

*“¿QUÉ DICE USTED?”*: DISCOURSES OF FEMININITY IN *NUEVA TROVA*

*CUBANA*

by

JULIANNE L. GRAPER

A THESIS

Presented to the School of Music and Dance  
and the Graduate School of the University of Oregon  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
Master of Arts

June 2014

THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

Student: Julianne L. Graper

Title: “¿*Qué Dice Usted?*”: Discourses of Femininity in *Nueva Trova Cubana*

This thesis has been accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in the School of Music and Dance by:

Juan Eduardo Wolf	Chairperson
Loren Kajikawa	Member
Carlos Aguirre	Member

and

Kimberly Andrews Espy	Vice President for Research and Innovation; Dean of the Graduate School
-----------------------	--

Original approval signatures are on file with the University of Oregon Graduate School.

Degree awarded June 2014

© 2014 Julianne L Graper

## THESIS ABSTRACT

Julianne L. Graper

Master of Arts

School of Music and Dance

June 2014

Title: “¿Qué Dice Usted? ”: Discourses of Femininity in *Nueva Trova Cubana*

Following the Revolution of 1959, the Cuban government implemented policy reforms geared towards increasing women’s rights. Despite these efforts, however, sexism persists in Cuban society. This difference between rhetoric and reality is reflected in the song genre, *nueva trova*, which foregrounds a progressive agenda for women’s rights but continues to marginalize their participation. Prominent *nueva trova* performers Silvio Rodríguez and Pablo Milanés advocate women’s rights in their songs, but their music remains couched in patriarchal structures that prevent women from speaking for themselves. Sara González, one of the first prominent female *nueva trova* composers, was able to integrate into government-supported *trova* institutions by adopting a masculine, revolutionary aesthetic, which she then adapted to feminist themes to combat the ideological disparity. Recent performers have split between a more complacent attitude, found in *novísima trova*, or a direct challenge to the patriarchy centered on an aesthetic of contestation in *rap cubano*.

## CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME OF AUTHOR: Julianne L. Graper

### GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED:

University of Oregon, Eugene  
Whitman College, Walla Walla, Washington

### DEGREES AWARDED:

Master of Arts, Musicology, 2014, University of Oregon  
Bachelor of Arts, Biology, 2010, Whitman College

### AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

Latin American Music  
Feminist Musicology  
Music and the Brain

### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Teaching assistant, School of Music and Dance, University of Oregon, Eugene,  
2012- 2014

### GRANTS, AWARDS, AND HONORS:

Graduate Teaching Fellowship, Musicology, 2012 to present

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express sincere appreciation to Professor Wolf for his assistance in preparing this manuscript. I also thank Professors Kajikawa and Aguirre for their valuable input in the editing process. In addition, special thanks to Dr. Robin Moore, whose advice and expertise served to direct my research at several crucial points in the process. Finally, special thanks to Anne Dhu McLucas, without whom I would never have considered “music and gender” as a concept.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
The Cuban Revolution .....	8
A Brief History of Cuban <i>Trova</i> .....	13
<i>Trova Tradicional</i> .....	13
<i>Nueva Trova</i> .....	16
<i>Novísima Trova</i> .....	22
II. SILVIO RODRÍGUEZ .....	25
III. PABLO MILANÉS .....	39
IV. SARA GONZÁLEZ .....	51
V. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS .....	62
<i>Rap Cubano</i> .....	69
Conclusions .....	75
APPENDIX: SONG TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS .....	77
REFERENCES CITED .....	87

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

*¿Qué dice usted,  
que una mujer no es capaz  
de construir, de analizar,  
y de luchar por la vida?  
Cuando la historia nos grita otra verdad.  
– Sara González, ¿Qué dice usted?*

[The] phenomenon of women's participation in the revolution was a revolution within a revolution. And if we are asked what the most revolutionary thing is that the revolution is doing, we would answer that it is precisely this – the revolution that is occurring among the women of our country!  
– Fidel Castro, Fifth National Plenum, *Federación de Mujeres Cubanas*

Female identity in Cuba has traditionally been centered on the concepts of home and family. Ideas about female value and sexual purity can be traced back to colonization, at which time Spanish immigrants brought Catholicism and its associated gender constructs to the island, effectively wiping out indigenous social structures. Despite the passage of time, Cuba maintains a value system that places female worth primarily on the ability to care for a husband and children, whereas men are valued for their ability to make money in a sphere outside of the home.

This gender dichotomy was perpetuated by the Hollywood film industry, whose images of female domesticity permeated Cuban culture in the 1950s.<sup>1</sup> In the United States, these images were based in the reality of World War II's aftermath, when soldiers returning from combat searched for a peaceful family life to compensate for the atrocities

---

<sup>1</sup> Johanna I. Moya Fábregas, "The Cuban Woman's Revolutionary Experience: Patriarchal Culture and the State's Gender Ideology, 1950-1976," (*Journal of Women's History* 22.1 (2010)): 63.



they had experienced in Europe. At the time, the United States' interest in Cuba was high, and it exerted a strong cultural influence on the island.

Following the Cuban Revolution of 1959, Cuban social structure changed completely, and with it, the perception of gender roles. Communism perpetuated a war economy in which women were suddenly propelled into the workforce, redefining their position in society. The creation of the *Federación de Mujeres Cubanas* (Federation of Cuban Women, hereafter FMC) in 1960 led to policy reforms that solidified these changes and attempted to integrate women completely into the new revolutionary process.<sup>2</sup> Legislation included the abolishment of prostitution, legalization of abortion, childcare and sex education programs, and protection from unfair dismissal.<sup>3</sup>

Despite concrete reforms, Cuban society remained embroiled in patriarchal ideas, unable to fully absorb the ideological changes that were implied by its new policies.<sup>4</sup> This disconnect created a paradoxical state in which women were encouraged to take charge of their lives and bodies, but were nonetheless restricted by definitions of femininity in which female value was exclusively linked to conceptions of motherhood. Although Cuba appeared politically progressive on the issue of women's rights, day-to-day realities for women in Cuba did not change.

Johanna Moya Fábregas has addressed the rhetorical implementation of this disparity in her article, "The Cuban Woman's Revolutionary Experience: Patriarchal Culture and the State's Gender Ideology, 1950-1976." Moya Fábregas argues that

---

<sup>2</sup> Federación de Mujeres Cubanas, *Memories: Second Congress, Cuban Women's Federation*, (La Habana: Editorial Orbe, 1975): 14.

<sup>3</sup> Gabriele Küppers, *Compañeras: Voices from the Latin American Women's Movement*. (London: Latin American Bureau, 1994): 102.

<sup>4</sup> Ilja J. Luciak, *Gender and Democracy in Cuba* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007): 14.

continued use of patriarchal forms of rhetoric allowed the changing role of women to be more acceptable to citizens raised in a system of traditional values. She asserts that women's participation in the revolution was considered valuable primarily because it better equipped them to raise (male) children who could contribute to society.<sup>5</sup> By couching women's increased participation in the public sphere as a facet of their identity as mothers, men's status as protectors and primary producers remained intact. Castro's rise to power suddenly defined a "New Woman," who moved quickly into the professional sphere while maintaining her roots at home.<sup>6</sup>

The disparity between governmental doctrine and popular opinion is as evident in Cuban music as it is in political rhetoric. The song genre *nueva trova*, which emerged concurrently with the revolution, was heavily supported by the Castro regime. Its proximity to Communist propaganda makes it a clear representation of the Castro government's ideals. Furthermore, government promotion of *nueva trova* in the international sphere through extensive touring made it a clear representation of Cuban nationalism and identity to many listeners outside the country.

Song is an ideal entryway into discussions of gender and performance. In addition to lyrical topics that address gender, music on the whole has the potential for expressive possibilities not readily apparent in text alone. These include subliminally internalized ideas about culture, which manifest themselves in audible ways. This can include the encoding of particular social constructs – like race and gender – through recognizable musical tropes. Additionally, the voice, as a physical part of the human body, is an inherently gendered instrument, subject to certain physical constraints that

---

<sup>5</sup> Moya Fábregas, "The Cuban Woman's Revolutionary Experience," 72.

<sup>6</sup> Moya Fábregas, "The Cuban Woman's Revolutionary Experience," 63.

differ depending on the biological sex of an individual. These differences – primarily register and timbre – are associated with social constructions of gender. However, vocal timbre and register are also highly manipulable, and as a result, can be adjusted to communicate gender identity in different ways, whether intentionally or unconsciously.

In this document, I argue that despite the allegation that *nueva trova* performers “stress their deliberate avoidance of *machismo*, objectification of women ... and romantic stereotypes and rhetoric,”<sup>7</sup> patriarchal forms of rhetoric continue to be present in the *nueva trovadores*. This rhetoric, despite its superficial attendance to the needs of women, serves to complicate and undercut Castro’s supposed move towards the betterment of women. In the case of male performers, attempts to promote a progressive agenda of women’s rights are undermined by the persistence of value systems that acknowledge women primarily for the reproductive capacity and suggest that they need to be spoken for by men. Female performers, on the other hand, have had to adopt a more masculine aesthetic in order to be accepted on equal terms with men. They are at times complicit in their own devaluation, but have developed a variety of ways to creatively address their role in *trova*.

I will begin with a brief outline of the history of *trova* in Cuba. The bulk of my argument will deal with *nueva trova* in the decades of the 1960s and ‘70s, focusing on some of the most popular performers of the government-sanctioned *Movimiento Nacional de la Trova* (National *Trova* Movement, MNT). The following two chapters will include close readings of works of Silvio Rodríguez and Pablo Milanés, between whom the bulk of early *nueva trova* listenership was divided. Using selected examples from their

---

<sup>7</sup> Peter Manuel, “Marxism, Nationalism and Popular Music in Revolutionary Cuba.” *Popular Music*, 6:2 (1987): 174.

respective repertoires, I will examine gendered language, lyrical content, and musical settings of songs by both men. My aim is to show that Rodríguez and Milanés perpetuate patriarchal ideology in different ways, despite their attempts to support the regimes policies of gender equality.

The crux of my argument will be an analysis of the work of the best-known female representative of *nueva trova*: Sara González. González was able to participate equally with her male counterparts in the production of *trova*, but her uniqueness in the history of *trova* demonstrates a distinct marginalization of women that is at odds with the feminist claims that she, Rodríguez, Milanés, and Castro's government espoused. Furthermore, her limited compositional output, and the perception that she is primarily a performer of other people's works, rather than a composer demonstrates continuing *machista* (sexist) attitudes about women in *trova*. I will examine the ways in which González integrated herself into the *trova* movement through adoption of a masculine aesthetic, and how she subsequently turned that aesthetic to address women's issues.

The final chapter will be an exploration of new developments in the most recent generation of *trova*, *novísima trova*. The number of women participating in *novísima trova* is much higher than that of either *nueva trova* or its predecessor, *trova tradicional*, which reflects changing realities about the participation of women in the arts in Cuba. Women like Heidi Igualada, Liuba María Hevía, Rita del Prado, Yusa, Marta Campos, Lázara Ribadavia, Yamira Díaz, and Niuska Miniet have come to the forefront as public performers, but there continues to be a stigma that all *trovadoras* (female singers of *trova*) are lesbians merely because they perform in a male-dominated genre.<sup>8</sup> This

---

<sup>8</sup> Susan Thomas, "Did Nobody Pass the Girls the Guitar? Queer Appropriations in Contemporary Cuban Popular Song," *Journal of Popular Music Studies*, 18:2 (2006), 124.

perception – regardless of their actual sexual orientation – devalues their work and perpetuates ideological oppression of women artists. I will assess the ways in which *trovadoras* describe their experience of these inconsistencies, in addition to the ways in which gendered rhetoric has been critically addressed. This includes discussions of new cross-generic trends, such as the rising influence of hip hop in Cuba.

It must be acknowledged that this study is heavily interpretive, based on literary and music theoretical techniques, rather than ethnography. This is partially due to the limited availability of resources, and, of course, restrictions on the ability for Americans to travel to Cuba for the sake of research. In some cases, musical examples and their texts have been available in published, commercial sources available in the United States, from where my research was conducted. In other cases, they have not. In these instances, I have turned to internet resources that I have done my best to verify and correct by comparison with existing scholarly sources. Translations are all my own. Ideally, the study could be expanded at a later date to contain interviews with performers and listeners about their experiences with gender and *nueva trova*.

To date, the majority of published material critically addressing gender issues in *nueva trova* focuses on homosexuality. This topic is clearly relevant in light of the systematic oppression of gays under Castro, as evidenced by the writings of Virgilio Piñera, José Lezama Lima, and Reinaldo Arenas. However, women also suffer injustices in Cuba, in ways that have not been thoroughly explored. Music is the ideal medium for exploring gender issues because it exposes cultural biases on a personal, rather than statistical level.

Overall, I will demonstrate that *nueva trova* represents the tension between patriarchal ideologies and changing political realities for women in Cuba. While gender dynamics have been amply discussed in dance music from Latin America and the Caribbean, they have not been thoroughly explored in the *nueva trova*, whose lyrical content and male-dominated performance tradition make it prime material for more complex discourses on femininity and social activism. I argue that the paradoxical relationship between the changing roles of women and continuation of patriarchy in the public consciousness in Cuba is an audible phenomenon, best explored through *nueva trova*. This demonstrates that problems in feminist history and feminist musicology have applications in areas yet to be explored, and that the oppression of women through public discourse – if not physical oppression – is a continuing problem in many parts of the world.

## THE CUBAN REVOLUTION

From the 1920s to the 1950s, North American tourists flocked to Cuba by the thousands, attracted to its sunny beaches and lawless character. The sounds of rumba, mambo, and cha-cha-cha filled nightclubs owned by mafia bosses, where U.S. businessmen and military personnel could come to drink, dance, or hire prostitutes.<sup>9</sup> Cuba was the antithesis of suburban America, an escape from the tedium everyday life. The development of the tourist economy was geared towards indulging North American exotic fantasies.

North American interests in Cuba went beyond tourism, however. By 1927, U.S. business interests dominated 40 percent of the Cuban land mass.<sup>10</sup> The United Fruit Company was the largest and most famous of these enterprises. The revenue from these ventures was so great that the United States kept a series of “puppet presidents and shadow governments”<sup>11</sup> in place in Cuba. One of the main agents of U.S. control in Cuba was Fulgencio Batista. He served one term as president from 1940-44, but maintained a strong hold on the government throughout the 1930s and 40s. When the brutal dictatorship of Gerardo “the Butcher” Machado (1925-33) came under criticism from the Cuban populace, Batista was called upon by the U.S. to imprison, torture, and kill members of the opposition.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Judy Maloof, Ed. and Trans., *Voices of Resistance: Testimonies of Cuban and Chilean Women*. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1999):24.

<sup>10</sup> Maloof, *Voices of Resistance*, 24.

<sup>11</sup> Louis A. Pérez, Jr., *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011): 211.

<sup>12</sup> Maloof, *Voices of Resistance*, 24.

Batista came to full power in a military coup of 1952. A young Fidel Castro, discontented with continuing corruption in the government, staged a failed revolt on the Moncada army barracks in Santiago de Cuba on July 26, 1953.<sup>13</sup> Despite rising public dissatisfaction with Batista, Castro did not attempt an uprising again until 1956, on his return from Mexico aboard the yacht the *Granma*. Although this revolt was also crushed, Castro and his forces retreated to the Sierra Maestra Mountains, where they established guerilla operations. These forces would eventually be dubbed the “26<sup>th</sup> of July Movement” in commemoration of the failed Moncada attack.

In 1957, Castro led his first successful guerilla attack against the Rural Guard.<sup>14</sup> The government responded with indiscriminate terror, forcing peasants in the countryside to relocate to detention camps. With rising revolutionary forces, multiple conspiracies from within the army, and a withdrawal of support from the United States in 1958 (including an arms embargo), Batista’s government was doomed.<sup>15</sup> Castro seized power in 1959.

It is unclear whether Castro was a communist at the time that he seized control, or if he became so later due to the aggressive policies of the United States. In fact, some scholars have suggested that “the ideological underpinnings of the Cuban Revolution were not socialist;”<sup>16</sup> rather they were based on the nationalist, democratic, and anti-imperialist thought of José Martí, who led Cuba in its second war of independence in

---

<sup>13</sup> Pérez, Jr., *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 221.

<sup>14</sup> Pérez, Jr., *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 222.

<sup>15</sup> Pérez, Jr., *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 235.

<sup>16</sup> Maloof, *Voices of Resistance*, 21.



1895-8, leading to its emancipation from European rule.<sup>17</sup> Martí's influence is apparent in Castro's famous "History will absolve me" speech, given after the failed attack on the Moncada Barracks in 1953.

Ideological connections to the independence wars can also be seen through women's participation in the revolution, particularly in references to *mambisas*, or legendary female combatants from the independence wars. *Mambisas* were women who cut their hair short and abandoned their homes, known for being able to "fight as men, nurture as women,"<sup>18</sup> and ask little for themselves. While male combatants in the independence wars were memorialized as heroes, female combatants became national symbols of suffering and sacrifice. According to Moya Fábregas, the *mambisas* were used during the Cuban Revolution as a way to make women's participation in politics acceptable, because they were still linked with traditional conceptions of femininity that placed male needs first.<sup>19</sup> The self-sacrificing *mambisa* thus established the baseline for women's participation in the revolution: though they were able to step out of the home sphere and into the political arena, they did so at the expense of their own lives and for the benefit of men.

Both Fidel Castro and Ernesto "Che" Guevara address the unique role of women in the revolution, touting their usefulness, but simultaneously placing limits on the kinds of participation allowed to them. In his work *Guerilla Warfare*, Che states that "the part that the woman can play in the development of a revolutionary process is of extraordinary

---

<sup>17</sup> Maloof, *Voices of Resistance*, 21.

<sup>18</sup> K. Lynn Stoner, "Militant Heroines and the Consecration of the Patriarchal State: The Glorification of Loyalty, Combat and National Suicide in the Making of Cuban National Identity," (*Cuban Studies*, 34, 2003): 73.

<sup>19</sup> Moya Fábregas, "The Cuban Woman's Revolutionary Experience," 62.

importance. It is well to emphasize this, since in all our countries, with their colonial mentality, there is a certain underestimation of the woman which becomes a real discrimination against her.”<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, Castro’s statements about the “revolution within a revolution”<sup>21</sup> supported what appeared to be a feminist agenda. However, women’s actual participation in the revolution remained limited and secondary, suggesting that even at its outset the regime preached a different gender ideology than it practiced.

Few women were actually permitted to participate in combat during the revolution, most acting as nurses or as special messengers able to cross enemy lines without detection, as stipulated in *Guerrilla Warfare*.<sup>22</sup> At the Moncada attack, the only two women permitted to fight were Haydée Santamaría and Melba Hernández.<sup>23</sup> Santamaría would later become director of the *Casa de las Américas* and a great proponent of the early development of *nueva trova*. In 1958, Castro trained and created the Mariana Grajales platoon, an entirely female platoon; however, “the fact that these women distinguished themselves in combat does not mean that they were exempt from tasks traditionally considered to be best left to women”.<sup>24</sup> Thus, the revolution established a precedent for increased participation by women in political and social arenas – but with the condition that they did not give up a traditional female role.

---

<sup>20</sup> Ernesto “Che” Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare: The Authorized Translation*, trans. J. P. Morray (New York: Vintage Books, 1969): 86.

<sup>21</sup> Fidel Castro, “Speech by Cuban Prime Minister Fidel Castro at close of fifth FMC national plenum in Santa Clara – live,” 1966, Castro Speech Database.

<sup>22</sup> Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare*, 86-7.

<sup>23</sup> Maloof, *Voices of Resistance*, 26.

<sup>24</sup> Luciak, *Gender and Democracy in Cuba*, 5.

Once Castro's government was instated, the change and development of women's social role was limited by the monopoly over women's groups held by the FMC with its close ties to the Communist party.<sup>25</sup> Though there had been over 900 women's organizations in the country when Castro took power, these were consolidated into one single organization, headed by Vilma Espín, the wife of Raúl Castro.<sup>26</sup> In the year 2000, more than 80% of women over the age of fourteen were members. The goal of the organization was to determine how best to establish women's role in the new revolutionary system, but because the origin of women's oppression was considered multicausal, there was disagreement about how best to address it. The early years of the organization focused on addressing practical concerns of women's lives, including establishment of birth control and sex education programs, as well as employment issues. One of the most prominent pieces of legislation was the Family Code of 1975, which attempted to codify the change in women's role in society. This included the suggestion that housework was to be shared by all members of the family, rather than being the exclusive domain of women. However, the Family Code and other measures enacted by the FMC relied exclusively on addressing immediate practical concerns, without any critical attention to underlying theoretical problems.

Along with changing women's roles, the revolution brought with it the need for new types of musical expression. Just as women began to redefine themselves outside of the home, older forms of popular expression were re-envisioned to fit a revolutionary aesthetic. However, antiquated ideas about gender were perpetuated in music just as they

---

<sup>25</sup> Luciak, *Gender and Democracy in Cuba*, 14.

<sup>26</sup> Maloof, *Voices of Resistance*, 34.

were in politics, despite surface-level changes. These were manifested in the exclusion of women from modes of production of *trova* exclusively afforded to men.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF CUBAN *TROVA*

### *Trova Tradicional*

Through official symposia, forums, reunions, and other events, many Cubans have agreed upon a general definition of a *trovador* as someone who sings their own songs or those of others, preferably accompanied by a string instrument.<sup>27</sup> *Trova* is typically classified into three generations: *vieja trova* or *trova tradicional* (turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century), *nueva trova* (1960s - 1970s), and *novísima trova* (1990s to present). While there are clear generic distinctions between each of these periods, Cubans typically see them as a single artistic movement, centered on the figure of the *trovador*, or romantic solo singer-guitarist. Many historians also link the movement ideologically to the Occitan and Old French *troubadours* and *trouvères*, which similarly featured the ethos of the wandering minstrel.<sup>28</sup>

*Trova tradicional* is a hybrid genre, combining elements of European opera and art song with rhythms of African slaves, and characterized by the prevalence of patriotic songs with fluid melodies, comparable to a tropical waltz.<sup>29</sup> Four major artists contributed to the development of *vieja trova*: Sindo Garay, Rosendo Ruíz, Manuel Corona, and Alberto Villalón. Of these, Gumersindo (Sindo) Garay (1867-1968) is often

---

<sup>27</sup> Antonio López Sánchez, *Trovadoras*, (Santiago de Cuba: Editorial Oriente, 2008): 40.

<sup>28</sup> Carlos Delgado Linares, *El Movimiento de la nueva trova cubana y la trova tradicional*. (Ediciones Namar: Caracas, Venezuela): 24.

<sup>29</sup> Dulcila Cañizares, *La Trova Tradicional Cubana*. (Editorial Letras Cubanas, La Habana, 1992): 18.

considered the most influential on *nueva trovadores*. Though he was not an excellent singer or guitarist, he is well known for his harmonic progressions and management of chromaticism.<sup>30</sup> His music features themes about women, his country, daily events, and the “transcendental events of history” in his music.<sup>31</sup>

The first *trovadora* in evidence was Angelita Becqué, active from around 1910-1922/3. Her music was never recorded, and documentation of her work exists only in the form of a single photograph and some video evidence.<sup>32</sup> Becqué serves as a prime example of the way that historiography can shape conceptions of women’s participation in the performing arts; because there was limited documentation of her contribution to the genre, she was excluded from narratives about the development of *trova*. Furthermore, the fact that Becqué did not compose *trova* herself suggests that she would have been excluded from early definitions of the *trovador*. To date, there continues to be a stigma that women are primarily interpreters of other people’s works, rather than composers in their own right, though many women do both. In this thesis, I take both women who compose and women who perform *trova* into consideration.

Another notable woman from the early years of *trova* was Justa García. Unlike Becqué, García did compose *trova* in addition to interpreting the songs of others and also headed a quartet that included some of the most popular performers of the era at varying points in their careers. Among these were Hortensia López, Ana María García, Hilda Santana, Dominica Verges, and most notably, Maria Teresa Vera.<sup>33</sup> In this way, García

---

<sup>30</sup> Cañizares, *La Trova Tradicional Cubana*, 30.

<sup>31</sup> Cañizares, *La Trova Tradicional Cubana*, 30.

<sup>32</sup> López Sánchez, *Trovadoras*, 37-8.

<sup>33</sup> López Sánchez, *Trovadoras*, 38.

was able to facilitate an environment in which *trova* performers were able to come together in a way that proved to be instrumental in the development of many of their careers.

Though clearly not the first *trovadora*, María Teresa Vera (1895-1965) is known by recent scholars and *trovadores* alike as “la madre de la trova” (the mother of trova).<sup>34</sup> She was a composer, a singer and a guitarist, but is best remembered as an interpreter of the songs of other *trovadores*, performing for the first time in 1911. One of her most famous works, *Viente años*, on a text by Guillermina Aramburu, was premiered by Justa García on the Radio Lavin in 1935. Though she had stopped singing for religious reasons, there was public outcry that she had not sung the song herself, at which time she rejoined García’s quartet. García, however, advancing in age, herself retired shortly after, and Vera formed a duet with Lorenzo Hierrezuelo.<sup>35</sup> She was known for being a particularly charismatic performer, with an exceptional reputation.<sup>36</sup>

Other female performers of *trova tradicional* are Hilda Santana, who though considered the best *voz segunda* in Cuba, recorded very little;<sup>37</sup> las Hermanas Martí, a duo closely associated with Sindo Garay, Manuel Corona, Rosendo Ruiz and other major figures in *trova tradicional*; las Hermanas Lago, who were the first to introduce three part harmony to the *trova*; Dominica Verges, who was one of the first women to sing *danzonetas* in Cuba; Ana María García; and María Granados, who had the fortune to

---

<sup>34</sup> Cañizares, *La Trova Tradicional Cubana*, 94.

<sup>35</sup> López Sánchez, *Trovadoras*, 39.

<sup>36</sup> López Sánchez, *Trovadoras*, 40.

<sup>37</sup> López Sánchez, *Trovadoras*, 42.

perform a recently commissioned song on text by José Martí for the man himself at age eleven, but which does not appear in Martí's complete works.<sup>38</sup>

### *Nueva Trova*

The connection between *trova tradicional* and *nueva trova* is an issue of debate among scholars. Robin Moore has argued that the association of *nueva trova* with *trova tradicional*, which did not become commonplace until the early 1970s, may represent an attempt to link what was seen as a deviant form of youth expression to Cuban artists of the past thereby removing some of its oppositional nature.<sup>39</sup> However, *trova* artists themselves have stated that they simply “identified” with the music of the *trova tradicional*.<sup>40</sup> This demonstrates the complex discourse that surrounds the *nueva trova* and its relationship to the Cuban government. It is rarely clear whether *trova* performers are allied with the state – as has been suggested by their free ability to travel and outspoken support by the Castro administration – or against it, as has sometimes been suggested through the veiled political commentary in the music itself.

Regardless of what the connection between *trova tradicional* and *nueva trova* is, a number of other popular styles existing before and concurrently with *nueva trova* had an influence on the genre. Among these is *filin*, a style from the 1950s characterized by romantic themes and significant chromaticism and modulations, drawing both from

---

<sup>38</sup> López Sánchez, *Trovadoras*, 42-6.

<sup>39</sup> Robin Moore, “Transformations in *Nueva Trova*,” in *Music and Revolution: Cultural Change in Socialist Cuba*, (London: University of California Press, 2006): 155.

<sup>40</sup> Clara Díaz Perez, *Silvio Rodríguez: Hay quien precisa...*, (Madrid: Editorial Música Mundana, 1995): 93.

Cuban *canción* and North American jazz.<sup>41</sup> Cary Aileen García Yero has argued that, like *nueva trova*, *filin* was not exclusively musical “fluff” – rather, *filineros* were able to convey Leftist views through the expression of lived realities. That is to say, that because *filin* related to personal experience, it was inherently political.<sup>42</sup> As in *trova tradicional*, participation by women in the early days of *filin* was minimal. Prominent female composers of *filin* are Marta Valdés and Tania Castellanos; interpreters of the genre include Omara Portuondo and Elena Burke.<sup>43</sup>

Cuban folkloric genres, such as the *son* and the *guajiro*, have also had an influence on *nueva trova*. Early examples of protest song in Cuba bore little resemblance to the current popular style, instead differing from prerevolutionary music only in lyrical content.<sup>44</sup> These early examples fused rural dance forms with lyrics about the revolution and current political events. Cubans have also employed poetic singing styles from Spain, such as *coplas* and *décimas* (also present in the genre *punto cubano*), in the early stages of *nueva trova*.<sup>45</sup>

Perhaps one of the most often cited influences on *nueva trova* is *nueva canción*, a genre that rejected U.S imperialism and the increase in U.S. and European consumer culture in Latin America after World War II. *Nueva canción* artists such as Atahualpa Yupanquí, Violeta Parra, Victor Jara and Mercedes Sosa “championed the arts of

---

<sup>41</sup> Robin Moore, “Transformations in *Nueva Trova*,” 137.

<sup>42</sup> Cary Aileen García Yero, “Is It Just About Love?: *Filin* and Politics in Prerevolutionary Cuba.” (*Studies in Latin American Popular Culture*, 30 (2012): 141-2.

<sup>43</sup> López Sánchez, *Trovadoras*, 49.

<sup>44</sup> Moore, “Transformations in *Nueva Trova*,” 138.

<sup>45</sup> Moore, “Transformations in *Nueva Trova*,” 139.



indigenous peoples and other marginal groups as well as the social issues pertinent to them.”<sup>46</sup> The use of folkloric instruments – largely ignored by South American governments – marked *nueva canción* as inherently political. In Chile, *nueva canción* emerged around the time of Salvador Allende’s socialist Unidad Popular government, and is accused of “criticiz[ing] the exploitation of the working class while exalting populist socialism.”<sup>47</sup>

*Nueva canción* made its presence known in Cuba in July of 1967, when Havana’s Casa de las Américas hosted the first Encuentro Internacional de la Canción Protesta (International Encounter of the Protest Song). This event featured prominent performers in the *nueva canción* and protest song movements from Argentina, Chile, the United States, Haiti, England, France, Portugal, Australia, Vietnam, and elsewhere, united in a denunciation of the dictatorial regimes of their own societies and of the United States actions in Vietnam. However, this encounter was not just a musical one, but also an ideological one, in which music was suddenly viewed as an instrument of social justice. The *Encuentro* concluded with a Final Resolution which stated:

*...la canción es un arma al servicio de los pueblos, no un producto de consumo utilizado por el capitalismo para enajenarlos...la tarea de los trabajadores de la Canción Protesta debe desarrollarse a partir de una toma de posición definida junto a su pueblo, frente a los problemas de la sociedad en que vive...*<sup>48</sup>

...song is an arm at the service of the people, not a consumer product utilized for capitalism to alienate them...the work of the workers of the Protest Song should develop from the standpoint of taking a defined

---

<sup>46</sup> Moore, “Transformations in *Nueva Trova*,” 136.

<sup>47</sup> Robert Neustadt, “Music as Memory and Torture: Sounds of Repression and Protests in Chile and Argentina.” (*Chasqui: revista de literatura latinoamericana*. 33:1 (2004)): 128.

<sup>48</sup> Clara Díaz, *Pablo Milanés*, (La Habana: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1999): 52.

position next to their people, facing the problems of the society in which they live...

In this way, *nueva canción* empowered musicians to use their art to combat the injustices they observed in the surrounding world.

In a sense, *nueva trova* achieved the opposite political agenda of *nueva canción*. While *nueva canción* “represented an attempt to valorize folk traditions that were absent in the national media,”<sup>49</sup> *nueva trova* deliberately broke from those traditions to create an international, cosmopolitan aesthetic. This is evidenced by the influence of folk rock (referred to as “*canción protesta*” by many Cuban sources) from the United States. Many first and second generation *trovadores* deliberately relied on a rock aesthetic to demonstrate a break from traditional music – and from local politics. The years from 1968-1970 were known as the “Grey Years” in Cuba, and marked one of the greatest times of ideological repression of the era, as well as economic difficulties caused *la zafra de los diez millones*, a failed attempt in 1970 to produce 10 million tons of sugar that resulted in famine.<sup>50</sup> Discontented with the surrounding political situation, *trovadores* turned to an internationally recognized symbol of contestation: folk rock.

Apart from its tenuous relationship with the United States, the Cuban government’s disapproval of rock stemmed from its tendency towards decadence, and its promotion of non-traditional dress and lifestyle, which was inconsistent with revolutionary ideas and with the revolutionary aesthetic.<sup>51</sup> In this way, despite its superficial adherence to Marxist values, *nueva trova* is politicized in opposition to Castro.

---

<sup>49</sup> Moore, “Transformations in *Nueva Trova*,” 137.

<sup>50</sup> Robert Nasatir, “El Hijo de Guillermo Tell: Carlos Varela Confronts the Special Period.” *Cuban Studies*, 39 (2008): 45.

<sup>51</sup> Moore, “Transformations in *Nueva Trova*,” 149.

The conflict between this aesthetic of contestation and the fact that much early *nueva trova* was produced from within the confines of governmental support creates the potential for simultaneous, conflicting meanings, and calls into question surface-level readings of *nueva trova* texts.

The influence from the United States is closely linked to *trova*'s early associations with the film industry. When Castro came to power, radio and television services were socialized, resulting in the creation of the *Instituto Cubano del Arte e Industria Cinematográficos* (Cuban Institute of Cinematographic Art and Industry, ICAIC). Under the direction of classically trained composer Leo Brouwer, they formed the *Grupo de Experimentación Sonora del ICAIC* (Group of Sound Experimentation of the ICAIC, GESI) in 1969.<sup>52</sup> Among the group's goals were to gain a solid technical understanding of music, including classes in solfège, harmony, electroacoustic sound, and orchestration. The group distanced itself from the concept of "pure sonority" as well as the delimitations of "national" and "international," instead attempting to explore the creative potential at the intersection of these categories.<sup>53</sup> This was one of the first government organizations to employ *nueva trova* performers.

By the early 1970s, *trova* had become popular nationwide; so much so, that an event was organized, called the *Primer Encuentro de Jóvenes Trovadores* (First Encounter of Youth *Trovadores*), to bring together *trova* performers from all over the country. It was so successful that it initiated an annual gathering, which eventually became part of the *Movimiento de la Nueva Trova* (*Nueva Trova* Movement, MNT).

---

<sup>52</sup> Moore, "Transformations in *Nueva Trova*," 153.

<sup>53</sup> Díaz, *Pablo Milanés*, 71.

Among the founders were Silvio Rodríguez, Noel Nicola, Sara González, Eduardo Ramos, Vicente Feliú, Augusto Blanco, and Lázaro García. By 1973, the MNT had expanded to include a national registry of members, a board of directors, annual festivals, and performance centers in every province.<sup>54</sup> This institutionalization allowed *trovadores* greater access to resources, but at the same time, subjected them to a greater degree of censorship and governmental control.

The early 1970s marked a period in which *nueva trovadores* began to receive greater international attention. Due to their success within Cuba, performers of *nueva trova* made extensive tours across Europe, South America, and the Caribbean. This garnered a great deal of support from abroad for socialist Cuba, but also sparked criticism of the performers themselves, particularly due to the restrictions on travel placed on most Cuban citizens. In a sense, they had become instruments of the socialist system, engineered to generate sympathy and revolutionary feeling from abroad.

Travel abilities, however, were largely concentrated in a select few ‘superstar’ performers. Like *vieja trova*, *nueva trova* has been described as a four-way split. Says singer Luis Eduardo Aute,

*Cuatro elementos fundamenta a la Nueva Trova Cubana: el fuego en la ardiente rabia de Silvio Rodríguez; el aire en las transparentes atmósferas de Noel Nicola; el agua en la apasionante humedad de Pablo Milanés; y la tierra, en la firmeza tiernamente humana de Vicente Feliú.*<sup>55</sup>

Four elements form Nueva Trova Cubana: the fire in the burning rage of Silvio Rodríguez; the air in the transparent atmospheres of Noel Nicola; the water in the passionate humidity of Pablo Milanés; and the earth, in the tenderly human firmness of Vicente Feliú.

---

<sup>54</sup> Moore, “Transformations in *Nueva Trova*,” 155.

<sup>55</sup> Orlando Castellanos Molina, *Tras la guitarra la voz*, (La Habana: Ediciones La Memoria, Centro Cultural Pablo de la Torriente Brau, 2012):9.

The two most prominent of these figures are Silvio and Pablo, on whose work much of this document will focus.

Silvio's music is patterned closely after that of Paul McCartney or Bob Dylan, and includes frequent usage of asymmetrical phrases, abrupt key changes, complex harmonies, and a high melodic vocal range. Lyrically, his songs employ surrealist imagery and extended metaphors. For the most part, his followers tended to be white, educated, and cosmopolitan: those that in general preferred international rock and pop, reflecting the association of Cuban dance music with poorly educated blacks.<sup>56</sup>

By contrast, Pablo Milanés, a light-skinned Afro-Cuban, tends to ground his music more heavily in Cuban folkloric genres. Credited with bridging the generation gap, Milanés played in dance orchestras in Havana, appeared on television, and was a member of the Cuarteto del Rey, a group dedicated to the performance of North American spirituals before branching into *nueva trova*. He employs creative picking styles to encompass traditional rhythms, as well as jazz harmonizations, and straightforward lyrics discussing "intimate relationships, love of country, as well as more political matters."<sup>57</sup> For the most part, Milanés' audiences tended to be black or racially mixed.

### *Novísima Trova*

Following the collapse of the Berlin Wall and with it, the fall of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, Cuba entered into what Castro termed the "*período especial en tiempo de la paz*" (special period in a time of peace). With the elimination of support from the

---

<sup>56</sup> Moore, "Transformations in *Nueva Trova*," 145.

<sup>57</sup> Moore, "From the *canción protesta* to the *nueva trova*, 1965-85," 184.

Soviet Union, Cuba was faced with a grave economic – and, as a result, an ideological – problem. Without its main financial backer, Cuba returned to tourism, along with “rum, tobacco, sex, and spectacle” to remain afloat.<sup>58</sup> This was referred to as *jineterismo* (horse-jockeying) – essentially “hustling tourists for dollars” through sex tourism.<sup>59</sup> This cultural reversion to the pre-Communist decadence seemed to undercut the positive effects that the revolution cited as its main accomplishments.

These conditions created an environment for the *novísima trova*, to emerge. Of this new generation of *trovadores*, Carlos Varela, Santiago Feliú, Liuba María Hevia, Gerardo Alfonso, Pedro Luis Ferrer, and Raúl Torres are perhaps the best known. These singers are often critical of the early years of the revolution, while their predecessors’ music seems to have nostalgia for it.<sup>60</sup> Aesthetically, *novísima trovadores* attempt to distance themselves from “establishment *trovadores*”<sup>61</sup> like Silvio and Pablo, particularly through the use of a more heavily rock-influenced aesthetic. The rise of electrified rock in *nueva trova* began as early as the late 1970s with fusion group Síntesis, and continued into the 1980s with heavy metal bands Venus, Zeus, Metal Oscuro, and, in the 1990s, with *trovadores* Carlos Varela and Gerardo Alfonso. Robin Moore argues that these artists use rock as “a symbolic tie to an international artistic community they are separated from, and as a reaction to government policies they still consider too

---

<sup>58</sup> Nasatir, “El hijo de Guillermo Tell,” 45.

<sup>59</sup> Talia Wooldrdge, “Cuban *Raperas*: A Feminist Revolution within the Revolution,” (Graduate essay, NYU, 2008): 6

<sup>60</sup> Nasatir, “El Hijo de Guillermo Tell,” 46.

<sup>61</sup> Moore, “Transformations in *Nueva Trova*,” 159.

constraining.”<sup>62</sup> However, the rock influence began to be accepted in Cuba in the early 1990s, when it became public that Che Guevara’s grandson Canek was a fan of heavy metal.

Paralleling international trends, rap has also carved out a space in *nueva trova*. Groups such as Anónimo Consejo, Alto y Bajo, and Instinto blend *trovadoresco* elements with rap. The ironic result of this has been that *nueva trova* receives more support from abroad than it does at home. Some have argued that Cuban rap has become the next phase of the *trova* in Cuba, due partially to its listening-centered aesthetic, politicized themes, and blend of international styles.

Throughout the history of Cuba and of *trova*, women have been marginalized, even when governmental policy appears designed to counteract stereotypes about them. The following chapters address works by major composers of *nueva trova*, examining the ways in which contradictions about gender – the simultaneous elevation and marginalization of women – are expressed musically. These studies show that even when a performer desires to promote a particular political agenda, deeply ingrained social constructs are still present, and may present themselves as a paradox.

---

<sup>62</sup> Moore, “Transformations in *Nueva Trova*,” 161.

## CHAPTER II

### SILVIO RODRÍGUEZ

*Pero no te confundas. Esa es una puerta que ellos saben que tienen que abrir. Es como quienes dicen que hace falta una mujer dirigente en esta fábrica, pero no porque en verdad crean que haya una mujer que sirva para eso. No voy a ir al extremo porque no todos son así y tampoco quiero que se me tilde de feminista; creo que cada cual debe tener su espacio de decir y pensar. Pero para algunos, un hecho es el diario de la vida, lo que hace diariamente la gente, y otro es lo que pones en una canción.*

– Liuba María Hevia

Silvio Rodríguez is perhaps the most iconic of *nueva trova* composers, and one of the most prolific, with a career spanning over four decades and an output of literally hundreds of songs. Much of the content in Silvio's music is political, and much of it demonstrates an interest in social issues, including songs that explicitly address the role of women in Cuba. In this chapter, I will analyze four songs by Silvio which deal directly with the situation of women in Cuba, bearing in mind that surface level meanings may not present the entire picture of what is being communicated. In chronological order, I will address "Mujeres," from the album *Mujeres* (1978), "Bolero y habaneras" (1987) and "Eva" from *Oh Melancolía* (1987), and "Desnuda y con sombrilla" from *Rodríguez* (1995). When possible, I will refer to Silvio's own statements about the meanings of these songs. I aim to demonstrate that Silvio's music presents a relatively progressive discussion of the role of women in Cuba, perhaps due to his close relationship with female relatives in his developmental years.

Nonetheless, some elements of Cuba's continual reliance on patriarchal ideologies are still present in Silvio's songs, reflecting many of the contradictions present in Cuba's approach to the changing role of women. Silvio represents the paradox of the Cuban



man: though he attempts to acknowledge women's changing role in society, he is invariably bound by certain stereotypes and limitations to his conception of women that have been deeply ingrained in Cuban society. Although Silvio attempts to promote a progressive regime for women's rights, he does so from the perspective of a man. The women in Silvio's songs are defined as objects of his compositional gaze, despite the progressive content contained within them. Furthermore, he chooses to represent his own experience of women's issues – or to project his idea of women's experiences onto them – rather than using his significant star power to promote the texts or songs of female writers and composers. Female composers, on the other hand, are repeatedly asked to perform the works and words of men. Without giving room for women to speak for themselves, Silvio's music could be read as a paternalistic approach to gender equality.

Silvio's relationship to the Revolutionary movement was a tenuous one, meaning that it is often possible to interpret his songs as either pro-Castro (which they may appear on the surface) or anti-Castro. Although in his youth, Silvio was in favor of the revolution, he is also marked by a sense of rebellion. He describes listening to music that was forbidden by the Castro regime, including records by the Beatles, which he had to cover with a bag so as not to be detected while carrying them home from the record store.<sup>63</sup> His career as host of the television program *Mientras Tanto* (In the Meantime) was also cut short, in part because of his style of dress – long hair, slightly shabby clothes – and because of his opinions on the cultural blockade.<sup>64</sup> He also spent five months on a

---

<sup>63</sup> Díaz Perez, *Silvio Rodríguez: Hay quien precisa...*, 71.

<sup>64</sup> Díaz Perez, *Silvio Rodríguez: Hay quien precisa...*, 87.

fishing boat in 1969, possibly due to his discontent with certain sectors of Cuban culture.<sup>65</sup>

Similar to his relationship with the government, Silvio's relationship to women is complex. Accounts of his early life demonstrate a strong connection between music and femininity. Born on November 29<sup>th</sup>, 1946, to an agricultural worker-turned-carpenter father with strong socialist attitudes and a hairdresser mother, accounts of Silvio's childhood strongly represent the connection between music femininity. In an interview with a student at the University of Habana, he states:

*Mi familia materna fue siempre una familia muy musical; esto te lo digo porque mi abuela cantaba canciones antiguas del tiempo de España, tonadas y esas cosas. Mi madre heredó un poco eso, todos eran un poco cantantes, medio aficionados, entre ellos hacían dúos y tríos a voces, incluso, uno llegó a hacerse músico profesional...Mi madre tuvo un dúo con una de sus hermanas, cuando tenía 14 ó 15 años. Querían empezar en la vida profesional y mi abuela se lo impidió, claro, por los prejuicios que existían en aquella época...Yo creo que por ahí comienza el primer contacto que yo tengo con la música desde muy niño, y eso, indudablemente, debe haber influido.<sup>66</sup>*

My maternal family was always a very musical family; I tell you this because my grandmother sang ancient songs from the time in Spain, *tonadas* and that sort of thing. My mother inherited a little bit of that, all were a little bit singers, medium experts, and between themselves they made duets and trios, including one that became a professional musician... My mother had a duo with one of her sisters, when she was 14 or 15 years old. They wanted to have a professional career and my grandmother impeded them, clearly, for the prejudices that existed in that time... I believe that through that began my first contact with music when I was very young, and that, undoubtedly, has to have had an influence.

In addition to demonstrating Silvio's early understanding of women as musical beings, this quote signifies Silvio's awareness of women's marginalization from the sphere of

---

<sup>65</sup> Díaz Perez, *Silvio Rodríguez: Hay quien precisa...*, 112.

<sup>66</sup>Díaz Perez, *Silvio Rodríguez: Hay quien precisa...*, (Madrid: Editorial Música Mundana, 1995): 11.

professional musical performance. Throughout his career, Silvio helped to ameliorate this problem by promoting the careers of women that surrounded him. This included inviting Sara González to become a member of the GESI, as well as an early partnership with *trovadora* Teresita Fernández, and performances of his songs by *filin* star Omara Portuondo.

Silvio's attention to women's issues is most evident in his song "Mujeres" (Appendix), which he dedicated to "the Cuban woman" on the International Women's Day in March of 1975 in a concert at the *Sala Talía*.<sup>67</sup> The song was later released on an album by the same name. It presents women in a sympathetic, but simultaneously tragic light, contrasting many different types of women through the various hardships that they suffered during the Revolution. Silvio presents them as powerful women, both in the political arena and at home, but concludes with the statement that the object of his affections makes him tremble more than the impressive feats of any of these other women.

Throughout the song, he uses the word "*estremecer*" (to tremble, shudder) to describe the visceral impact that these many different women had on him. It configures women in a position of power, as if they were as large of figures as the mythically described *guerilleros* of the revolution (or perhaps the *mambisas* of the independence wars). By using this term, Silvio places women's deeds on an equal level with those of men.

However, femininity in this song is primarily defined in relationship to motherhood, which is consistent with Moya Fábregas' discussion of patriarchal rhetoric. The first anecdote is about a woman who gives up her child for adoption, and who

---

<sup>67</sup> Díaz Perez, *Silvio Rodríguez: Hay quien precisa...*, 145.

subsequently buries him or her. The second section of the piece begins with a description of a woman who bore eleven children, and had to feed them from scant resources – this woman turns out to be the narrator’s grandmother. These descriptions serve as a celebration of the everyday, a valuation of the strength needed to bear and cultivate children, and of the unbearable grief that comes with the death of a child. Rather than present a story of the ways in which women can do the same things as men, Silvio opts for a type of feminism that attempts to elevate the status of traditionally “feminine” deeds and attitudes. This type of feminism is very much in line with that promoted by the revolutionary government.

Essentially, however, “*Mujeres*” remains a love song, whose message is that the narrator has met many impressive women, but none of them compared to the object of his affections. Without prior knowledge of Silvio’s compositional intent, it would be easy to read the song as a reinforcement of the traditions of *trova tradicional* and *filin*. However, Silvio has made known that he wrote the song for his daughter. In this way, he cleverly re-imagines the love song to include other types of love, including that between a father and a daughter. Silvio is therefore expanding the ambitus of women’s image in *trova* to include types of femininity that are more than just sexual.

Nonetheless, Silvio himself is responsible for defining women’s role throughout the song. As the creator of the song, he creates the women in it, and defines them. His daughter – or the unnamed object of the narrator’s affection – is important not because of her deeds, but because he sees her and makes her real and valuable.

The tone of the music is generally upbeat, giving it an air of empowerment. Percussive guitar strumming alternates with the melodic picking style characteristic of

Silvio's melancholy early music, giving it an assertiveness not found as frequently in his other works. The opening features a rhythmic motif followed by several seconds of rest, which, fanfare-like, arrests the listener's attention. The end of the piece is similarly abrupt, decisively assisting the sense of a feminist call to action pervasive in the music's accompanying text.

In effect, "*Mujeres*" is an attempt at promoting women's rights in Cuba. There is emphasis on valuing the place of women as it currently exists, and what appears to be a call to action promoting a change in that ideological value. While women's rights in Cuba have been criticized for the disconnect between ideology and legislative reform, this song seems to suggest an effort towards a shift in thinking about women. However, that alleged shift in thinking is very much in line with Revolutionary politics, which have been cited as ignoring some of the larger issues facing women. This is to say that while "*Mujeres*" makes a brave attempt at feminism, it does not provide any alternate possibilities as to women's role within the family or her relationship to men. Furthermore, these roles are defined by a man: Silvio himself.

A strikingly different example is "*Eva*," from the mid-1980s, when Silvio was beginning to experiment with the use of electronic sounds in his music. Silvio says about this song:

*Es un acercamiento a una de las zonas de la problemática de la mujer. La canción surgió de una situación que me conmovió: una muchacha que tuvo un hijo sin esposo. De pronto reflexioné, pues en los últimos años supe de muchos casos iguales, y como yo defiendo del derecho de la mujer a tener un hijo cuando quiera, hice la canción con ese lenguaje, ese tono, ese contenido, esas palabras. Es una llamada a reflexionar por qué ocurre esto, no sólo a organismos e instituciones, sino también a nosotros mismos.*

*Creo además, que esto significa que la mujer se está liberando realmente, y que Eva puede ser el anticipo de la mujer del futuro. Canto Eva porque es algo que está pasando.*<sup>68</sup>

It is an approach to one of the zones of that with is problematic about women. The song came from a situation that moved me: a girl who had a child without a husband. I quickly reflected, since in recent years I knew of many similar cases, and as I defend the rights of women to have a child when she wants, I wrote the song with that language, that tone, that content, those words. It's a call to reflect on why this happens, not only to organisms and institutions, but also to us ourselves.

I believe, furthermore, that this means that the woman is really liberating herself, and that Eve can be the anticipation of the woman of the future. I sing Eve because it is something that is happening.

Yet again, Silvio raises issues about the status of women in Cuba. “*Eva*” tells the story of a woman who refuses to be confined by men, but wants a child for herself anyway. She goes in search of someone to impregnate her without considering marriage or a committed relationship. Silvio’s acknowledgment of this situation empowers Eva to choose her own path in life.

Again, while this is a commendable representation of the empowerment of women, it confines their needs and desires to that of the home and the body. On one hand, the song suggests that female eroticism should be socially acceptable, and that women are able to financially support a family without the help of men – perhaps a relevant issue to Silvio, whose father was not always present – but this erotic desire is couched strictly within the desire for home and family, a more traditional idea. Eva isn’t searching for sex for the sake of her own physical pleasure; she is doing so so that she may embody the role of mother, albeit an unattached one. Furthermore, some of the

---

<sup>68</sup> Díaz Perez, *Silvio Rodríguez: Hay quien precisa...*, 241-2.

language used to describe her pursuit of the perfect sperm is animalistic. Silvio describes her as being “*en celo*” (in heat), and going to “*buscar semillas*” (looking for seed).

As Silvio describes, “*Eva*” seems to represent the woman of the future, who is completely independent, and yet maintains her essential function as childbearer. Yet again, this piece reflects the inability of the Castro regime (and apparently Silvio) to perceive women as valuable for something other than giving birth. While the song suggests that she should be able to have children on her own terms, there does not appear to be room for the possibility that she doesn’t have children at all. “*Eva*” is a clear representation of the catch twenty-two described by Moya Fábregas, which allows women to advance their role in society only under the auspices of being better mothers.

The song is also couched within the Biblical imagery of the Garden of Eden, as evidenced by the final line “*Eva deja de ser costilla*” (Eve stops being a rib), a reference to the creation story in the book of Genesis in which God created Eve from one of Adam’s ribs. Silvio received some criticism for the use of Eve as a symbol, because interpretations of the Bible that blame her for the fall of humanity from perfection are often perceived as anti-feminist. However, scholar Isabel Moya has suggested that “*un poco se logra, desde ese mismo símbolo tan habitual, revertir el concepto tradicional de lo que ha sido la mujer y ahondar en el concepto diferente quede esta se desea reflejar*”<sup>69</sup> (it achieves a little, from that same so habitual symbol, the reversion of the traditional concept of what women have been and delves into a different concept that is left to reflect what is desired). According to Moya, the evocation of such a commonly used symbol serves to reposition stereotypes about women in a way that allows new conceptions of womanhood to be validated.

---

<sup>69</sup> López Sánchez, *Trovadoras*, 26.

Regardless of whether it invites a feminist interpretation or not, the use of Biblical imagery continues to rely on the evocation of “Woman” as a symbol, rather than women as real people. This academic approach distances Silvio’s piece from the real experiences of women and their desire (or lack of desire) for children without a committed partnership. Furthermore, in his description of the piece’s conception, Silvio states that he observed a number of single, pregnant women, but gives no evidence that he actually spoke to them about their experience. Though Silvio is clearly promoting a new concept of womanhood, he is continuing to speak for women without allowing them to speak for themselves. In this way, he continues to support a patriarchal framework which suggests that women need a man to speak for them and to sanction their actions.

A contrasting example from the same time period, “*Bolero y Habaneras*,” (Appendix) addresses the issue of prostitution. Percussion is more prevalent in this piece, eschewing the solo singer and guitar instrumentation for a full complement of instruments including woodblocks, piano, and electronics. As Silvio has described, this represents the shift in *trova* of the 1980s towards musical collectivism in an attempt to better embody Communist values. In this instance, however, it also assists in the danceable rhythm of the song, which is likened to the two dance forms suggested in the title. These dance forms have traditionally been linked with lower class dance clubs and often associated with the sex trade.

As John Charles Chasteen has noted, in Cuba and other parts of Latin America, transgressive dance forms became converted into symbols of national identity to symbolize and make less threatening types of cultural mixing that were problematic in



societies with a recent history of European colonization.<sup>70</sup> The tension between nationalism and sexual transgression is particularly pertinent in “*Bolero y Habaneras*.” Outlawing prostitution was one of the key reforms that the Castro regime set in place upon its rise to power, but which experienced a resurgence in the 1970s and 80s, at the time when this song was written.<sup>71</sup> On one hand, Silvio’s condemnation of prostitution, through his description of the loveless life of a prostitute, is a feminist statement against the continuing practice of paying women for sex. However, it also fits into Castro’s public ideology against prostitution, and is therefore a demonstration of support for the government.

As with “*Eva*,” the woman in “*Bolero y Habaneras*” is described exclusively in third person. The song is addressed to an anonymous man, who the narrator warns against “collecting objects”. This vision of prostitution gives limited voice to the woman herself who is engaged in the sex trade, instead focusing on the male view of prostitution. Like “*Mujeres*” and “*Eva*,” Silvio is presenting women’s issues from a male perspective. In this case, however, Silvio’s choice to focus on the masculine serves a different function: by discouraging men from hiring prostitutes, he acknowledges that men are also responsible for the problem of prostitution, an attitude that removes blame from women and brings the dual nature of the issue to the forefront. In other words, by encouraging men not to pay for prostitutes, Silvio is attempting to reduce prostitution as a whole.

While “*Bolero y Habaneras*” is distanced and academic, “*Desnuda y con sombrilla*” (Appendix), is blatantly erotic. Scholar Néstor José León has presented an

---

<sup>70</sup> John Charles Chasteen, *National Rhythms, African Roots: The Deep History of Latin American Popular Dance*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004): 191.

<sup>71</sup> Smith and Padula, *Sex and Revolution*, 178.

analysis of this piece as a demonstration of Silvio's indebtedness to José Martí and poet Nicolás Guillén, poets who Silvio himself has attested to admiring greatly.<sup>72</sup> States León, "*podemos observar que él tampoco se libra de la intertextualidad y de la influencia de la temperatura poética que absorbe de sus autores predilectos*"<sup>73</sup> (we can observe that not even he is liberated from intertextuality and the influence of the poetic temperature that absorbs its predicated authors). León presents "*Desnuda y con sombrilla*" as a rare example of eroticism in Silvio's work, comparing it to "Me veo claramente," another example of his direct dealings with sex. The comparison to poems of Guillén is based on similarity of themes, and the presence of foreign language words in the text; in this case, the English words "lord" and "alone".

He also presents an apt description of the interpersonal dynamics in the piece, which are marked by a duality between the self and other. States León:

*El autor se implica para describir, con un aparente y marcado carácter subjetivo, un serie de imágenes en las que la mujer adquiere un papel importantísimo, sumergida en un juego de interacción bipolar que oscila entre la primera y segunda persona, yo [...] tú [...], adquiriendo dimensión artística y sensual a través de una desinhibición total en el desarrollo de la escena, y sin un solo vocable disonante o malsonante. Es un diálogo en imágenes que evoluciona sobre pronombres en singular, con un ritmo de pensamiento que se sostiene a lo largo del poema.*<sup>74</sup>

The autor implicates himself to describe, with apparent and marked subjective character, a series of images in which the woman acquires a very important role, submerged in a game of bipolar interaction that oscillates between first and second person, *I...you...*, acquiring artistic and sensual dimension through the total uninhibitedness the development of the scene, and without a single dissonant or bad sounding vocable. It's a

---

<sup>72</sup> Orlando Castellanos Molina, *Tras la guitarra la voz*, (La Habana: Ediciones La Memoria, Centro Cultural Pablo de la Torriente Brau, 2012): 49.

<sup>73</sup> Néstor José León, *Silvio Rodríguez: Semblanza Biográfica, Análisis literario y musical de sus obras más populares*. (@becedario: Badajoz, España, 2005): 111.

<sup>74</sup> León, *Silvio Rodríguez*, 112.

dialogue in images that evolves through singular pronouns, with a rhythm of thought that sustains throughout the poem.

The incessant yet fragmentary back-and-forth between *tú* and *yo* throughout the song is interrupted at the very end of the song by the entrance of a third character: *él*. Up to this point, the narrative has been restricted to the two people engaged in a romantic encounter. León suggests that this third person could represent a child resulting from the amorous union depicted in the piece. Alternatively, he suggests that, due to the erotic nature of the piece, a third person could have been invited to join in as part of a threesome.<sup>75</sup> Regardless, the actual effect of the third character in “*Desnuda y con sombrilla*” is a sudden pulling back from the intimacy of the earlier text. The intimate scene has suddenly been interrupted by another person, the result of which makes the listener aware of his or her own voyeurism.

The power dynamics in this piece are immediately apparent from the outset. The woman is presented in a seated position, while the man, with a “lordly” expression, stands above her. Their physical orientation in the space suggests a power dynamic in which he looms over her. Furthermore, she is naked; he is dressed, suggesting her vulnerability and his control of the situation.

Despite the obvious depiction of femininity as a sexualized object, a few interesting moments arise in this piece. The first of these occurs when the woman offers the male narrator a condom, not because she is concerned about pregnancy or her own sexual health, but because she herself has a venereal disease. This configures the woman as sexually experienced – a far cry from the idealized virginal woman suggested by European troubadours. The man, on the other hand, appears shy, perhaps suggesting that he is the less experienced of the two. While on one hand, this (along with her knowledge

---

<sup>75</sup> León, *Silvio Rodríguez*, 118.

of contraception) configures her as a sexually liberated, modern woman, it coincides with literary tropes of contamination. Because she is sexually experienced, she is necessarily contaminated. This is consistent with the response to the increased availability of birth control following pro-woman campaigns after the Revolution. While on the surface, these purported to liberate and protect women from sexual illness, they carried with them such a significant holdover stigma about promiscuity, that many women did not effectively take advantage of the new program.

Musically, the song is simple, diatonic, and repetitive. For a non-Spanish speaker, there is no clear musical evidence of the explicit content of the lyrics. The almost pointilistic fragmentation of the phrases lends a sense of vulnerability to the delivery of the song, marking it as a seemingly innocent or sweet depiction of the relationship. We might also argue, however, that the musical suspension of each phrase – the long pauses between each word without harmonic resolution – sets up a sense of tension and release, depicting the experience of male desire for a female subject, as described in Susan McClary's *Feminine Endings*.<sup>76</sup> Though McClary was writing primarily about Western Classical music, the harmonic structures contained in Silvio's music are similar.

As in "*Bolero y Habaneras*," "*Desnuda y con sombrilla*" deals with issues of female representation in a way that is very much in line with the reforms made by the Castro regime. Both the elimination of prostitution and the availability of birth control were major reforms that the FMC and Castro himself pointed to as evidence of their proto-feminist leanings. However, neither song – nor "*Mujeres*" or "*Eva*" – allows space

---

<sup>76</sup> Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, & Sexuality*. (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1991): 57-8.

for the woman herself to express her feelings on any of these issues. In all four cases, they are presented as part of an ideological campaign still based in a paternalistic framework.

As *nueva trova* scholar Robin Moore has pointed out, there is a marked change in the politicism of the music of Silvio throughout his career. As evidenced by his biography, Silvio's early years mark him as a contentious artistic figure in Cuban music who seems to have been subsumed by governmental attempts to control an artistic expression that it could not quash from the public view. Even in recent interviews, Silvio has made statements about the early years representing a time when one was forced to become a part of the Communist propaganda vehicle even when one didn't want to. His particular treatment of female figures in the above-listed songs addresses the same issue: he references and promotes governmental policies and their hypocritical stance on the place and promotion of women's rights by depersonalizing women. Whereas many of his songs deal with specific people, with magical realism, and can be characterized by an extremely personal tone, the above songs promote a sense of distance that sounds more like propaganda than it does feminism.

Silvio's work is contrasted with that of Pablo Milanés, whose ideas of femininity are more subtly employed. Pablo, like Silvio, adheres to governmental ideas about women's rights, but he addresses them through the manipulation of musical genre characteristics, rather than head-on. The next chapter examines Pablo Milanés' approach to women's rights in Cuba.

### CHAPTER III

#### PABLO MILANÉS

The revolution gave human beings their dignity back; it didn't just give it back to men. Because I don't believe that the words *man* or *men* include women. I don't agree that when one is going to talk about human beings one should say *men*. I don't think men would agree that our saying *women* when what we mean is men and women really includes them.  
– Haydée Santamaría

No discussion of *trova* would be complete without mention of Pablo Milanés. Whereas Silvio's person and music are associated with internationalism and a rock aesthetic, Pablo is both musically and discursively local. The comparison between these two men serves to personalize the central conceit of *trova*, which is a marriage between international pop styles and local "traditional" styles, or the "popularization" of endemic musical forms. Much of Pablo's music has a strong influence from traditional dance forms, which evoke the body, and lyrically address traditional tropes of femininity. At times, Pablo has re-imagined these genres by describing relationships with women that are not merely romantic; for example, father-daughter relationships, or mother-son ones. Thus, while Silvio approaches women's issues head-on, in a way that is arguably paternalistic, Pablo evokes tropes of femininity through romantic song styles and through dance forms, which he then re-envisioned to allow space for alternate versions of femininity.

Dance rhythms in Pablo's music have important implications in the analysis of gender. As Mark Butler put it (and as most people who have been to a dance club will attest), in dance music, "the beat is not only heard, but also physically felt, as well as

enacted through bodily motion.”<sup>77</sup> As a result of this embodied physicality, and because dance-based genres are often enacted in social spaces, rhythm is often linked to sexuality.

However, because *nueva trova* is generally considered a listening-based genre, the presence of dance rhythms has different implications. *Nueva trova* concerts and albums are not generally geared towards social dancing (though audiences certainly may do that), so the dance rhythms in Pablo’s music do not serve the same function as they do in their original contexts. Rather, the presence of dance rhythms in Pablo’s music makes certain racialized and sexualized “images” audible.

The most important of these “images” is the association between rhythm and blackness. As John Charles Chasteen has noted, dance forms in Cuba are generally conceived as hybrid forms derived from European styles of partner dancing, which, through the influence of African traditions, developed a sexually transgressive quality. The association of African heritage with hypersexuality is in part related to the spaces in which these dance forms became popularized; in particular, in *casas de cuna*, or musical entertainment centers where white men went to socialize and often sleep with women of color.<sup>78</sup> These associations are furthered through the trope of the *morena* (woman of African descent with light skin), who reappears throughout Cuban literature and music as a symbol of promiscuity. The *morena* is pervasive throughout Cuban dance forms, especially the *guaracha*, linking them both to concepts of blackness and to female sexuality.<sup>79</sup> In Pablo’s music, allusions to dance rhythms associated with blackness and

---

<sup>77</sup> Mark J. Butler, “Conceptualizing Rhythm and Meter in Electronic Dance Music,” *Unlocking the Groove: Rhythm, Meter, and Design in Electronic Dance Music*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006): 91.

<sup>78</sup> Robin Moore, *Nationalizing blackness: afrocubanismo and artistic revolution in Havana, 1920-1940*, (Pittsburgh, Pa: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997): 49.

<sup>79</sup> Moore, *Nationalizing blackness*, 50.

sexuality are contrasted with lyrical themes that expand definitions of race and femininity, undercutting stereotypes through the very forms that enforced them.

However, the shift to the inclusion of dance rhythms occurred relatively late in Pablo's career. His early work mirrors that of Silvio in its use of solo guitar and political themes, including settings of texts by José Martí and Nicolás Guillén. Like Silvio, Pablo was in search of a musical form that accurately expressed the reality of life in revolutionary Cuba:

*Sí, mira, para un joven de mi generación no era posible estar identificado con la Revolución y sentirse un artista joven con ganas de crear, y no poder recrear tu medio cotidiano de vida. No era posible, en mi caso concreto, que hiciera nuevas canciones, hiciera búsqueda desde el punto de vista musical y literario y no reflejara mi realidad.*<sup>80</sup>

Yes, look, for a young man of my generation it was not possible to be identified with the Revolution and feel one's self a young artist with a desire to create, and not recreate your medium of daily life. It wasn't possible, in my concrete case, that I make new songs, make a search from that musical and literary point of view, and not reflect my reality.

The setting of Revolutionary texts, like those of Martí and Guillén, in a musical style that evoked both folkloric sounds and an internationally-based aesthetic of protest allowed Pablo to express the experiences of life after the Revolution, which focused heavily on the clash between antiquated ideologies and new political realities.

New settings of old poems also perpetuated 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century gender roles in the modern consciousness, which can later be observed in Pablo's *filin*-inspired compositions. “*Es rubia: el cabello suelto*,” from Pablo's first album, *Versos Sencillos de José Martí*, is a prime example of how old fashioned ideas about women were repurposed in a modern musical setting (Appendix). The songs from this album were

---

<sup>80</sup> Orlando Castellanos Molina, *Tras la guitarra la voz*, 198.



first written in 1973 for a play to honor the life of Martí at the Casa de las Américas, a tradition for which Sara González would write the following year.<sup>81</sup> The poems are reflective, personal, romantic, and very much allied in tone to *trova tradicional*. Musically, however, the songs are clearly drawn from the modern aesthetic of protest music, particularly that of the United States.

The lyrics rely on tropes of femininity common in Martí's time. In the first stanza, the narrator describes the blonde hair of a woman that leaves him "*envuelto en un torbellino de oro*" (wrapped in a whirlwind of gold). The focus on the physical beauty of the woman – in particular her hair – foregrounds ideas about what qualities make her attractive, and about her value as a romantic subject. As scholar Isabel Moya puts it,

*Cuando tú limitas a la mujer sólo a lo físico, que es como limitarla sólo a lo biológico, sólo a lo genético (porque lo físico no depende de tu esfuerzo personal, ni de tu superación, ni de tu voluntad; lo físico es algo que te viene dado por tu ADN y por tus genes), pues entonces estás limitando a ese ser humano a lo puramente biológico.*<sup>82</sup>

When you limit a woman solely to the physical, which is like limiting her solely to the biological, solely to the genetic (because the physical doesn't depend on her personal strength, or to her ability to overcome, or her will; the physical is something that comes to you from your DNA and your genes), then you are limiting that human being to the purely biological.

Since the woman's hair is only one of two references to her in the entire poem (the other a description of her walking by a lake), Martí is limiting the woman's identity in the poem exclusively to her physical beauty. Furthermore, the poem can be read as almost voyeuristic: the narrator, clearly beguiled by her, follows the woman throughout the countryside, trying to catch a glimpse of her, but without ever speaking to her.

---

<sup>81</sup> Castellanos Molina, *Tras la guitarra la voz*, 182.

<sup>82</sup> López Sánchez, *Trovadoras*, 23.

The narrator's romantic interest in the woman is evidenced by the references to flowers in the fourth stanza. Due to their visible reproductive parts, flowers are used to metaphorize male-female romantic relationships. The "*jacinto*" (hyacinth) of stanza four is used to evoke femininity because it is both beautiful and passive. A bee appears in the second stanza that "*zumba más ágil por la flor nueva*" (buzzes most agilely to the new flower), pollinating it – a clear reference to male sexuality, which is traditionally conceived as being the active partner. Floral imagery, then, when compounded with the description of the woman's beauty in the first stanza, describes the narrator's desire for a romantic encounter with her.

The narrator also uses Biblical imagery to evidence his desire for the woman, by comparing her to Eve, the first woman in Christian theology. He (as the bee) says "*todo es Eva*" (everything is Eve), suggesting that the natural surroundings have completely absorbed him in thoughts of her. As in Silvio's "*Eva*", the use of Eve to signify the beloved is problematic, since it perpetuates the idea that women are to be blamed for the fall of Man due to their sexuality. The reference to the serpent in stanza six references this particular aspect of Eve's character, since it was supposedly a serpent that tempted her to pluck a forbidden apple from the tree of knowledge in the Garden of Eden.

Melodically, the piece is quite simple, making the text and its associated gender connotations intelligible to the listener, while simultaneously evoking a modern aesthetic. As with Silvio's early music, the song is strictly a vocal solo accompanied by guitar, which plays a simple strumming pattern based in folk rock, indicating that despite its antiquated text, the song is clearly for a modern audience. Pablo also utilizes a shallow,

breathy vocal timbre reminiscent of Silvio's, more common in recent pop styles than in those of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and contrasting with the rounded, dark sound of his later music.

Pablo also manipulates texts by Martí, taking control of their meaning within the song, as seen in “*Yo soy un hombre sincero*” from the same album as “*Es rubia: el cabello suelto*” (Appendix). The text deals with the humility a man feels upon experiencing the wide variety of personal, political, and natural phenomena that surround him; essentially, it is a description of a man's identity and life experiences. To a modern audience, Martí's poem evokes Che Guevara's “*Hombre Nuevo*,” the new revolutionary man inspired by the Communist takeover, and on whom its projected success would depend.<sup>83</sup> Since Revolutionary ideology was largely based on the works of Martí, this connection is not merely coincidental. The New Man in Guevara's work is patriotic, just, and morally conscious, but at the same time, humble, just as he is in Martí's poem.

Pablo selects certain stanzas from this poem, particularly those that deal with slavery and death, and juxtaposes them with selections from other poems in Martí's *Versos sencillos*. Through his selections, Pablo indicates his interpretation of the poem as a whole, and as a result, his interpretation of New Manhood. One of stanza that he adds addresses a mother figure:

*Mírame, madre,  
y por tu amor no llores  
si esclavo de mi edad y mi doctrinas  
Tu mártir corazón llené de espinas  
piensa que nacen entre espinas flores*

Look at me, mother,  
and don't cry for your love.  
If I am a slave to my age and my doctrines  
I will fill your martyred heart with spines;  
Just think that among spines grow flowers.

---

<sup>83</sup> Guevara, *El socialismo y el hombre en Cuba*, 7.

For Pablo, as for Guevara, the New Man is dependent upon women, and their inclusion in a piece that defines male identity serves to acknowledge the importance of their place in society. However, the woman in this stanza retains a traditional position: that of a mother waiting at home while her son goes to war. The elements of sacrifice in this example evoke attitudes about femininity perpetuated by the image of the *mambisa*.

Pablo's setting of the poem also has a sense of bitterness about it, as evidenced by the overall minor tonality, and chromatic inflections in the guitar accompaniment. The New Man leaving his mother to go to war is therefore presented as tragic or bittersweet event, rather than one of personal fulfillment. The sense that the narrator must go and fulfill his duties is tinged with melancholy in a way that almost seems subtly critical of a government that requires military service of all men. When the song closes with repeated statements of "*América y el hombre digno sea*" (America and man will be dignified), suddenly in a major tonal area, it seems to ring false, as if then narrator is repeating political doctrine to himself in an effort to convince himself that it's true.

Following his settings of Martí poems, Pablo transitioned into works derived from *filin*. These employ many of the same gender ideologies as those established in Martí's time, merely altering the musical aesthetic. However, the texts of Pablo's *filin* works are self-composed, suggesting an internalization of many of the romantic tropes and gender stereotypes derived from earlier poems and song styles.

"*Amor*" (Love, Appendix) lists a woman's physical attributes, saying that the narrator will love her even when they decay. Throughout the song, he subverts traditional descriptions of female beauty, saying that her eyes are not like stars, her nails are unpolished, her hair is graying, etc, but that he still loves her. This deliberate

evocation and subversion of romantic descriptions of femininity undercuts their validity as a mode of discourse, expanding the genre to include alternate versions of female identity.

However, the exclusive focus the body is a holdover from patriarchal ideas about female value. Though the brain is included in the list of attributes, it is presented as yet another physical feature of the woman; rather than use the word “*mente*” (mind), an intellectual feature, he uses the term “*cerebro*,” (brain) a physical one. The brain is described as a motor which allows all of the physical parts of the woman to function, rather than an intangible element of her personality, or the essence of her being. The brain is also the last item listed after extensive mention of the rest of her body.

“*Amor*,” like the music of Silvio, represents men’s dilemma in Cuba. On one hand, it is a reimagining of the traditional love song, which rather than focusing on the youthful beauty of a young woman, boldly states that even when she has lost all of her physical charms, she will still be loved. However, this is still couched within an ideology that objectifies women, and neglects to give them a voice or agency, as the woman herself does nothing within the text of the song. The narrator’s final statement that the reason he want to be with her – “*por eso, quiero vivir a tu lado*” (for that, I want to live at your side) – is the sum of those body parts, suggesting that the accumulation of them is tantamount to the creation of an entire human being. Though he is trying to assert that she is not only worthwhile because of her beauty, he simultaneously is unable to consider a woman as something other than her body.

Pablo’s move to dance forms complicates tropes of femininity even further, similarly re-envisioning them to allow for alternate forms of femininity. Though he

transitioned to Cuban dance forms later in his career, he describes these sounds – particularly that of the *son montuno* – as being very present in his early childhood, and very much naturalized as a part of the landscape. Much as Silvio recalls hearing music in his childhood home, Pablo describes his father singing in their house:

*Sí recuerdo oír a mi padre cantando canciones tradicionales y haciendo un segundo, hermosísimo que lo hacía, pero solo cantaba en la casa de manera muy espontánea; no obstante, esas cosas no las olvido, pese a que ocurrieron cuando tendría aproximadamente cuatro años. Y ese arraigo del oriental al son montuno – ya sea en montes o ciudades siempre se canta al son montuno – es algo que se tiene dentro y tiene gran influencia en mí. Puedo decirte que cuando yo empiezo a hacer una búsqueda de lo cubano en mi música me sale fuera inmediatamente el son montuno. Lo que abarca la mayoría de mi producción musical es el son, a veces ligado con guajira son; a veces son de la ciudad, a veces son del campo, pero siempre el son.*<sup>84</sup>

I do remember hearing my father singing traditional songs and singing the second voice, he did it beautifully, but only singing in the house in a very spontaneous manner; nonetheless, these things I do not forget, since they occurred when I was about four years old. And the roots of the east in the *son montuno* – be it in mountains or cities they always sing *son montuno* – is something that one keeps inside and has a great influence on me. I can tell you that when I begin a search for that which is Cuban in my music what comes out immediately is *son montuno*. The point of departure for most of my musical production is the *son*, sometimes linked with *guajira son*; sometimes *son* of the city, sometimes son of the country, but always the *son*.

For Pablo, the *son* is inextricably linked with expressions of Cuban identity and with his own roots as a young person. Furthermore, he references the *son*'s origin in the Eastern part of Cuba, which is characterized by a higher concentration of Afro-descendants.

Thus the *son* is a reference both to Pablo's roots, and to his identity as Afro-descendent.

Pablo uses the *son* to deal explicitly with femininity in “*Son Para Despertar a Una Negrita*” (Appendix). The term “*negrita*” on one hand, addresses the connection

---

<sup>84</sup> Castellanos Molina, *Tras la guitarra la voz*, 196-7.

between the *son* and blackness, but is also commonly used as a term of endearment in Cuba.<sup>85</sup> In this case, Pablo uses the term to address his daughter, Haydée Milanés, for whom the song was written.

The text draws on tropes associated with femininity, like love and innocence, but recontextualizes them in a way that is appropriate to the description of a child. If there is any doubt that the song is for his daughter, it is assuaged when he makes mention of cartoon characters, such as Pájaro Loco (Woody the Woodpecker), Elpidio Valdés, and Blanca Nieves (Snow White). While his suggestion that he will be her prince would be read as evidence of feminine passivity in a text about a romantic relationship, here it merely demonstrates a parent's tender desire to protect his child.

Pablo also makes mention of the fact that his daughter's name is Haydée, named for Haydée Santamaría who fought in the Moncada attack during the Revolution, and subsequently became director of cultural activities at the Casa de las Américas. His choice to foreground the connection to Santamaría demonstrates a desire to raise a daughter who is herself revolutionary. It also places value on women who challenge gender norms. At the same time, Pablo states that he knows that his daughter will not be like Haydée Santamaría, supporting whatever path she chooses to follow. While on one hand, this marks Haydée Santamaría as an exception to normal conceptions of femininity, it also grants his daughter the ability to choose for herself what to do with her life. It is also worth knowing that Haydée Milanés went on to pursue a music career, and cites her father as a major influence on her music.

Because the song is based on a *son* rhythm, it is naturally associated with tropes of blackness and sexuality. However, the *negrita* in this song is a far cry from the

---

<sup>85</sup> Moore, *Nationalizing Blackness*, 14.

stereotypical *morena* who is interested only in sex. Pablo's use of this dance form, complete with Afro-descendant female protagonist, re-imagines these symbols through its depiction of his relationship with his daughter. Haydée Santamaría becomes a *morena* of an entirely different kind: she symbolizes parent-child love, rather than promiscuity and transgression.

In addition to reworking dance and romantic genres, Pablo does at times directly address the issue of women's rights in his music. This is most notable in his song, "*En nombre de los nuevos*" (Appendix), a *filin*-based ode to women and the difficulties that they face in Cuban society. As with Pablo's other songs, it is essentially a love ballad, but one that doesn't address the physical attributes of woman, but her fortitude in persisting in a sexist society. "*Los nuevos*" clearly alludes to Che Guevara's concept of the Hombre Nuevo, as in "*Yo Soy un Hombre Sincero*." In this case, the suggestion that the New Man needs to be pardoned by women suggests an element of criticism for Guevara's political ideology which did not coincide with popular attitudes. Pablo offers the song as a gift of apology. Again, through the use of a *filin*-inspired aesthetic, Pablo subverts and re-works romantic tropes in a way that points out their problems and inconsistencies.

Whereas Silvio's music demonstrates a direct address to issues surrounding Cuban women, Pablo demonstrates the paradox of the Cuban man through his reworking of musical tropes associated with romance and sexuality. He draws on themes common to *trova tradicional* and *filin*, subtly modernizing these genres to address issues alternate forms of femininity. Like Silvio, he ascribes to a type of feminism that attempts to value women in a traditional role, in accordance with the Castro regime's ideology.



However, while he expands these genres to include different types of relationships with women, he still positions himself as the one who defines them. Furthermore, it remains to be seen whether the content of traditional love songs and dance genres can ever be truly dissociated from their subconsciously encoded meanings. Because Pablo is relying on musical styles that are well-known by his listeners, and evoke certain types of associations with race and gender, it is unclear whether or not they can be truly dissociated from their codified meanings.

## CHAPTER IV

### SARA GONZÁLEZ

*Esas mujeres tan femeninas como una rosa, como un alhelí o como un capullo de jazmín, no lucen bien cantando esas cosas. A esta trova nuestra hay que ponerla mucha bomba, mucho corazón y hay que sentirse una trovadora con los pies realmente sobre la tierra, hay que poner mucho de sí, porque esta trova hay que decirla con un sentimiento tal, que no valen interjecciones femeninas porque decae el interés y no hace llorar. La trova, cuando se canta bien, hace llorar a lo que se meten dentro de la canción.*

Lino Betancourt (Paraphrase of Hilda Santana)

If Pablo and Silvio represent male attempts to speak for women, Sara González is a prime example of a woman who spoke for herself. As the first female member of the GESI and the MNT, Sara was perhaps the most influential female voice in *nueva trova*, particularly in her ability to participate in the same capacity as her male counterparts, despite her repeated insistence that she was (like María Teresa Vera), primarily an interpreter of *trova*.<sup>86</sup> Perhaps due to her unique position in these organizations, the music of Sara González distances itself from an exclusively gentle or romantic aesthetic that might more easily be attributed to femininity; in other words, Sara's ability to make music that was as *macho* as that of her male counterparts (if not more so) prevented her from being relegated to the secondary status often afforded to women in *trova*. Unlike the romantic dance-centered aesthetic of Pablo, or the gentle, yet gender-aware sounds of Silvio, Sara's music is bold and confrontational, reflecting a revolutionary aesthetic in its most pure form. In this way, she was able to conform to the standards of a male-dominated genre then use her unique position as a woman in a male-dominated field to make a statement about women's rights and their place in Cuban society.

---

<sup>86</sup> Castellanos Molina, *Tras la guitarra la voz*, 185.

It is worth noting that Sara self-identified as a lesbian. Homosexuality is historically an extremely contentious issue in Cuba, and when Fidel Castro paid his respects to Sara's partner after her death from cancer in 2012, it was perceived as a large advancement for gay rights in Cuba. However, it would be simplistic to suggest that Sara's sexuality was the reason her music can be read as masculine. "Masculine" and "feminine" qualities are not necessarily linked to a particular biological sex or sexual orientation; they are socially constructed norms based in a gender binary system that neglects the complexities of human identity and experience. By suggesting that Sara's musical aesthetic is "masculine", I am admittedly reinforcing the very gender binary I wish to deconstruct. However, due to the contentious nature of homosexuality in Cuba, it is equally unreasonable to suggest that Sara is performing "lesbian-ness" in her music, as it would have been impossible (or at least unlikely) for her to receive government support. That being said, Sara can be said to be "queering" the *trova* genre because she is a woman performing a role traditionally occupied by men – a subject discussed at greater length in chapter five. In the case of Sara, this goes beyond merely her presence in the genre, but extends to her particular musical aesthetic.

It is also important to note that Sara was not the only woman involved in early years of *nueva trova*, or the only one to hold a prominent position. As stated previously, revolutionary Haydée Santamaría was the director of cultural activities at the Casa de las Américas, organizing many of the festivals and organizations which fostered the early development of *nueva trova*.<sup>87</sup> Additionally, singers such as Miriam Ramos and Teresita Fernández are well-known as interpreters of *nueva trova*, both of whom compose as well.

---

<sup>87</sup> Moore, "Transformations in *Nueva Trova*," 148.

The stigma that women are only interpreters of *trova* and not composers affects Sara as well as Miriam and Teresita. Sara states that her compositional output is limited because she enjoys performing other people's works, and in fact, her "real" vocation is that of a teacher.<sup>88</sup> Similarly, upon hearing Sara criticize her for not having recorded a number of her compositions, Miriam stated:

*Evidentemente es más fuerte en mí la intérprete que la compositora. Hay gente que dice muy bien, para mi gusto, cosas que yo diría también; y eso no hace que las deseche, todo lo contrario. Dice Martí, que uno se honra cuando honra al prójimo, ¿no?*<sup>89</sup>

Evidently the interpreter in me is stronger than the composer. There are people who say very well, to my taste, things that I would say as well; and this doesn't make them fall apart, to the contrary. Martí said that one does himself honor who honors his neighbor, right?

The fact that Sara and Miriam perceive themselves as interpreters, while Pablo, who has recorded extensive amounts of other people's work, is seen as a composer, reflects a clear gender bias. While there is also a marked difference in output between Pablo and Sara, her status as merely an interpreter suggests a different value judgment about her work and her abilities as a *trovadora*. However, I argue that Sara represents one of the earliest examples of women's participation in *trova* in a manner equal to that of men due to her high level of visibility within the genre, and her status as an initiator for future women to perform *trova*.

Sara, however, attributes the central problem with the limited participation of women in *trova* to numbers, not to value difference. She states, "*lo que ocurre con la historia anterior es un problema de cantidad no de calidad. ¿Quién duda de la calidad de Marta Valdés? Ella está entre las mejores [...] lo que pasa es que ellas eran menos.*

---

<sup>88</sup> Castellanos Molina, *Tras la guitarra la voz*, 179.

<sup>89</sup> López Sánchez, *Trovadoras*, 131.

*En lo que había diez hombres había una mujer*”<sup>90</sup> (What happened with past history is a problem of quantity, not quality. Who doubts the quality of Marta Valdés? She is among the best... what happened is that they were less. When there were 10 men, there was one woman.) Furthermore, she states that she never felt alienated by male members of the movement. She saw them as close friends, who “*nunca me vieron a mí como un ser aparte ni un caso extraño, ni mujer ni hombre: me vieron como una compañera más*”<sup>91</sup> (never saw me as a separate being or an exceptional case, neither female nor male: they saw me as another companion). Sara’s drive towards a feminist bent, then, came not out of her own experience, but from the surrounding social dynamics that she observed in Cuba and the rest of the world.

Despite the Communist government’s attempts to implement a feminist agenda, Sara was able to assimilate into the *trova* institution because she eschewed a traditionally feminine aesthetic. For example, Sara’s first album, like Pablo’s, was a setting of the words of a man: José Martí. As discussed in chapter three, Martí’s poems reinforce antiquated notions about gender relations. Pablo, however, was able to complicate these notions in “*Yo Soy un Hombre Sincero*” by juxtaposing parts of the text with other poems by Martí, as well as his musical setting of the text.

Sara also composed a setting of “*Yo Soy un Hombre Sincero*” (Appendix). Her adoption of a masculine tone is evidenced by the fact that she is setting a poem by a man about definitions of male identity. She takes on the persona of an “*hombre sincero*” (sincere *man*) in order to be accepted in a genre dominated by men. Furthermore, based on the selections she adds to the poem, she creates a different type of commentary on

---

<sup>90</sup> López Sánchez, *Trovadoras*, 138.

<sup>91</sup> López Sánchez, *Trovadoras*, 140.

Martí's original, one that focuses on tropes of masculinity more than Pablo's version does. As in Pablo's narrative, she includes a verse that references the pains of slavery, but the final two stanzas are much more fatalistic than those chosen by Pablo. Rather than draw attention to the tragedy of a mother watching her son go off to war, Sara paints the picture of a moralistic crusade, including references to Christ. The narrator exhorts an "*hijo viril*" (virile son) to go face to face with the enemy with him, saying that it would be better to see him dead than an enemy. The aggressive quality of these lyrics, in conjunction with the earlier stanzas about male identity, constructs a more traditional picture of masculinity than the one depicted by Pablo.

Furthermore, by singing the song herself, she positions herself as a kind of warrior, particularly in the address to the "virile son" in the last stanza. In this way, Sara places herself on an equal level with men, appropriating the traditionally masculine area of warfare. This would have been acceptable to the Revolutionary government, who continually evoked the figure of the *mambisa* (female independence warrior) to describe women's role in the revolutionary process, despite the fact that so few women participated in combat during the Revolutionary takeover. Though Sara is challenging gender norms by configuring herself as a warrior, she is doing so from within the confines of acceptable discourse.

This heroic tone is mirrored musically. Sara adopts a major tonal framework, in contrast to the minor chromaticism of Pablo, evoking an overall positive tone. She plays the first few stanzas with a straightforward picking style, which shifts to an energized strumming on the verses evoking the cross and exhorting the "virile son" to go to war. The strumming emphasizes vocal lines that are at times soaring, and at times rhythmic.

The abrupt ending lends assertiveness to the entire piece, which seems overall to support the decision to go to war.

Sara's masculine, pro-Revolutionary aesthetic has been commented on by her peers as one of her best and most essential characteristics as a composer. Teresita Fernández says that, "*La absoluta fidelidad de Sara a la Revolución es uno de mis mayores apreciados por ella. Independientemente de la calidad de sus canciones, de su voz, y hasta de una cosa que algunos le han criticado pero que yo le aplaudo: Es ese modo, digamos guerrillista, de interpretar sus canciones, de expresarse,*"<sup>92</sup> (Sara's absolute faithfulness to the Revolution is one of the things I appreciate most about her. Independently of the quality of her songs, of her voice, and even of one thing that some have criticized her for but for which I applaud her, is this mode, let's say warrior-like, of interpreting her songs, of expressing herself." This total faithfulness to the government may be one of the reasons she was able to reach a prominent place in government-supported *trova* institutions.

Even more than "*Yo Soy un Hombre Sincero*," this Revolutionary fervor is expressed in "*Girón, la Victoria*" (Appendix). Conceived as part of a 1974 film trilogy which explored the political participation of youth from the war of 1895 through the pseudo-Republic to the Bay of Pigs incident, Sara's piece follows a prelude by Silvio, and a battle scene by Eduardo Ramos.<sup>93</sup> Like "*Yo Soy un Hombre Sincero*," "*Girón, la Victoria*" presents a positive impression of war, allying it to concepts freedom and heroism, rather than tragedy.

---

<sup>92</sup> López Sánchez, *Trovadoras*, 153.

<sup>93</sup> Díaz Pérez, *Silvio Rodríguez: Hay quien precisa...*, 132.

If “*Yo Soy un Hombre Sincero*,” is about masculine identity, the text of “*Girón, la Victoria*” sounds like Communist propaganda. This includes references to the colors red and white in the first stanza (“*el rojo color del cielo*” (the red color of the sky); “*el blanco color de palomas*” (the white color of doves)), commonly associated with Communism. It’s also present in the juxtaposition of terms like “*gloria*” (glory) and “*victoria*” (victory) with “*guerra*” (war), indicating a connection between positive abstractions like winning and the realities of combat.

As the song progresses, it evolves from a relatively simple statement of the melody into a lush, full anthem, complete with choral backing and driving percussion. The use of choir gives a sense of community, supporting Communist ideas about collectivism and unity. Rather than present Sara as a soloist full of individual ideas about victory and war, the choir gives the impression that the entire nation is united with her.

Sara’s vocal tone, as mentioned by Teresita Fernández, also contributes to the masculine quality of her performance. Both “*Yo Soy un Hombre Sincero*” and “*Girón, la Victoria*” utilize a relatively low range for the female voice, lending them a sense of gravity. As Suzanne Cusick has suggested, the choice of register is a way of performing gender identity; though most men and women have some overlap in range, masculinity is performed through vocalization in a lower range, while femininity is performed in a higher register.

Timbre also contributes to gender performance according to Cusick. She identifies “feminine” vocal technique in popular music as being melodic and lyrical, while “masculine” technique is aggressive, and closer in approximation to speech or yelling. This difference is based in the cultural perception that “most women sing, most



men do not.”<sup>94</sup> In other words, foregrounding a melodic quality or a *bel canto* technique is tantamount to foregrounding femininity. In “*Girón, la Victoria*,” Sara’s dark vowel placement, uncontrolled vibrato, and loud dynamic give the effect of a battle cry, which is closer to Cusick’s description of masculine technique than it is to feminine technique.

Sara utilizes his heroic, revolutionary tone to address women’s issues later in her career, particularly in “*¿Qué dice usted?*” from 1990s *Si yo fuera Mayo* (Appendix). In a live performance recording, Sara states that the song is dedicated to women, and a question to “*los pocos machistas que todavía nos quedan por allá que no piensen que una mujer puede hacer todo igual que un hombre*” (the few *machistas* that remain to us that don’t think that a woman can do everything as well as a man).<sup>95</sup> The song, then, suggests that despite attempts to reduce sexism in Cuba and without, Sara acknowledges a continuation of biased attitudes towards women. This demonstrates that the government’s attempts to change popular culture were limited in their ability to actually change the prevailing ideology.

The song text is direct, posing a challenge to the older ideas of femininity, such as those expressed in the text by Martí. She argues that ideas about women’s fragility or uselessness are not supported by historical evidence; in fact, she cries that “*la historia nos grita otra verdad*” (history shouts another truth).<sup>96</sup> This song is a strong contrast to those of Silvio in that it puts a woman in the active voice of the narrative. It is not merely the fact that the song is written and sung by a woman, but the directness of the language –

---

<sup>94</sup> Suzanne Cusick, “On musical performances of gender and sex,” *Audible traces: gender, identity, and music*, (Zürich: Carciofoli, 1999): 34.

<sup>95</sup> “*¿Qué dice usted?*,” YouTube.

<sup>96</sup> “*¿Qué dice usted?*,” YouTube.

relatable to the warrior-like tone of “*Girón, la Victoria*” – that places her in a position of power. Rather than describing women’s issues in the abstract, she is bringing forth her own experiences and sending out a call to action to her compatriots.

She describes a number of stereotypes about women in the song, including the idea that women are only valuable for their physical beauty. She sings, “¿*Qué dice usted, que una mujer luce bien en el portal o en el sillón, tejiendo su aburrimiento?*” (What do you say, that a woman looks nice in a doorway or on a sofa, weaving her boredom?). The suggestion is that women should empower themselves in ways not exclusively linked to physical attractiveness.

She also addresses the issues of female sexuality in the first stanza, evoking the same floral imagery used in poems by Martí, and suggesting that a woman is not just “*para hacer el amor*” (for making love). She also sarcastically equates the home with the Garden of Eden, evoking the same problematic Biblical connections as Silvio did in “*Eva*” and as Pablo did in his setting of Martí’s “*Es rubia: el cabello suelto*”. In this case, however, it is clear that the home is not paradise for women.

She also includes references to cultural misrepresentations of women in the media. In particular, she mentions the song “*Seis Lindas Cubanas*” from the 1940s (a re-working of the earlier “*Tres Lindas Cubanas*” to include references to all six provinces in Cuba), which describe Cuban women as the most beautiful, and therefore the best.<sup>97</sup> This song is closely allied to the ideas of Cuban sex tourism from the 40s, which tried to encourage foreigners to spend money in Cuba by suggesting that their women were the most beautiful, and also the most available. The fact that there are six women in the song

---

<sup>97</sup> “Seis Lindas Cubanas – Melodías del 40 (Solo Audio),” *YouTube*.

also relates to the idea of the “*montón de mujeres*” depicted in Silvio’s “*Mujeres*” which encouraged a perpetuation of the idea that male validity was based in having a greater number of female partners. Sara’s recontextualization of this piece in the *montuno* section of “*¿Qué Dice Usted?*” is biting to say the least.

She evokes the *mambisas* as a counterexample to these stereotypes, shrewdly pointing out that they were active one hundred years ago. She suggests that women have been active participants in society for a long time, and that they should be able to do so equally as well as a man, undercutting the suggestion in the final stanza that women are not capable of fighting for their lives. The fact that this stereotype persists a century after it was disproved indicates resistance on the part of Cuban society to elevate the position of women.

Musically, the piece adopts a dance rhythm, complete with *clave* percussion and *montuno* section. As with the music of Pablo, the danceability of the song is at once celebratory and simultaneously aware of the powerful sexuality of female bodies. The juxtaposition of the sexualized dance form with lyrics that critique societal perceptions of women reinforces the element of commentary. Sara uses the same vocal technique, major tonality, and upbeat percussion as in “*Girón, la Victoria*,” suggesting that the activation of women’s rights is as much a battle as the one fought at *Playa Girón*.

“*¿Qué Dice Usted?*” demonstrates how Sara adapts her powerful revolutionary aesthetic to the discussion of women’s issues, but she also used her powerful position in the MNT and in the public eye to promote the work of other female composers. This is evidenced by her work on the two compilations, *Cantos de mujer* and *Cantos de mujer II*. With the creation of these two albums – and purportedly work on a third prior to her

death in 2012 – Sara suggests that the works of women composers are as worthy of continued performance and approval as those of men. Furthermore, she cleverly re-envisions her role as an interpreter in such a way as to make a political statement about women’s rights.

However, by singling out the fact that these are songs by women, she runs the risk of the albums being directed at a specialist audience. There is a danger in categorizing “women’s music” as its own genre, in that it suggests that it is somehow alternative to the unmarked category of “music” (read: men’s music). This categorization on one hand promotes the music of people who have been traditionally ignored or undervalued in the public consciousness, but it also runs the danger of Otherizing them as a sort of novelty.

Sara’s unique position in the institutions that regulate *nueva trova* gives her a unique standpoint on the movement and its potential. Because she was able to adopt an aesthetic that meshed with the revolutionary aesthetic – eschewing romantic or traditionally “feminine” themes for political ones – she was able to integrate into the movement and into the governmental processes. From this position, Sara then used her power to critically address the representation of women in society and their ability to participate in the production of *trova*.

Sara has served as a flagship for the presence of women in *nueva trova*, foregrounding the importance of women’s rights through her music. Following her lead, the 1990s saw a rapid proliferation of women’s involvement in *trova*. However, *novísima trovadoras* dealt with women’s issues in different ways than Sara, Pablo, and Silvio, perhaps due to changing cultural climate. The next chapter discusses these women and their attitudes about participation in a male-dominated musical field.

## CHAPTER V

### RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

*Las mujeres hemos sido marginadas, discriminadas y subvaloradas por ideas y costumbres ancestrales e históricas que no se cambia de un día para otro. No creas que a veces no he tenido determinadas circunstancias que te chocan, pero no es lo que marca la pauta en mi trabajo. En determinados momentos y ambientes sé cuándo viene la cosa por ahí. Cuando ocurre, trato de manejarlo con mis armas, respetando la armonía, la ética.*

*No es fácil ser mujer, me dijo alguien. Bueno, no es fácil vivir, es una lucha y ahí está la belleza de la historia. Trato, sobre todo, de que me respeten como músico, como mujer, como ser humano que tiene mucho que decir y mucho que escuchar.*

– Yamira Díaz

Though Silvio, Pablo, and Sara are some of the best-known performers of *nueva trova*, their attitudes and music reflect the ideology of the period in which they came of age as performers: the height of the Revolutionary government. While each of their artistic styles developed over the many decades of their careers, the attitudes about feminism and patriarchy discussed in the previous chapters are a result of the time period in which they matured artistically. More recently, artists have re-envisioned the *trovador* aesthetic in ways that reflect the changing political climate in Cuba. In particular, the rise of the Special Period in the early 1990s marked a dramatic return to pre-Revolutionary dependence on tourism and its associated emphasis on sex and superficiality, which challenged the validity of Revolutionary ideology. As a result, *trovadores* moved away from openly supporting the Revolution in their music.

The 1990s also saw a rise in the participation of women in *trova*. Apart from an increase in numbers, these women were now able to take a more active role in the production of *trova*, and received greater press and recognition than their predecessors.

When asked to explain the sudden proliferation of *trovadoras*, many women stated they felt that society had advanced and begun accept women's role in musical production.

Susan Thomas' "Did Nobody Pass the Girls the Guitar? Queer Appropriations in Contemporary Cuban Popular Song" explores Cuban perceptions of *trovadoras* and their attempts to communicate their experiences through song. Thomas' interviews with male Cubans suggest that *trovadoras* are perceived as either non-existent or as "*una mafia lesbiana*" (a lesbian mafia).<sup>98</sup> Despite the fact that there are few well-known outspoken lesbian *trovadoras* (Yusa, for example),<sup>99</sup> the misconception persists that all women interested in composing and performing *trova* are lesbians. A similar argument has been made about the Riot Grrrl movement in the United States, which appropriates the traditionally "masculine" sphere of anger and aggression.<sup>100</sup>

This attitude suggests that *trovadoras* are "queering" the genre by entering into a traditionally male-dominated sphere. Due to its associations with romantic love songs, in which a man traditionally sings to a woman to woo her, women who sing *trova* are seen as assuming the "wrong" side of the amorous encounter – a particularly contentious move in a society that has historically criminalized homosexuality. As Teresita Fernández, *nueva trovadora* and former duet partner of Silvio, put it:

*Es una pregunta delicada, porque casi toca el tema de la supuesta o real homosexualidad de las mujeres que hacen canciones. [...] Me gustaría hacer el hincapié de que, por este machismo que heredamos de los españoles, un hombre canta y es un macho; pero una mujer le dedica una canción a un hombre y casi ninguno la escucha con sensibilidad. Ahí es*

---

<sup>98</sup> Thomas, "Did Nobody Pass the Girls the Guitar?," 127.

<sup>99</sup> Thomas, "Did Nobody Pass the Girls the Guitar?," 137.

<sup>100</sup> Lucas Hilderbrand, "'Luring Disco Dollies to a Life of Vice': Queer Pop Music's Moment," *Journal of Popular Music Studies*, 25:4 (2013):420.

*donde es preferible cantarle a un gato, a la lluvia, a una planta o a un amigo o a una amiga...*<sup>101</sup>

It's a delicate question [being asked how it feels to switch from being the object of a song to the one who writes it], because it almost touches the theme of the supposed or real homosexuality of women who write songs.... I'd like to emphasize that, because of this *machismo* that we inherited from the Spanish, a man sings and is *macho*; but a woman dedicates a song to a man and almost nobody listens to it with sensitivity. This is where it's preferable to sing to a cat, to the rain, to a plant or a friend...

For Teresita Fernández, avoiding the romantic love song entirely is the most successful way for a woman to perform *trova*. The implication that women receive criticism for expressing romantic emotions – even when gender is not specified – counteracts the Revolution's attempts to validate women's status as an active partner in romantic relationships. Teresita re-enforces this disparity when she states, "*no entiendo qué relación puede haber en nuestra sociedad entre la sexualidad o la educación sexual y la canción*"<sup>102</sup> (I don't understand what relationship there could be in our society between sexuality or sex education and song). Though Teresita – like Silvio, Pablo, and Sara – is a relic from a previous generation, her statements are pertinent in light of current attitudes.

For the most part, *novísima trovadoras* seem more complacent about gender issues than their predecessors. In fact, many *trovadoras* have stated that they are not interested in a "fight" to reclaim an equal share of representation, since they believe that it should already be their right.<sup>103</sup> This attitude is markedly different than that of Sara

---

<sup>101</sup> López Sánchez, *Trovadoras*, 149.

<sup>102</sup> López Sánchez, *Trovadoras*, 149.

<sup>103</sup> López Sánchez, *Trovadoras*, 66.

González, who utilized her unique position in *trova* communicated feminist ideas to a broader audience.

*Novísima trova* also has a more marked aesthetic differentiation between men and women. Whereas male *trovadores* like Carlos Varela adopted elements of rock – directly challenging authority through the evocation of an aesthetic of contestation, while subtly critiquing the establishment through carefully coded lyrics<sup>104</sup> – *trovadoras* opted for a softer sound, closer to *trova tradicional*.<sup>105</sup> Women in *novísima trova* tend to prefer solo acoustic guitar and an airy style of singing, while men prefer electric sounds. This contrasts strongly with the early stages of *nueva trova*, where the music of Silvio, Pablo and Sara could all be said to utilize essentially the same aesthetic, despite differentiation later in their careers. Furthermore, their vocal technique is gendered more “feminine” than that of Sara.

However, when asked whether or not there is an audible difference between compositional styles of men and women, *trovadoras* give a variety of answers. Some, like Heidi Igualada, answer definitely in the affirmative:

*No es la temática, ni el concepto, ni por supuesto la calidad, es algo más subjetivo aún... hay una sutileza, una óptica más suave (aunque provenga de un temperamento fuerte), creo que es una cuestión de naturaleza; indudablemente no tenemos las mismas demandas, ni nos proyectamos igual mujeres y hombres.*<sup>106</sup>

It’s not the theme, nor the concept, nor of course the quality, it’s something even more subjective... there’s a subtlety, a smoother view (even when if it comes from a strong temperament). I think it is a question of nature; undoubtedly we have different demands, and male and female don’t project the same.

---

<sup>104</sup> Nasatir, “El Hijo de Guillermo Tell,” 46.

<sup>105</sup> Thomas, “Did Nobody Pass the Girls the Guitar?,” 128.

<sup>106</sup> López Sánchez, *Trovadoras*, 77.



Heidi suggests that since men and women are biologically different, there is an inherent difference in the quality of sound that they produce.

For others, the difference lies primarily in the different experiences men and women have, particularly in a sexist society. Scholar Isabel Moya suggests that men and women will have different opinions on subjects like violence and homosexuality, and these differences will come out in their music.<sup>107</sup> *Trovadora* Yamira Díaz concurs, “*Tiene que ver mucho con tu experiencia de vida como mujer, cómo es el rol que has asumido, si lo has violentado para tratar de ser más andrógena o no [...] incluso, tu orientación sexual*”<sup>108</sup> (It has a lot to do with your experience in life as a woman, what is the role you’ve assumed, if you’ve done violence to it by trying to be more androgynous or not...including your sexual orientation). For Yamira Díaz and Isabel Moya, the difference between men and women and their composing styles relies less on any natural characteristics than it does the role one has assumed in society and the way that role impacts potential relationships with other people. To compose in a certain manner is to communicate that role.

For a third group of *trovadoras*, the concept of a particularly “female” sound is not only ridiculous, it’s insulting. Rita del Prado merely states, “*Si ya en este siglo nos queda claro que no hay un modo único de lo femenino ni de lo masculino: ¿Por qué entonces hablar de un modo femenino o masculino de componer?*”<sup>109</sup> (If in this century it’s clear to us that there isn’t a single way of being feminine or masculine: Why then talk

---

<sup>107</sup> López Sánchez, *Trovadoras*, 27.

<sup>108</sup> López Sánchez, *Trovadoras*, 60.

<sup>109</sup> López Sánchez, *Trovadoras*, 70.

about a feminine or masculine mode of composing?). Unlike Heidi Igualada, Rita del Prado understands *trova* as an expression of individual feeling, rather than a particularly “female” one. Rather than be classified as a member of a group (“female” *trovadoras* rather than just performers of *trova*), Rita del Prado prefers to see herself and other women as complete individuals who are not exclusively defined by their choice to perform in a male-dominated art form. She states,

*Me gustaría que algún día se dejara de hablar de las “mujeres trovadoras,” porque personalmente no creo que sea un “departamento” distinto al de los hombres trovadores. Somos todos individualidades complejas. Somos el género humano. Somos creadores. Cada cual es un mundo de vivencias, de preferencias, de contradicciones, de respuestas y de preguntas.<sup>110</sup>*

I’d like someday to stop talking about “female *trovadoras*,” because personally I don’t believe that it’s a “department” separate from that of male *trovadores*. We’re all complete individuals. We are the human gender. We are creators. Each one is a world of experiences, of preferences, of contradictions, of answers and of questions.

For Rita del Prado, projects such as Sara González’s *Cantos de mujer* albums might serve as a way of categorizing and classifying women to indicate their status as different. In essence, to essentialize the feminine is to ignore the complexity of human experience, regardless of the way it is gendered.

While Rita is right in suggesting that a complete person is not defined only by his or her gender, the historical exclusion of women from *trova* – and arguably, continuing devaluation of women in *trova* – has led many to believe that a foregrounding of femininity, reductive or no, is the optimal way to counteract existing gender dynamics. This is evident in the existing perception that men are simply better composers than women. Singer Liuba María Hevíá describes how “*A veces hasta me han dicho: ¡Oye, tú*

---

<sup>110</sup> López Sánchez, *Trovadoras*, 69.

*escribes como un hombre, qué clase de canción esa! Y de verdad, ese tipo de criterio, de asociaciones, me parece tan irrespetuoso, tan horroroso.*”<sup>111</sup> (Sometimes they have said to me: “Hey, you write like a man, what kind of song is that!” And truly, this type of criterion, of associations, seems to me so disrespectful, so horrible”). Despite the fact that women would like to be seen as complete performers, whose gender is not read by their audiences, audiences continue to see and make value judgments on their music based on gendered preconceptions.

Women have also been categorized and confined to certain subtypes of *trova* performance. For example, many *trovadoras* have written extensive *trova* repertoire for adults, and yet continue to be seen exclusively as singers of children’s songs. When confronted with the question of how they feel about this classification, *trovadoras*’ answers – as with their answers to whether there is a “female” sound – vary. Teresita, representing the previous generation, says that she began writing children’s songs because there was a scarcity of that.<sup>112</sup> She therefore places herself in an active role of defining a role for herself within the existing framework of the genre. Liuba María Hevía, on the other hand, describes how she may sing children’s songs, but she doesn’t define herself as a children’s composer.<sup>113</sup> Instead, she argues that her songs deal with the theme of childhood from an adult’s perspective.<sup>114</sup> While Liuba attempts to describe the complexity of her music, and its relationship to childhood, she is confronted with a continuing stereotype that places her in a position of caring for children. As Moya

---

<sup>111</sup> López Sánchez, *Trovadoras*, 105-6.

<sup>112</sup> López Sánchez, *Trovadoras*, 148.

<sup>113</sup> López Sánchez, *Trovadoras*, 106.

<sup>114</sup> López Sánchez, *Trovadoras*, 107.

Fábregas said, this reduces her value to that of her abilities as a mother figure. Rita del Prado, in acknowledgement of this continued stereotyping, responds that being categorized is just a way of life.<sup>115</sup>

This section has focused primarily on the opinions of members of the *novísima trova*, as well as those of *trovadoras* still active from the earlier generations, and who might be said to have stylistically evolved along with the *trova*. As we have seen, *trova* is closely allied with popular styles, which in recent years, has also come to include rap music. While artists such as Anónimo Consejo, Alto y Bajo, and Instinto have attempted to bring elements of rap music and hip hop culture into the ambitus of *trova*, some have argued that hip hop itself *is* the next phase of *trova*. This argument is validated by the lyric-driven and protest centered ethos of rap music.

While *novísima trovadoras*, for the most part, have not seemed to approach their music with a feminist agenda, *rap cubano* has taken the opposite approach. If *rap cubano* represents an extension of the principles of revolutionary music that were outlined in *nueva trova*, its attention to women's issues – in particular the disparity between policy and reality – is no exception. The next section will outline and describe the connection between *rap consciente* and *nueva trova*, and the ways in which recent *raperas* have come to use their music as a tool for fighting for social change for women.

## *RAP CUBANO*

Rap in Cuba began in the early 1990's, responding to negative social results of the Special Period. While *trova* is often described as predominantly featuring white performers and audiences – although we have seen several examples of Afro-Cuban

---

<sup>115</sup> López Sánchez, *Trovadoras*, 71.

performers, not the least of whom is Pablo Milanés – *rap cubano* is very much perceived as an Afro-Cuban space of expression. Geoffrey Baker has argued that Cuban rap artists capitalized on the similarities between *rap consciente* (conscious rap) and Cuban revolutionary ideals – both of which focus on oppression based on marginalization rather than authority, as with rock.<sup>116</sup> This perceived similarity allowed Cuban rap artists to carve a space within the national discourse, arguably following the model that *nueva trova* had set for establishing ties with the government. Most importantly, Cuban rap (as with early forms of rap in the U.S., particularly in regards to their discussions of race relations) “expose[s] the gap between official discourses and lived experience.”<sup>117</sup> As we have seen, the gap between women’s alleged rights and the actual treatment of women in Cuba is directly illuminated by the paradoxical nature of *nueva trova* as an art form and the discourses it purports to project. With Cuban rap, these disparities are addressed head on, rather than subverted. Baker argues that rap is able to achieve this without complaint from the government because it criticizes the gap itself, and not the governmental discourse.<sup>118</sup>

Cuban rap followed a similar path to nationalization as that of *nueva trova*. Though both art forms began as forms of protest song, they were able to demonstrate a clear connection to the ideals of the Cuban revolutionary government, and as such, obtained funding and a blessing to continue their work. In the case of Cuban rap, this included the establishment of governmental institutions devoted to the promotion of its

---

<sup>116</sup> Geoffrey Baker, “¡Hip Hop, Revolución! Nationalizing Rap in Cuba,” *Ethnomusicology*, 49:3 (2005): 372.

<sup>117</sup> Geoffrey Baker, “¡Hip Hop, Revolución!,” 377.

<sup>118</sup> Geoffrey Baker, “¡Hip Hop, Revolución!,” 377.

art, much in the way that the GESI and MNT kick-started the popularity of *nueva trova*. It also included direct patronage by Castro himself; singer Harry Belafonte, on a visit to Cuba, reputedly spent several hours in a meeting with Fidel Castro, much which was taken up by a discussion of the rising trend of hip hop. This process of nationalization has led to the acceptance of what is often perceived in the rest of the world as a heavily contested form of protest music, and is directly based on the model established by *nueva trova*.

The connection between *nueva trova* and *rap cubano* is discussed by rap artists and scholars alike. Many rappers have self-consciously drawn the connection to *nueva trova* arguably to validate it by drawing connections to already existing forms, much as *nueva trovadores* themselves drew connections to the *trova tradicional* movement. Scholars have supported this connection, particularly Ariel Fernández, in an important magazine article, in which he states, “*El rap es una nueva trova en los noventa por el proceso político en que nace, por el papel que dentro de él juega*”<sup>119</sup> (Rap is a *nueva trova* in the 90s for the political process in which it was born, for the role it plays in it). This is to say that since the Special Period came as a result of the Cuban Revolution, *rap cubano* plays a similar role that *nueva trova* did and forms a part of the political process itself by pointing out social injustice.

Cuban rappers have made a point of turning their unique political situation into one that asserts a unique Cuban authenticity. Due to limited available technology and recording resources, Cuban rappers have returned to the aesthetics of early hip hop in the United States. Furthermore, they have put a distinct stamp on it by rapping in Spanish,

---

<sup>119</sup> Ariel Fernández, “Rap cubano: ¿Poesía urbana? O la nueva trova de las noventa,” *El Caiman Barbudo* 296 (2000): 12.

including verses by Nicolás Guillén and other revolutionary poets, and including elements of Afro-Cuban percussion.<sup>120</sup> This is to say that musically, as well as discursively, *rap cubano* has come to represent ideals of Cuban identity and the revolutionary process.

The primary counterpart to *rap cubano*, or *rap consciente* in Cuba has been *reggaetón*. While *rap consciente* has focused largely on social issues, *reggaetón* is a celebration of capitalism, excess, and self-indulgence. Many Cuban rappers disparage *reggaetón* as having “sold out” to commercial ideals (a similar issue to that discussed by proponents of particular sub-currents of hip hop in the United States). However, Geoffrey Baker has argued that the privileging of *rap consciente* over *reggaetón* has gendered implications, indicating a “fundamental privileging of male eloquence over female bodily expression.”<sup>121</sup> This is to say that because *rap consciente* has been traditionally male-dominated, and features male performers in impressive displays of verbal dexterity, undervaluing *reggaetón*, in its objectification of the female body, is to undervalue female expression itself. In fact, criticisms of *reggaetón* have often featured critiques of the dance moves associated with it, which suggests a move away from the expression of female sexuality.

However, the rise of Cuban *raperas* sends a challenge to Baker’s bold statement. While the extent to which *reggaetón* positively values female expression is certainly contestable, Cuban *raperas* have taken matters into their own hands and carved a space in which to express themselves eloquently and loudly as their male counterparts. While many *trovadoras* have underplayed the potentially feminist connotations of their musical

---

<sup>120</sup> Fernández, “Rap cubano: ¿Poesía urbana? O la nueva trova de las noventa,” 15.

<sup>121</sup> Geoffrey Baker, “¡Hip Hop, Revolución!,” 392.

choices, *raperas* have taken it upon themselves to loudly declaim issues pertaining to women in Cuba.

Cuban *raperas* cite the influence of female MCs from the United States, such as Salt-N-Pepa, Queen Latifah, and TLC.<sup>122</sup> The type of feminism that they project fits closely in to the so-called third wave of feminism in the United States, which recognizes that race, class, and sexual oppression are intertwined, and that women face psychological obstacles when competing with men.<sup>123</sup> This has been expressed by many Cuban *raperas* in their choice of African-influenced clothing and hairstyles,<sup>124</sup> as well as lyrics that address the specific intersectionality of their experiences.

Many Cuban *raperas* specifically address issues of *jineterismo*, or the sex tourism that returned in the 1990s when Cuba reopened itself to foreign interests.<sup>125</sup> As with Silvio, Magia MC, the only female member of trio Obsesión addresses the problem of prostitution in Cuba in her song “*Me llaman puta*” (They call me whore). However, while “*Bolero y Habaneras*” serves as a warning for men not to fall in love with prostitutes, focusing on the soulless character of that kind of amorous relationship, “*Me llaman puta*” attempts not to vilify women driven to prostitution, instead explaining why they might be driven to that profession.<sup>126</sup> The title is in first person, addressing the issue from a woman’s point of view, rather than presenting her as a tempting but dangerous

---

<sup>122</sup> Sujatha Fernandez, “Fear of a Black Nation: Local Rappers, Transnational Crossings, and State Power,” in *Cuba Represent! Cuban Arts, State Power, and the Making of New Revolutionary Cultures*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006): 109.

<sup>123</sup> Fernandez, “Fear of a Black Nation,” 112.

<sup>124</sup> Fernandez, “Fear of a Black Nation,” 116.

<sup>125</sup> Wooldridge, “Cuban *Raperas*: A Feminist Revolution within the Revolution,” 6.

<sup>126</sup> Fernandez, “Fear of a Black Nation,” 112.



object, as in the text by Silvio. Furthermore, the song was clearly intended to provoke debate. According to Sujatha Fernández, Magia MC was approached after a live performance of the song by a man who suggested that prostitution was a legitimate way for women to make money. Magia counter by pointing out that if the government provides women with housing, health care, and child care, there should be no need for them to resort to prostitution.<sup>127</sup>

Women have also used rap as a method for expressing their own agency and sexuality. In particular, the openly lesbian, all-female group, *Las Krudas*, uses their lyrics to express the oppression they feel as women, confined both by their own bodies and by society. This is particularly pertinent in a society which has traditionally viewed homosexuality as subversive, and which, as pointed out by Susan Thomas, has used homosexuality as a manner of discounting women's performances in male-dominated musical and artistic arenas.

However, despite their powerful expressive potential, women have continued to be largely excluded from *rap cubano*, much as they have been in *nueva trova*. The number of women's groups is significantly lower than men's groups, and they are constantly forced to prove their skill level in ways that male performers do not. As with *nueva trova*, Cuban *raperas* battle against an artistic system that purports to promote social equality, but continues to suppress them. Cuban *raperas*, like *trovadoras*, however, have seized the microphone, and are now asserting themselves and their own voices into the musical discourse.

---

<sup>127</sup> Fernández, "Fear of a Black Nation," 112.

## CONCLUSIONS

The goal of this document has been to show the great complexity of discourses on femininity as exemplified through the many eras of *trova*. *Nueva trova* has attempted to promote women's causes in line with governmental agendas, but has allowed for only limited participation by women and has historically circumscribed them as objects without giving them the ability to speak for themselves. The works of greats such as Silvio Rodríguez and Pablo Milanés have demonstrated efforts to include women – perhaps due to these men's personal experiences with the women in their lives – but elements of paternalism and holdovers from 19<sup>th</sup>-century romantic tropes are perpetuated in their music. Sara González made great strides in the efforts to promote women's rights in the early stages of *nueva trova*, but her success relied heavily on the ability to assert herself into a male-dominated aesthetic, to demonstrate that she was more *macho* than *los machos*. Furthermore, Sara represents the only woman from that period who received wide recognition as a composer of *trova*, despite her allegations that composing was not her primary vocation.

More recent developments in *trova* have seen an increase in the participation of women, but for the most part, these women are not interested in promoting a feminist agenda. A huge variety of opinions about what it means to be a woman in *trova* exist, and women are often relegated either to a position of children's songwriter, interpreter, or attempt to downplay their femininity in an attempt to be accepted on the same terms as men. More recently, Cuban *raperas* have used their music as a way of directly addressing feminist issues in a space that has been nationalized but continues to allow for freedom of expression and contestation against social disparities.

The significance of these findings is that social issues which have been directly expressed by scholars of history and politics can also be observed through the arts. In fact, the arts serve to personalize and more subtly inflect the disparities already known to be present, because they come out of real human experiences, which are sometimes articulated in intangible ways. There is much more to be said about the role of women in *trova*, but this study serves as a basic demonstration that issues raised with feminist historiography in historical and “new” musicology by scholars such as Susan McClary and Suzanne Cusick also have applications in music of other areas. This is to say that while the methods of oppressing women are undoubtedly different depending on the circumstance, there are still subtle ways in which male hegemony is enforced, and creative ways in which women are learning to combat it. As Sara González once said, “*se tiene que luchar y ganar/ se tiene que reír y amar/ se tiene que vivir y cantar/ se tiene que morir y crear*”<sup>128</sup> (you have to fight and win/ you have to laugh and love/ you have to live and sing/ you have to die and create). And that is exactly the truth that history will shout.

---

<sup>128</sup> Sara González. “Girón, la Victoria,” *Antología de la nueva trova*. [Vol. 2]. 1998. La Habana, Cuba: EGREM.

## APPENDIX

### SONG TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

#### Mujeres<sup>129</sup>

Me estremeció la mujer  
que empinaba sus hijos  
hacia la estrella de aquella  
otra madre mayor  
y como los recogía  
del polvo teñidos  
para enterrarlos debajo  
de su corazón.  
Me estremeció la mujer  
del poeta, el caudillo  
siempre a la sombra y llenando  
un espacio vital.  
Me estremeció la mujer  
que incendiaba los trillos  
de la melena invencible  
de aquel Alemán.  
Me estremeció la muchacha,  
hija de aquel feroz continente,  
que se marchó de su casa  
para otra, de toda la gente.  
Me han estremecido  
un montón de mujeres  
mujeres de fuego,  
mujeres de nieve,  
pero lo que me ha estremecido,  
hasta perder casi el sentido,  
lo que a mi más me ha estremecido  
son tus ojitos, mi hija  
son tus ojitos divinos.  
Me estremeció la mujer  
que parió once hijos  
en el tiempo de la harina  
y un kilo de pan  
y los miró encurecerse  
mascando carijos.  
Me estremeció porque era  
mi abuela, además.  
Me estremecieron mujeres

#### Women

I trembled at the woman  
who tiptoed her children  
towards the star of that  
a better mother,  
and how she took them  
from stained dust  
to bury them below  
her heart.  
I trembled at the woman  
of the poet, the leader  
always of shadow and filling  
a vital space.  
I trembled at the woman  
who ignited the trails  
of the invincible mane  
of that German (Marx's wife).  
I trembled at the girl,  
daughter of that ferocious continent,  
that left her house  
for another, of all the people.  
A heap of women  
have made me shudder:  
women of fire,  
women of snow,  
but what has made me tremble the most,  
almost to losing my senses,  
what has made me shudder the most  
are your little eyes, my child,  
are your divine eyes.  
I trembled at the woman  
who bore eleven children  
in the time of flour  
and a kilo of bread  
and watched them harden  
chewing *Carijos*.  
I trembled because she was  
my grandmother, as well.  
Women have made me tremble

---

<sup>129</sup> Silvio Rodríguez. *Mujeres*. La Habana, Cuba: Ojalá, 2000.

que la historia anoto entre laureles  
y otras desconocidas gigantes  
que no hay libro que las aguante.  
Me han estremecido...

Bolero y Habaneras<sup>130</sup>

Tú la perdiste pero aquí se queda,  
al fin y al cabo está con un obrero;  
conozco un caso que me da más pena:  
una muchacha de por el Cotorro,  
por una chapa HK en febrero  
torció camino y se perdió en el Morro.  
En todo caso la sabrás presente,  
latiendo aún para las nobles cosas,  
y no partida y con el alma inerte.  
Lo que te falta te abandona menos;  
sólo mudó de cualquier la rosa,  
no se trocó la flor por el dinero.  
Quien hace altar de la ganancia pierde  
la condición, la latitud, el puesto,  
y pierde amor, pues la codicia muerde,  
jamás en yo y siempre allá en el resto.  
Por otra parte, detener amores  
es pretender parar el Universo.  
Quien lleva amor asume sus dolores,  
y no lo para ni el sol ni su reverso.  
Vaya con suerte quien se crea astuto  
porque ha logrado acumular objetos,  
pobre mortal que desalmado y bruto,  
perdió el amor y se perdió el respeto.

Eva<sup>131</sup>

Eva no quiere ser para Adán  
la paridora pagada con pan.  
Eva prefiere también parir,  
pero después escoger dónde ir.  
Por eso adquiere un semental  
y le da un uso sin dudas normal.  
Eva cambió la señal.  
Eva sale a cazar en celo,  
Eva sale a buscar semillas,

who history notes with laurels  
and other unknown giants  
that there is no book that could hold them.  
They have made me tremble...

Bolero y Habanerasu

You lost her but here she stays  
at the end of the day, she's with a worker;  
I know a cause that gives me more pain:  
a girl that in *el Cotorro* (municipal district),  
in a *chapa HK* (car) in February,  
took a twisted road and got lost in *el Morro*  
(castle). In any case, you'll know she's  
here, still beating for the noble things,  
not gone and with an inert soul.  
What you lack leaves you with less;  
the rose only moved from whichever  
didn't barter the flower for money.  
He who makes an altar of earnings loses  
his condition, his latitude, his post,  
and loses love, because envy bites,  
never in me and always in the rest.  
For another part, detaining loves  
is faking for the Universe.  
He who carries love assumes its pains,  
and doesn't stop for the sun or for its  
reverse. Good luck to him who thinks  
himself smart because he's accumulated  
objects, poor mortal, soulless and brutish,  
he lost love and lost respect.

Eve

Eve doesn't want to be for Adam  
the birth giver paid with bread.  
Eve still wants to give birth,  
but after deciding where to go.  
So she acquires a stallion  
and gives him use without normal doubts.  
Eve changes the signal.  
Eve goes out to hunt in heat,  
Eve goes to find seed,

<sup>130</sup> Silvio Rodríguez. "Bolero y Habaneras," *Oh Melancolía*. Mp3 audio. Itunes. 1989.

<sup>131</sup> Silvio Rodríguez. "Eva," *Oh Melancolía*. Mp3 audio. Itunes. 1989.

Eva sale y remonta el vuelo,  
Eva deja de ser costilla.  
Evo no intenta vestir de tul.  
Eva no cree en un príncipe azul.  
Eva no inventa falso papel:  
el fruto es suyo, con padre o sin él.  
Eva se enfrenta al “¿Que dirán?”  
firme al timón, como buen capitán,  
y encoge hombros a Adán.

Desnuda y con sombrilla<sup>132</sup>

Tú, sentada en una silla;  
yo, de pie con expresión de *lord*.  
Tú, desnuda y con sombrilla;  
yo, vestido pero con calor.

Tú, con uñas y con dientes,  
mirándome de frente  
con brillo de matar.  
Yo, retrocediendo un poco  
llenándome de un loco  
deseo de sangrar.

Tú, besando tus rodillas;  
yo, discreto pero sin rubor,  
Tú, creando maravillas;  
yo, soñándome esquimal sin sol.

Tú, con un ritmo tan lento,  
buscando un alimento  
frotado con alcohol  
Yo, de pronto ensimismado,  
mirándote alelado,  
colmada de licor.

Tú, ardiente y sin capilla;  
yo, quitándome el sombrero, *alone*,  
tú, dispuesta la vajilla;  
yo, al filo de mi pantalón.

Yo, a punto del delirio,  
extraigo un solo cirio

Eve leaves and soars,  
Eve stops being a rib.  
Eve doesn't intend to wear tulle,  
Eve doesn't believe in a blue prince.  
Eve doesn't invent a fake character:  
the fruit is hers, with a father, or without  
him. Eve faces the “What will they say?”  
firm at the helm, like a good captain,  
and shrugs her shoulders at Adam.

Naked and with a sunshade

You, seated in a chair;  
I, on foot with a lordly expression.  
You, naked and with a sunshade;  
I, dressed, but hot.

You, with fingernails and with teeth,  
looking straight at me  
with the brightness of killing.  
I, backing up a little  
filling myself with a crazy  
desire for blood.

You, kissing your knees;  
I, discrete but without blushing,  
You, creating marvels  
I, dreaming myself an Eskimo without sun.

You, with a rhythm so slow  
searching for food  
rubbed with alcohol.  
I, suddenly embarrassed,  
looking at you, bewildered,  
replete with liquor.

You, burning and without a hood;  
I, removing my hat, alone,  
You, arranging the suitcase,  
I, the edge of my pants.

I, on the edge of delirium,  
extract a single taper

---

<sup>132</sup> Silvio Rodríguez. “Desnuda y con Sombrilla.” Rodríguez. Ojalá, 1995, streaming audio. Accessed 11/24/13. *Spotify*.

que poso ante tu flor.  
Tú, susurrando un misterio  
de un no sé qué venéreo,  
me das un protector.

Tú, sentada en una silla;  
yo, de pie con expresión de *lord*;  
yo, vestido pero con calor.  
Tú, yo, él.

Es rubia: el cabello suelto (José Martí)<sup>133</sup>

Es rubia: el cabello suelto  
da más luz al ojo moro:  
Voy, desde entonces, envuelto  
en un torbellino de oro.

La abeja estival que zumba  
más ágil por la flor nueva  
no dice, como antes, “tumba”:  
“Eva”, dice: “todo es Eva.”

Bajo, en lo oscuro, al temido  
raudal de la catarata  
¡Y brilla el iris, tendido  
sobre las hojas de plata!

Miro, ceñudo, la agreste  
pompa del monte irritado:  
¡Y en el alma azul celeste  
brota un jacinto rosado!

Voy, por el bosque, a paseo  
a la laguna vecina:  
Y entre las ramas la veo,  
Por el agua camina.

La serpiente del jardín.  
Silba, escupe y se resbala  
por su agujero: el clarín  
me tiende, trinando, el ala.

¡Arpa soy, salterio soy

that I pose in front of your flower.  
You, whispering a mystery  
of who knows what venereal disease,  
give me a condom.

You, seated in a chair;  
I, standing with a lordly expression;  
I dressed, but hot.  
You, me, him.

She's blonde: her loose hair

She's blonde: her loose hair  
gives more light to the Moorish eye:  
I go from then on wrapped  
in a whirlwind of gold.

The summer bee that buzzes  
most agile to the new flower  
doesn't say, like before, “tomb”:  
“Eve,” it says, “everything is Eve.”

In the darkness, I drop  
to the feared flood of the cataract  
¡And the rainbow shines  
on the leaves of silver!

I see, frowning, the wild  
pomp of the irritated mountain,  
And in the light blue spirit  
sprouts a pink hyacinth!

I go walking in the forest  
to the neighboring lake:  
and between the branches I see her  
walk by the water .

The garden serpent  
hisses, spits, and slides  
down its hole: the songbird,  
pouring its soul, is stretching to me its  
wing.

I am a harp, I am a psaltery

---

<sup>133</sup> José Martí, *Versos sencillos/Simple verses*, trans. Manuel A. Tellechea, Houston, TX: Arte Público Press, 1997; Pablo Milanés. “Es Rubia, el Cabello Suelto,” *Versos Sencillos de José Martí (1973)*. Mp3 audio. Itunes. 1992.

donde vibra el universo:  
Vengo del sol, y al sol voy:  
Soy el amor: soy el verso!

Amor<sup>134</sup>

No te pido que te cuides  
esa delgadez extrema.  
Sólo pido que me mires  
con esa mirada buena.

Tus ojos no son luceros  
que alumbran la madrugada  
pero si me miran siento  
que me tocas con tus manos.

Tus manos no son hermosas  
no veo estilo en tus dedos  
pero qué humanos reposan  
si se enroscan en tu pelo.

Tu pelo ya sin color  
sin ese brillo supremo  
cuida y resguarda con celo  
lo que cubre con amor.

Tu cerebro porque piensas  
porque es tu clave y motor  
va generando la fuerza  
que me hace humano y mejor.

Cuerpo, manos, ojos, pelo,  
carne y huesos inanimados  
que cobran vida  
y por eso, quiero vivir a tu lado.

Son Para Despertar a Una Negrita<sup>135</sup>

Voy a hacerte unas letras por primera vez.

where the universe vibrates.  
I come from the sun and to the sun I go.  
I am love, I am verse!

Love

I don't ask that you keep  
That extreme slimness.  
I only ask that you look at me  
With that good look.

Your eyes are not constellations  
That light up the morning  
But if they look at me I feel  
That you are touching me with your hands.

Your hands are not beautiful  
I don't see polish on the nails  
But how humanly they repose  
When they are entwined in your hair.

Your hair now without color  
Without that supreme shine  
Protect and take care of with jealousy  
That which it covers with love.

Your brain because you think  
Because it is your key and motor  
It generates the force  
That make me human and better.

Body, hands, eyes, hair,  
Flesh and inanimate bones  
That come to life  
And for this, I want to live at your side.

Son to Awaken a Black Girl

I am going to write you some words for the

<sup>134</sup> Pablo Milanés and Mario Benedetti. *Yolanda y otras canciones*. Buenos Aires: Espasa Calpe, 1994; Milanés, Pablo. "Amor," *Vengo Naciendo*. Mp3 audio. Itunes. 1999.

<sup>135</sup> Pablo Milanés and Mario Benedetti. *Yolanda y otras canciones*. Buenos Aires: Espasa Calpe, 1994; Milanés, Pablo. "Son Para Despertar a una Negrita," *La Más Completa Colección*. Universal Music Mexico, 2003, streaming audio. Accessed 11/25/13. *Spotify*.



Quiero pregonar que te llamas Haydée  
Porque otra Haydée que me duele y que no  
olvidré vive en mi memoria,  
en tu nombre también.

Esta inconsulta inspiración  
con tus hermanos ya no sé  
si evocará un conflicto mayor  
que fue el esfuerzo de querer  
adelantarme en mucho tiempo  
a lo que está sucediendo.  
Tu pequeña figura vino a unificar  
todos los amores que te han de brindar.

De tu persona, qué diré  
si en tu inocencia sueles ser  
para empezar como un sueño a lograr  
que al despertar encontrará  
la más hermosa, la terrible,  
la verdad de este mundo.

Serás como un resumen del bien y del mal  
y al final te haré con mi forma de amar.

Que la belleza te elija,  
que la bondad te defina,  
por siempre, la felicidad  
conserva en ti esa sonrisa.

Como Haydée Santamaría  
yo bien sé que no serás.  
Quiero que seas como tú, mi cariño,  
con eso me bastará.

La soberbia en demasía,  
la tolerancia discreta,  
son armas de doble filo,  
vas a aprender su secreto.

Juego con esa muñeca  
no descubras el dolor.  
Sé feliz, recibe amor.  
No desesperes por llegar a mayor.

Dame tu Pájaro Loco  
y toma mi Elpidio Valdés,

first time. I want to tout that you are named  
Haydée because another Haydée that pains  
me and that I will not forget lives in my  
memory, in your name as well.

This unadvised inspiration  
with your brothers I still don't know  
if it will evoke a major conflict  
that was the force of wanting to  
advance myself in much time  
to that which was happening.  
Your small figure came to unify  
all the loves that you have to provide.

Of your person, what will I say  
if in your innocence you tend to be  
to begin like a dream to achieve  
that on waking you will encounter  
the most beautiful, the terrible  
the truth of this world.

You will be like a summary of the good  
and the bad and at the end I will make you  
with my form of loving.  
That beauty choose you  
that goodness defines you  
for always, happiness  
conserves in you that smile.

Like Haydée Santamaría  
I know well that you will not be.  
I want you to be like you, my love,  
with that I have enough.

Too much pride,  
discrete tolerance,  
are double-edged swords,  
you're going to learn your secret.

I play with that doll  
you don't discover the pain.  
Be happy, receive love.  
Don't despair that the best is coming.

Give me your Pájaro Loco  
and take my Elpidio Valdés,

y si tú eres Blanca Nieves  
yo tu príncipe seré.

and if you are Blanca Nieves  
I will be your prince.

Serás como un resumen del bien y del mal  
y al final te haré con mi forma de amar.  
Con mi forma de amar.

You will be like a summary of the good  
and the bad and at the end I will make you  
with my way of loving.

En nombre de los nuevos<sup>136</sup>

In the name of the new ones

Qué difícil resulta, compañera,  
acabar de situarte en tu lugar  
qué manera de alzar la primera  
qué justicia tan última en llegar.

How difficult it is, friend,  
to finish situating you in your place  
how to elevate you the first  
what justice so late in coming.

Tu sereno perfil, tu larga espera  
tu esperanza que no ha de terminar  
te moldearon, de estoica madera  
que resiste el más viejo vendaval.

Your serene profile, your long wait,  
your hope that has not ended,  
they molded you of stoic wood  
that resists the oldest storm.

Yo te saludo en nombre de los nuevos  
los que no han de acusarte por amar  
los que amando contigo se hacen  
buenos porque buena es, tu savia original.

I salute you in the name of the new ones,  
those that will not accuse you for loving  
those that loving with you make good,  
because it is good, your original lifeblood.

Los que respetan tu delicadeza,  
los que admiran tu triple condición,  
¡qué Mariana, qué obrera, qué belleza!  
Mil perdones, recibe esta canción.

Those that respect your delicacy,  
those that admire your triple condition,  
what Mariana, what a worker, what beauty!  
A thousand pardons, receive this song.

Yo guardé para tí el hermoso sueño  
de esa inmensa capacidad de amar  
que me lleva por límites sin dueños  
de tu mano dejándome guiar.

I guarded for you the sweet dream  
of the immense capacity for love  
that carries me to the limit without the  
owner of your hand letting me guide.

Yo Soy un Hombre Sincero (Pablo  
Milanés)<sup>137</sup>

I Am a Sincere Man

Yo soy un hombre sincero  
De donde crece la palma,  
Y antes de morirme quiero  
Echar mis versos del alma.

I am a sincere man  
from where the palm grows,  
and before I die, I want  
to release my verses from my spirit.

---

<sup>136</sup> Pablo Milanés and Mario Benedetti. *Yolanda y otras canciones*. Buenos Aires: Espasa Calpe, 1994; Milanés, Pablo. "En nombre de los nuevos." Accessed 5/19/14. *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RrdUyvg0bDQ>

<sup>137</sup> Pablo Milanés. "Yo Soy un Hombre Sincero," *Versos Sencillos de José Martí (1973)*. Mp3 audio. iTunes. 1992.

Yo vengo de todas partes,  
Y hacia todas partes voy:  
Arte soy entre las artes,  
En los montes, monte soy.

I come from all parts,  
and to all parts I go.  
I am art among art,  
in the mountains, I am a mountain.

Oculto en mi pecho bravo  
La pena que me lo hiere:  
El hijo de un pueblo esclavo  
Vive por él, calla y muere.

Hidden in my brave chest  
the pain that wounds me:  
the child of an enslaved people  
live for him, silent and dead.

Yo he visto al águila herida  
Volar al azul sereno,  
Y morir en su guarida  
La víbora del veneno.

I have seen a wounded eagle  
flying in the serene blue  
and the venomous viper  
dying in its den.

Temblé una vez, —en la reja,  
A la entrada de la viña—  
Cuando la bárbara abeja  
Picó en la frente a mi niña.

I trembled once, – in the gate,  
at the entrance of the vineyard –  
when the barbaric bee  
stung my daughter in the forehead.

Gocé una vez, de tal suerte  
Que gocé cual nunca: —cuando  
La sentencia de mi muerte  
Leyó el alcaide llorando.

I enjoyed once, such luck  
that I enjoyed as much never again: - when  
the warden read  
my death sentence, crying.

Mírame, madre,  
y por tu amor no llores  
si esclavo de mi edad y mi doctrinas  
Tu mártir corazón llené de espinas  
piensa que nacen entre espinas flores

Look at me, mother,  
and don't cry for your love.  
If I am a slave to my age and my doctrines;  
I will fill your martyred heart with spines;  
Just think that among spines grow flowers.

Verso forjé  
donde crece la luz  
Y América y el hombre digno sea.

I forged a verse  
where the light grows  
and America and man will be dignified.

Yo soy un hombre sincero (Sara  
González)<sup>138</sup>

I Am a Sincere Man

Yo soy un hombre sincero  
De donde crece la palma,  
Y antes de morirme quiero  
Echar mis versos del alma.

I am a sincere man  
from where the palm grows,  
and before I die I want  
to release my verses from my soul.

Yo vengo de todas partes,  
Y hacia todas partes voy:

I come from all parts,  
and to all parts I go:

---

<sup>138</sup> Sara González. *Versos de José Martí*. 1974. Helsinki, Finland: Love Records.

Arte soy entre las artes,  
En los montes, monte soy.

I am art among art,  
in the mountains, I am a mountain.

Yo sé de un pesar profundo  
Entre las penas sin los nombres  
¡La esclavitud de los hombres  
Es la gran pena del mundo!

I know of a profound weight  
among the pains without names  
The slavery of men  
is the great pain of the world!

Cuando al peso de la cruz  
El hombre morir resuelve,  
Sale a hacer bien, lo hace, y vuelve  
Como de un baño de luz.

When the on the weight of the cross  
the man resolves to die,  
he goes out to do good, does it, and returns  
as if in a bath of light.

Bien estará en la pintura  
El hijo que amo y bendigo:  
¡Mejor en la ceja oscura  
cara a cara al enemigo!

It will be good in the painting  
the son that I love and bless:  
better on the dark brow  
face to face with the enemy!

Vamos, pues, hijo viril:  
Vamos los dos: si yo muero,  
Me besas: si tú... ¡prefiero  
verte muerto a verte vil!

Let's go, then, viril son  
Let's us two go; if I die,  
kiss me: if you... I'd rather  
see you dead than see you vile!

#### Girón, la Victoria<sup>139</sup>

#### Girón, Victory

Cuando cambia el rojo color del cielo  
por el blanco color de palomas  
se oyen las campanas de los hombres  
que levantan sus sonrisas de las lomas.

When the red color of the sky changes  
to the color of white doves  
you can hear the bells of men  
who lift their smiles from the hills.

Después que entre pecho y pecho  
haya tenido el deseo de quemar,  
de matar, de vengar y de vencer.

After which, between chest and chest  
they have had the desire to burn,  
to kill, the avenge, and to overcome.

Y cuando no se olvida que no hay  
libertad regalada, sino tallada  
sobre el mármol y la piedra  
de monumentos llenos de flores y de tierra,  
y por los héroes muertos en las guerras  
se tiene que luchar y ganar,  
se tiene que reír y amar,  
se tiene que vivir y cantar,  
se tiene que morir y crear.

And when they don't forget that  
there is no gifted freedom, only carved  
out of marble and stone  
of monuments full of flowers and earth,  
and for the heroes died in war,  
you have to fight and win,  
you have to laugh and love,  
you have to live and sing,  
you have to die and create.

---

<sup>139</sup> Sara González. "Girón, la Victoria," *Antología de la nueva trova*. [Vol. 2]. 1998. La Habana, Cuba: EGREM

Canto y llanto de la tierra,  
canto y llanto de la gloria,  
y entre canto y llanto de la guerra,  
nuestra primera victoria.

I sing and cry of the earth,  
I sing and cry of glory,  
and between singing and crying of war,  
our first victory.

De luces se llenó el cielo  
de esta tierra insurrecta,  
y entre luces se batió seguro  
buscando la victoria nuestra.

The light filled with lights  
of our insurgent earth,  
and between lights were surely battled  
searching for our victory.

Hoy se camina confiado  
por los surcos de la historia,  
donde pelearon los héroes  
para alcanzar la victoria

Today one walks confident  
of the ruts of history,  
where heroes fought  
to achieve victory.

¿Qué Dice Usted? <sup>140</sup>

What do you say?

¿Qué dice usted,  
que una mujer es la flor  
de aquel Edén, del dulce hogar,  
y para hacer el amor?  
Si la historia nos grita otra verdad.

What do you say  
that a woman is a flower  
of that Eden, of the sweet home  
and for making love ?  
if history shouts another truth.

¿Qué dice usted,  
que una mujer luce bien  
en el portal o en el sillón,  
tejiendo su aburrimiento?  
Si la historia nos grita otra verdad.

What do you say,  
that a woman shines well  
in a doorway or on a sofa  
weaving her boredom?  
If history shouts another truth.

¿Ves?, hace cien años comenzó  
cuando alzó el machete una mambisa.  
¿Ves?, y así siguió la tradición  
siempre que luchar se necesita,  
por eso: seis, seis, lindas cubanas.

You see? 100 years ago it began  
when a *mambisa* lifted a machete.  
You see? And this way the tradition  
continued, we have always needed to fight,  
so: six, six, pretty Cuban women.

¿Qué dice usted,  
que una mujer no es capaz  
de construir, de analizar,  
y de luchar por la vida?  
Cuando la historia nos grita otra verdad.

What do you say,  
that a woman is not capable  
of constructing, of analyzing  
and of fighting for her life?  
When history shouts another truth.

---

<sup>140</sup> Sara González. “¿Qué dice usted?” *Si yo fuera mayo*. 1990. Accessed 11/24/13. *YouTube*.  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lknzgC1UCiU>

## REFERENCES CITED

### Print and Online Sources

- Baker, Geoffrey. "¡Hip Hop, Revolución! Nationalizing Rap in Cuba." *Ethnomusicology*, 49:3 (2005): 368-402.
- Butler, Mark J. "Conceptualizing Rhythm and Meter in Electronic Dance Music," *Unlocking the Groove: Rhythm, Meter, and Design in Electronic Dance Music*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006: 76-97.
- Cañizares, Dulcila. *La Trova Tradicional Cubana*. La Habana: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1992.
- Castellanos Molina, Orlando. *Tras la guitarra la voz*. La Habana: Ediciones La Memoria, Centro Cultural *Pablo de la Torriente Brau*, 2012.
- Castro, Fidel. "Speech by Cuban Prime Minister Fidel Castro at close of fifth FMC national plenum in Santa Clara – live." 1966. Castro Speech Database, accessed May 17, 2014, <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/castro/db/1966/19661210.html>.
- Chasteen, John Charles. *National Rhythms, African Roots: The Deep History of Latin American Popular Dance*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004.
- Cusick, Suzanne. "On musical performances of gender and sex," *Audible traces: gender, identity, and music*. Zürich: Carciofoli, 1999.
- Delgado Linares, Carlos. *El Movimiento de la nueva trova cubana y la trova tradicional*. Ediciones Namar: Caracas, Venezuela.
- Díaz, Clara. *Pablo Milanés*. La Habana: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1999.
- Díaz Perez, Clara, *Silvio Rodríguez: Hay quien precisa...*, Madrid: Editorial Música Mundana, 1995.
- Federación de Mujeres Cubanas. *Memories: Second Congress, Cuban Women's Federation*. La Habana: Editorial Orbe, 1975.
- Fernández, Ariel. "Rap cubano: ¿Poesía urbana? O la nueva trova de las noventa." *El Caiman Barbudo* 296 (2000): 4-14. Accessed via La Jiribilla Online, [http://www.lajiribilla.cu/paraimprimir/nro15/326\\_15\\_imp.html](http://www.lajiribilla.cu/paraimprimir/nro15/326_15_imp.html).
- Fernández, Sujatha. "Fear of a Black Nation: Local Rappers, Transnational Crossings, and State Power," in *Cuba Represent! Cuban Arts, State Power, and the Making of New Revolutionary Cultures*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006.

- Guevara, Ernesto "Che". *Guerilla Warfare: The Authorized Translation*, trans. J.P. Morray. New York: Vintage Books, 1969.
- Guevara, Ernesto "Che". *El socialismo y el hombre en Cuba*. La Habana: Editora Política, 1988.
- Hilderbrand, Lucas. "'Luring Disco Dollies to a Life of Vice': Queer Pop Music's Moment." *Journal of Popular Music Studies*, 25:4 (2013):415-438.
- Küppers, Gabriele. *Compañeras: Voices from the Latin American Women's Movement*. London: Latin American Bureau, 1994.
- León, Nestor José. *Silvio Rodríguez: Semblanza Biográfica, Análisis literario y musical de sus obras más populares*. @becedario: Badajoz, España, 2005.
- López Sánchez, Antonio. *Trovadoras*. Santiago de Cuba: Editorial Oriente, 2008.
- Luciak, Ilja A. *Gender and democracy in Cuba*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007.
- Maloof, Judy, Ed. and Trans. *Voices of Resistance: Testimonies of Cuban and Chilean Women*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1999.
- Manuel, Peter. "Marxism, Nationalism and Popular Music in Revolutionary Cuba." *Popular Music*, 6:2 (1987): 161-178.
- McClary, Susan. *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, & Sexuality*. Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1991.
- Martí, José. *Versos sencillos/Simple verses*, trans. Manuel A. Tellechea. Houston, TX: Arte Público Press, 1997.
- Milanés, Pablo and Mario Benedetti. *Yolanda y otras canciones*. Buenos Aires: Espasa Calpe, 1994.
- Moore, Robin. *Nationalizing blackness: afrocubanismo and artistic revolution in Havana, 1920-1940*. Pittsburgh, Pa: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997.
- Moore, Robin. "Transformations in Nueva Trova," in *Music and Revolution: Cultural Change in Socialist Cuba*. London: University of California Press, 2006.
- Moya Fábregas, Johanna I. "The Cuban Woman's Revolutionary Experience: Patriarchal Culture and the State's Gender Ideology, 1950-1976". *Journal of Women's History* 22.1 (2010): 61-84.

Nasatir, Robert. "El Hijo de Guillermo Tell: Carlos Varela Confronts the Special Period." *Cuban Studies*, 39 (2008): 44-59.

Neustadt, Robert. "Music as Memory and Torture: Sounds of Repression and Protests in Chile and Argentina." *Chasqui: revista de literatura latinoamericana*. 33:1 (2004): 128-137.

Pérez, Louis A., Jr. *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Smith, Lois M., and Alfred Padula. *Sex and revolution: women in socialist Cuba*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

K. Lynn Stoner. "Militant Heroines and the Consecration of the Patriarchal State: The Glorification of Loyalty, Combat and National Suicide in the Making of Cuban National Identity." *Cuban Studies*. 34 (2003): 71-96.

Thomas, Susan. "Did Nobody Pass the Girls the Guitar? Queer Appropriations in Contemporary Cuban Popular Song." *Journal of Popular Music Studies*, 18, 2 (2006): 124-143.

Wooldridge, Talia. "Cuban *Raperas*: A Feminist Revolution within the Revolution". Graduate essay, NYU, 2008.

Yero, Cary Aileen García. "Is It Just About Love?: Filin and Politics in Prerevolutionary Cuba." *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture*, 30 (2012): 138- 161.

## **Discography**

González, Sara. *Cantos de mujer*. Bismusic, 2011, streaming audio. Accessed 11/25/13. *Spotify*.

González, Sara. *Cantos de mujer II*. Biscoito Fino Br, 2006, streaming audio. Accessed 11/25/13. *Spotify*.

González, Sara. "Girón, la Victoria," *Antología de la nueva trova. [Vol. 2]*. 1998. La Habana, Cuba: EGREM

González, Sara. *Versos de José Martí*. 1974. Helsinki, Finland: Love Records.

González, Sara. "¿Qué dice usted?" *Si yo fuera mayo*. 1990. Accessed 11/24/13. *YouTube*. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lknzgC1UCiU>

Milanés, Pablo. "Amor," *Vengo Naciendo*. Mp3 audio. Itunes. 1999.



Milanés, Pablo. “En nombre de los nuevos.” Accessed 5/19/14. *YouTube*.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RrdUyvg0bDQ>

Milanés, Pablo. “Es Rubia, el Cabello Suelto” and “Yo Soy un Hombre Sincero,” *Versos Sencillos de José Martí (1973)*. Mp3 audio. Itunes. 1992.

Milanés, Pablo. “Son Para Despertar a una Negrita,” *La Más Completa Colección*. Universal Music Mexico, 2003, streaming audio. Accessed 11/25/13. *Spotify*.

Obsesión. “La llaman puta.” Accessed 5/19/14. *YouTube*.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EGXtu8c3fyo>.

Rodríguez, Silvio. “Desnuda y con Sombrilla.” *Rodríguez*. Ojalá, 1995, streaming audio. Accessed 11/24/13. *Spotify*.

Rodríguez, Silvio. *Mujeres*. La Habana, Cuba: Ojalá, 2000.

Rodríguez, Silvio. “Bolero y Habaneras” and “Eva,” *Oh Melancolía*. Mp3 audio. Itunes. 1989.

“Seis Lindas Cubanas – Melodías del 40 (Solo Audio).” Accessed 5/20/14. *YouTube*.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xw1kmkcwJM0>.