encarnan las glorias pasadas … (“Marcha triunfal,” Darío, Derusha and Acerdo 104)	the breezes fill up with voices … (Those ancient swords, Those illustrious steel blades, that embody past glories.) (“Triumphal March,” Derusha and Acerdo 105)

Here, Darío remembers the ancient swords. At the same time, the narrator remembers the fallen soldiers who carried those weapons. The narrator says, “de voces los aires se llenan …” and “que encarnan las glorias pasadas …” recalling the sounds of voices and images of bodies that are no longer alive fill the air. The ellipses function as a silent memorial for those who died.

“Marcha triunfal” expresses a hopeful future and a nostalgic past through the sounds of a bugle’s call, thunder, a bronzed French horn, kettle drums, clanking military armor, and the ghostly voices of dead soldiers. The poem sounds out a military victory, offering an alternate outcome that resists Darío’s contemporary moment of imperial aggression. In Darío’s alternate world, his pan-Latin American compatriots claim their own version of liberty and justice that differs from what US and European imperial aggressors might decree. More significantly, the poem evades any specific reference to Nicaraguan nationhood—a literary maneuver that aligns with Darío’s decision to seldom thematize Nicaragua as a poetic subject. The poem pushes against a Nicaraguan nationalist framework and instead presents a pan-Latin American, anti-imperialist vision. In the same way, Darío’s other poems (“Helios,” “Sinfonía en gris mayor,” and “Tarde del trópico”) present a regional, Central American vision that takes in a larger pan-Latin Americanism rather than a Nicaraguan one. As I will discuss later in this chapter, the poem’s message differs from the Nicaraguan-centered, nationalist direction that the poem assumes when it is set to Delgadillo’s march and performed at Darío’s funeral.

Aida: A Distant Referent in "Marcha Triunfal"

"Marcha triunfal" alludes to the march "Gloria all' Egitto" from Giuseppe Verdi's opera *Aida.* Scholars argue that this opera reflects the British and French colonization of Egypt, and also Egyptian aggression in Ethiopia (Said 103; Robinson 135). As a consequence, one could claim that Darío's poem and Verdi's triumphal march are both critical of imperialism.

According to an article by Alejandro Sux, a friend of Darío's, Darío was directly inspired by Giuseppe Verdi's "Gloria all' Egitto, ad Iside" ("Triumphal March") from Act 2 of *Aida* for the composition of "Marcha triunfal." Sux describes how Darío had seen a performance of *Aida* that had a profound effect on him (Sux 316). In a state of catharsis, Darío allegedly grabbed the first sheet of paper and pen he could find to write "Marcha Triunfal" that very night:

> Su famosa "Marcha Triunfal" la escribió a la madrugada, después de haber estado "poco menos que a empellones en la ópera … de no recuerdo que ciudad." Asistió a la representación de *Aida* de Verdi y Ghislanzoni; el retorno triunfante de Radamès precedido de la doble hilera de trompeteros, le había impresionado "hasta la obsesión". "Si esa noche no escribo 'La Marcha Triunfal' hubiese enloquecido"—me dijo—; "las estrofas se agolpaban en mi cabeza como algo material, y me gritaban en tropel, como para que les abriera una puerta de escape. Cuando liberó a todas las imágenes y todas las rimas, me quedé profundamente dormido sobre la mesa. Al otro día, al leer lo que había escrito, tuve la sensación de que alguien me había dictado." Para completar esta explicación, me dijo enseguida mirándome con severidad, como para que no fuese a dudar un solo instante de que estaba hablando en serio: "Sepa que mi Musa es el Ángel Gabriel; el mismo que anunció a María que Dios había elegido su vientre para humanizarse y venir al mundo perecedero en la forma de Cristo." Así trabajaba Darío: De pronto, en mitad de conversación, comida o paseo, quedaba mudo e inmóvil, con los ojos fijos en un punto bajo; pedía papel y pluma—porque nunca llevaba consigo ni el uno ni la otra—, y excusándose con palabras ininteligibles, apartábase y escribía moviendo la cabeza a modo de batuta. (Sux 316)

> He wrote his famous "Triumphal March" in the middle of the night shortly after "spilling out of the opera house … the exact city escapes me." He had just seen the performance of *Aida* by Verdi and Ghislanzoni. He was so moved by the trumpet duet prefacing Radames's triumphant return that he grew obsessed. "If I hadn't put 'Triumphal March' on paper, I'd have gone mad," he told me. "The verses banged on my head like sledgehammers. They screamed in unison so that I'd force open a door for their escape. When I finally rid myself of those images and rhymes, I fell into a deep sleep on my desk. As I reread it the next day, I felt as if someone had dictated it all to me." To ensure

> that I'd believe him without a shadow of a doubt, he looked me straight in the eye and asserted: "You must know Angel Gabriel is my muse. He is the very one who told the Virgin Mary that God had chosen her womb to carry Jesus Christ and to birth him in the flesh." That is how Darío worked. He would suddenly freeze in the middle of a conversation, or when eating or on a stroll, with his eyes staring elsewhere. He would always demand pen and paper (something he never carried) and excuse himself by muttering something unintelligible. He would then leave and begin to write while feverishly swaying his head from side to side.

Darío's experience of listening to the opera march in a live performance and composing the poem surely shaped the sounds he chose to use therein. As a listener, Darío seems to have fixated on the march's brass fanfare, with the trumpets playing a distinctive melodic line to queue Radamès's procession before the Egyptian King. Darío would have heard Verdi's musical representation of Egypt. For the opera's debut in 1871, Verdi had commissioned an instrument craftsman to design elongated trumpets to mimic those depicted in ancient Egyptian paintings; a design that gave a particular timbre and A flat range inconceivable for the traditional trumpet.[30] Although Sux's anecdote does not confirm where Darío saw the opera, it is likely that Darío did not have a chance to hear these unique trumpets. Sux describes, nevertheless, Darío obsessively listening to this new, brass sound: "el retorno triunfante de Radamès precedido de la doble hilera de trompeteros, le había impresionado 'hasta la obsesión.'" Darío heard this stylized trumpet part as innovative, new, and modern. As a result, he may have felt a sense of urgency about embedding that sound in his poetry.

[30] According to Giulio Ricordi's Production Book based on the first Italian production of *Aida* in La Scala Opera House in Milan in 1872, Ricordi notes Verdi's vision for Egyptian trumpets. Verdi wanted Egyptian trumpets for the Ceremonial March in the "Triumphal Scene." They had to be long and straight (not at all like the usual trumpet); three had to be in the key of Ab, and three in B. To meet Verdi's request, Ricordi ordered them from a Milan instrument maker but, after "a great trumpet concert in my studio," it became clear that some of the notes Verdi had written were impossible without a slight change of design and a sleight of hand to disguise the valve which would allow access to those notes. Verdi just wanted to show "what the trumpets were like in ancient times" and he wanted that march tune to be heard from the stage. See https://utahopera.org/explore/2016/03/the-music-of-aida/.

The poem and Verdi's march share not only aesthetic principles in presenting "new" sounds, but also suggest similar attitudes toward imperialism. *Aida* tells a tragic story about the love between the Ethiopian princess Aida and the Egyptian military commander Radamés. They cannot openly love one another because they belong to two warring countries. Commissioned by the Egyptian Viceroy Isma'il Pasha, *Aida*—with a libretto by Ghislanzoni—premiered on December 24, 1871 in Cairo's Khedivial Opera House. Edward Said describes the production of *Aida* as an "an imperial *article de lux*," hinting at the British occupation of Egypt (Said 103). The first staging of the opera offered orientalist representations of Egypt and Ethiopia, and the libretto orientalized these North African countries as well. For Said, the opera reflects the ethnic and class biases and racism that characterized British and French imperial projects in Egypt.

Paul Robinson counters Said's reading of the opera as imperialist, however, he thinks Verdi's music offers a critique of British rule not evident in the staging or libretto (Robinson 135). Robinson asserts that the music creates a dialectical frame between Egypt as an authoritarian, tyrannical, and expansionist nation and Ethiopia as an exploited and colonized nation (Robinson 135). The music allows listeners to sympathize with the exploited victims and criticize empire, by creating different themes and sounds for Egyptian and Ethiopian characters (Robinson 135).

The music Verdi wrote to accompany events in Egypt is commonly regular, diatonic, and brassy. It relies on the most traditional harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic means to evoke authority and military might (Robinson 136). The battle hymn "Su! Del Nilo," "Gloria all' Egitto," and a noisier and triumphant version of "Su!" exemplify this. "Gloria all' Egitto"—the very piece that inspired Darío's poem—signals Egypt's empirical power. With a brass fanfare, the Egyptian army enters the stage in a procession. Verdi creates music for the Egyptians that

echoes an "aggressively traditional European idiom" (Robinson 136). In contrast, Verdi depicts Ethiopia with melancholic arias for Amonasro and Aida. At the height of the drama, their melodic lines become chromatic, accompanied by subdued woodwinds. This music, suggested by Robinson, evokes the imagined sounds of racially characterized non-Europeans, and presents a contrast to the imperial sounds associated with Egypt.

Darío's "Marcha triunfal" alludes to Verdi's "Gloria all' Egitto," as I noted above. The poem evokes the march's brass fanfare, in my view also evoking the opera's critical approach to it and anti-imperial message. Like in the opera, the poem describes a procession of soldiers returning from a battle victory: "¡Ya viene el cortejo!" and "¡Tal pasan los fieros guerreros/debajo los arcos triunfales!" Darío also evokes the image of Verdi's trumpets in phrases like "sus largas trompetas" ("their long trumpets") and "voces de bronce las trompas de guerra que tocan la marcha triunfal …" ("the horns of war salute with bronze voices, playing the triumphal march!"). The poem plays with the phonetic possibilities of "clarín" (bugle or trumpet), using consonant alliteration and assonant rhyme to exaggerate its sonic quality ("claros clarines," "canto," and "cálido coro"). By appropriating the victory march for Latin America, Darío evokes spiritual over imperial triumph.

Reading "Marcha Triunfal" Aloud

The Argentinean poet Ricardo Jaimes Freyre's performance of "Marcha triunfal" in 1895 for an Argentinean Ateneo event adds another layer of interpretation to my inquiry into the poem's sounds (Morales 77; Barcia 35).[31] The Argentinean Ateneo was founded by Darío and other Argentinean intellectuals and artists, including Carlos Guido Spano, Rafael Obligado,

[31] In *Institutio Oratoria,* Quintilian emphasizes the oral performative delivery of speech: oral attributes like voice, gesture, and motion. They are a proper fulfillment of the previous stages of inventing ideas, ordering them, and articulating them with proper words.

Lucio Vicente López, and Lucio V. Mansilla (Morales 55-56). Following in the footsteps of the long-established Athenaeum societies in Barcelona, London, and Manchester, the Argentinean Ateneo's mission was to encourage appreciation for the fine arts and the humanities in Buenos Aires. The society welcomed Argentinean artists, writers, and intellectuals.[32] Ateneo usually held annual art expositions as well. For their exposition scheduled on May 26, 1895 in Buenos Aires, the society invited Darío to write a poem to complement the "velada literario-musical" (a literary-musical concert) portion of the event (Morales 57). Darío received Ateneo's formal request by telegram while on vacation with Prudencio Plaza at the Martín García Island on the Río de la Plata. Plaza recounts that Darío received it just a few days before the event (Barcia 12). Darío then fervently wrote the poem on the eve of May 23, just in time for it to be included in the mail carrier service on the last boat leaving for Buenos Aires on May 25. This was the very night when he heard Verdi's *Aida,* described above. He mailed his draft with all his markings and corrections still on it. On his way to the post office, he formulated the poem's title:

> "Vamos al telégrafo" y en el camino recuerdo perfectamente que decía "la Revolución de Mayo, la epopeya redentora, todos los héroes de América que vuelven a ver su obra, la recorren en una Marcha triunfal" y repitió "Marcha triunfal así se llamará mi composición" e hizo el telegrama anunciando el nombre de su trabajo. (Barcia 13)
>
> "Let's go to the telegraph" and midway through I clearly remember him saying, "the revolution of May, the redeeming epic poem, all the heroes of America who turn back to see their work, they experience a 'Triumphal March.'" He repeated, ""Triumphal March,' that will be the title of my composition." Then, he sent out the telegram containing his poem's title.

Plaza's memory of Darío evokes the Revolution of May in 1810, which marked the beginning of the complex process of independence from Spain for the territories that would later configure as

[32] The Ateneo's celebratory debut came at the initiation of the newly elected president, José E. Uriburu, in January 1895, whose new administration endowed funding for the first Facultad de Filosofía y Letras at the Universidad de Buenos Aires, as well as for the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes campaigns directed by Eduardo Schiaffino (Morales 55–56).

Argentina. Plaza appropriates the poem for the project of Argentinean nationalism and pan-Latin Americanism. He imagines Darío's poem as representing a new moment of political urgency.

After Darío handed off his poem to the Ateneo society, the event organizers struggled to find someone to recite it. The performance of the poem brings up another layer to understand the significance of the poem's sounds. The Ateneo had programmed a series of poetry readings and musical pieces, including a choral performance of the Argentinean national anthem, and readings of Enrique Rivarola's "A los Poetas Argentinos" and Darío's poem (Morales 57). Right up to the evening of the event, the organizers struggled to secure a performer for Darío's poem. Freyre's brother shares a first-hand account of the evening's unfolding:

> Al llegar Ricardo, encontró a los organizadores de la fiesta en una grave dificultad. Darío había dado una poesía para que fuera leída y el encargado de hacerlo, el poeta Domingo Martinto, fue esa noche, desolado, a excusarse: dijo que en vano había leído repetidas veces la poesía; no había podido encontrar el ritmo que la regía. (Morales 57)
>
> When Ricardo arrived, he found the event's organizers facing a big problem. Darío had sent his poem to be recited. But the performer they had scheduled, poet Domingo Martinto, had, with a heavy heart, excused himself earlier that night. In vain, he confessed that he had read the poem repeatedly, but failed to follow its rhythm.

Martinto's struggle to master the poem's rhythm speaks to the poem's formal maneuvers of sound. The poem does not follow one-meter scheme but rather follows a polymetric scheme. It results in an unevenness or unpredictability when read aloud. Most likely, Martinto had not encountered such versification before and shied away from the challenge. The poem asks the reader to repeat particular sounds in rapid succession, which could have added to Martinto's difficulty.

Nevertheless, Ricardo Jaimes Freyre rose to the challenge. Despite feeling underdressed for the event, he agreed to perform it (Morales 57). Freyre's brother recounts:

> Al ver a Ricardo, se consideraron salvados: allí estaba el principal representante, con Rubén, del movimiento renovador de la poesía castellana, y era seguro que él encontraría la rebelde melodía de los versos. (Morales 57)
>
> When spotting Ricardo, they considered themselves saved. Like Darío, he represented the innovative movement for Castilian poetry. They were sure that he would find the verses' rebellious melody.

In the same way that Plaza praises Darío for leading a new "rebellious" generation of Argentinean artists, Freyre's brother praises his performance. The newspaper *La Nación* also celebrated Freyre's performance:

> Se escuchó con sumo agrado una elegante y magnífica poesía de Rubén Darío, titulada "Marcha triunfal", que leyó el señor Ricardo Jaimes Freyre con muy oportuna entonación y noble acento. (Morales 57)
>
> The elegant and magnificent poem titled "Triumphal March" by Rubén Darío was heard with supreme delight, which was read aloud by Mr. Ricardo Jaimes Freyre in proper intonation and in a noble accent.

Freyre's "oportuna entonación" (proper intonation) and "noble acento" (noble accent) are significant here. Freyre creates an experience of the sounds in the poem. Martinto, the Ateneo group, Freyre's brother, and the newspaper reporters hear the poem as simultaneously resonating sounds of rebellion, hardship, and magnificence. Based on what they experience, they believe the poem represents the Argentinian Ateneo intellectual community. Listening to the poem read aloud shapes how they perceive and interpret it.

Luis A. Delgadillo's Concert March: "Marcha Triunfal"

I now come to Delgadillo's setting of Darío's "Marcha triunfal," which premiered at Darío's funeral ceremony in León, Nicaragua, in 1916—described in my introduction. Delgadillo set Darío's poem as a military march. Once again, the meaning of Darío's "Marcha triunfal" shifts in Delgadillo's piece. It is interesting to contemplate whether Delgadillo followed Darío's

meter or tried to replicate the sounds evoked. Strikingly, Delgadillo's piece is a march, a conventional genre immensely popular in Europe and in the United States in the late nineteenth century. Delgadillo's march—evoked by Darío's poem—appeals to Nicaraguan nationalism and unified civic duty.[33] Darío's poetic experimentation does not translate well into Delgadillo's conventional march, however. Delgadillo's march limits and perhaps mishears Darío's poem.

Between 1880 and World War I, military marches grew in commercial popularity in the United States and in Europe (Schwandt and Lamb 5). Famous march composers such as John Philip Sousa and Briton Kenneth J. Alford and their touring woodwind bands gained global recognition (Schwandt and Lamb 5). It is likely, however, that Delgadillo was inspired by his commissions for military bands and wind bands popular in Latin America. Military marches were typically programmed for public band concerts, parades, and ceremonial and military occasions to commemorate regiments, generals, and governing officials. Marches also projected the traits that late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century listeners hoped to find in themselves: a sense of masculinity, patriotism, and a balance between cultural sophistication and everyday musical sensibilities (Warfield 292). Typical features of the military march such as the *da capo* form, duple meter, a major key, an uncomplicated main theme, a brass heavy arrangement, a dramatic finale, and brevity ensured audiences a sense of predictability that met their expectations for the genre (Warfield 311). The predictability of Delgadillo's march falls in line with this larger trend of military marches of the late-nineteenth century. Like many of those marches, Delgadillo's march serves to commemorate a national hero, in this case Darío.

[33] The Napoleonic wars lent a new impetus to compose marches specifically for regiments and armies to signal their partisanship. After the French Revolution, marches were primarily composed for ceremonial and military occasions (Schwandt and Lamb 4).

Unlike Sousa's or Alford's wind-band instrumentation, Delgadillo's *Marcha triunfal* is composed for strings, woodwinds, brass, and percussion.[34] For the majority of the march, the instruments perform in a homophonic setting resembling that of an anthem. Historically such settings express power, collectivity, and a united voice. In this case, the march is situated in a public event that calls for Nicaraguan national unity. At times, however, Delgadillo singles out certain instruments, specifically in the brass and percussion sections. On one hand, it could seem Delgadillo is recalling the poem's foregrounded sounds of brass instruments ("claros clarines" and "largas trompetas") and percussion ("los timbaleros"). On the other hand, he could be following the standard of the nineteenth-century march, which forefronts the brass section and unites the instruments to play homorhythmically and homophonically.

The march's principle theme also resembles the characteristic theme of the nineteenth-century march. The theme repeats five times, with six sections alternating between it. The main melody is sixteen bars long, legato, and resembles a hymn theme with the orchestra playing in unison. The brass section plays the theme with the winds and strings accompanying and the percussion marking the downbeat forcefully. For the listener, the theme becomes a source of musical relief; it is both unpretentious and memorable, characteristic of the march genre (Schwandt and Lamb 2). Delgadillo varies the march theme each time it is repeated by adding ornamentation, another typical feature of the march. The second time the main theme is played, the flutes and piccolo create harmony to accompany it. For the third time, the piccolo plays decorative trills. The fourth time it is repeated, the orchestra plays more forcefully than before.

[34] According to Schwandt and Lamb, it is possible that Delgadillo's orchestral arrangement reflects the art music turn that composers gave to the march form. After World War I, composers like Charles Ives, Alban Berg, and Igor Stravinsky experimented with the march form and removed its formal military trappings. The march evolved into a more flexible, less stereotyped genre and the orchestration became more colorful (Schwandt and Lamb 9).

The fifth and final time, the theme grows in climactic gesture to a dramatic close. Set to a slower tempo, the brass play louder and the orchestra more forcefully while the basses accompany with a descending melodic eighth-note gesture. The march concludes with an orchestral crescendo accompanied by snare and timpani rolls, ending in a loud cymbal crash. The finale offers a sense of relief and resolution at the end of the piece.

In this chapter, I traced and analyzed the sounds, references to sound, and practices of listening encouraged by the different triumphal marches. Verdi's triumphal march in *Aida* can be considered in the context of a critique of imperialism, as demonstrated in his different musical representations of Egypt and Ethiopia, although this idea is much contested. Darío heard Verdi's "Gloria all' Egitto" and transcribed its sounds into poetry through alliteration and assonant rhyme. He repurposed Verdi's sounds to serve a pan-Latin American purpose. Ricardo Jaimes Freyre's recitation of Darío's poem demonstrated poetic innovation to a small elite audience of intellectuals and artists who identified themselves as Argentinian and pan-Latin American. Finally, Delgadillo transforms Darío's poem into a US-style march arranged for a military band. This march also gives pride of place to a brass fanfare. Delgadillo's march can be used for the civil articulation of national pride in contrast to the performance of Darío's poem at the Ateneo soirée. Performing Delgadillo's march at Darío's public funeral reminded the people attending of their national commitment to Nicaragua. This march contrasts with Verdi's in style and political purpose. Ultimately, the poetry reading and Delgadillo's march both realize Darío's poems, but in different ways to different ends.

Argentinean and Nicaraguan Reception of Delgadillo's Concert March

Delgadillo's *Marcha Triunfal* was performed two more times after Darío's public funeral: first in Buenos Aires in April 1916, and then in Managua in 1933 for the inauguration of

the Rubén Darío Monument. The local newspapers emphasize what close attention Delgadillo paid to the poem in composing the music, while ignoring Darío's tumultuous relationship with his home country.

In "'La Marcha Triunfal' del Maestro Delgadillo en la Argentina" (*La Nación*, April 16, 1916 and reprinted in *El Gráfico* in 1929), an unnamed author describes the performance of Delgadillo's march in Buenos Aires two months after the monumental funeral ceremony in León.[35] The author draws precise connections between the poem and the march to legitimize Darío's legacy and boast Delgadillo's burgeoning career as a composer. The author singles out instrumental references in the poem and shows how they are realized in the march. The author notices that Delgadillo opens with trumpets, crashing cymbals, and percussion, as Darío did. The article also noted the role of the march's percussion section. The author wants to find a close relationship between the march and the poem, also in its finale. But much of what the author described is predictable and true of any standard nineteenth-century march.

On September 24, 1933, the Nicaraguan journal, *La Noticia, Diario Independiente y Intereses Generales* published ""La Marcha Triunfal' de Luis A. Delgadillo en la Argentina," announcing a ceremony to erect a monument to Darío in Managua.[36] The opening ceremony was to include a performance of Delgadillo's march, which by then had been played in Argentina and would finally be reheard in Darío's home country. In response to the news that the march would be included at the monument's ceremonious unveiling, *La Noticia* revisited the history of the march, reprinting an article written by G. Ramírez Brown covering its performance in Buenos

[35] The Hemeroteca Archives (Palacio Nacional in Managua), does not indicate why the article was reprinted.

[36] A propósito de que hoy en la inauguración del Monumento a Darío, será ejecutada en Managua la "Marcha triunfal" de Luis A. Delgadillo, inspirada en la "Marcha Triunfal" de Darío, reproducimos la siguiente, que fue publicado en "El Comercio," 30 de octubre de 1927.

Aires in 1916.[37] In this article from 1916, the author focused on where the march was being performed—Bosque de Palermo, a city park in Buenos Aires—and the event itself. The article idealizes the event in Buenos Aires, opening with a phrase most often used in fairy tales:

> Una vez fue en la Patria de San Martín y de Sarmiento. El Dr. don Pedro González, Delegado de Nicaragua al Congreso Financiero Panamericano que se reunió en Buenos Aires en 1916, obsequió al Director de la Banda de aquella gran urbe, con los papeles de la "Marcha Triunfal Rubén Darío."
>
> Once upon a time, in San Martín's and Sarmiento's homeland, Dr. Pedro González, Nicaraguan Delegate for the Pan-American Finance Congress, arrived in Buenos Aires in 1916. He presented the band director of that wonderful metropolitan city with the music sheets to *Marcha Triunfal* by Rubén Darío.

The reviewer describes Delgadillo's march as a beautiful gift bequeathed on Argentina by Nicaragua, noting the concert program's ornate detail as well, akin to Cinderella's invitation to the ball:

> En preciosa cartulina, recibimos invitación para ir al Bosque de Palermo a escuchar un concierto de gala en el cual iba a ser ejecutada la Hermosa Marcha Triunfal de Delgadillo.
>
> We received an invitation printed on elegant cardstock. It invited us to a gala hosted in Palermo Woods to listen to a concert performance of the marvelous *Marcha Triunfal* by Delgadillo.

Most notable, however, is that the author emphasizes how the Bosque de Palermo was decorated with Nicaraguan national emblems:

> brillantes cintas con colores de la bandera de Nicaragua; los programas del concierto ostentaban también los colores de nuestro emblema nacional, y en ellos, con el número uno, en letras especiales, se leía: "Marcha triunfal Rubén Darío", obra de su compatriota Luis A. Delgadillo.

[37] Reprinted in *El comercio*, October 30, 1927. The Hemeroteca Archives (Palacio Nacional in Managua), does not indicate why this article was reprinted.

> Richly-colored ribbons matched the Nicaraguan flag. The concert program also boasted our national emblem's colors. It read in elegant script: "Marcha Triunfal Rubén Darío" by his fellow countryman, Luis A. Delgadillo.'

Reprinting parts of this old article in the new article from 1933 anticipates the inauguration of the Monument of Darío. Moreover, the Nicaraguan newspaper reminded readers of Nicaragua's diplomatic alliance with Argentina. Even more significantly, Darío's poem takes on a different meaning in this context. Darío and Delgadillo become coauthors in this construction of Nicaraguan nationhood.

Conclusion

By transforming Darío's "Marcha triunfal" into a military march, *Marcha triunfal,* in 1916, Degadillo enabled it to serve as a means of commemorating Darío as a national hero, thereby solidifying the poet's role in the symbolic representation of the Nicaraguan nation. Darío's poetry, after his death, became a symbol of the nation. In this chapter, I explored this transformation by first examining Darío's tumultuous relationship to Nicaragua, and how his own history with his homeland contradicts the actions the Nicaraguan government took to integrate and celebrate him after his death. Darío's tendency to avoid speaking of national belonging gave evidence of his conflicted relationship to his homeland during his life. By exploring the sounds in selected poems—"Marcha triunfal," "Helios," "Sinfonía en gris mayor," and "Tarde del trópico,"—I was able to investigate more deeply Darío's anti-imperialism and pan-Latin Americanism as it contrasts with how he was later commemorated. In "Helios," the musical instruments from Greek antiquity and the sound of an erupting volcano offer an alternative to imperialism. "Tarde del trópico" and "Sinfonía en gris mayor" each evoke the sounds of tropical seascapes, creating a melancholic tone as they mourn the impact of global commercial trade. "Marcha triunfal" also evokes a pan-Latin American, anti-imperial sentiment;

not a Nicaraguan, nationalist one. Darío's "Marcha triunfal" evokes a bugle's call, thunder, a bronzed French horn, kettle drums, clanking military armor, and the ghostly voices of dead soldiers to evoke a scene of celebration and joy. These sounds offer traces of the various circumstances that shape the poem: US and European imperialism in Latin America, a dialogue with the Argentinean intellectual community, and Verdi's opera march "Gloria all' Egitto" from *Aida.* Like "Helios," this poem evokes an era of pan-Latin American independence and artistic freedom. Delgadillo revised the meaning of Darío's poem when he realized it in his "Marcha triunfal," transforming Darío into an icon while somewhat losing the particularities of his life and work. My chapter exposes these historical tensions, while also giving pride of place to the rich sonic world of Darío's poetry.

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CHAPTER THREE:

Ideals of Sound Fidelity and US-Produced Sound Technology in Selected Works by Sergio Ramírez

Columbia's and Victrola's Gramophones and Listening Practices Arrive in Nicaragua

On November 28, 1920, the Nicaraguan literary and cultural magazine *Los Domingos* placed a print advertisement in English for a phonograph, the "Grafonola," produced by Columbia Records. By the first decade of the twentieth century, Columbia's Grafonola had been widely lauded for its nearly perfect sound-reproducing qualities (Sterne 274). The ad celebrated the product's US origin by appearing only in English. It also advertised a catalogue of records with opera, symphonic music, and vaudeville tunes that could be played on the phonograph. It was implied that Nicaraguan consumers could own such a phonograph themselves thanks to the local distributor José Gordillo in Managua. In this way, Nicaraguans could hear the same music as Americans did. The ad read:

> Columbia Records gives you today's music today. The Columbia Grafonola plays it to perfection. The Columbia catalog contains everything from symphony orchestra music to grand opera, from vaudeville to musical comedy. All the music of all the world is yours on Columbia Grafonolas and Records. Come in anytime and hear our latest Records on our newest Grafonolas. You'll find it worthwhile. José Gordillo, Agente. Managua, Nic. (*Los Domingos, Revista Popular Ilustrada,* año III, número 132, 28 de noviembre de 1920, 12)

Two months later *Los Domingos* placed an ad for another Columbia product. This time, the ad targeted a younger audience by referring to popular music—waltzes, fox-trots, one-steps, blues, and jazz—music that could enliven social dances and parties. The US record industry in this way influenced Nicaraguan's musical taste. This time the ad included a Spanish message, reminding readers to consult their local, Spanish-speaking distributor in Managua: Música Toda headed by Gordillo.

> Columbia Grafonola and Records. Dance Records that they Encore. That's the way to make a success at your party. Get the records that they encore. We have them – whirlwind waltzes, fox-trots, one-step war songs, and weird, wild 'Blues' that out-jazz old Mr. Jazz himself. Come in and make your selection. You are welcome to play any record on any Grafonola in our store. We have not only the newest Columbia Records, but the best and latest models of Columbia Grafonolas. Sold on convenient terms, of course.
>
> Música Toda esperando la orden de los clientes. Toda Música.
>
> All Music is ready for client orders. All music.
>
> For sale by José Gordillo, Agente, Managua, Nic. Columbia Grafonola. Price $110. With electric motor, $135. (*Los Domingos, Revista Popular Ilustrada,* año III, número 137, 2 de enero de 1921, 11)

The intense marketing in evidence in these advertisements gives credence to Darío's prophetic words about Nicaraguans that, "Mañana podremos ser yanquis (y es lo más probable)" ("Tomorrow we could be Yankees (and that is highly probable)"; Ramoneda 334). Rather than embrace Darío's pessimistic sentiment, however, Nicaraguans readily opened themselves up to US cultural influence. In 1923, another US company joined Columbia in marketing the phonograph in Managua—Victrola. Following Columbia's model, Victrola worked with a distributor, Manuel J. Riguero, and set up shop at Agencia Victor in Managua. Departing from their competitor's marketing strategy, however, they placed their ads in Spanish:

> Al comprar una Victrola usted adquiere un instrumento que simboliza la perfección suprema. La compra de una Victrola significa proveerse de un instrumento magnífico por su inimitable calidad, insuperable por su elegancia y fina construcción, y único por las delicias que su exquisita música promete a oídos delicados. Tenemos Victrolas de varios tamaños y precios y prácticamente le demostraremos las numerosas ventajas que reúne este maravilloso instrumento de música. Pase a vernos hoy mismo. Facilidad de pago. Manuel J. Riguero Agente Exclusivo, Managua. La manera más fácil de hacerse de una Victrola es tomando una acción del Club Victor. Mediante el módico pago de un córdoba semanal Ud. obtiene la mejor música del mundo en su hogar. Bajo este sistema a muchas personas le sale costando una Victrola dos córdobas, a otros tres córdobas y así sucesivamente. Personas favorecidas últimamente: Don Francisco Tellería, Don Fernando Z. Carrión, Don Gustavo Espinosa L., Dr. José Luis Arce, Don Luis S. Rodríguez y

> muchos otros más. Sírvase pasar por la Agencia Victor a obtener detalles. (*Los Domingos, Revista Popular Ilustrada*, año VI, número 256, 13 de mayo de 1923, 10)
>
> When you buy a Victrola, you own an instrument that symbolizes supreme perfection. Buying a Victrola means that you own a magnificent instrument of unmatched quality, of unparalleled elegance, of fine construction, and of unique richness thanks to the exquisite music it promises to your ears. We carry Victrolas of all shapes and sizes ranging in price. We will demonstrate the many advantages that this marvelous musical instrument offers. Stop by today. Payments made easy. Manuel J. Riguero, Exclusive Agent, Managua. The easiest way to obtain a Victrola is to join Club Victor. By making a modest weekly payment of just one córdoba, you will have access to the best music in the world in your own home. With this plan, most customers end up paying just two or three córdobas for a Victrola. Our exemplary clients include: Don Francisco Tellería, Don Fernando Z. Carrión, Don Gustavo Espinosa L., Dr. José Luis Arce, Don Luis S. Rodríguez, and many more. Stop by Victor Agency for details.

This ad appeals to an audience who appreciates luxury items. No music is listed here. The Victrola is described as a musical instrument, which can elevate and refine a person's lifestyle. With these ads, Columbia and Victrola opened the market for selling phonographs in Nicaragua in the 1920s, thus contributing to the development of sound technologies in Latin America.

Wurlitzer Company's Latin American Market in the 1950s

By the 1950s, Wurlitzer and Rock-ola—manufacturers of jukeboxes and record players—had taken over as the leading competitors for securing sales in Latin America. Wurlitzer's salesmen convention in Miami in December 1954 gives evidence of the company's growing clientele south of the US as *The Billboard* claims, it was the "biggest world-wide sales meet of the phonograph distributor organization of the Rudolph Wurlitzer Company ever held" ("Wurlitzer World Meet" 14). The event hosted 200 salesmen who represented nineteen countries and fifty foreign distributors. The Latin American foreign distributors included El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, Mexico, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Puerto Rico,

Peru, Venezuela, and Colombia. The participants at the convention formulated corporate plans for domestic and export sales and marketing for the upcoming year. They also recognized foreign distributors for their excellent sales records, many who were from Latin America ("Wurlitzer Distributors in Miami"). *The Billboard* summarizes the convention's awards ceremony:

> Arthur C. Rutzen, general export sales manager, awarded trophies (depicting the goddess of achievement, with a U.S. flag and the flag of the country of the firm awarded) to six foreign distributors in five regions: In Region 1—North America—a Canadian and Mexican distributor tied, and each received a trophy; Siegel Distributing Company, Ltd., Toronto, headed by Albert Siegel, and Casa Riojas, Mexico City, headed by Jose Riojas. Central America: Jose Gadala Maria Hijos & Company, Santa Ana, El Salvador, headed by Jose Gadala María. South America: Importaciones Cabo, Ltda., Bogota Colombia, headed by Leopoldo Franco. Caribbean area: Borinquen Music Corporation, San Juan Puerto Rico, headed by Rodolfo Griscuolo. ("Wurlitzer World Meet" 60)

The Wurlitzer Company enjoyed a large market for selling their machines to Latin America. Although Wurlitzer does not list a sales distributor for Nicaragua, it is likely that distributors from the neighboring countries—El Salvador, Guatemala, or Panama—sold to Nicaraguans.

This convention gives evidence of the larger trade relations between the US and Latin America from 1946-1955.[38] US investment in Latin America came from the federal Export-Import Bank—which stimulated global trade—and from private investment. They were motivated by three desires: to increase US exports while generating domestic economic activity; to ensure the US continued receiving strategic materials like petroleum and minerals; and to manage Cold War political relations with Latin America (Stallings 82–83).

[38] After WWII, the US heavily invested into Europe's reconstruction project. Latin American politicians sought to receive the same financial investments. In the 1948 month-long Ninth International Conference of American States in Bogotá, Colombia, Latin American politicians complained that the US had been ignoring the region since the war. US Secretary of State George C. Marshalls, the conference's keynote speaker, reassured them that the US would facilitate loans to Latin America. The US loaned Colombia $10 million dollars that year. See: Becker, William H, and William M. McClenahan, 79.

Brazil, Venezuela, Chile, and Mexico capitalized the most from US investments, bolstering their mining, petroleum, and manufacturing industries (Stallings 82–83). In that nine-year period, Latin America's direct investments from the US increased from $3 billion to $6.4 billion (Stallings 82–83).

The Wurlitzer Company benefitted from private and federal funding in developing its relationships with Latin America. An article in *The Billboard* from 1958 highlights Mexico receiving $3.2 million from the US Export-Import Bank:

> Early this month, the U.S. Export-Import bank set up its first credits in a foreign currency—equivalent to $3,282,720 –to affiliates of American concerns in Mexico. The program is designed to aid the growth of American investments overseas. This plan is separate from the one established to provide loans for the purchase of American equipment. It seems tailor-made, tho, for the setting up of Mexican plants turning out the same products as are manufactured in the United States. ("Jukes Build Own Niche")

Indeed, these "affiliates of American concerns in Mexico" included Wurlitzer. These credits most likely financed Casa Riojas, Wurlitzer's manufacturing plant and distributor in Mexico City ("Mexico's Music Machine Dean").

The Wurlitzer company did business extensively in Latin America. The company hired personnel who focused exclusively on securing and maintaining the Latin American market; they established trade schools, manufacturing plants, and distributing agencies there, and generated media coverage about their growing venture. In 1954, Wurlitzer recruited André Echevarría as the Sales and Service Representative for Latin America—a position he held for almost 15 years ("Wurlitzer Promotes Three"). He was in charge of "bringing about closer cooperation between the export sales and service departments of Wurlitzer and distributors throughout these countries" ("Wurlitzer Promotes Three"). Echevarría established Wurlitzer technical service schools in several Latin American cities such as Mexico City and Havana ("Wurlitzer Op. Distributor Service Schools Underway"). Schools trained distributor-service personnel "in the

special technique of handling Wurlitzer products" ("Wurlitzer Op. Distributor Service Schools Underway"). In addition, Echevarría grew and maintained a network of distributor agents. The Wurlitzer's Sales Meet in Miami in December 1954 gives evidence of his expanded Latin American employee roster.

Echevarría's efforts also prompted US trade magazines to publish stories about consumers using Wurlitzer machines abroad. A notice in *Cashbox* from 1959 reports on Wurlitzer's new Ecuadorian headquarters at the Casa Nacional de Comercio in Guayaquil ("President of Ecuador at Opening"). A few months later, a notice in *Billboard* commented upon "Wurlitzer on Location in Ecuador," and on the many small eateries and cantinas located in rural and less accessible areas that were buying the 2300 Wurlitzer models in spite of their steep costs.

Wurlitzer was most active in Mexico because the Mexican distributor Casa Riojasincreased jukebox production and sales worldwide and created what one reporter called a "Juke Box Dynasty" in Mexico ("Mexico's Music Machine Dean"). An article from 1954 features a poll in which Mexican consumers voted on their favorite brands of consumer electronics like radios, refrigerators, and jukeboxes. The article reports that over 75,000 Mexican consumers voted, who widely favored the Wurlitzer jukebox ("Wurlitzer Voted Top Place"). Four years later, another article in *Billboard* discussed how Wurlitzer jukeboxes were favored in local cantinas, bars, and public squares. It relates: "The great mass of the Mexican people sip their soft drinks (mostly Coca-Cola and Pepsi-Cola) at less than 2 cents a bottle, or their excellent domestic beer at 8 cents a bottle, while they listen to the music from a juke box. The 1.6 cents a play is about all they can afford, but the juke boxes are seldom silent." The jukebox appealed to the masses and served an important function in local taverns and bars ("Jukes Build

Own Niche"). US-made gramophones, jukeboxes, and radios had become accessible on a mass scale.

Sound Fidelity: A US Ideology Infiltrates Nicaragua

Columbia's and Victrola's advertisements in *Los Domingos*, paired with Wurlitzer Company's aggressive sales efforts, point to a significant moment for the introduction and development of modern sound technologies in Nicaragua. At this time, US advertisers introduced for the first time the discourse of "sound fidelity" to Nicaraguans to guide their relationship to these machines. Jonathan Sterne defines the idea of "sound fidelity" as the belief in "the narrative of technical progress and the transparency of reproduced sound, as well as the desire for pure tone and equating live and recorded music" (Sterne, 275). Advertisers proclaimed that the newest machines represented technological progress and produced a true or "perfect" reproduction of sound. As Sterne elaborates, "perfect" is synonymous with "worthy of my faith" since the early sound reproduction technologies, such as the telephone and gramophone, did not actually produce a perfect reproduction of sound (Sterne, 274). Nevertheless, the idea of sound fidelity was about enacting, solidifying, and eventually erasing the listener's relationship with sound reproduction—whatever the model—so that they could instead focus on what it produced—recorded music, the voice, or another sound (Sterne, 274). The rhetoric of sound fidelity has continued to repeat itself from the 1870s (when Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone) to the present. In the same way, Nicaraguan advertisements from the 1910s through the 1940s marketed US-made phonographs as achieving this sound fidelity.

The idea of sound fidelity also shaped Nicaraguan literature in the twentieth century. In this chapter, I compare Nicaraguan author Sergio Ramírez's fiction to the idea of sound fidelity,

drawing on his relationship to US-produced jukeboxes and record players. Published in the 1990s, Ramírez' novels and short fiction are set after 1940, when the gramophone, the record player, the jukebox, and the radio made headway in Nicaragua as a result of trade relations between the US and Latin America, as I noted above. Through sound, Ramírez builds narratives of disillusionment and cynicism as a way to comment upon the Somoza dictatorship's direct economic and political ties to the US between the 1930s-1970s, as well as the neoliberal outcome of the Nicaraguan Contra War. [39] At the same time, Ramírez's fiction describes the Nicaraguan listener's relationship to these US-produced machines. His narratives give evidence of disenchanted local listening microcosms within a global sonic space in the twentieth century. I analyze Ramírez's essay *Retrato de familia con violín* (1997), sections from his novel *Un baile de máscaras* (1995), and three short stories from *Clave de sol* (1992): "Kalimán el magnífico y la pérfida Mesalina," "Volver," and "Pero no lloraré." My goal is to examine Ramírez's characters' listening practices and how they relate to sound reproduction technology and the idea of sound fidelity. A clear tension emerges between how US advertisers had imagined ideal listeners in the early twentieth century and Ramírez's understanding of such listeners decades later. His listeners problematize the ideals of sound fidelity.

I first discuss Ramírez's short essay, *Retrato de familia con violín*, in which he memorializes three generations of composers and musicians in his family who lived from the late nineteenth century to the 1940s in Masatepe, Nicaragua. Members of his family played together in Luces de Masaya and the Orquesta Ramírez. I am interested in how this essay reflects on the period when Columbia's Grafonola and Victrola's gramophone were popular in Nicaragua.

[39] For further discussion, see Beatriz Cortez's *Estética Del Cinismo: Pasión y el Desencanto En La Literatura Centroamericana De Posguerra* (2010).

Ramírez is pessimistic about these sound technologies, which he judges as inferior to live music performances and as a threat to live musicians—in this case, members of Ramírez's own family.

I then discuss the novel *Un baile de máscaras.* Once again, musicians in Ramírez's family are protagonists alongside a slew of side characters who all make up the local residents of Masatepe. The novel was published in 1995—almost 89 years after Delgadillo's memorial march premiered at Darío's funeral. The novel's plot, however, is set in the 1940s, thirty years after Darío's death. In the same way that Delgadillo's march evokes a sense of nostalgia in posthumously commemorating Darío, Ramírez's novel looks to the past to memorialize the 1940s. The novel is constructed in an episodic style that narrates a day in 1942 leading to an evening masked ball and to the birth of the author. The novel is set in a time when record players and radios from the US were growing in popularity in Nicaragua, as was recorded music from Europe and the US. The townspeople of the rural, isolated town of Masatepe remain ambivalent about these technological and cultural developments, however. These characters' listening practices call into question the idealized listener that US advertisers earlier imagined. Characters in the novel mishear, overhear, misunderstand, or do not hear at all—in contrast to the ideal listener imagined by record companies promoting sound fidelity. The novel plays with modern sound technologies as translated or mistranslated in imagined rural towns in Nicaragua.

I then analyze three short stories from Ramírez's *Clave de sol* that investigate individual character's relationship to modern sound technologies in small towns of Nicaragua. "Kalimán el magnífico y la pérfida Mesalina" (The Incredible Kalimán and Mesalina's Betrayal) parodies the plight of a radio aficionado. Here, I consider how the characters listen to the radio, records, and concertina and how what they hear inspires new love or reminds of lost love. "Volver" ("Come Back") highlights a gramophone playing a tango and how it triggers the leading character's

painful childhood memories. His childhood memories are also guided by other sounds: a gunshot, his mother's sewing machine, and his mother singing the tango he heard on the gramophone. "Pero no lloraré" ("But I Shall not Cry") features the music of a Wurlitzer jukebox, which also causes a flashback. The Wurlitzer, called *la roconola* in Ramírez's tale, appears in a local tavern. In this story, the sounds of a tropical rainstorm counterpoints *la roconola* playing a bolero. When listening to these sounds, characters feel nostalgia, pessimism, obsession, and misunderstanding. Across these three short fictional pieces, Ramírez's characters are blinded by sentimentality or by confusion when they listen.

I survey Ramírez's fictional and essay writings to evaluate local listening practices for sound technologies like the radio, jukebox, gramophone, and record player that are very much tied to their social and cultural contexts. These texts demonstrate that Nicaraguans in the mid-twentieth century were not only recipients and consumers of these modern sound technologies but also participants in shaping listening practices worldwide.

Retrato de familia con violín: A Family of Musicians at Odds with Sound Technology

Retrato de familia con violín commemorates Ramírez's family as it satirizes their plights. Ramírez situates the gramophone as harmful to his family's musical legacy. Members of his family worked as performing musicians in the early to mid-twentieth century, when Columbia's Grafonola, and Victrola's gramophone were most popular. Understanding his family history helps contextualize the role of the gramophone and jukebox in Nicaraguan musical culture.

Narrated in a comical, satiric style, the piece traces three generations of Ramírez's family between the late nineteenth century and the 1990s. The essay features three family members—his great-grandfather, Don Alejandro, his great-uncle, Carlos, and his grandfather, Lisandro—but

it also includes anecdotes about his uncles, los Ramírez. Neither Ramírez nor the fifty-two cousins of his generation learned a musical instrument. Ramírez laments:

> Una dinastía de músicos que pereció porque ninguno de los cincuentidós primos de la siguiente generación aprendimos a tocar un instrumento. (Ramírez, *Retrato* 2)
>
> It was the end of our musical dynasty because not one of my fifty-two cousins from the following generation, including me, learned to play an instrument.

Retrato de familia con violín begins by introducing Ramírez's great grandfather, Don Alejandro, who lived from 1845-1911. Don Alejandro was an orphan who built a career as a musician, composer, and conductor of his own small orchestra. As a young boy who lived through Nicaragua's Filibuster Civil War (1855), he worked his way up to playing violin with traveling musicians. His musical talent caught the attention of a medical doctor who adopted him and put him through music school. As a conductor, Don Alejandro contracted his sons, grandsons, and great grandsons to play in his band, Luces de Masaya (Lights of Masaya). They were active in the first half of the twentieth century, performing for religious services, municipal, and private events in Masatepe, Masaya, and in the neighboring towns of West Nicaragua. Their repertoire included pieces Don Alejandro composed, among them requiem masses, sones, marches, waltzes, foxtrots, boleros, and corridos. The band also performed popular tunes of the era. Orquesta Ramírez, a second-generation orchestra in which Ramírez's father and the young women in the family performed, emerged after the members of Luces de Masaya retired.

The musicians in Don Alejandro's group were frequently involved in gossip and scandals. Luces de Masaya was in competition with other local orchestras, mostly because they sought the same performing opportunities, which sometimes led to brawls with rival musicians:

> En Masaya las orquestas vivían en guerra perpetua…enemistados a muerte, los músicos no se dirigían la palabra y más de una vez llegaban a las manos en

> trifulcas que se escenificaban a media misa, o en las procesiones de santos. (Ramírez, *Retrato* 2)
>
> In Masaya the orchestras were constantly at war…enemies until death, the musicians wouldn't use their words and more than once they would get into brawls that would take place in the middle of the mass service, or during a saint procession.

Retrato also describes the family's travails and love affairs, like the cholera epidemic or their trouble with money. He parodies his family's travails and triumphs in how he describes their music-making process. Don Alejandro's kin often composed music in response to what was happening in their personal lives. Three songs in particular respond to the composers' love affairs. The first is the waltz "Ilusión Perdida," composed by Ramírez's grandfather Lisandro; the second the waltz "Carmencita," composed by his uncle, Alberto; and the third the corrido, "Masatepe," composed by another uncle, Carlos José. "Ilusión Perdida" represents Lisandro's frequent acts of infidelity. Even though he was married to Ramírez's grandmother Petrona, he seduced women with his waltzes or boleros and dedicated his songs to them. One woman, however, rejected his romantic advances, as well as this song, which he dedicated to her. Petrona reminded Lisandro of his failure and the pain his philandering caused her by singing "Ilusión perdida" to him every now and then. Ramírez recalls overhearing his grandmother sing the waltz while she rolled her cigarettes:

> solía cantar también una canción que todavía yo recuerdo, oída de su voz:
>
> *Nací en las cumbres*
> *de una montaña*
> *donde es tibio el aire*
> *y calienta el sol…* (Ramírez, *Retrato* 4)

> she usually always sang a song that I still remember coming from her voice:
>
> *I was born on top of*
> *a mountain*

where the air feels toasty
and the sun heats up…

The music shaped the internal family dynamics.

The second waltz, "Carmencita," evokes a heartbreaking story. Uncle Alberto composed it for his lover, Carmencita, but when he proposed, she rejected him because her family expected her to marry another man. To make matters worse, Uncle Alberto and Orquesta Ramírez were hired to play at her wedding. He later learned that she died while giving birth, causing him to collapse over his music stand. "Carmencita" celebrates his love for her, while eulogizing her:

Una noche te conocí
y llorando quedé por tí
yo no sé qué tienen tus ojos
porque loco me volví… (Ramírez, *Retrato* 9)

I met you one evening
and I cried waiting for you
I don't know what it is about your eyes
but I'm crazy about you …

Carlos José's corrido, "Masatepe," continues with the theme of death and loss. In fact, it was played at his funeral. Ramírez mourns Uncle Carlos José as the last survivor of Orquesta Ramírez: "Esa tarde me dí cuenta que la orquesta *Ramírez* había terminado para siempre" (I realized that afternoon that Orchestra Ramírez was over for good). At the request of Ramírez's brother, the local band plays the corrido to bid his uncle farewell:

Masatepe tierra mía
rinconcito encantador
perfumado de jardines
*valiente y trabajador (*Ramírez, *Retrato* 10*)*

Masatepe, my home
A charming corner of the world
Scented with gardens
Brave and hardworking

In *Retrato de familia con violín*, Ramírez nostalgically remembers his family's history through the songs they created. Uncle Carlos José's death coincides with the family's symbolic death, because their music-making was replaced with technology. Right before his death in 1991, Uncle Carlos José witnessed this transition:

> Al final, se dedicó a la enseñanza de la música, consciente de que los músicos iban acabándose en el pueblo, y terminó, ya sin orquesta, arruinado por los disco-móviles (Ramírez, *Retrato* 9)
>
> In the end, he dedicated himself to teaching music, even though he knew that local musicians were dwindling in number. Without an orchestra to turn to, which fell in ruin because of traveling disk jockeys, he directed a woodwind band that performed at bull fights and religious processions.

Ramírez faults record technology as implemented by the DJ for putting live orchestras out of business. By evoking his family's music in his writing, he preserves its legacy.

Eventually, Ramírez was able to incorporate sound into his remembrance of his family. In 1991, the director Jorge Alí Triana and the Colombian production company Radio Televisión Interamericana Producciones adapted his novel *Castigo Divino* into a soap opera*, Castigo Divino*, which broadcast on the Colombian television station, *Cadena 2* ("Esta Semana Comienza" folder 6). For the program's soundtrack, Ramírez sent the director Jorge Alí Triana two examples of his grandfather's unpublished sheet music. In a correspondence to Triana, Ramírez wrote:

> Te envío también dos partituras de composiciones de mi abuelo, que era músico: una de ellas es un vals "Ilusión Perdida", y la otra, un fox-trot. Como me habías dicho que darías a componer la música de la partitura, a mí me encantaría que estas piezas fueran utilizadas, aunque se cambien los nombres que corresponden a la película. (Ramírez, Sergio. Letter to Jorge Alí Triana)
>
> I also enclose two composed scores by my grandfather, who was a musician: one of them is a waltz 'La Illusion,' and the other, a foxtrot. Since you had mentioned

> that you would record this music, I would love for these pieces to be included, even if the titles are changed for the film.

In addition to promoting his family's music on television, Ramírez secured a recording contract for his great grandfather's music in 2003. The resulting album, *Los Ramírez,* features compositions by Ramírez's great grandfather, Don Alejandro Ramírez, interpreted by leading musicians in Nicaragua.[40] *La Prensa,* a Nicaraguan newspaper, lauded this recording achievement:

> La obra musical de Don Alejandro Ramírez (1845-1911) el Patriarca de la familia, violinista y maestro de capilla, sus hijos…llenos de originalidad y de conocimiento de las reglas técnicas de composición musical tradicional de la época en que les tocó vivir influenciadas por las tendencias europeas de la música semiclásica (valses) y de la música popular latinoamericana (boleros). (Prado 3)
>
> The musical works of Don Alejandro Ramírez, the patriarch of the family, violinist, and musical director of the chapel…is filled with originality and a mastery of the technical conventions of traditional musical composition during a time when they were influenced by European tendencies of semiclassical music (waltzes) and Latin American popular music (bolero).

With this album, the soap opera soundtrack, and his essay, Ramírez promoted his family's contribution to Nicaraguan music culture. His family's musical past subsequently provided the historical setting for his literary works, *Clave de sol* and *Un baile de máscaras.*

Ramírez offers an alternative history of Nicaraguan live music to counter that of recorded music as typified by the DJ. Sound reproduction technology harmed the livelihoods of local musicians and later led to their erasure from music history. Ramírez's efforts to revive local music history in Nicaragua reminds us of the culture sound reproduction technology sometimes excludes.

[40] Nicaraguan musicians who recorded on the album include: Camerata Bach, Luis Enrique Mejía Godoy, Los de Palacagüina, el Coro de Cámera de Nicaragua, guitarist Andrés Sánchez, singer and songwriter Ofilio Picón, and pianist Ronald Hernández.

Mishearing and Overhearing in *Un baile de máscaras*

In his short stories and novels, Ramírez focuses less on commemorating his family than transforming aspects of their lives into satirical, comical, or tragic tales. He casts his family members as characters in his literary works, and also refers to the music they wrote, or thematizes their song lyrics. In this way, his family's musical history serves as a source of inspiration for his literary works.

Loosely based on the plot of Giuseppe Verdi's *Un ballo de Maschera* (1859), *Un baile de máscaras* (1995) takes place in a single day and features characters based on Ramírez's family members who played in the Orquesta Ramírez. In the novel, residents of Masatepe prepare for a masked ball for which Orquesta Ramírez is hired to provide entertainment. Told in an episodic style, the novel includes an omniscient narrator who touches on the trivial activities of countless Masatepe residents that day, including those of the musicians who are practicing for the evening event, without settling on a main protagonist or antagonist. The author highlights the unique qualities of Nicaraguan sonic culture by creating a counterpoint between Verdi's opera and the "rural, provincial" culture from Masaya. In the Mexican magazine, *La jornada*, Ramírez notes:

> esta novela tiene mucho del recuerdo de mis tíos músicos y de mi propio oído musical, que es un oído-oído, no un oído reproductor. Como una composición musical una frase va dando pie a la que sigue, y que es lo que se busca también en la poesía. ... Yo usé aquí los aires operáticos y las referencias a la opera para darle una referencia permanente a ese dramatismo cantado que existe, donde las grandes tragedias se cuentan cantando. Y eso es lo que he querido hacer en esta novela. La cultura musical de mis tíos, en cambio, no era una cultura operática; ellos y mi abuelo eran más bien compositores de música sacra y de música popular, sin embargo al tratar de introducir al lector en la atmósfera de ese pueblo y esa época usé la ópera como una nota más alta, de contrapunto: la ópera en ese pueblo tan sencillo, de gente con una cultura provinciana, rural. (Espinosa)
>
> This novel calls on many of the memories of my uncles who were musicians, as well as my own musical ear, which is a hearing ear, not an ear that reproduces.

> Like a musical composition, one phrase gives footing to the next, as it also searches for poetry.…I used arias and references from operas in order to give a permanent reference to that sung drama that exists, where the great tragedies are told by singing. And that is what I wanted to achieve in this novel. My uncles' culture, in contrast, was not a culture of opera; including my grandfather, they were more or less composers of religious music and popular music, but nevertheless, upon introducing the reader to the atmosphere of that small town during that time, I used opera as a higher register for counterpoint: the opera in that simple town, where the people share a provincial, rural culture.

Ramírez highlights characters' patterns of listening and local form of communication. In an interview with *La Jornada* in 1995*,* Ramírez points to Mexican author Juan Rulfo as having changed the course of Latin American literary tradition by giving voice to rural communities and their vernacular:

> Yo venía de una literatura vernácula, escrita por académicos desde su balcón. Desde allí miraban al pueblo y su realidad rural. Luego descendían a ella, pero con guantes para no contaminarse de nada. Rulfo lo transformó todo desde el instante en que descendió del balcón, se confundió entre la gente y comenzó a hablar *desde* los personajes. Eso significó para mí un cambio muy radical: pasé de la literatura académica, esa que a apostrofaba el habla popular, a la que Rulfo *dice*, o mejor dicho, a la que *es* Rulfo. Rulfo jamás habla desde la lengua culta para permitirse licencias con la lengua inculta. (Pacheco)
>
> I read vernacular literature written by academics who sat on their balconies. From there, they gazed at the town below and saw their own version of a rural world. Then, they descended to the streets, but not without wearing gloves for fear of contamination. Rulfo transformed everything from the moment he descended from his balcony. He got lost between the people and he started to talk in their speech. That signified a radical shift for me. I moved from academic literature—the kind that quoted popular speech—to what Rulfo *says*, or better yet, to what Rulfo *is.* Rulfo never speaks in an academic register, which gives him the creative license to speak in a colloquial register.

Like Rulfo, Ramírez tries to capture "el habla popular" (popular speech). He aims for his novel to feature a more intimate and grounded vernacular from rural Masatepe. The characters' form of communication is also informed by how they listen to or mishear each other. Mishearing plays a key role in Ramírez's realistic and imagined rendering of his hometown.

I am interested in how Ramírez's characters mishear, refuse to hear, and overhear one another. Sometimes they cannot hear because of physical distance or loud noises. In this way, Ramírez suggests listening cultures that are the opposite of those promoted by record companies interested in sound fidelity. By featuring characters who mishear, overhear, or cannot hear, Ramírez validates the cosmology of this imagined, rural community of Masatepe. His characters base their worldview on inconclusive hearsay, gossip, and taboos. Take, for example, the passage where Abuela Luisa hears Amada Laguna rehearse her aria "Tutto e gioia, tutto e festa" from the opera *La sonnambula* (*The Sleepwalker*) by Vincenzo Bellini (Bellini). The novel describes Amada Laguna's singing:

> Y en la casa vecina, detrás de una tapia florida de bugambilias, oye [Abuela Luisa] que la muy gorda Amada Laguna ensaya el aria de entrada de Lisa en *La Sonnambula*, porque va a cantar esta noche en el baile de disfraces.
>
> *Tutto e gioia, tutto e festa*
> *Sol per me non v'ha, non v'ha contento*
> *e per colmo di tormento*
> *son costretta a simular…* (Ramírez 31)
>
> In the neighboring house, behind a garden wall adorned with bougainvillea, [Grandma Luisa] hears the rather plump Amada Laguna practice the entrance to Lisa's aria from *La sonnambula.* She will perform it for the evening's masked ball.

Amada's physical proximity ("en la casa vecina") is important here. The novel establishes spatial relations as key to determining whether others can or cannot hear. Because Abuela Luisa is in close proximity to Amada, she can hear Amada clearly. However, Abuela Luisa is indifferent to the fact that she fails to understand the words to the music she hears:

> Tu abuela Luisa pasa y escucha el aria. No entiende la letra y no hace mucho caso, pues no la atraen músicas profanas, ni tiene ella voz, ni tiene oído, y si acompaña en el templo evangélico los himnos que señala el pastor, es sólo por razones de su deber. (Ramírez 33)

> Your Grandma Luisa walks by and listens to the aria. She doesn't understand the lyrics, but it's of no concern to her. She is not a big fan of secular music, anyway. Plus, she can't sing and she is tone deaf. If she joins the pastor in song at the Evangelical church, it's only to fulfill her liturgical obligation.

Abuela Luisa can hear Amada's singing clearly. However, she cannot understand Italian and is tone deaf. Her only contact with music comes from church. For her, music is an act of prayer, rather than an art form. She can hear, but she fails to understand Amada's aria.

In contrast, Tía Leopoldina attentively listens to Amada's singing from her jail cell. Although she is located much further away from Amada, Tía Leopoldina listens to the aria with care. Amada's voice sounds faint from where Tía Leopoldina sits, but this physical distance does not prevent her from hearing:

> Aunque muy cerca de allí, en su cárcel, también está oyendo entonar el aria tu tía Leopoldina la prisionera, que sí sabe de música; y tantas veces se la ha oído en fiestas y veladas a la muy gorda Amada Laguna, que herida por la tristeza del canto terminó por aprenderse la letra sin conocer su sentido. (Ramírez 33)

> Not too far from there, Aunt Leopoldina, the inmate living in a jail cell, knows about music and listens to the aria's modulations. She had frequently overheard plump Amada Laguna's singing at parties and soirées. Moved by the song's tenderness, she had dedicated herself to learning the [Italian] lyrics without caring for its meaning.

Unlike Abuela Luisa, Tía Leopoldina demonstrates a passion for opera and knows about musical technique, but not about the meaning of the lyrics. Tía Leopoldina even turned to Eneas Razetto—a local farmer who also happens to be Italian—who translated it for her into Spanish. She sits in her jail cell reading the translation while listening to Amada's singing:

> y en la soledad de su cárcel del aposento, repite ahora, el rostro contra la almohada: *todo es dicha, todo es fiesta, solo para mí no hay, no hay contento, y para colmo del tormento tengo que disimular…* (Ramírez 33)

> In the solitude of her chamber, with her face against the pillow, she repeats: *Tutto e gioia, tutto e festa, sol per me non v'ha, non v'ha contento, e per colmo di tormento son costretta a simular…*

Sadly, Tía Leopoldina—a true opera fan—cannot attend Amada's aria performance at the masked ball because she remains in jail.

Physical impairment also comes into play in how characters hear and mishear in this novel. Abuelo Teófilo, for example, is deaf in one ear, but even with his one good ear, he can hear well. His wife, Abuela Luisa, frequently questions him about his unusual talent:

> ¿cómo es que podés oír pitar de tan lejos ese tren? […] se quedará sin responder lo que siempre se guarda para sí: no hay ruido, ni voz, ni llanto, aunque venga del fondo de la tierra, o se esconda en cualquier confín, que yo, con el oído que me quedó bueno, no pueda oír. (Ramírez 16)
>
> How can you hear the train's whistle from so far away? […] He remains silent and revels in his most precious kept secret: 'There is no sound, no voice, not even a cry from below earth or from a sealed coffin that my one good ear cannot hear.'

His ability to hear with one good ear debunks the myth that only the able-bodied can hear well. Moreover, not even physical distance hinders Abuelo Teófilo's miraculous facility. Despite Tía Leopoldina's physical detainment and Abuelo Teófilo's deaf ear, they hear well, and even better than others who do not face such physical limitations.

The novel demonstrates another example of mishearing during the masked ball. A heavy rainstorm and loud thunder drown out Orquesta Ramírez's musical performance. The hired orchestra had promised an exciting evening of music including the prelude from *Un Ballo in Maschera* by Giuseppe Verdi, a waltz, "Noche de ilusiones y carcajadas" (A Night of Dreams and Laughter), composed by Abuelo Lisandro, as well as popular waltzes and foxtrots, but no one can hear the performance because of the loud thunderstorm. The thunderous rain prevents the audience from properly hearing the music and even makes it difficult for the musicians to hear themselves play:

> Los músicos seguían tocando bajo aquellas órdenes expresas en medio diluvio, como gallos remojados, aunque, de todos modos, poco o nada se les escuchaba y entre el ruido del aguaje, y tampoco se escuchaban entre ellos, de uno a otro instrumento, por lo que su ejecución era desconcertada, y además, sin nada de ímpetu y mucho de morriña, a pesar del esfuerzo que tu abuelo Lisandro hacía con la batuta (Ramírez 174)
>
> In the complete downpour, the musicians kept playing under [the conductor's] expressive command. They appeared like soaked roosters who were barely heard because of the torrential rainstorm. Befuddled, the musicians couldn't hear themselves play, let alone play with the vigor or sentimentality your Grandpa Lisandro's baton so adamantly tried to communicate.

In the end, the weather conditions take centerstage instead of the performance. Moreover, the musicians and those who attend the party and properly listen to the performance are equally denied a musical experience. The rainstorm inserts sonic dissonance into the orchestral performance. This moment points to the town's larger soundscape and how they respond to it. Sounds from their natural surroundings are just as important as musical performances, even if musicians and audience members try to discriminate between the two.

The rainstorm also drowns out the public announcement of Amantina Flores's death, another local resident in Masatepe. As an anonymous voice yells out the fatal news around town, those at the party can barely overhear:

> Y apenas se lanzaba al viento y a la lluvia, una voz en la oscuridad pasó avisando por la calle a todo correr: ¡la Amantina Flores se quedó dormida fumando en la cama y se incendió con todo y la sábana, la almohada y el colchón! ¿Cómo? ¿La Amantina Flores? ¿Y murió?, preguntó el beduino a la voz que se alejaba, apresurada; y la voz, disminuida en la distancia, le contestó […] Aquella voz que parecía que corría, alejándose, ni corría ni se alejaba, era la lluvia la que la había empujado hasta disminuirla. (Ramírez 178–79)
>
> Coming from the darkness outside, a voice cut through the wind and rain. The voice hurriedly passed through and announced from the street: "Amantina Flores fell asleep while smoking in bed and she lit herself on fire! Her bed sheets, pillow, and mattress caught on fire too!" "What? Amantina Flores? Did she die?" yelled back the Bedouin to the disappearing voice. The voice sounded like it was

> running away. But it was neither running nor departing. The rain was the culprit behind washing out the voice.

In this case, the person yelling out the announcement is in close proximity to those listening. However, the overpowering sound of the rainstorm prevents others from clearly hearing the announcement.

Un baile de máscaras returns to the 1940s, when record player manufacturers and music record companies from the US promised access to musical recordings and an optimal experience for the listener, as epitomized by Amada Laguna singing along to the recording of the aria "Tutto e gioia." Ramírez's characters are not interested in sound fidelity, however, or other listening practices promoted by US manufacturers. Ramírez's characters dissent from rather than conform to what US sound technologies advertise to Nicaraguans.

The Radio, Record Player, and Concertina in "Kalimán el magnífico y la pérfida Mesalina"

I now transition to "Kalimán el magnífico y la pérfida Mesalina" (Kalimán the Magnificent and Mesalina's Betrayal) from the short story collection, *Clave de sol*. My dissertation began with Darío setting a machine—the barrel organ—against natural sounds. Here, we hear another machine—the radio and record player—placed against a concertina. "Kalimán" tells the story of a character's obsessive listening to the radio, the record player, and the concertina. Although the story does not specify the time frame, it reflects the mechanical sonic era—and its corresponding listening practices—of the mid-twentieth century when US trade relations with Latin America were at their peak. As I described in the introduction to this chapter, Wurlitzer, Victrola, and Columbia began doing in business in Central America, leading to an

influx of machines, radio programs and records in Nicaragua. Ramírez's story takes place at the time when such machines had become household staples. His characters in this story listen to these machines with nostalgic obsession.

Ramírez introduces the main protagonist and narrator, Kalimán, a typographer and passionate fan of the superhero radio show, "Kalimán, el Hombre Increíble" (Kalimán, the Incredible Man). A popular Mexican program that first aired in 1963 on Radio Cadena Nacional, "Kalimán, el Hombre Increíble" ran for twenty years and aired across Latin America, including in Nicaragua. It became so popular that it was also issued as a comic book series.[41] The narrator feels such zeal for the program that he renames himself Kalimán.

Ramírez introduces an indirect reference to *Don Quixote*. Kalimán listens to the radio in the same way Don Quixote devours tales of chivalry. Don Quixote reads his external world—like windmills—as real-life plotlines in the novels he reads. Similarly, Kalimán mediates his life like an adventure in "Kalimán, el Hombre Increíble." He believes that he also holds the superhero's power of foresight, thanks to the voices he imagines inside his head. He believes that they are esoteric voices, helping him predict acts of infidelity and romantic affairs in his community. At his job as a typographer, he first tries out his alleged super powers with his boss, Basilisco (which alludes to Basilio, another character in *Don Quixote*). He declares that Basilisco's daughter will run away with José de Arimatea, a coworker at the typography firm. His prediction comes true, but his prophecy does not stop the events from causing havoc and distrust within Basilisco's family.

[41] Héctor Fernández L'Hoeste asserts that "Kalimán" represents a moment when Mexican media fantasized about the Orient. This character projects "a distinctively Oriental, Caucasian superhero as a non-Mexican, non-Amerindian other." For further discussion, see: L'Hoeste H.F., "Race and Gender in The Adventures of Kalimán, El Hombre Increíble." Edited by L'Hoeste H.F., Poblete J. *Redrawing The Nation. New Directions in Latino American Cultures.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Inspired by his newfound talent (with little remorse for the troubling aftermath he may incite), Kalimán quits his typography job and begins a love-advice radio program in Managua called "Kalimán el magnífico." Ironically, his flawed predictions escalate rather than resolve lovers' conflicts. While Kalimán immerses into his fantasy world, another plotline unfolds that he is unaware of until it is too late. In addition to Basilisco's daughter, José de Arimatea seduces Kalimán's wife by playing boleros on his concertina. His concertina replays the boleros women first encountered on their record players. But Kalimán fails to foresee that José will woo his wife and eventually run off with her. In the end, Kalimán failed to hear what his gut instinct, as opposed to his hypnotic voices, forewarned: his own wife's unhappiness and eventual infidelity.

I am interested in how Kalimán's imagined voices allegorize the listener's experience of the radio. Kalimán evokes the mechanical function of the radio when he speaks of "dialing on" or "dialing off" his voices. Typically, a listener can hear the radio as either background noise or as something meaningful. The listener also has the option to simply turn off the radio altogether. In the same way, Kalimán's thoughts (that he interprets as outside voices), can be either meaningless or meaningful, depending on what he chooses to tune out or to silence. Filtering his life through a radio show allows him to control what he feels and thinks.

Kalimán's relationship with the radio parallel the invasive and indecipherable voices inside his head. He confesses:

> oí dentro de mi cabeza aquellas voces extrañas queriendo comunicarme sus mensajes (Ramírez 241)
>
> In my head, I heard those strange voices wanting to communicate their messages to me

In reality, his voices fail to communicate meaning. Kalimán believes that these voices create an experience of hypnotic trance that possess him:

> sino que aquellas voces habían entrado en tropel tan desenfrenado en mi cabeza que mi mente no había podido soportar la impresión de semejante novedad. (Ramírez 241)
>
> except that those voices had entered into my head in such a wild mass that my mind hadn't been able to bear the impression of such novelty.

Kalimán's "voices" are his way of coping with the unwanted fears and insecurities that arise in his mind. As the story later reveals, he had denied the painful reality of his failed marriage all along. Nevertheless, Kalimán evades his malaise by choosing to interpret his fears and insecurities as mysterious voices in his superhero fantasy.

Instead of tending to his own relationship, Kalimán starts a love-advice radio program to tend to others' relationships, as I noted above. His show grows in popularity as his local fan base comes to believe that he can cure their conflict-stricken relationships. Listeners phone in their concerns under anonymous pseudonyms:

> como los oyentes llamaban por teléfono o enviaban sus cartas bajo seudónimo…corría menos riesgo de ser víctima de alguna venganza. (Ramírez 248)
>
> since the listeners called on the telephone or sent their letters under pseudonyms … they lowered their risk of falling victim to revenge.

Here, Kalimán transforms personal stories into public property by preserving his listeners' anonymity while sharing what they say with the public (McEnaney 17).

Kalimán's radio show inspires gossip and suspicion among his listeners. Yet he fails to recognize the emotional and psychological distress his broadcast creates. He views himself as a healer or preacher, but his delivery lacks the necessary empathy to connect with his audience:

> A prudente distancia del micrófono, tal como el controlista me había indicado, leía las cartas y respondía a cada llamada que entraba por el parlante de la cabina, con aplomo y parsimonia, como si se tratara de un pastor protestante que predicara casa por casa. A usted su mujer lo engaña, busque la carta en tal sitio, se

> ven en tal lugar, no está en el cine, está con el otro en la pensión tal. (Ramírez 248)
>
> At a prudent distance from the microphone, just like the producer had shown me, I read the letters and responded to each call that came in through the speaker with calmness and composure, as if I were a Protestant pastor who preached door to door: your wife is cheating on you, look for the letter in such and such place; you'll see each other in this or that spot; she's not at the movies, she's with the other man at such and such motel.

In the end, Kalimán's radio program merely fulfills his desire for local fame.

The listening habits of the female characters in this story offer a counterpoint to Kalimán's obsessive world of radio. The women choose to listen to the record player instead of the radio. Unfortunately for Kalimán, this world escapes his purview. Basilisco's wife and daughter, as well as Kalimán's wife, listen to records as an essential part of their daily routine. For example, they play boleros each morning:

> seguía sonando a todo volumen el tocadiscos que la señora ponía desde la hora del desayuno con su canción preferida del Trío los Panchos, *Flor de azalea*. (Ramírez 245)
>
> The record player kept going at full volume. The woman started playing it at breakfast to hear her favorite song from the Trío los Panchos, *Azalea Flower.*

They devour the music alongside their breakfast. The machine plays the bolero, "Flor de azalea."[42] In this way, the record player inspires pleasure, love, and desire. Kalimán's radio callers likewise play records to remember romance:

> ese disco de Nat King Cole que pone a cada rato, es porque le recuerda los momentos de pasión que ha vivido con él. (Ramírez 248)
>
> She plays that Nat King Cole record all the time because it reminds her of the passionate moments she'd had with him.

[42] "Flor de azalea" was composed by the Mexican composer Manuel Esperón and released through Columbia Records in 1953. Two renditions of this bolero were recorded by Mexican singer Jorge Negrete and by Trío los Panchos.

Unlike Kalimán, José de Arimatea is able to tune into the women's listening habits. He not only listens to the most popular bolero tunes like "Flor de azalea," but also reproduces them on his concertina. His playing seduces women obsessed with the song. One example is when he plays the tune for Basilisco's daughter at the typography firm:

> Hasta entonces comprendí, sin que las voces me dijeran, el porqué de aquel eterno cantar del Trío los Panchos con su *Flor de azalea* la más amarga desesperación, que empezaba apenas José de Arimatea ponía pie en la tipografía. (Ramírez 246–47)
>
> It wasn't until then that I understood, without the voices having to tell me, the reason behind the eternal singing of the Trío los Panchos with their *Flor de azalea*, the most hopeless despair that started as soon as José de Arimatea stepped foot into the typography office.

In the same way, José plays the tune for Kalimán's wife and manages to convince her to run away with him. When she phones into Kalimán's live show, she notes how José's playing wooed her:

> Pero ahora, ardo de pasión por un caballero muy galante, que dice que me adora, y toca muy lindo la concertina. (Ramírez 249)
>
> But now I'm burning with passion for a very gallant gentleman who says he adores me, and he plays the concertina beautifully.

Kalimán's wife falls for José because he listens to her and reproduces her desired music on his concertina. In contrast, Kalimán fails to listen and pay attention to her.

It is worth noting that it is Kalimán's wife's voice, rather than the imagined voices in his head, that become the beacon of truth. Kalimán refuses to listen to her voice because she conveys an uncomfortable truth about her unhappiness with him. She confesses her plans to leave him on his live program under the pseudonym, Mesalina (Messalina) – the wife of the Roman emperor Claudius who conspired against him. When she ends her radio call, Kalimán overhears José's concertina in the background:

> Para colmo de todos los males, en el parlante se escuchó, antes de que ella colgara, una concertina que tocaba *flor de* azalea*, la vida en su avalancha te arrastró.* (Ramírez 249)
>
> To make things even worse, before she hung up, he heard a concertina through the speaker, and it played *azalea flower, life and its avalanche took you by storm*.

He finally understands why José replays the bolero on his concertina. Kalimán's fantasy inevitably crumbles because he directed his heroic attention to the wrong cause. He sought to save everyone else's love life except his own. At the same time, he was listening to the wrong voices. In the end, the world of record players and concertinas stand as the unexpected victors in Kalimán's superhero fantasy. In the face of this turmoil, Kalimán cancels his show, and his mysterious voices fall silent.

In this short story, Ramírez sets up the radio, record player, and concertina against each other, demonstrating how listening practices related to each are shaped by an individual's journey toward self-awareness.

The Gramophone as a Device for Memory and Nostalgia in "Volver"

"Volver", another story from *Clave de sol,* also features the gramophone. This time, the gramophone's transmission revives a childhood memory for the main character, a street musician. Ramírez's revives the figure of the street musician peddling on European streets that Darío casts in "El rey burgués" and "Cantemos el oro."

In this short story, Ramírez tells the story of an aging tango musician's homecoming. Once a successful touring star who performed in concert halls, he is now a street peddler. He returns to his childhood home that has since converted into a saloon and brothel. His father, a gambling addict, wagered the home away when the street musician was a teenager. Inside the

saloon, he hears the gramophone play a tango. It triggers a memory of his mother, who also sang tangos in their home, and opens a cascade of painful memories about the night his father lost their house. He remembers his mother's singing, his own guitar strumming, his sister's wails, and finally, the gunshot with which his father killed himself. In the aftermath of this painful shock, the narrator left home to become a traveling musician. The story concludes in stalemate; the present-day saloon continues to host the unresolved pain of a broken family and home. His painful memories continue to replay through the gramophone.

Ramírez begins the story by describing a gramophone's needle, which counterpoints the sewing machine's hum and his mother's singing. "La aguja" (the needle) from the mother's sewing machine parallels the "aguja" from the gramophone. The mother's sewing needle represents childhood memories, as does the gramophone. He recalls hearing his mother singing tangos while she worked on the sewing machine:

> Cantaba a todas horas del día mientras cosía: elevaba la voz al desplegar la tela frente a sus ojos para revisar las costuras, y cuando debía enhebrar la aguja, el hilo en la boca, tarareaba sin abandonar la melodía. (Ramírez 216)
>
> She sang all day long while she sewed. She raised her voice while she unfolded the fabric and held it to her eyes to squint at the stitches. And when she needed to thread the needle, she held the thread in her mouth and hummed without abandoning the melody.

His mother's "tarareaba" or melodic humming synchronizes with the sewing machine's needle. Later in the story, this synchronization configures onomatopoeically. The sewing machine "zumbaba la máquina de coser" (the sewing machine buzzed; Ramírez 218)., for example, as the mother "tarareaba". The gramophone's needle symbolizes the experience of hearing his mother's singing and the sewing machine:

> El disco había terminando de tocar; la aguja raspaba al final de surco y nadie se atrevió a reponer el disco. (Ramírez 218)

> The record stopped playing. The needle lifted at the end of the record and no one thought to replace the record with a new one.

The gramophone evokes a nostalgia for a peaceful, happier time.

Listening to the gramophone evokes memories for the musician. As noted above, he relives the events from the night his father gambled away their home. He rehears the sewing machine: “Zumbaba la máquina de coser” (Ramírez 218; “The sewing machine buzzed”) and his paralytic sister crying:

> Su hermana lloraba encerrada en el pequeño aposento porque no le acercaban el andarivel. (Ramírez 218–19)
>
> His sister was locked in away in a small chamber, crying because no one would throw her a lifeline.

He even rehears his guitar playing, accompanied by his mother:

> Los arpegios de la guitarra se repitieron en ecos broncos mientras probaba la encordadura, y después empezó a alzarse su voz que iniciaba la letra de un tango…Se interrumpió, mientras ella lo ayudaba, y luego volvió a empezar; su voz no estaba aún madura, y aflautada, perdía los registros graves. (Ramírez 218–19)
>
> The arpeggios from the guitar played over and over in hoarse echoes while he tried the strings, and then he raised his voice to start singing a tango … He faltered, and she helped him along, and then he started again. His voice still wasn’t mature. It was fluty, and he got lost in the lower registers.

The sounds of the sewing machine’s "zum," his sister’s cries, his own guitar playing, and his mother's singing allow him to remember this traumatic night. The most dramatic sound he recalls is the gunshot from his father’s suicide:

> Y entonces suena en la noche el disparo que espanta a las palomas en la cumbrera del techo y que se dispersan bajo las estrellas del cielo de agosto en febril y alocado aletear. (Ramírez 220)
>
> And then the shot sounded in the night. It frightened the doves on the edge of the roof and they flew off under the stars of August’s sky, flapping their wings with a wild fervor.

The story ends with this final sound, suggesting the unresolved trauma of this broken family. On one level, the story's sounds could be seen as appropriate for a tango ballad. Indeed, the story highlights tango: his mother sings tangos and the gramophone plays a tango. Stories of broken families are frequent in tango ballads. Yet, on a deeper level, the gramophone simulates the musician's memory.

"Volver" describes a gramophone listener who both embraces and tries to overcome the idea of sound fidelity. On the one hand, the main character's relationship with the gramophone aligns with what advertisers idealize—a listener who takes for granted the mechanical features that produce the music. He fixates on the tango song that the gramophone plays, rather than the machine itself. On the other hand, the sounds of the gramophone elicits pain, tragic memories, and reticence in the tango musician. His emotional state does not align with what US gramophone ads desire for their listeners. In this way the tango musician resists the aggressive US marketing of the gramophone.

Soundwaves from a Jukebox, a Bolero, and Rainfall Trigger Disenchantment in "Pero no lloraré"

The third story I analyze is "Pero no lloraré." This story features the jukebox, the bolero "Una Aventura," as well as rainfall sounds. Nicknamed *la roconola* (a play on words in Spanish with "rock-n-roll"), the coin-operated jukebox–and the bolero it transmits–revives the main character's memories of past love affairs. The rainfall sounds, on the other hand, inspire her childhood memories of playing in the rain. Here, different sounds define the character's past and present life.

"Pero no lloraré" is set in the 1980s during the height of Nicaraguan Contra War between the Contras and Sandinistas. The story opens with an unnamed female protagonist who sits at a bar in San Tomás and experiences flashbacks to her past love affairs. Her most significant love affair happened one year before. She had fallen in love with a Sandinista guerrilla soldier, whom she had met at that very same bar in San Tomás. After their many intimate encounters, her lover inevitably returned to the battle front where he was soon killed, his body sent back to his family. After learning of his death, she sought to give her condolences to his family and then learned that he had had a wife and children all along. She realized that her experience of true love was just a fling for him, and she felt deeply hurt and betrayed. Moving to her present moment, she experiences flashbacks to this event when she begins a romance with another soldier. By this time she has grown cynical toward love. She views this affair as temporary and void of any meaning like the war that she is also living through.

Three sounds emerge in the story: those of the jukebox, a bolero, and rainfall. These sounds make the female protagonist recall her past and carry over into her present and her future. The downpour ("el aguacero") on the tin roof ("el techo de zinc") evoke two memories for the protagonist: the tropical, humid climate in San Tomás, on the one hand, and the roofing material of low-income housing, where she lived in growing up, on the other. Both provided the sonic background to her youth, yet are used here to explore her emotional and personal relationship to the current war.

The story opens with heavy rainfall and rolling thunder engulfing the small village of San Tomás in a loud clamor:

> Los truenos rebotaron sordos y llegaron hasta ellos en ecos prolongados, como si un tumulto de piedras desprendidas de los promontorios remotos de la cordillera rodara a través de un túnel milenario. (Ramírez 235)

> The thunder made muffled claps and reached them through a series of prolonged echoes, as if a tumult of rocks had detached from remote promontories of the cordillera and rolled down an ancient tunnel.

The rolling thunder elicits an endearing childhood memory for the soldier of dancing in the rain:

> —Chavalo, me encantaba bañarme desnudo debajo de las chorreras de los aleros—dijo él. (Ramírez 235)

> —Dude, I used to love to bathe naked under the streams from the eaves—he said.

Likewise, the female protagonist recalls a similar childhood memory:

> también recordaba la lluvia en Chichigalpa que la llamaba a salir desnuda a la calle con sus hermanitas, solamente con el blumer puesto, para bañarse en la corriente que arrastraba la hojarasca de los canales. (Ramírez 235)

> She also remembered the rain in Chichigalpa that would call her to run out onto the street with her little sister naked, dressed only in her bloomers, to bathe in the currents that dragged fallen leaves down the gutters.

The rolling thunder evokes a childhood memory and fills the main character with nostalgia.

In fact, the sounds of thunder and rain create a nostalgic longing for a simpler, happier time in both characters. The rain falling evokes the time she danced as a child in the violent rainstorm outside. Acoustically, rain and thunder's sonic waves usually disperse and signal a soft, hushed sound. As a child, she welcomed the rainstorm as soothing and comforting; it blended into, rather than intruded upon, her sonic space.

Listening to the hard rainfall from inside a structure protected by a tin roof elicits a very different memory for the female protagonist:

> El aguacero sonaba insistente sobre el techo de zinc, igual que el redoble prolongado de un tambor de feria que antes estuvo tocando lejano, por otras calles y sobre otros techos, y ahora se instalaba con extraña alegría encima de ellos, el mismo tambor que había oído sonar, gozosa, temblando de frío en la cama, abrazada a sus hermanas. (Ramírez 236)

> The downpour pounded insistently against the tin roof, like the prolonged roll of a festival drum that had once made far off strains on other streets and above other roofs, and that now installed itself with strange joy right above them. It was the

> same drum that she had heard while she trembled with pleasure and cold in her bed, and clung to her sisters.

Her spatial positioning within the boxed structure, underneath the tin roof, creates for her a more intimate, even suffocating, relationship to the rainfall's tap-tapping sound. The rain becomes trapped within the room's walls, as if struck inside a snare drum's shell. To that effect, the space violently vibrates, amplifying the sound for listeners trapped inside. A snare drum's sharp staccato sound resembles the all-too-familiar sounds of rain on a tin roof for residents of low-income housing in Nicaragua. Tin roofs are cheap to build and easily damaged during a hurricane or heavy rainstorm (Moncada). The tin roof reminds of the challenging living conditions in Nicaraguan rural communities like the one portrayed in the story.

The metaphor of the snare drum holds an additional meaning in its connection with a "redoble prolongado de un tambor de feria" ("prolonged roll of a festival drum"). This recalls the snare drums that play for the annual street festival performance, "La Gigantona," the "Giantress." La Gigantona is a folkloric, satiric figure, loosely based on a duchess from the Spanish-colonial renaissance era, who is parodied as a grotesque-looking joker suggestive of an anti-colonial project. La Gigantona performers improvise verses between drumming interludes to tell a story, describe current events, or make fun of their fellow performers or audience members (Scruggs 113). The performers usually make an annual appearance on December 8th, the day of the Immaculate Conception, which also serves as a Nicaraguan national holiday. This tradition continues in Nicaragua. Both children and adults dress up in La Gigantona puppet suits and wander along residential and public streets accompanied by snare drummers on the hunt for curious onlookers who can give them money for their improvised performance. The percussive effect of rain falling on a tin roof and snare drumrolls in this story allude to this popular street ritual, reminding again of the challenging, lower-income living conditions for Nicaraguans in

rural communities. Those who perform on the streets for a living are most likely those who reside in low-income housing with tin roofs. Ramírez nods to this reality through the story's backdrop.

The soundscape of a rainstorm, rolling thunder, rainfall on the tin roof, and the snare drums played for La Gigantona create a conflicted sonic experience. Ramírez complicates and overlaps these sounds to suggest the ways they indelibly intertwine and are at constant odds with each other.

The bolero song, "Una Aventura," was recorded by Vicentico Valdés and la Sonora Matancera in 1956. It was produced by Seeco Records, a Jewish-owned Latin record company in New York founded in 1944 by Sydney Siegel and George Goldner (Pacini Hernández 25). Soon thereafter, in 1948, Goldner founded Tico Records, another leading Latin record company. When major record companies dropped Latin American artists from their rosters during the war in the 1940s, Jewish entrepreneurs took advantage of this market gap to revitalize the Latin music industry. As a result, Tico Records and Seeco Records dominated the Latin music industry throughout the 1940s and 1950s. Seeco Records specialized in recording musicians from Mexico, the Caribbean, and Latin America in their countries of origin; its roster quickly included the most diverse and important Latin American musicians and artists, including Cuba's Trio Matamoros, and Mexico's Trío los Panchos, Celia Cruz, Arsenio Rodríguez, and La Sonora Matancera (Pacini Hernández 25–26). Seeco and Tico operated as independent labels that did not own their own pressing or distribution companies. Nevertheless, the two record labels had more access to economic and social capital than their Latino counterparts, which allowed them to promote and sell their music beyond the New York Latino community to communities in Mexico, the Caribbean, and Latin America.

The bolero is set in a major key with a brass-heavy orchestral arrangement. The string bass integrates with the percussion section to accent the downbeat, while the strings create a delicate plucking effect, and the piano plays glissandos and improvisational riffs to embellish the melody. The lyrics tell a common bolero tale of disappointed love. The speaker, hurt by a lover's betrayal, bemoans how his ex-lover mistreated him but refuses to cry over her. The lyrics frame the speaker as broken but resilient:

"Una aventura"	"An affair"
Fue mi primer amor un desengaño más para mi vida	It was my first romance, another disappointment in my life
Porque yo comprendí que tú a mi corazón no lo querías	Because I realized that it was my heart you didn't care for
Ya que no pudo ser resignación tendré así es la vida	Since it couldn't be I had to give it up Because that's life
Tú sabes bien que yo y mi pobre corazón nunca te olvidan	You know well that my poor heart and I will never forget you
Pero no lloraré por ese amor que fue una aventura	But I refuse to cry over love that was merely an affair
Porque yo sé que tú jamás comprenderás mis amarguras	Because I know you will never understand my deep sorrow

Melodramatic lyrics are common in the bolero, which focuses on a sentimental, over-exaggerated emotional experience related to failed love affairs. These love affairs may or may not be hidden from public view, and sometimes occur outside of marriage. On a deeper level, bolero lyrics historically perpetuate a patriarchal-motivated sense of love, in which the speaker (a male figure) usually idolizes an absent referent (a female figure). By not including the absent referent's perspective (the woman, in most cases), the song maintains the stereotypical roles

assigned to women during the first half of the twentieth century—the Madonna or the Jezebel. A bolero that appears to be a somewhat harmless ballad about love actually seduces and traps the listener in feelings of nostalgia, loss, and unrequited love that preserves the absent female lover as a desired "other." The bolero freezes a love affair in time through its seductive rhythms, smooth harmonies, and simple lyrics. Several boleros, including, "Perfidia" (Treachery), "Se me hizo fácil olvidarte" (It's Easy to Forget You), and "Sufrir" (Suffering) all function this way.[43] In Ramírez's story, however, the gendered roles are switched. The female protagonist sings about her former male lover. Nevertheless, the bolero's sentiment remains consistent in the story.

In "Pero no lloraré", "Una Aventura" enters the story three times to serve as a thematic motif (i.e., the soundtrack) that evokes the female protagonist's failed romances. The song first enters the story at the beginning as she sits at the bar. The story gestures to the song's ambient presence:

> Vicentico Valdés cantaba otra vez con una cadencia tranquila, sin prisa, una octava por encima del coro de trompetas, pero no lloraré, por ese amor que fue una aventura…un disco antiguo de la Sonora Matancera. (Ramírez 234)

> Vicentico Valdés sang again with an easy cadence, unhurried, one octave above the chorus of trumpets, *pero no lloraré, por ese amor que fue una aventura* [but I won't cry for this love that was an affair]…an old record by the Sonora Matancera.

The lyrics to this bolero also provide the title for the short story.

The song enters the story a second time when the protagonist remembers the death of her first lover (another soldier) and how she learned of his wife and children. Here, the lyrics of the

[43] Bolero titles include: "Perfidia" (Treachery); "Se me Hizo Fácil" (How Easy [to forget you]); "Sufrir" (Suffering); "Amor de Ayer" (Yesterday's Love); "Amor de la Calle" (Love on the Street); "Basura" (Trash); "No Trates de Mentir" (Don't try to lie); "Nunca" (Never); "Sin ti" (Without You); "Sin un Amor" (Without a Love); "Una Traición" (Betrayal); and "Una Aventura" (A Love Affair). For further discussion, see Campos and Baum.

song allow her to express that what she thought was a meaningful romance with the soldier was just a trivial love affair:

> *Por ese amor que fue una aventura*, la voz de Vicentico Valdés pugnaba por elevarse sobre los rumores del aguaje que apagaba el coro de las trompetas. *Una aventura*. 'Aventura que no se cuenta, vale la mitad,' sentenciaba su padre. (Ramírez 240)
>
> *Por ese amor que fue una aventura* [for this love that was an affair], Vicentico Valdés's voice struggled to rise above the sounds of the currents of water that silenced the chorus of trumpets. *Una aventura*. 'An affair that you don't talk about is only half an affair,' her father pronounced.

The song is now directly reflecting the main protagonist's own life experience; she is confronted with the reality that the song and her father both warned her about, namely that pursuing adventures of passion can come with deep disappointment and unrequited love.

The song appears a third and final time in the story to comfort a fearful and desperate soldier who is heading into battle:

> Uno de los soldados, un chavalo al que le pesaban las botas, entró corriendo, las monedas apuñadas, y fue hacia la roconola. De nuevo, *pero no lloraré, por un amor que fue una aventura.* La cadencia tranquila de la voz de otros tiempos de Vicentico Valdés, que ascendía sin prisa sobre el coro de trompetas de la Sonora Matancera, los alcanzó ya en la vera de la carretera mojada que fulguraba como papel de lija deshaciendo los reflejos del sol. (Ramírez 241)
>
> One of the soldiers, a kid whose boots weighed heavy on him, came in running with coins in his fists and went to the jukebox. Again, "*pero no lloraré, por un amor que fue una aventura [but I won't cry, for a love that was an affair]."* The easy cadence of the voice from times past of Vicentico Valdés ascended unhurriedly over the Sonora Matancera's chorus of trumpets to where they were, at the bank of the rainy highway that glowed like sandpaper and broke up the reflection of the sun.

Here the song elicits a sense of nostalgia and longing for a better, happier, and simpler time for the young soldier. He is not interested in the lyrics but rather "la cadencia tranquila de la voz de otros tiempos de Vicentico Valdés" ("the easy cadence of the voice from times past of Vicentico

Valdés"). He listens passively, guided by nostalgia and romantic feelings. Actually, however, as the story clarifies, this song speaks of unrequited love and—more broadly—the unfulfilled promises of a bloody war.

The fact that "Una aventura" is played on the jukebox is also critical to the short story. The coin-operated jukebox is a long-established fixture in the local tavern within the story. Ramírez describes the *roconola's* round shape and flashy lights as it plays an old record:

> un disco antiguo de la Sonora Matancera, como casi todos los demás discos almacenados bajo la comba de vidrio de la roconola Wurlitzer que desleía en giro tornasol sus luces chillonas. (Ramírez 234)
>
> …an old record by La Sonora Matancera, like all the other vinyls piled under the domed glass of the *roconola* Wurlitzer, whose flickering lights dissolved on the spinning turntable

The Wurlitzer's glass curvature and rotating neon lights, likened to an arcade machine, most likely identifies it as the 1500 Wurlitzer model that launched between 1952–1953. The story also gestures to the Wurlitzer's coin-operated feature through the soldier who rushes in to feed coins into it:

> Uno de los soldados, un chavalo al que le pesaban las botas, entró corriendo, las monedas apuñadas, y fue hacia *la roconola* (Ramírez 241)
>
> One of the soldiers, a kid whose boots weighed heavy on him, came in running with coins in his fists and went to the jukebox.

The story reflects a jukebox culture that both Nicaraguans and Americans enjoyed in the mid-twentieth century, when jukeboxes were fixtures in working-class venues, especially in taverns and restaurants. Ramírez's story nods to the popularity of the Wurlitzer jukebox and signals its importance for the local communities in San Tomás.

"Pero no lloraré" presents a scenario in which pain, memory, and nostalgia are mediated through the listening ear. When the main protagonist listens to the bolero on the *roconola*, she

relives her painful memory – a personal experience that is echoed in the bolero's seductive lyrics. When she listens to the sounds of rainfall, she is comforted and consoled. Ramírez associates the jukebox and rainfall with personal pain.

The listening practices of Ramírez's main character fails to model the behavior of the listeners imagined by US advertisers of the jukebox. Ramírez's protagonist passively encounters the jukebox playing the bolero, which conjures in her challenging and painful memories. As a result, she rejects the music and the technology that produces it. She is not interested in what the jukebox promises—technological progress, pure tone, and immediate access to music—because she is preoccupied with larger problems, like the uncertainty of war and the pain from her past love affair. The jukebox sounds intrude and create inner conflict for her. In contrast, Ramírez includes an incidental character – the young soldier – who intentionally engages with the jukebox and selects the bolero tune to play. He considers the jukebox and the music it plays to be an ideal accompaniment to his short visit at the bar. Unlike Ramírez's main character, this incidental character represents the ideal listener for the jukebox. Overall, Ramírez's short story calls into question the over-celebrated sound fidelity that the jukebox promises, which is disrupted by the turmoil of civil war and emotional pain of lost love.

Conclusion

In his short stories, essays, and novels Ramírez describes how Nicaraguans responded to modern means of sounds reproduction such as the gramophone, record player, jukebox (*la roconola)*, and radio. In addition to the machines themselves, US manufacturers such as Columbia, Victrola, and Wurlitzer successfully marketed sound fidelity. They promised Nicaraguan consumers "exquisita música" (exquisite music) for their "oídos delicados" (delicate

ears; *Los Domingos, Revista Popular Ilustrada,* año VI, número 256, 13 de mayo de 1923, 10). They marketed a new way of listening that invited the consumer to desire pure tones and the equivalent of live music. Their machines promised sound fidelity and access to a wide selection of US and West European music.

Ramírez's imagined rural Nicaraguan communities respond to these new technologies. Rural Nicaraguans may have owned one of these machines, but did not embrace the manufactures' suggestions about how to listen with them. Instead, their listening is informed by civil war, nostalgia, and misunderstanding.

In *Retrato*, Ramírez describes the DJ as an inevitable threat to live musicians. In *Un baile*, the characters tend to mishear, overhear, misunderstand, or fail to hear each other altogether. Save for two characters, the majority of the Masatepe community treats the record player as an afterthought, or they misunderstand its intended production of a "perfect" sound. They are distracted by the materiality of the machine. In the three short stories in *Clave*, Ramírez's characters sentimentally respond to the respective sound technologies to which they are exposed. In "Kalimán," Kalimán obsesses over the radio. In "Volver," a lonely musician has an aversion to the gramophone playing a tango because it elicits painful memories from his childhood. Similarly, in "Pero no lloraré," the main character listens to the bolero "Una Aventura" on the *roconola* as she experiences flashbacks about unrequited love.

Ramírez provides a unique lens for interpreting how his characters relate to sound technology. He pessimistically responds to the Contra War, while establishing local listening practices that counter the listening ideals of US advertisers. His stories give evidence of the plurality of listening practices as sound technologies developed in the twentieth century.

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CONCLUSION

Concluding Remarks

In this dissertation I have shown how Ruben Darío established a sonic archive for Nicaraguan literature and poetry in the early twentieth century, and how that archive was later memorialized by Luis Delgadillo and then nostalgically remembered by Sergio Ramírez. By exploring sounds and listening practices in selected literary works, I was able to better understand these processes, and how geopolitical circumstances shape literature through sound.

Rubén Darío establishes an acoustic binary in his short stories by setting up modern city noise against what he perceives as "beautiful" music. The modern city noise includes barrel organs, locomotives, factory machinery, and unruly city dwellers—sounds representative of the late nineteenth-century European cities that Darío experienced firsthand. In contrast, Darío understands the sounds of certain Western musical instruments, natural landscapes, and Greek antiquity as beautiful. He asks his readers to challenge what they hear in the modern present by seeking the more peaceful and quieter acoustic spaces of the past. By rejecting the "noisy" modern city, I argue, he poetically resists imperial and neocolonial aggression in Central America.

In his poems, Darío suggests a more emphatic listening orientation than in his short stories. He ardently attends to sounds from the seacoast, rumbling volcanoes, animals, musical instruments from Greek antiquity, and military bands. He appeals to ecological, West European, and ancient Greek sounds to create a soundtrack for Central American cultural autonomy. At the same time, he tunes out the noise created by European and U.S. imperial aggression in the isthmus at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The sounds Darío evoked in his poetry also became manifest in Nicaraguan concert music. Set to Darío's poem "Marcha triunfal," Luis A. Delgadillo's military march privileges the military brass sounds evoked in the poem. The march itself is brass-heavy and demonstrates the characteristics of a typical European concert march from the late nineteenth century. Yet whereas the brass in Darío's poem evokes Pan-American and anti-imperial imagery, the very same instruments when used by Delgadillo to celebrate Darío after his death are transformed into signifiers of Nicaraguan nationalism.

Lastly, the short stories by Sergio Ramírez document how sound technology arrived in Nicaragua, and how it is later remembered. Ramírez returns nostalgically to the rural, local impact of Nicaraguans listening to music through sound technologies developed in the United States in the mid-twentieth century. His stories feature characters who listen to music on radios, record players, and jukeboxes with feelings that range from obsession, nostalgia, and incomprehension to doubt. His fictionalized listeners problematize rather than conform to US commercial ideals of sound fidelity. Through his attention to sound and practice of remembering, Ramírez points to a larger debate about U.S. cultural and political occupation in Central America in the second half of the twentieth century and the civil wars that resulted from it.

Darío's and Ramírez's use of sound reveals their passion and ambivalence about the promises of modern sound technology. They were suspicious of modern urban development, distressed by imperial and neocolonial aggression, nostalgic for what had been lost, and hesitant to believe in sound technologies developed in the United States. Whereas Darío developed a listening practice to evade the noise of the modern city, however, Ramírez destabilized and reappropriated that very "noise." Both authors develop listening practices that reveal much about the Nicaraguan literary response to global capitalist expansion in the twentieth century.

Future Research Projects

The literary, musical, and archival texts I studied in this dissertation are a small sample of a larger corpus of texts by Darío and Ramírez that represent sound. In revising this dissertation for publication as a book monograph, I plan to conduct a more extensive examination of the sonic archive in Darío's and Ramírez's works to broaden my theoretical scope of a twentieth-century acoustic Nicaraguan and Central American imaginary. I will include in the published version of this thesis an analysis of Darío's abundant travel chronicles, including *Caravana pasa* (Passing Caravan, 1903), *El viaje a Nicaragua* (Travels to Nicaragua, 1904), and *Tierras solares* (Ancestral Lands, 1904). Careful consideration of these texts will help me to track how Darío listened to the sounds he heard himself in modern Western cities. I will also examine Ramírez's *Tambor olvidado* (Lost Drums, 2007), in which he highlights the West African roots of Nicaragua's and Central America's traditions of music, oral stories, and folklore. Finally, I plan to study texts by Guatemalan author Miguel Asturias, including *Hombres de maíz* (1949), which privileges sounds in speech, raising the issue of aural biases in racializing indigenous groups in Guatemala and Central America. Through my analysis of sound in Asturias's work, I will be able to draw conclusions about his and other elite writers' relationship to Indigenous and Black populations in the isthmus.

I hope to have laid the groundwork in this project for establishing a method for reading sound in twentieth-century literature and poetry. Establishing these sonic archives has allowed me to gain a much greater understanding of Nicaraguan literature. I have learned that what is audible is just as important as who is listening or hearing passively. These insights have led me to better understand systems of oppression and to recognize Nicaraguan voices that are not always heard.