

‘Performances of Pain and Pleasure (Divas Sing the Bolero)’

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Firstly: just what exactly is this paper about for those of you who don’t know what a bolero is and are wondering about divas...

The bolero can be considered the most popular romantic rhythm of the twentieth century both in Spanish America and Spain. From its origins in Cuba in the late 1800s it spread throughout the Spanish Caribbean and the continent, rapidly crossing frontiers through the new media of radio, film, and an emerging record industry, as well as extensive tours by the most popular artistes. It is a sub-genre of the ‘canción cubana’ (Cuban song), in duple metre, originally with a strict rhythmic base, the ‘cinquillo cubano’ comprised of a group of syncopated notes forming five beats (hence the term ‘cinquillo’) of note value long-short-long-short-long usually followed by non-syncopated notes. This alternation, which can be traced back to African drumming patterns, was originally played on the ‘clave’ (a pair of hard wooden sticks struck together) and the bolero has been described as the first great Afro-Hispanic vocal synthesis (Orovio, 1981:52).¹

Lyrically, it is commonly conceived of as a romantic discourse privileging ‘unrestrained romanticism or sentimentality’ (Campos, 1991:637).² The hegemony of the strict rhythmic patterning of the ‘cinquillo cubano’ has gradually been replaced by freer rhythms which follow the prosody of the lyrics. The move away from simple guitar accompaniment to the use of orchestras and big bands has paradoxically served to place increased emphasis on the vocality of the performer who becomes the focal point for audience identification. This voice may be seductive, offering images of the ideal other and promises of eternal love. Indeed, love in its multiple variations is the predominant theme of the bolero. However, it is important to note that relatively few boleros glorify love: most deal with deception and disillusionment, jealousy, abandonment and betrayal. For Domínguez this is a defining trait of the bolero genre, the bitter aftertaste of pain which accompanies the passion (1993:80). According to Zavala, the Cuban bolero speaks the language of desire, of its absence and presence, of illusion and disillusionment (1991). It is therefore not about love or pleasure but

about a desire which by definition is impossible to realize: the pursuit of the unattainable other.³ For Delgado Ruiz the bolero expresses modern theories of desire in its tension between absence and desire for presence:

Es como si inopinadamente, los Lara, Domínguez, Machín, etcétera, hubieran intuido, en clave músico-sentimental, las actuales teorías del deseo. (1991:95)

It's as if unexpectedly, Lara, Domínguez, Machín, etc., had intuited, in an emotional-musical code, current theories of desire.⁴

For critics such as Aristizabal (1987), Campos (1991) and Monsiváis (1997) the desire being articulated is male (and heterosexual). Campos argues that the masculine voice expresses both passion and vulnerability through the lyrics and vocal techniques such as 'portamento', the lengthening of syllables at the end of a phrase (1991:638). The conventions of the bolero provide a sanctioned musical space within which men can cathartically express their emotions and sensitivity, traditionally feminine attributes without compromising their masculinity. It is a discourse of affective self-disclosure in both the public and private realm as romantic music is not just used as a background sound for courtship in Latin America; it may be used actively as a surrogate voice which articulates emotion and negotiates relationships through acts such as dedicating a song on the radio, giving a record or serenading a loved one (Pacini Hernández, 1995:192). However, the bolero is far from being an exclusively male-produced discourse as Campos would seem to suggest. The use of 'portamento' which Campos would seem to regard as a male expression of strong passion is characteristic of many women singers, particularly Olga Guillot. Guillot is associated with a particular style of bolero known as 'feeling'. As its name suggest it is a highly expressive style of singing achieved through various vocal techniques such as varying tempo and stress (Rico Salazar, 1988:52). It is also associated with performance in an accentuatedly dramatic, gestural manner (Galán, 1983:296-9).

Indeed, it is possible to invert the terms of Campos's analysis discussed above. That is to say, the bolero can provide a sanctioned outlet for women to express sexual desire, passion and anger, traditionally masculine qualities. As well as numerous female performers (of whom I will be discussing two in particular today –La Lupe and Chavela Vargas), there were many famous women writers of boleros such as the Mexicans Consuelo Velásquez, María Greever and Emma Elena Valdelamar, and the Cubans Isolina Carrillo, Marta Valdés, and Ernestina Lecuona.⁵ Frances Aparicio engages in a more complex reading of the bolero which attempts

to take into account the ambivalences inherent in the genre with regards to gender. She draws on two Puerto Rican texts: Iris Zavala's essay 'De héroes y heroínas en lo imaginario social: El discurso amoroso del bolero' (1990: 'Of Heroes and Heroines in the Social Imaginary: The Amorous Discourse of the Bolero') and Luis Rafael Sánchez's 'fabulation' *La importancia de llamarse Daniel Santos* (1989: *The Importance of Being Daniel Santos*).⁶

Aparicio traces the development of bolero lyrics from the Western tradition of courtly love through the 'modernista' imagery of poets such as Rubén Darío in which women are idealized and mythified as almost divine figures, eternal and unattainable seductresses, objects of male unrequited longing or unconsummated love (1998:125-8). However, a counterpoint to this idealized seductress features in many lyrics in the guise of a rather decadent 'femme fatale' as immortalized in the boleros of the prolific Mexican composer Agustín Lara with their references to 'fallen women', prostitutes and relationships outside the legal confines of marriage. In these boleros the motifs of absence, separation and abandonment are central and Aparicio suggests that they are a reaction to the increased access of women to public spaces as Latin America became increasingly industrialized and urbanized through the course of the twentieth century.

In contrast women composers and singers break with social norms in boleros which take up the motif of separation to voice women's desire for an alternative, independent path in life in which the emphasis is on mobility and freedom of movement. The gendered binary division of masculine activity and feminine passivity is clearly subverted in the boleros cited by Aparicio which include 'Es tarde ya' ('It's too late') by the Puerto Rican composer Silvia Rexach and 'Yo quiero andar' ('I want to walk') by the Dominican singer Sonia Silvestre (1998:130-2). However, her reading of the libidinal economy inscribed in the bolero begins by examining songs in which the power differential between men and women is articulated through a discourse of male sexual domination. The synecdochal representation of women through fragmented eroticized body parts, particularly the eyes, lips, mouth and hands, may be seen to reduce them to objects of male desire and fantasy. However, in an inversion of traditional male-female relationships in a patriarchal context, the male is presented as suffering and vulnerable, victimized or abused by the female (Campos, 1991:638). Aparicio cites 'Usted' ('You') by the Mexican composer Gabriel Ruiz as an example of a bolero inculcating women as the source of men's problems. It begins with the line 'Usted es la culpable/ de todas mis angustias' (You are responsible/ for all my anxieties) (1998:154).⁷

However, these accusations serve to reveal male dependency on women's love and presence, the woman in 'Usted' is constructed as the man's hope and ultimately his life.

The ambivalent gender politics of the bolero are central to Zavala's discursive analyses of the form (1990, 1991) which focus on the gender fluidity of the signifiers, 'yo' ('I') and 'tú/usted' (you), which allow male and female performers to interpret the same song as the majority of boleros are not addressed to a specific named, and therefore gendered, subject. This indeterminacy allows the relatively easy regendering of lyrics, for example 'Usted' cited above has been performed by the American Eydie Gorme and simply transformed into 'Usted es *el culpable*'.⁸ Each bolero can have multiple meanings which shift through performance depending on who is singing and who is listening. A space is created for diverse subjectivities to be expressed.

Interpretation may be additionally inflected by sexual identity, allowing homoerotic articulation of desire in a further destabilization of gender categories. Colón Zayas discusses a number of recordings in which the binary divisions between masculine subjects and feminine objects are clearly broken down: Linda Ronstadt (U.S.) singing 'Perfidia' ('Perfidy') which is addressed to another woman, Juan Gabriel (Mexico) and Rocío Dúrcal (Spain) singing 'Fue un placer conocerte' ('It was a pleasure to meet/know you') in unison thereby making both the subject and the object of desire in the bolero simultaneously male and female, Gilberto Santa Rosa and Tito Rodríguez (Puerto Rico) singing 'En la soledad' ('In solitude') as a duet, made possible through digital technology some twenty years after Rodríguez's death, in which two male voices sing to each other thereby displacing heterosexual discourse altogether (1995).⁹

And now for the divas... I'm using the term as defined by Alberto Mira in his dictionary of Hispanic gay and lesbian culture. They are not the stars we seem to have unprivileged access to through the mass media:

Las divas deben hacernos pensar que viven en su propia esfera y que las normas y convenciones que se aplican a todos no sirven para ellas. Y deben convencernos de ella a través de su arte, en el que se combinan siempre la mujer y el mito [...] Quizá la clave que define a la diva es el modo en que habita su propio mito, el modo en que su vida supura en sus creaciones (1999:235)

Divas should make us believe that they live in their own sphere and that the norms and conventions which apply to the rest of us are no good for them. And they should convince us

of this through their art, in which the woman and the myth merge together [...] Perhaps the key to defining the diva (as opposed to the star) is the way in which she inhabits her own myth, the way in which her life oozes through her creations.

Examples in Anglo culture might include Judy Garland or Billie Holliday. In the Hispanic world singers such as La Lupe and Chavela Vargas have become gay icons. These are singers whose highly sexualized performances and strong voices seem to embody the notions of pleasure and pain of my title today. The fascination they exert for gay audiences is complex and may be accounted for by many factors including: identification with the marginal, with an aesthetics of emotional suffering and intense pain, with risqué eroticism and excess, with the semiotics of glamour. In the case of the bolero the semiotic shifters of 'tú/usted' (you) and 'yo' (I) play a crucial role in audience identification setting into play mechanisms of recognition which invite the emotional involvement and participation of the listener who is made to feel both special and unique (Domínguez, 1993:82) whilst identifying with an implicit community of other listeners who share the same desires and frustrations (Middleton, 1990:167; Durant, 1984:202-4).

La Lupe was born Guadalupe Victoria Yoli Raimond on the 23rd of December 1936 in the popular *barrío* of San Pedrito, Santiago de Cuba. From an early age she showed a natural talent for music and influenced by the performances of Olga Guillot declared that she wanted to be an artiste (singer/dancer). Her nickname la Yiyiyi stems from her exuberant, youthful performances. However, her father (a worker for Bacardi) was quite strict and insisted on her gaining an education. She duly graduated as a schoolteacher in Havana in 1958 and following her father's instructions proceeded to marry that same year.

She married a musician, Eulogio 'Yoyo' Reyes and with another singer named Tina they formed the Tropicuba Trío. Liberated from her father Lupe's nonconformist and rebellious character began to manifest itself more clearly. She was not content to share centre stage and frequently ignored Yoyo's direction in her performances. Professional and personal differences (Yoyo's affair with Tina) led to the break up of both the marriage and the group in 1960. This blurring of Lupe's private and public life was to mark her career.

She began to perform solo in a small nightclub, La Red, which still exists in Havana, and soon had an enthusiastic crowd of fans who packed out the tiny locale, applauding wildly at the end of each number. The Cuban writer Guillermo Cabrera Infante has described her as a 'fenómeno fenomenológico' (phenomenological phenomenon). Her stage show was marked

by her transgressive performative style which was excessive in both vocal technique and bodily display, and highly erotically suggestive. In an interview I did with Jesús Madruga (in June 2000), journalist and presenter for Radio Cadena Habana, he stated that for him La Lupe stood out because of her performances rather than her voice (in contrast to other singers such as Olga Guillot, Freddy or Celia Cruz). Indeed her voice has a particular timbre and vibrato all of its own described by José Quiroga as ‘like tin foil, like shattered glass, like nails on a blackboard’ (2000:166). According to Cuban commentators, she wore strong makeup and revealing clothes associated more conventionally with *putas*. She would scream, laugh wildly, cry, swear at the audience, bite and scratch herself, hit her pianist Homero with her shoes, lift her skirts, sit on men or women in the audience and moan and groan in imitation of orgasm. Lupe publicly flaunted her sexuality. However, in one of her key numbers, ‘No me quieras así’ (‘Don’t love me that way’) by Facundo Rivero, she denied the audience visual access to her face, physically controlling the spectacle by facing the wall. hence the song’s nickname ‘La pared’ (‘The wall’).

La Lupe has been described (by Cuban novelist and playwright Humberto Arenal) as the most outrageous female performer in Cuba at that time, breaking with social norms of decorum and passivity for women in her explosively dynamic performances. Her flamboyance called attention to the artifice of presumed natural gender roles through its acting out of images of excess and her popularity in 1960, recognised by the awarding of a gold disc by RCA Víctor, is perhaps an indication of the heady atmosphere following the revolutionary triumph of 1959. However, la Lupe was not popular with all sectors of the public and music press. her first LP released in 1961 with Discuba was entitled *Con el diablo en el cuerpo* (‘With the Devil Inside’ by Adolfo Guzmán) and indeed that is how some commentators described her: scandalous, eccentric, mad, hysterical. These terms, conventionally associated with feminine emotion and irrationality, are also used by those praising her e.g. Cabrera Infante describes her performance as ‘un temblor demente’ (a demented shaking/earthquake) as if possessed, or as ‘más esquizoide que exquisito’ (more schizo than exquisite). She is allied with the transgressive figures of the Gorgon, madwoman or prostitute. Whilst her radical, aggressive style was well-suited to the marginal space of La Red, it did not translate to the mainstream space of television as a disastrous experience in 1961 would show. She was dismissed as being in bad taste, even grotesque for her sexual abandon. The identification of her vocalicity with a violent female sexuality, described by Cabrera Infante as both sadistic and masochistic, provoked both desire and fear in that it

seemed out of control. To quote Leslie Dunn and Nancy Jones in *Embodied Voices* (a study of female vocality):

Whether it is celebrated, eroticized, demonized, ridiculed or denigrated, [the female voice] is always stigmatized, ideologically ‘marked’ and construed as a ‘problem’ for the (male) social critic or auditor who demands concern if not control. (1994:9)

The reasons for her departure from Cuba in January 1962 differ in accounts given inside and outside of Cuba. Cuban cultural commentators, such as Arenal and Raúl Martínez Rodríguez, point out that 1961 was not a very successful year for Lupe. She lost her job in La Red due to personal differences with the owner and they hint at scandals of a personal nature. In interviews Lupe claimed that she was summoned to the radio station CMQ and ordered out of the country (after a personal intervention by Fidel) because ‘lupismo’ was setting a bad example in the new moral climate of austerity being promoted by the revolutionary ideologues.

What is certain is that an Italian entrepreneur took her to Mexico and from there she went on to Miami and New York. She began performing at the Cuban cabaret, La Barraca and was offered a contract by Mongo Santamaría recording Afro-Cuban inflected jazz with renowned musicians such as *Chocolate* Armenteros. However, her definitive rise to success in the U.S. came when Tito Puente invited her to sing with his orchestra. Their collaboration was to be a commercial and critical success. Lupe was singled out in 1965 and 1966 as the most important singer in the Latino press who dubbed her ‘The Queen of Latin Soul’. Prior to Lupe joining the orchestra Puente had been playing traditional Cuban Rhythms. She helped provide a bridge from the big band sound to the brasher/harsher sound of the *barrío latino* that would become known as salsa. Her modulations and the grain of her voice gave the band a more up-to-date sound.

However, the relationship was not to last. Puente, like Yoyo before him, complained about Lupe’s informality and lack of discipline and fired her in 1968 (ironically the year she was crowned ‘Queen of Salsa’). This was not the only reason, Puente was worried about her public image. Unlike Puente’s most famous long-term female collaborator, Celia Cruz, Lupe was very open about her practice of the Afro-Cuban religion *Santería*. (Cruz has denied being an initiate despite recording LPs of songs to the *orishas*, flourishing a scarf in the colours of Yemaya (deity of maternal love and protector of women) whilst dancing and invoking her name in a low voice during stage performances.) *Santería* is in part responsible

for Lupe's decline in fortune both public and private. In 1971 she paid 15,000 dollars for a pair of 'saints', Changó and Ochún. She was later to claim that this was the start of a long chain of personal disasters. That year her husband Willy García was diagnosed with schizophrenia and over the following four years she lost all her money and home trying to overcome the illness with no success.

However, Lupe's career was not finished just yet. She toured Venezuela to popular acclaim and back in New York, recorded a number of boleros by the Puerto Rican composer, Catalino 'Tite' Curet Alonso: 'La tirana' ('The tyrant'), 'Carcajada' ('Roar of laughter') and 'Puro teatro' ('Pure theatre'). These are some of her most famous numbers. 'La tirana' openly contests negative constructions of the feminine by sarcastically deconstructing a subjective male point of view in which the woman is set up as the villain of the piece:

Según tu punto de vista	According to your point of view
yo soy la mala	I'm the wicked one
vampiresa en tu novela	the vampire in your novel
la gran tirana	the great tyrant

The irony which is evident in these opening lines pervades the song and is reinforced musically by the crescendo which accompanies the final stanza, affirming the woman's victory which is socially sanctioned, 'si dice la misma gente/el día en que te dejé/fui yo quien salí ganando' (as everyone else says/the day I left you/I came out the winner). 'Puro teatro' is also accusatory in tone, the woman has been deceived by her lover's pretence which is described as 'drama', 'theatre', 'a role', 'play-acting'. His very way of being is performance but his performative strategy is used deliberately to mislead in a well-rehearsed 'simulacra' of love. In Lupe's hit rendition of 'Puro teatro' she interjects a spoken line from 'La tirana', 'Y acuérdate que según tu punto de vista yo soy la mala' (remember according to you I'm the wicked one) thus emphasizing her awareness of and drawing the listener's attention to the performative tactics at play in both songs. Utterances whose meanings are not wholly determined by linguistic content, in other words the bodily, sonorous element of vocality, are crucial to understanding her performances. (To borrow from Roland Barthes via Julia Kristeva the geno-song is as crucial as the pheno-song in constructing meaning from the listening experience.)

LISTEN TO 'PURO TEATRO'

Curet Alonso's compositions shifted in tune with the times as the bolero was sidelined by music entrepreneurs such as Jerry Masucci (president of Fania from 1974) focusing on the salsa boom and on the whole on the male stars of the early salsa pantheon: Ray Barretto, Larry Harlow, Willie Colón, Héctor Lavoe, Johnny Pacheco, Rubén Blades, Cheo Feliciano, Ismael Rivera to name but a few. (Celia Cruz is the exception in the Fania All Star line-up.) Nonetheless over the course of 1977 La Lupe gave a number of electrifying performances. On January 30th she played the Bronx's Puerto Rico Theatre backed by Machito. She was introduced as the 'Queen of Latin Soul' and came on stage dressed in a long white gown and tiara. On June 8th she played Madison Square Gardens. Here is the description given by Peter Hamill in the *Daily News* of June 20th:

She pulled out all the stops: moaning, making a chattering sound with her voice, her right hand kneading her breast, whipping the dress around her, tearing at her hair, the sound orgasmic and huge as the band moved to the end and the song stopped and she was gone. (Salazar 2000:27)

Indeed, she was soon to vanish from the scene, Lupe's wild-woman act was before her time and she was increasingly marginalized by the salsa mainstream. Her album 'One of a Kind' from 1977 received relatively little promotion or airplay.

Her personal misfortunes were also to continue, her flat was destroyed in a fire and she fractured two vertebrae in a domestic accident leaving her in a wheelchair. Lupe was forced to rely on social security and begging for food stamps. Whilst in hospital in 1986 she met an evangelist and was to join the temple of Jorge Rascke who she claims gave her the ability to walk and dance freely through divine intervention. Her last years were spent as an active Christian and she released an LP of hymns 'La samaritana'. She died of a heart attack on 28 February 1992. Her obituary in the New York Times by Jon Pareles focused on the series of personal tragedies that befell her rather than her impact on salsa or subversive performance style (Aparicio 1998:179).

In *Listening to Salsa* (a gender inflected study of the genre) Frances Aparicio argues that la Lupe has been subjected to a masculinist silencing because of her transgressively erotic articulation of a different female subjectivity. She is consistently constructed as a singer in relation to men: Yoyo, Puente and Curet Alonso. Aparicio instead suggests that the key to analysing la Lupe is in her performative style. As well as the songs by Curet Alonso which I have already discussed, Aparicio picks out two tracks from the 1977 LP, 'La Lupe: One of a

Kind': 'Canta bajo' ('Sing Bass') and 'La dueña del cantar' ('The Mistress of Song'). The first openly articulates erotic desire in a vocal and physical dialogues with the double bass which Lupe exhorts to sing whilst caressing it and placing her fingers inside it. Moans and kisses add to the overall effect. In 'La dueña del cantar' La Lupe asserts her right to be recognized as a central figure in the development of salsa despite her insertion into the Fania 'family'. Her voice is echoed by the chorus in the *son montuno* section who repeat 'dueña del cantar' symbolically reaffirming the right of female voices to be heard.

The second female voice I want to focus on today is that of Chavela Vargas. I have rather less research into Chavela so this will be a briefer section. Her origins are a matter of controversy. She was born in 1919 in either Mexico or Costa Rica. What is certain is that her success came in Mexico in the 1950s with her impassioned performances of a number of genres including the bolero and 'canción ranchera' (which fuse in the 'bolero ranchero'). However, like La Lupe, Chavela was to be censured for her openly sexual stance but in her case that stance was overtly lesbian. She 'lesbianized' lyrics alluding to heterosexual masculine subjects of desire and identified with a masculinized eroticism -grabbing her crotch in performances of her signature song 'La macorina' and posing caressing a guitar (traditionally sexualized as the body of a woman)- and macho culture of smoking/tequila reputedly drinking her way through 45,000 litres of tequila over the years. She originally wore her hair scraped back then later cropped and typically dressed in a jorongo (poncho) and trousers. Lesbian fans identify with Chavela or Chabela (a more 'popular' spelling) as a 'macha' or butch. In 1960s Mexico the aura of scandal surrounding her sexuality, violent temperament (she was nicknamed 'pistolas' for allegedly firing at her audience) and heavy drinking led to her being blacklisted and by the early 1970s she was performing in gay friendly locales only such as 'El Hábito' in Coyoacán.

In the 1990s she has become popular again through her recuperation in the films of the highly successful Spanish film director, Pedro Almodóvar featuring in the soundtracks of *Kika* (1993) and *La flor de mi secreto* (The Flower of My Secret, 1995). In 1993 at the age of 74 she toured Spain to great acclaim. Indeed the tour became known as 'el chavelazo'. Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano notes with interest the religious imagery used to describe her in the Spanish press: *La Jornada* describing Almodóvar as the priest of 'chavelismo', *ABC* stated 'blessed are they who got tickets for the show' (1998:72). In the Madrid show in 1993 Chavela bantered with Almodóvar from the stage, joking that they would marry and have lots

of 'Pedritos'. He wryly remarked that she was capable of performing miracles in reference to both her advanced age and their respective sexualities. Almodóvar has also referred to Chavela as the ultimate martyr, 'Nadie, excepto Cristo sabe abrir los brazos como Chavela Vargas' (Nobody except Christ knows how to open their arms wide like Chavela Vargas) (Mazo 1999).

This imagery seems clearly sacrilegious when linked to other statements made by Almodóvar such as 'esa mujer canta de donde le sale el coño' (that woman sings out of the place her cunt comes from) (Yarbro-Bejarano 1998:81). Like La Lupe Chavela's voice transcends the lyrics being sung to communicate emotion and eroticism through the body. In its variance of tempo and stress it could be characterized as 'feeling' (being slightly before/after the beat). There are passionate breaks in register and a whole gamut of (guttural) sounds are employed including sighs, moans, groans, grunts, laughter and cries.

WATCH EXTRACT FROM *LA FLOR DE MI SECRETO* WITH CHAVELA ON TV AS MAIN CHARACTER LEO (MARISA PAREDES) BREAKS DOWN, THEN LISTEN TO FULL SONG. TYPICAL RANCHERA OF DRINK AND DESPAIR. SIMILAR INDETERMINACY HERE AS WITH BOLERO IN LYRICS.

In his tribute song 'Por le bulevar de los sueños rotos', Spanish singer-songwriter Joaquín Sabina notes that 'las amarguras no son amargas/cuando las canta Chavela Vargas/y las escribe/un tal José Alfredo' (bitterness is not bitter, when sung by Chavela Vargas and written by José Alfredo [Jiménez]).

To conclude then these two women in their performances of erotic pleasure and emotional pain are empowering figures for a range of listeners (but particularly gay subcultures) who can identify with the multiple positions held open in the bolero song form they are associated with. The power of the music is enhanced by its direct appeal to the listener creating a sense of belonging through affective investment. Their voices and bodies provide a site in which, to quote Sheila Whiteley in *Sexing the Groove*, 'desire and power are invested and operationalized' (1997:xiv-xv). The bolero is a complex and contradictory form, a potentially conservative discourse which simultaneously provides the opportunity for resistance to structures of domination.

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¹ Orovio cites the Cuban composer Rosendo Ruiz Quevedo and arranger Vicente González-Rubiera in support of this argument (1995:63).

² See Manuel (1995:35).

³ Other definitions talk about the promise of pleasure (Evora, 1993:i); illusion as its substance (Castillo Zapata 1991:91); a romantic lament comprised of melancholy, frustration and solitude (Saladrigas 1983). Its simultaneous expression of dichotomies forms the basis of both Castillo Zapata (1990) and Zavala's (1991) book length studies.

⁴ Delgado Ruiz is referring to perhaps the most famous Mexican composer of boleros, Agustín Lara, who wrote 'Solamente una vez' ('Only Once'), 'Noche de Ronda' ('Night of Serenades') and 'Piensa en mí' ('Think of me') among many others; Domínguez could refer to Frank Domínguez who wrote 'Tú me acostumbraste' ('You made me accustomed') which was a hit for both Lucho Gatica and Olga Guillot or to Alberto Domínguez Borrás of the Hermanos Domínguez who wrote 'Perfidia' ('Perfidy') and 'Frenesí' ('Frenzy'), Antonio Machín is one of the key Cuban singers.

⁵ See Caravaca (1995) ch.11.

⁶ This term is taken from the introductory section of Sánchez's extraordinary hybrid text (1989:16).

⁷ All bolero lyrics cited are from Caravaca (1995). The emphasis is mine.

⁸ The emphasis is mine.

⁹ This paper was provided by Dr John Perivolaris of the University of Manchester to whom I am grateful for introducing me to many Puerto Rican authors.