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2 The Nuevo Cancionero: A Change of Paradigm in Argentine Folklore

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6 A field of cultural production that was gradually established in Argentina since the mid-
7 twentieth century as part of the more general evolution of the communications media and
8 mass culture came to controversially be called “folklore” in the social imaginary. Quite a
9 number of scholars have shown the difference between this type of musical expression,
10 which pertains to mass culture, and authentically folkloric phenomena--no matter how
11 they are defined. Despite these issues, the “folklore” connected to the recording industry
12 and big Argentine festivals like Cosquín and Jesús María has continued to evolve, is still
13 called “folklore,” and is an important type of popular music in Argentina.

14 As I have mentioned elsewhere, I propose that Argentine folklore be studied as a
15 specific field of cultural production--in other words, as a system of social relations having
16 its own rules of production and consecration.¹ Because this field of discursive production
17 is part of the cultural industry’s overall production of popular music, its game rules are
18 very different from the ones found in the sociocultural areas where the musical genres
19 comprising the larger field of popular music originally came from. However, like all
20 fields of discursive cultural production, folklore operates according to the principle of
21 competition for legitimacy, which evolved per specific rules and is based upon specific
22 ideals regarding consecration. These rules are not arbitrary; instead, they were gradually
23 constructed by means of the battles that impacted the field’s formative process from the

1 1920s on. This is how the “classic” paradigm of production--as I call it--specific to the
2 field of folklore was constructed.

3 By paradigm, I mean the set of assumptions, convictions, and agreements that was
4 generally shared by the social agents who made up the field--not taking into account
5 extant differences of opinion and fights for legitimacy. These shared beliefs were the
6 ones that made it possible to clearly recognize which creations belonged to the field of
7 folklore: in other words, to be able to say that these works were “folklore” as opposed to
8 those that were not.

9 During the field of folklore’s process of development, the classic paradigm that
10 was constructed came to be made up of a set of rules (thematic, compositional,
11 performative, rhetorical, lexical, and others) that determined the correct way of producing
12 its musical works and therefore created criteria for inclusion and exclusion--the basis of
13 the classic paradigm’s identity.² Thought of in this way, social agents internalized the
14 paradigm. Not only that, the field itself made sure that it would be spread and passed
15 down to future generations through a variety of means (from schools that taught folklore
16 to didactic articles found in specialized magazines).

17 The classic paradigm of folklore had already been formed by the middle of the
18 twentieth century. During the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, this field
19 of production experienced a period of expansion and consolidation called the “folklore
20 boom.” Then, around the mid-1960s, a number of musical phenomena appeared that
21 brought tension to the field because their aesthetic and ideological approaches challenged
22 some key aspects of the dominant paradigm of production. The purpose of this chapter is
23 to analyze some of the characteristics of these new aesthetic concepts and to propose an

1 explanatory hypothesis about their appearance. Before addressing the main elements of
2 these aesthetic concepts that arose in the mid-1960s, however, it is first necessary to give
3 some precise details about the classic paradigm of folklore.

4

5 “Tradition” in the Classic Paradigm

6 If there was anything that characterized the dominant paradigm in folklore towards the
7 end of the 1950s, it was the central place of the concept of tradition. This concept,
8 however, is a particularly ambiguous one that has multiple meanings. For many scholars,
9 tradition--the continuation of the past into the present--is one of the basic components of
10 “what is truly folkloric.”³ As Gabriel Ábalos has shown, however, the term “tradition” is
11 used in many ways that are often contradictory.⁴ For the purposes of this chapter,
12 however, instead of tradition being an essence or a visible continuity with the past, I take
13 it to be more of a discursive construct whose function is to legitimate aesthetic, ethical, or
14 ideological concepts that prevail in the present.⁵

15 It can therefore be said that the tradition discussed in folklore is a “selective
16 tradition,” a conscious way of building a true connection with the past by means of a
17 selection process that involves placing emphasis on certain things, omitting others, and
18 silencing yet others. This selective tradition, which had become dominant in the field by
19 the 1950s, was genealogically connected to cultural nationalism--and to what cultural
20 nationalism would later be deemed to be--beginning in the Centennial era and including
21 Peronism’s important contributions.⁶ As part of this selective tradition, a set of
22 characteristics was established that would gradually become the norm for judging

1 authenticity of folkloric songs. Without attempting to be exhaustive, some of these traits
2 were as follows:

3 a) The nationalization of genres: in a long and complex process, the various
4 musical genres from different regions of Argentina came to be recognized and
5 ontologically defined as distinct expressions of the same “national being.” Musics that
6 were distinctly regional or local began to be known through ample discourse production
7 that legitimated them in magazines, radio programs, etc., with emphasis being placed
8 upon a given genre’s place and region within the realm of “national folklore.” As for this
9 particular phenomenon, it was observed in different ways. To give one example,
10 specialized folklore programs on different radio stations began to devote nights or
11 specific time slots to each province or region.

12 A legitimating strategy that tried to show the authenticity of the different musical
13 styles by saying that they were rooted in popular customs and ways of life from various
14 parts of the nation accompanied the spread of these regional genres.

15 In this nationalization process, intellectuals like Augusto Raúl Cortazar, Carlos
16 Vega, and Félix Coluccio--along with others who in one way or another were part of the
17 field--played an important part.⁷ These intellectuals, in fact, used the symbolic capital
18 they had accumulated while doing research and participating in academic life to
19 contribute their knowledge to specialized magazines and other publications, thereby
20 sharing information about the history of the various musical genres they had studied as
21 well as popular fiestas, traditional ceremonies, and customs from the corresponding
22 regions.

1 A general result of this process was that musical genres that had developed
2 independently, or had been unknown to each other because they were from different
3 sociocultural areas, began to be seen as part of the same system and to be governed by the
4 same rules. Processes of hybridization as well as the use of various kinds of music by
5 performers who had first specialized only in regional genres also began in this same
6 fashion.

7 Along with the desire to disseminate knowledge about these genres, the use of a
8 variety of musics and hybridization tended to legitimate these same types of music by
9 showing that they were different ways of expressing the “same nation.” This concept
10 came to be a key part of the classic paradigm and its particular manner of creating
11 tradition.

12 b) The nation portrayed in different regional musics was based on an origin
13 myth.⁸ Per this myth, there was a former way of life that had virtues and values that
14 needed to be rescued and honored. This way of life that had existed before the advent of
15 modernity led to an idealized view of rural life and at times to a negative vision of urban
16 space. This idealized rural world, which was located in the interior, was a place where
17 national essence was preserved. In addition, this place was inhabited by a prototypical
18 persona who was also idealized: the countryman, the man from the provinces, the man
19 from the interior, and--even more symbolically--the gaucho [cowboy].

20 Rural areas, the interior of the country, and the gaucho--along with his customs,
21 dress, and musical instruments--were therefore an expression of the national soul and of
22 authentic Argentine popular art. This idealized image became established as
23 modernization, industrialization, and urbanization came into play and drastically

1 transformed the Argentine social map. During the first part of the twentieth century, the
2 rapid development of the forces of production involved massive internal migration, new
3 forms of exploitation, and new social identities in addition to the waves of European
4 immigration that had occurred since the end of the nineteenth century. In this particular
5 social context, the insistence upon connecting the values that defined nationality with a
6 type of human being, an idealized past, and an idealized image of “the native land” or
7 “the interior” became especially important as well. Claudio Monti and Adrián Javier
8 Weissberg have analyzed the process through which this idealized and positive image of
9 the gaucho was constructed as well as the values that were associated with him: honesty,
10 generosity, valor, love of country (understood as fighting against foreign invaders or
11 Indians), respect for family and religion, etc.⁹

12 In the discipline of folklore, which developed as modernization and internal
13 migration occurred, this led to a special rhetoric as well as one of the most recurrent
14 special topics found in the classic paradigm: the pagó,¹⁰ an idealized place euphorically
15 shown as having lost values and nostalgically described from an urban, dysphoric
16 perspective. In an extreme sense, this loss of values and virtues was a loss of identity,
17 which could be recuperated only by singing. Besides its aesthetic component, folkloric
18 song therefore acquired an ethical and ideological facet linked not only to provincialism,
19 but also to nationality--where song, the Argentine people, the pagó, and nationality were
20 united in tradition.

21 c) The song of the people, which expressed the nation authentically, used a
22 particular language. This language addressed the various regional ways of life and
23 included all types of provincial speech. In the same way that genres and customs were

1 valued as expressions of nationality, so were regional accents and different idiomatic
2 expressions. These possible combinations, which were highly varied, became even more
3 complex with the introduction of words taken from indigenous languages--which in some
4 cases reflected different regional cultural layers and in others were a sign of bilingualism.
5 It was therefore quite common to find quechua expressions in the music of Santiago del
6 Estero or guaraní ones in the music of the Littoral region.¹¹ The language of folklore,
7 however, was for the most part based upon a literary model: gaucho literature that was
8 reconverted, reinterpreted and adapted to reflect regional ways of speaking. In this sense,
9 Hernández's Martín Fierro,¹² which was recovered by Lugones and positioned in the
10 literary canon, was paradigmatic. On one hand, it was a model that created narrative and
11 ideological concepts, but on the other, it reinforced a type of language that eventually
12 became established as "traditional."

13 d) This concept, expressed through traditional language and focused on the pago
14 and the Argentine people, used landscapes, customs, popular fiestas, and ceremonies of
15 each region as its topic matter. Dances and music, as well as food and dress, appeared
16 repeatedly in the songs. In many of them, it was clear that their purpose was didactic due
17 to the notable precision with which customs were referred to and places were described.
18 This didacticism was also found in and stimulated by magazines and specialized
19 publications, a type of teaching emphasis that well suited what has already been
20 discussed above because spreading knowledge about local customs was part of the
21 nationalization process. Listeners, after all, had to become familiar with objects, customs,
22 and musics they did not know about--yet could possibly adopt--because they were all just

1 different facets of the same nation expressed in folklore. Consequently, the language of
2 folklore had to be taught.

3 e) Perhaps the most important characteristic of the “tradition” I am analyzing in
4 this chapter was the special expressive strategy constructed in the songs. The language of
5 folklore, the surrounding scenery, places, and customs, the idealized pago connected to
6 the original values of the nation, and nationalized musical genres and song itself made up
7 the symbolic space from which a provinciano [man from the interior]--in other words, a
8 criollo or a gaucho--spoke. In this tradition, however, the provinces of the interior, their
9 customs, and their musics were synonymous with the nation. When a man from the
10 interior spoke through song, it was an Argentine who did so. More precisely put, the “I”
11 from the provinces was part of a “we” that expressed authentic argentinidad [Argentine
12 national sentiment] and its essence.

13 On the other hand, this expressive strategy was not purely discursive; instead, it
14 was also subject to the compositional and performance rules of the different genres that
15 were in themselves expressions of the nation’s popular soul. Because of this, the
16 compositional styles, manner of arranging voices, selection of suitable musical
17 instruments for each genre, typical traits of the accompaniment, and so forth, tended to
18 become standardized. As part of this process, the influence of “pioneers,” “masters,” and
19 “models” in the areas of composition, arranging, and/or performance corresponding to
20 the different genres involved became stronger (Buenaventura Luna, Ernesto Montiel, Los
21 Hermanos Ábalos, Atahualpa Yupanqui, and others). Respect for stylistic rules, that is the
22 “tradition” that I am here analyzing, therefore became a sign of authenticity in folkloric
23 song. Around the beginning of the 1960s, these criteria connected to authenticity had

1 already been naturalized [adopted], so by then it was possible to talk about a completely
2 established classic paradigm.

3

4 The Nuevo Cancionero: Crisis of the Classic Paradigm and Tensions in the Field of
5 Production

6 The creation of the big folklore festivals (such as Cosquín, Jesús María, and Baradero) at
7 the beginning of the 1960s showed that the field of production had become established
8 and had developed in three different ways. For one, measurable growth had occurred in
9 both production and consumption. This phenomenon, known as the “folklore boom,” was
10 evident in sales statistics, the interest shown in folklore by recording companies, the great
11 number of folklore radio programs, the presence of consecrated folklore artists on
12 television, and the attention paid to folklore by the press. The mere fact that festivals
13 were successful showed the existence of an audience that was interested in folklore. In
14 addition, however, it reflected the interest of different market sectors, such as the
15 recording industry, radio and television sponsors, and even the State, in establishing
16 folklore as a field of cultural production. On the other hand, because the classic paradigm
17 had become firmly rooted, criteria had been developed to judge the legitimacy of musical
18 works and whether or not they belonged to the field. Among other things, this resulted in
19 an abundance of new artists at the beginning of the decade whose output fit within the
20 dominant aesthetics. In addition, typical avenues--such as Folklore magazine, which first
21 appeared in July 1961, and the many cultural associations, traditionalist centers, peñas
22 [restaurant venues with live music], and radio and television programs that developed at
23 the start of the 1950s--were created and established to promote and reproduce these rules.

1 There was a third element pertaining to the development of the field, however,
2 that must be considered: the growth and establishment of what I have discussed above
3 produced the conditions necessary for folklore to be thought of as a separate realm of
4 cultural production within Argentina. During the entire time the field of folklore was
5 developing, it was relatively homogeneous. Although the field's biggest source of
6 diversity was the regional origin of its different musical styles, this difference, as I have
7 already pointed out, tended to be nullified by means of legitimating strategies that
8 nationalized these musics and made them part of the same selective tradition. In the
9 1960s, difference began to be introduced by another type of process as well. For one, the
10 compositions of musicians like Ariel Ramírez, Eduardo Falú and Gustavo Leguizamón
11 (to name just a few) expanded the dictates of the classic paradigm. Without challenging
12 any of the classic paradigm's fundamental beliefs, these individuals added "art" music
13 elements to it, and thereby created a new type of folklore sound. Both their success and
14 the positive response of critics created a context ripe for innovation and the search for
15 new musical languages. In addition, the relative general success of folklore and its mass
16 dissemination led many young musicians, some from other fields of production (for
17 example, choral music, music literature, and "young people's" music), to develop an
18 interest in folkloric music and to attempt to enter the field. As new arrivals, these
19 musicians had to come up with ways so that their own aesthetic creations would be
20 recognized. In some cases, they imitated successful models, thus following the rules of
21 the reigning paradigm. In other cases, however, they developed differentiating strategies
22 that provoked a crisis in the reigning norms of production--the classic paradigm--in more
23 than just one way. To be more exact, this crisis had to do with the appearance of the

1 Movimiento Nuevo Cancionero [Argentine New Song Movement], its followers, and the
2 tensions it created in the field of folklore.

3

4 A Folklore Manifesto

5 The first thing I would like to point out about the Nuevo Cancionero's appearance is how
6 it was introduced to the public: by means of a "manifesto." Signed by Tito Francia, Oscar
7 Matus, Armando Tejada Gómez, and Mercedes Sosa, among others, the manifesto, which
8 became known in 1963, marked the public appearance of these artists who wanted a place
9 in the field of folklore and a new identity.¹³ This was neither a group of artists dedicated
10 to regional musics nor a "company" like the one that Ariel Ramírez had founded; instead,
11 it was a "collective." In other words, it was a purposeful banding together of artists who
12 promoted an aesthetic, ethical, and political ideal that they shared and publically
13 expressed as a united front, thus transcending their individual works.¹⁴ Although it is true
14 that all branches of modern art, especially the avant-garde, have typically published
15 manifestos corresponding to schools or movements, speaking publically through this kind
16 of discursive vehicle was a new approach for taking on a position in the field of folklore,
17 which until this time had not had much internal differentiation. To be exact, what was
18 radically new about this action was that manifestos generally showed a genealogy and
19 presented a project. As for the Nuevo Cancionero's genealogy and aim, they stirred up
20 major areas of conflict without entirely severing ties with the classic paradigm of
21 folklore. I will address these facets of the Movement one by one below.

22

23 Genealogy

1 As opposed to how tradition was understood in the classic paradigm, the Nuevo
2 Cancionero emphasized renovation and what was new without rejecting these roots. For
3 this reason, instead of showing its origin as being a tradition connected to an idealized,
4 premodern past that held basic values, the Nuevo Cancionero glorified as “textual
5 fathers”[whose songwriting skills should be imitated] two specific people in the field who
6 had great legitimacy: Buenaventura Luna and Atahualpa Yupanqui. Although the
7 Movement also recognized the work of other agents who had made valuable
8 contributions by collecting and circulating vernacular songs, the manifesto clarified that
9 merely compiling music led only to stagnation:

10 The obsession with [song collecting] degenerated into postcard folklorism that we
11 are still suffering from today. For men who had built the country and whose
12 reality changed from day to day, it was lifeless and had no meaning.

13 Buenaventura Luna, as for song lyrics, and Atahualpa Yupanqui, as for both lyrics
14 and music, began a renewal movement that expanded folklore’s content without
15 eliminating its native roots.¹⁵

16 In order to remain in this traditionalist and collecting stage, folklore had
17 supposedly degenerated into folklorism (per the manifesto). As can be seen in this
18 example, the classic paradigm’s concept of tradition was presented somewhat
19 dysphorically and as the opposite of what could be accomplished through renovation.
20 Renovation was depicted as pitting the past and the present against each other, and the
21 present was shown to be the result of man’s [mankind’s] transformations of reality
22 instead of the degeneration and/or loss of original values. Far from being a fixed vision
23 that bound values to the past and considered all types of transformation to be a threat,

1 man was now presented as being an active subject who constructed and modified reality.

2 This change, which was positive, was to be carried out along with aesthetic renewal.

3 The present, therefore, was euphorically depicted as being a time of renovated
4 native popular music in which the new generations were central figures. This type of
5 representation was part of a discursive strategy that also targeted the meaning of the
6 “folklore boom” and positioned the Nuevo Cancionero as being a legitimate part of it:
7 “There are people who tend to believe that this growth of interest in folklore is a passing
8 fad . . . We believe that this native popular music boom is not circumstantial but is an
9 indication of a heightening of awareness of the Argentine people” instead.¹⁶

10 The “Argentine people,” then (per the manifesto), was the subject of a long search
11 in which popular artists had participated and had gone through ups and downs. One of the
12 discoveries made during this collective artistic search was tango. The discovery of tango
13 and its commercial success, however, had supposedly paved the way for conflict because
14 the interior and its music had been pushed aside and tango had been emptied of content
15 by anti-subjects that fed dark interests.¹⁷ True popular artists, then, faced two enemies: on
16 one hand, an asphyxiating past (“tradition”) that did not acknowledge the transformations
17 that man had produced as part of his reality, and on the other, marketeers who
18 condemned music to a stereotype that fit their commercial interests (in other words, to
19 traditionalist folklorism on one hand, and to the culture industry on the other).

20 It was in the context of this narrative that calling the “folklore boom” a
21 “heightening of awareness” became meaningful. The transformation of reality, industrial
22 growth, and internal migration led to the coming together of the interior and Buenos
23 Aires and to a comeback of music from the interior. It was therefore stated in the

1 manifesto that “the boom of folkloric music is a sign of the maturity that Argentines have
2 reached in knowing the country as it is today,” and, metaphorically, that “the people of
3 the interior have already founded Buenos Aires for the third time--this time from
4 within.”¹⁸

5 This new founding of Buenos Aires was not just cultural in nature, but was part of
6 a political change of historic proportions as well. That is to say that besides adopting an
7 aesthetic position, which was clear throughout the entire manifesto, there was also
8 another stream of discourse in the manifesto that took a political and ideological stance.
9 This type of discourse was evident in the various elements of the narrative I am here
10 reconstructing: in the people’s fight with marketeers, the transformation of material
11 conditions through human action, the heightening of awareness arising from these
12 transformations, and popular art as being an expression of this heightened awareness. In
13 other words, the members of the Nuevo Cancionero did not define their identity in the
14 collective only as “popular artists” and inheritors of the “renovation” started by Luna and
15 Yupanqui, but they also presented themselves as the recipients of a mission, a purpose
16 that fit in perfectly with a global narrative: “May this heightening of awareness not be
17 hidden from artists or the people.”¹⁹ The Nuevo Cancionero therefore outlined a
18 genealogy by means of which it constructed a stylistic place, legitimated itself, defined
19 who its enemies were, and sketched out a collective project in which the aesthetic and the
20 political were intertwined.
21
22 The Project

1 The construction of a genealogy was a central aspect of the position presented in the
2 Nuevo Cancionero's manifesto, but that was not all. There was also a plan presented that
3 sketched out the aesthetic and ideological principles upon which the identifying "we" was
4 constructed. In order to explain and analyze these concepts more deeply, however, I will
5 not base my comments exclusively upon the manifesto; I will also refer to the recordings
6 produced at that time by some of the artists connected with the Movement, songs found
7 on these recordings, and specific paratext. In these works, the principles stated in the
8 manifesto operated as discursive strategies but at the same time as a political platform, a
9 means of self-legitimation, and a break with the classic paradigm. The "tradition" versus
10 "renovation" tension that appeared in the manifesto to define the Nuevo Cancionero was
11 at the heart of these principles and strategies.

12 Three principles were presented to help explain the Nuevo Cancionero's mission.
13 First of all, it had popular roots that were being reappraised because the identifying "we"
14 was now constructed as part of a popular movement in which artists participated.
15 Secondly, it was a completely artistic movement. Because of this, renovation,
16 assimilation of "all modern forms of expression," and artistic freedom were insisted
17 upon, as opposed to being subject to the traditional rules upon which classic paradigm
18 identity was based.²⁰ Thirdly, the manifesto proposed an identity-building process not
19 anchored in an idealized past but in both the country's present and the general populace
20 instead. A number of strategies based upon these three principles were evident in
21 recordings. Without attempting to be exhaustive, I will analyze some of them below:
22

1 a) In the classic paradigm, the representation of regional scenery and customs was
2 tied to an idealized past that harbored key values. Song lyrics therefore mentioned
3 traditions and constructed an identity. Amidst this predominance of landscapes and
4 customs, the Nuevo Cancionero reclaimed “man” and more specifically “modern man” as
5 its central subject. Let us look at some examples.

6 In 1965, Oscar Matus independently published Mercedes Sosa’s first recording.
7 Called Canciones con fundamento [Songs Based upon Principles], it both adopted a
8 strong position and launched the career of an artist who would be central to the
9 Movement. On the back side of the album, there was some text written by Armado
10 Tejada Gómez that introduced the singer as a member of the Nuevo Cancionero and
11 stated the following: “This work is not just a recording: it is a testimonial.” And later:
12 “Her songs document the interior of Argentina. The land, but with man being present
13 there. Man and his inner life. Work, pain, persistent hope, and the highly exuberant joy of
14 being alive.” In this text, it was also stated that the recording disdained “simple depiction
15 of social customs and traditions and folkloric picturesqueness [of the type] found on
16 postcards.”²¹ How then, was the mission set forth in the manifesto put into practice? For
17 one, the selection of songs on the entire album was in itself a strategy that helped to
18 construct a speaker identified with the Movement. Of the twelve songs on the recording,
19 six belonged to the Matus-Tejada Gómez songwriting duo, three to Ramón Ayala, and
20 only three to composers who were not part of the Nuevo Cancionero (the Hermanos
21 Núñez, Ariel Ramírez, and Aníbal Sampayo). Yet besides the choice of songwriters and
22 composers, just looking at the names of the songs was enough to recognize the place
23 given to “man” in them: “Zamba del riego” [“Irrigation Worker’s Zamba”] (Matus–

1 Tejada Gómez), “El cachapecero” [“The Ox Cart Driver”] (Ramón Ayala),²² “La de los
2 humildes” [“Poor People’s Zamba”] (Matus–Tejada Gómez), “El cosechero” [“The
3 Harvester”] (Ramón Ayala), “Los inundados” [“The People Who Have Experienced a
4 Flood”], Ariel Ramírez–G. Aizemberg), and “La zafretera” [“The Female Sugar Cane
5 Harvester”] (Matus–Tejada Gómez), etc. Let us look at some song fragments:

6

7	Se va tu caudal por el valle labrador	Your water flow passes through the
8		hardworking/peasant valley
9	Y al amanecer sale a padecer	And at dawn comes out to endure
10	La pena del surco ajeno	The suffering of another’s irrigation ditch
11	Verano y rigor, va de sol a sol	Summer and harshness, from morning until
12		night lasts
13	La sombra del vendimiador.	The irrigation worker’s shadow.
14	(“Zamba del riego”)	

15

16	Zambita para que canten	A little zamba so that
17	Los humildes de mi pago	The poor people of my <u>pago</u> can sing
18	Si hay que esperar la esperanza	If it is necessary to hope/wait for hope
19	Más vale esperar cantando.	It is best to wait for it by singing.
20	(“La de los humildes”)	

21

22

1 Rumbo a la cosecha cosechero yo seré On the way to the harvest I will be a
 2 harvester
 3 Y entre copos blancos mi esperanza cantaré And among white puffs I will sing of my
 4 hope
 5 Con manos curtidas dejaré en el algodón With leatherlike hands I will leave in the
 6 cotton
 7 Mi corazón. My heart.
 8 (“El cosechero”)

9

10 The idea, in other words, was to show the reality of the Argentine interior. Amidst
 11 the landscape, however, working people and the man of the interior’s duties appeared--a
 12 reality that did not correspond to an idealized past, but to a real and troubled present
 13 instead.

14 Another interesting example is the second volume of Folklore sin mirar atrás
 15 [Folklore Without Looking Back], by the Cuarteto Zupay. This album was released under
 16 the Trova label in 1968. On the back side, Miguel Smirnoff came up with a new category
 17 to describe this type of aesthetic concept: “. . . listening to the recordings made in the
 18 1950s, and comparing them to recent ones by avant-garde groups, it is easy to see the
 19 difference produced by evolution that is as much internal as external.”²³ The idea of an
 20 avant-garde [music] subject to transformative action was in itself a break with the classic
 21 paradigm. This transformative action amounted to a kind of “evolution” that recovered
 22 yet updated tradition in order to take modern man into account: “And if we sing songs
 23 about current reality, replacing the rancho [country home] and the china [wife] with a

1 love song to our land, where does modern Argentine man come from? . . . That which is
2 traditional does not suit a person who lives in Buenos Aires or Córdoba, has a car that
3 theoretically speaking can go 240 kilometers per hour, . . . and who is up-to-date on
4 books, theater, and films.”²⁴ The choice of songs and songwriters was once again a key
5 strategy in what was being asked in this question. This same approach to modern man
6 was also reflected in the use of non-traditional genres like the ballad (“Balada para mi
7 tierra” [“Ballad for my Land”]), the addition of modern instruments, the [choice of]
8 contemporary topics like the elderly being taken from their homes (“Por un viejo muerto”
9 [“For a Dead Old Man”]), and even in the title of the recording itself: “Folklore sin mirar
10 atrás.”

11 b) This was not just a matter of reflecting modern man and valuing the present. In
12 the classic paradigm, social contradictions were erased so as to construct a national “we”
13 that was anchored in a past considered to be a site filled with values. To the contrary, the
14 Nuevo Cancionero wanted modern man to be shown in the context of exploitation,
15 injustice, violence, and marginality. This view no longer involved an idealized image or
16 the crystallization of certain canonic values (authenticity, generosity, loyalty, courage,
17 love of country, etc.), but instead depicted man as suffering due to unjust social relations.

18 The connection of man to man, and of man to nature, changed radically in the
19 Nuevo Cancionero. Although the landscape did not lose its magic, nature was now
20 generally hostile, and man had to deal with it while he did difficult and dangerous jobs.
21 Man now appeared in specific thematic roles connected to rural work and/or kinds of
22 exploitation related to agricultural production. The rancho [family farm/home], the

1 jungle, the rivers, and the deserts were no longer just part of the scenery; instead, they
2 were now stages on which misery, marginality, and exploitation played out.

3 The idea, however, was not just to show the misery and exploitation of the man
4 from the interior. Besides this, the goal was to express the awareness of being part of a
5 popular movement that was linked to a destiny, which is why strong feelings connecting
6 the work of the people with hope and struggle appeared in the songs.²⁵ No longer was
7 there just a distancing from the past and a strong anchoring in the present, but there was
8 also hope for a virtual narrative project involving the entire collective and projecting it
9 into the future. Song went hand in hand with this hope and to some degree generated it.
10 This concept was crucial for Nuevo Cancionero songwriters because the themes used in
11 songs, the specific social spaces where songs were sung, and the profession of being a
12 singer were all part of a strategy to construct a place for popular art in the collective
13 mission:

14

15	Como un canto de la tierra	Like a song from the land
16	Hay que cantar esta zamba	This zamba must be sung
17	Hermana de los humildes	Sister of the poor
18	Sembradora de esperanzas	Sower of hope
19	Alzada raíz de sangre	Root of blood raised up
20	Del fondo de la guitarra.	From the depths of the [my] guitar.
21	("La de los humildes")	

22

1 This collective mission, this hopeful destiny that the manifesto talked about and
2 which ran permanently through its songs, thus took the shape of rebel hope, or struggle.
3 This facet of the fight against injustice was barely even suggested in the manifesto or in
4 the first recordings made by Nuevo Cancionero artists, but it became more and more
5 apparent as the 1960s went by. Popular struggles were depicted in songs along with a
6 critical look at history, which led to--among other things--a rethinking of the role of the
7 man from the interior (the gaucho, the rural worker) in the “popular” movement of which
8 the Nuevo Cancionero was a part. In this context, the reframing of the Indian’s role was
9 especially interesting because it had been fairly ambiguous in the classic paradigm.
10 Therefore, in “Zamba del riego,” the lyrics were about a sleeping huarpe [an indigenous
11 group] waking up, in “Zamba del chaguanco” [“Zamba of the Chaguanco Indian”] about
12 a Chaguanco Indian’s misery, and in many other songs about his being a victim. Yet in
13 “Canción para mi América” [“Song for my America”] by Daniel Viglietti, which was
14 recorded by Mercedes Sosa on her album Yo no canto por cantar [I Do Not Sing Just for
15 the Sake of Singing] in 1966, the Indian appeared in a new light because he was
16 presented as a central figure in the battles for liberation.

17 Towards the end of the decade, this fight against injustice, including a call to
18 action, became louder and louder in all of the artists connected with the Nuevo
19 Cancionero. This was seen in album titles such as Hasta la victoria [Until Victory]
20 (Mercedes Sosa, 1972) and in songs that were recorded and sung as emblems of the
21 Movement: “Canción con todos” [“Song with Everyone”] by César Isella, “Fuego de
22 Animaná” [“Animaná Fire”] (César Isella–Tejada Gómez), “Cuando tenga la tierra”

1 ["When I Have the Earth"] (A. Petrocelli–D. Toro), "Plegaria de un labrador" ["Prayer of
2 a Worker"] (Victor Jara), and so many others.²⁶

3 c) The song titles mentioned in the last part of the previous paragraph might
4 mistakenly make a person think that the Nuevo Cancionero was concerned mainly with
5 "mere content" or was perhaps of "low quality" rather than being focused on aesthetics or
6 form. One of the Movement's main principles, however, was to always be careful with
7 the aesthetics and formal writing of its songs. Its political commitment and ideological
8 position always went hand in hand with a demand for aesthetic rigor in which the artist's
9 identity was at play in the context of its popular mission. For this reason, there was a
10 strong emphasis on formal writing and criticism of facilismo [that which can be done
11 very easily with little effort].

12 From another perspective, in tandem with its defense of aesthetic rigor, the
13 Movement also distanced itself from the formal simplicity and repetition (both poetic and
14 musical) characteristic of the classic paradigm, and importantly, from the repetition of
15 successful models backed by the recording industry that tried to take the utmost
16 advantage of the boom era. It was therefore stated in the manifesto that the Nuevo
17 Cancionero "will discard, reject, and publically denounce, after doing case by case
18 analysis, any coarse or inferior work that given its commercial purpose might insult the
19 intelligence or morals of our people."²⁷

20 Instead of facilismo, there was an intense search for musical and poetic quality in
21 terms of seriousness, work, renovation, and experimentation. The musical work these
22 musicians did, not only their choice of songs, consisted for the most part in making
23 arrangements and using novel harmonic concepts other than parallel thirds, which were

Helena Simonett 5/23/14 10:45 AM

Comment [1]:

CD commented: Se traduce una frase en la que intento decir que la actitud estética del Nuevo Cancionero no estaba centrada en el mero contenido con descuido de la forma. Los artistas no pretendían hacer panfletos (es decir propaganda política de baja calidad) sino canciones de alta calidad poética y musical. La traducción propuesta "The song titles mentioned in the last part of the previous paragraph might make a person think that the Nuevo Cancionero had an evangelical and demagogic outlook."; introduce un matiz religioso (evnagelico) y político (demagogic) que no es lo que pretendo expresar.

1 so common in folklore. This new type of singing, in which two voices sometimes had
2 different melodic lines often sung in falsetto, was an easily identifiable style; it required
3 open-mindedness from the public, however, because it was far, and sometimes very far
4 away, from the typical harmonizations of the classic paradigm.

5 A good example of this trend was the Cuarteto Vocal Zupay, which used ideas
6 taken from classical choral music [art music] in its arrangements, such as harmonizations
7 in fifths or sixths and/or basso continuo--clear references to the Baroque period. In
8 addition, however, it added new sounds performed on modern instruments such as
9 electric guitar or drum set. In this fashion, rigor, experimentation, work, and seriousness
10 were part of a discursive strategy of differentiation and rupture with the classic paradigm,
11 but they also served to legitimate the Movement's own artists who participated in its
12 popular mission.

13 d) The "historical destiny" referred to in the Nuevo Cancionero's manifesto
14 regarding the popular movement that popular artists would be a part of was no longer
15 presented as one taking place within the closed borders of the nation. As opposed to what
16 was regional, yet always understood as being a particular expression of the nation, in the
17 songs there was a thematic emphasis placed upon recovering what was Latin American
18 instead. This did not mean that there was ignorance about or rejection of regional
19 elements. To the contrary, there was always importance given to expressing the whole
20 country, with all its diverse genres and musical styles. The recovery of regional diversity
21 as expressed in the manifesto, however, went hand in hand with the rejection of all
22 closed-minded regionalism.²⁸ In this sense, Latin America appeared to be both a cultural

1 and political frame of reference--a real contradiction with the ontologization of the
2 national from a more or less conservative perspective.

3 This facet of the project was reflected in several aspects of the artistic output of
4 the time. On one hand, there was a similar strategy used in paratext, in which there was a
5 permanent insistence upon American roots; regarding song, these roots were often
6 specifically indigenous. Another facet of the project was seen in the topics addressed in
7 the songs. In some of the more important ones, there was a collective perspective that
8 transcended any type of nationalism, such as “Canción del derrumbe indio” [“Song of the
9 Indian Collapse”] by Figueredo Armain, “Canción para mi América” [“Song for my
10 America”] by Daniel Viglietti, “América” by R. Herrera, and “Canción con todos”
11 [“Song with Everyone”] by César Isella, etc. But this Latin American perspective was
12 also evident in the constant incorporation of songwriters and composers from other Latin
13 American countries--like Víctor Jara, Daniel Viglietti or Violeta Parra--as well as popular
14 rhythms and genres from different regions of Latin America into the Movement. This
15 produced a tendency to collaborate that over time began to give the Movement an ever
16 wider and more extensive nature. As Mercedes Sosa put it: “. . . our Movement that was
17 born here [in Mendoza] afterwards really caught on in Latin America. With ease we
18 talked about Joan Baez and Bob Dylan because they drew from the most refined elements
19 of jazz to the profoundness of North American folklore [folk music]. We operated the
20 same way here. Ten years after the emergence of the Nuevo Cancionero, I ended up
21 singing with Joan Baez and being friends with her.”²⁹

22 e) All of these strategies made a contribution towards something that all of these
23 works had in common: the construction of a speaker and listener connected to a new type

Helena Simonett 5/23/14 10:51 AM

Comment [2]:

CD commented: Se ha eliminado una cita textual en la que Mercedes Sosa alude a las relaciones del Nuevo Cancionero y las propuestas artísticas de Joan Baez y Bob Dylan. En mi opinión sería interesante conservarla.

1 of identity. There was no longer a “we” understood in terms of a “nation” expressed
2 through different regional traditions, but more of a notion of both popular artists and the
3 public as being critical, demanding, and subject to a heightening of awareness linked to a
4 transcendent project instead. In other words, instead of the “we” having an ontological
5 basis tied to an idealized past, the identity-shaping process had to do with an aesthetic
6 and ideological goal understood in terms of freedom. As part of this goal, something that
7 had not been relevant in folklore up until now became important per the manifesto: the
8 idea of youth having a generational identity, the insistence upon the role of new
9 generations, and the need to foster “formative dialogue with our youth.”³⁰ At this stage,
10 young people were portrayed as having some special features. On one hand, just as
11 occurred then with other fields of popular music production (rock, for example), this
12 music began to be recorded and heard at recitals more often. As a result, it became
13 viewed more and more as pure entertainment unrelated to dance and as a vehicle for a
14 message. On the other hand, youth was shown to have a major role as an agent of change,
15 and especially of revolutionary change, even in music. Going a step further, drawing
16 upon Latin American topics and music from other countries was probably part of a
17 strategy to connect Argentine youth to the political processes found on the rest of the
18 continent. Lastly, new musical space was given to the new generations as a legitimizing
19 strategy. In fact, what this music should appropriately be called within the realm of
20 popular music began to be questioned; it was not called folklore very often. On the back
21 sides of albums and in manifestos it was described as being the birth of something new,
22 like post-folklore, that could be called Música Popular Argentina [Argentine Popular
23 Music]. This displacement could clearly be thought of in conjunction with other things

Helena Simonett 5/23/14 11:35 AM

Comment [3]: Claudio, ¿refieres al rock en Argentina o al rock en general?

1 found on quite a number of recordings made at the time: the addition of art music
2 references, but also to what was modern; the abandonment of gaucho attire used by
3 groups in the past and the use of urban, modern dress instead; the design of record
4 jackets; and generally speaking, the process of identity construction that Nuevo
5 Cancionero artists carried out.

6

7 Popular Songs, Intellectuals, and Politics: The Emergence of the Nuevo Cancionero
8 The appearance of this Movement, which had a new aesthetic and ideological plan for its
9 works and doctrinary texts, produced great tension within the field of folklore: it
10 unleashed a period of major discussion about what folklore was. The limits of folklore as
11 defined in the classic paradigm were challenged and controversy arose because the
12 definition of what was or was not folklore was at stake. Above I briefly alluded to the
13 social conditions that allowed this Movement to appear in a field of production
14 possessing such special traits. I will now analyze these social conditions in detail below.

15 Per the theoretical perspective I have adopted in this chapter, I must reiterate that
16 I understand discursive production, in this case aesthetic, to be a social practice carried
17 out by agents who are immersed in networks of specific relations. All discursive
18 production can therefore be thought of as adopting a position, which is the end result of
19 an agent's creation of options and strategies. These options and strategies can be
20 explained and understood based upon the agent's place (i.e., his or her competency) in
21 these relational networks, which is determined by all of his or her abilities and
22 trajectory.³¹ Because of this, it was necessary [for us] to start by looking at the situation

1 of artists who were part of this Movement during the mid-1960s, as the field of folklore
2 developed.

3 In order to be able to understand the circumstances that led to the appearance of
4 the Nuevo Cancionero, however, it is necessary to have a wider perspective: it is
5 important to analyze the field of folklore's place and its new aesthetic trends in the
6 context of socio-global processes, and especially in the context of some discursive
7 tendencies that were experienced in Argentine society during the 1960s.

8

9 The Expansion of the Field

10 The so-called "folklore boom" that began towards the end of the 1950s was a
11 phenomenon that came about due to the establishment and expansion of the field of
12 production. This establishment of the field was at the same time the result of stabilization
13 in a market that had become attractive to recording companies, radio, and television. It
14 did not involve, however, merely quantitative growth. Even when nobody was thinking
15 about inventing strategies to openly break with the past, and long before the Nuevo
16 Cancionero's manifesto appeared, some artists--not just the pioneers recognized by the
17 Movement--had already developed innovative creative works that had obtained both
18 recognition and legitimacy in the field. Because these works were accepted and
19 consecrated, they produced an opening effect that made it possible to consider using
20 some of the musical, poetic, and even ideological ideas that the Nuevo Cancionero would
21 eventually make explicit.

22 As for folk song's poetic elements, a type of renewal had already been occurring
23 in northern Argentina, especially in Salta, dating at least as far back as a group called "La

1 Carpa.” According to Alicia Poderti, these young intellectuals, poets, narrators, and essay
2 writers, who in 1944 banded together around the “bimonthly bulletin” (also called La
3 Carpa) that they published, were unique because “they did not idealize the past and
4 perceived the present as being full of conflicts, like a fragmented and chaotic reality.”³²
5 With this renovating and demystifying attitude towards the past, they assumed a political
6 position of struggle and rejected both folklorism and regionalism.³³ Poet Manuel J.
7 Castilla, among others, followed these basic principles, which were similar to many of
8 the important Nuevo Cancionero ones. Eventually, Castilla would play a major role in the
9 renovation of folklore lyrics. Castilla’s modernizing work and introduction to writing
10 song lyrics for popular music was not just an isolated case. Other people, such as Jaime
11 Dávalos and Hamlet Lima Quintana, would also make contributions towards creating a
12 new poetic language in folklore, one far removed from purely decorative folkloric,
13 gaucho, and regionalist elements. This innovation had to do with the fact that these artists
14 were intellectuals: a good part of their innovations consisted of introducing discursive
15 strategies associated with “cultured” poetry in song lyrics after avant-garde artists had
16 appeared. From there they gradually positioned themselves in the field with a specific
17 identity that made them stand out. They were “poets”--not collectors or performers, who
18 would likely have had other views.

19 The important thing, however, was that this new language was accepted, that
20 famous artists in the field (Los Chalchaleros, Los Fronterizos, etc.) recorded these new
21 songs, and that these works existed alongside more traditional ones written in the classic
22 paradigm vein. For this reason, it can be said that a change in the expressive conditions
23 within the field began to occur, and that new discursive strategies and forms of

1 expression therefore became possible. Because the potential of these new possibilities
2 was so great, when the Nuevo Cancionero manifesto set forth its aesthetic and ideological
3 principles, some of these artists joined the Movement.

4 Musically speaking, something similar happened. Musicians like Eduardo Falú
5 and Ariel Ramírez had already begun to renovate musical composition, performance, and
6 arrangements starting in the 1940s. This musical renovation was also connected to the
7 academic training these musicians had obtained; although they did not use a decidedly
8 avant-garde approach, they added stylistic elements taken from art music. What interests
9 me here is that possessing this specific cultural capital allowed these musicians to add
10 sounds, arrangements, genres, and instrumentation that expanded the limits of the field.
11 This expansion, which took place around the time that the Nuevo Cancionero appeared,
12 produced some works that were accepted in the field and unanimously praised because
13 they were considered to have reached maturity and the height of folklore. This is what
14 happened with [the album] Coronación del folklore [Coronation of Folklore] (1963), on
15 which Ariel Ramírez's orchestra, Eduardo Falú, and Los Fronterizos performed together,
16 Romance por la muerte de Juan Lavalle [Romance for the Death of Juan Lavalle] (1965)
17 by Falú and Ernesto Sábato, and above all, La Misa Criolla [The Creole Mass] (1964) by
18 Ariel Ramírez. In all of these works, there was a dual purpose. The goal was to preserve
19 folkloric roots and use folkloric music from the different regions [of Argentina], but at
20 the same time to elevate and dignify that music by adding elements taken from art music,
21 such as choral and orchestral arrangements.

22 At the time that the Nuevo Cancionero manifesto was launched, these musicians
23 who had dignified folkloric music had not only reached a privileged position in the field

1 already, but had also expanded its limits to the point of making audible many of the
2 innovations that artists of the Movement would eventually bring to this field of
3 production.

4

5 Intellectuals and Popular Music: An Avant-garde Folklore

6 According to Mercedes Sosa, she discovered a new world upon arriving in Mendoza in
7 1957 after having married Oscar Matus: “Soon I entered an unknown world: the world of
8 writers, sculptors, painters, and intellectuals. I was dazzled by many of the creative,
9 educated, and good people I met.”³⁴ Antonio Di Benedetto, Carlos Alonso, Antonio
10 Salonia, Chilean Iverna Codina, musician Tito Francia, editor Gildo D’Accursio, and
11 many others were part of this group of intellectuals that was forming in Mendoza. A key
12 organizer among them was Armando Tejada Gómez, a friend and buddy of Oscar Matus.
13 This nucleus of intellectuals would eventually be important regarding the emergence of
14 the Nuevo Cancionero and would signal a new kind of connection with folklore.

15 Up to this point, the intellectuals who had helped to construct the field of folklore
16 had come from nativist and traditionalist backgrounds associated with the many types of
17 nationalism extant at the time--especially its conservative wing. As a consequence, the
18 scientific study of folklore, a phenomenon that had appeared at the beginning of the
19 century and had then evolved as a result of modernization,³⁵ had found in these same
20 intellectuals--many of whom were associated with the State--substantial support that had
21 allowed for the collection and classification of folkloric materials. During the 1930s and
22 1940s, this had led to the publication of numerous regional anthologies and songbooks as

Helena Simonett 5/23/14 10:59 AM

Comment [4]:

CD commented: tras nombrar al núcleo de intelectuales a los que se asocia el nacimiento del Nuevo Cancionero, se omite una página completa que tiene cierta importancia. En ella intento mostrar el contraste entre ese núcleo de intelectuales de izquierda, y la tradición de intelectuales nacionalistas y conservadores que habían nutrido el campo del folklore hasta entonces. Ese contraste es importante si se pretende comprender las condiciones sociales que hicieron posible la emergencia del movimiento. Sugiero introducir aunque sea un párrafo que muestre ese contraste. Me parece importante también que se mantenga la referencia (omitida en la traducción) a las relaciones de los integrantes del movimiento con la izquierda política en especial con el partido comunista.

1 well as works written by key authors such as Carlos Vega, Félix Coluccio, and Augusto
2 Raúl Cortazar.

3 During this same period and well into the 1950s, Nativa magazine had become a
4 place of refuge for people who since the 1920s had been fairly marginal in an intellectual
5 field increasingly dominated by different types of modernization and the avant-garde. Per
6 this traditionalist view, protecting and developing native art forms was a patriotic act.
7 Many intellectuals and ideas at the center of the classic paradigm then appeared in
8 Folklore magazine from its creation in 1961 onward, thus showing that the intellectual
9 continuity of nativism and folklore was now an established field of production.

10 The nucleus of intellectuals that formed in Mendoza in the years immediately
11 preceding the appearance of the Nuevo Cancionero belonged to a completely different
12 tradition called “Social Literature” associated with leftist political culture. This trend,
13 which had taken shape in Peronist times, had been revitalized with the triumph of the
14 Cuban Revolution. Some of these writers and intellectuals were later persecuted by the
15 military regime of 1976 to 1983, and the group of intellectuals who founded the Nuevo
16 Cancionero was part of this tradition. In this intellectual world, the founding members of
17 the Movement discussed at length not only cultural and aesthetic problems of the time
18 (the new novel, the new film, avant-garde aesthetics, the new place of song in the world,
19 the opposition of elite versus popular art, etc.), but also political matters that would brand
20 that entire generation: the fall of Peronism, Frondizi’s rise to power, and the birth of a
21 New Left on the continent influenced by the Cuban Revolution.

22 All of these people were part of a small group of intellectuals and artists, and it
23 was in this world where their ideas about the new aesthetic and political place that

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Comment [5]: I have added this text.

1 popular song should occupy began taking shape. In addition, this was the network of
2 specific relations in which their works in that realm began to be known. In this
3 intellectual circle, circumstances were ripe for accepting the group’s compositions
4 performed with the voice of Mercedes Sosa. These same ideas and compositions were
5 also accepted by other groups of intellectuals--such as ones in Montevideo, when Matus
6 and Sosa set up household there in 1962. In Montevideo, they managed to get radio
7 exposure and the support of writers and artists like Carlos Nuñez and Mario Benedetti.
8 Matus and Sosa also got the backing of the Communist Party, which they joined shortly
9 thereafter. By that time, Tejada Gómez and many other intellectuals had joined the
10 Communist Party as well.

11 The leftist culture of these intellectuals, especially their affiliation with the
12 Communist Party, had great importance for the kind of connection with folklore that the
13 Nuevo Cancionero proposed. In fact, as of 1946 folkloric studies in the Soviet Union had
14 taken a new path that could be summed up in the following two principles: 1) Folklore is
15 an echo of the past but also expresses the present condition of the “popular” sectors. 2)
16 Folklore has been and still is an arm of the proletariat in class struggles.³⁶ These
17 concepts, which were associated with the basic ideas of the Nuevo Cancionero and
18 clashed with the dominant “tradition” of the classic paradigm, were evident in all of the
19 various offshoots of Nueva Canción that appeared on the continent during those years
20 and were supported by leftist intellectuals (see below for more information about Nueva
21 Canción).

22 The acceptance of this aesthetic concept linked to popular song by circles of
23 intellectuals explains why the Nuevo Cancionero was introduced by means of a

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Comment [6]: I have added this text.

Microsoft Office User 5/29/14 7:26 PM
Comment [7]: I added this text in parentheses, but there might be a better way to fix the problem. There is somewhat of an explanation of what Nueva Canción is in footnote 26, but its definition and development are not really explained until letter (b) in the next section of the article.
We need to remedy this somehow.

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Comment [8]: I have added all of this text.

1 manifesto. It also explains the avant-garde way used to present the Movement's aesthetic
2 and political principles. Considering how the people who would later found the
3 Movement started out, it is understandable why they decided to make a break with the
4 classic paradigm: so as to eventually lose their marginal status in the field. They
5 succeeded in introducing debate, pressuring artists into adopting a position, and,
6 importantly, dividing the public based on aesthetic and ideological criteria.

7

8 The Nuevo Cancionero and the Politicization of Discourse

9 What I have written up to this point is not enough to explain how the Movement
10 developed, its progressive legitimization in the field of folklore, the coming on board of
11 many artists, or, most importantly, their blockbuster success and international influence.
12 In order to give a proper explanation, it is necessary to link this issue to some aspects of
13 the social process that developed in Argentina after the fall of Peronism. Although this is
14 not the place for an exhaustive analysis of the matter, I will briefly outline its main
15 features.

16 a) On one hand, from the time that [President Juan] Perón was overthrown [1955],
17 the various governments that followed him until the middle of the 1960s suffered from a
18 great crisis of legitimacy. The banning of Peronism resulted in a number of attempts to
19 fill this void, but all of them failed. This internal situation along with the Cuban
20 Revolution's success and influence made possible the birth of a New Left that would
21 have major importance all over the continent. Given these circumstances and the
22 remaining Latin American dictatorships, some union and student groups became

1 radicalized especially after 1966, and the critical, sometimes revolutionary, discourse of
2 the left kept expanding near the end of the decade.³⁷

3 b) Moreover, in different parts of the world, including Latin American countries,
4 popular song began to be revalued and conceived of as a vehicle for social change. A
5 phenomenon called Nueva Canción [New Song] then developed in Chile, Uruguay,
6 Brazil, Cuba, France, and other European countries. An important thing related to this
7 process was how Bob Dylan and Joan Baez had first changed rock music, followed by the
8 Beatles. Using song as a vehicle of change became associated with the emerging youth
9 phenomenon as a social identity and as a means of transformation; it was precisely in this
10 period when the seeds of the Argentine rock movement were sown. The idea of youth
11 being transformative, both aesthetically and politically speaking, ran through the entire
12 New Song phenomenon and was a key aspect of the Nuevo Cancionero.

13 These briefly outlined traits of the Argentine social process between the middle
14 and the end of the 1960s are key in helping us to understand the role that artists who
15 followed Nuevo Cancionero principles played in symbolic struggles--battles that became
16 more and more aggressive beginning in the early 1970s until 1976. Taking these
17 characteristics into consideration, it is also understandable why this movement was
18 derailed/dismantled during the 1976 to 1983 military dictatorship by means of
19 persecution and exile.

20

21

Notes

¹ Claudio Díaz, “Condiciones sociales y estrategias enunciativas en las canciones de Teresa Parodi,” in Lugares del decir: competencia social y estrategias discursivas, ed. Danuta Teresa Mozejo and Ricardo Lionel (Rosario: Homo Sapiens, 2002), 211-39.

² The author draws on the works of Tomas Kuhn, La estructura de las revoluciones científicas (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1971), and Marc Angenot, Interdiscursividades: de hegemonías y disidencias (Córdoba: Editorial Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, 1998), to develop his notion of paradigm.

³ Liliana Clement, “Folklore: una disciplina científica. Algunos fundamentos epistemológicos,” Revista de investigaciones folklóricas 17 (2002).

⁴ Gabriel Ábalos, “Para una ontología simbólica de las tradiciones,” paper presented at the Primer Congreso Universitario de Folklore (Córdoba, 2003).

⁵ Raymond Williams, Marxismo y literatura (Barcelona: Península, 1980; originally published in 1977, Marxism and Literature), 137.

⁶ Argentina’s “Centennial” took place in 1910. It celebrated the 100-year anniversary of the founding of Argentina, which took place on May 25, 1810, as part of the May Revolution. At this time there was a lot of debate and reflection about the nation, and in that context the first texts having to do with “cultural nationalism” appeared: El payador [The Gaucho Minstrel] by Leopoldo Lugones; La historia de la literatura argentina [The History of Argentine Literature] and La restauración nacionalista [The Nationalist Restoration] by Ricardo Rojas, etc. These authors and books were very influential in the formation of the classic paradigm of folklore.

⁷ Augusto Raúl Cortazar, who was a professor at the Universidad de Buenos Aires and the Universidad Católica Argentina, was one of the most important academic folklorists

in Argentina. The Musicology Institute in Buenos Aires is named after Carlos Vega, one of the best-known and earliest ethnomusicologists in Argentina. Félix Coluccio was an Argentine researcher and prolific author of numerous books that had to do with folklore. One of his most well known books was Diccionario folklórico argentino (1948).

⁸ The issue of “origin” is especially important in connection with “selective tradition.” Michael Foucault, “Nietzsche, la genealogía, la historia,” in Microfísica del poder (Madrid: Ediciones de La Piqueta, 1992), drawing on Nietzsche’s ideas, has shown the effects of power inherent in a proposed “origin.” This is the total opposite of a theological view of history.

⁹ Claudio Monti and Adrián Weissberg, “Construcción de la imagen gauchesca: un enfoque cultural, escrito, filmado y encuestado,” paper presented at the Primer Congreso Universitario de Folklore (Córdoba, 2003).

¹⁰ A pago is the place where a person is from, his home territory, and where he has his (idealized) roots.

¹¹ Although this is not the place to focus on it, the matter of indigenous roots in folklore is especially interesting since the greater part of the work of collectors and folklorists consisted of a policy of “rescuing” native culture. Not only that, this happened only 20 to 30 years after the nation had adopted a policy of exterminating indigenous peoples. For these reasons, the Indian’s place in folklore has always been ambiguous. On one hand, there were a number of attempts to legitimate the Indian in the vein of Ricardo Rojas’s Eurindia (1924). On the other hand, starting from the time that the gaucho was turned into a key symbol, the Indian continued to appear in many songs as an enemy or

undervalued being. Generally speaking, the “rescuing” mentioned above was accompanied by idealization.

¹² Martín Fierro, by Argentine author José Hernández, is an epic poem that Argentine national identity was based upon. The poem was originally published in two parts: El gaucho Martín Fierro (1872) and La vuelta de Martín Fierro (1879). In these two poems, Hernández sympathized with the plight of the gaucho, who was unjustly driven from his rural environment and forced to reluctantly adapt to urban ways. Hernández portrayed Martín Fierro as a payador: a gaucho musician who improvised and sang verses in song “duels” with other payadores accompanied by guitar.

¹³ The manifesto, drafted by Armando Tejada Gómez, was published on February 11, 1963, in Los Andes [a newspaper from Mendoza]. The Head of Arts and Entertainment at Los Andes was Antonio Di Benedetto. That same day in February, the Movement was also presented at an artistic event at the Salón del Círculo de Periodistas. Besides the artists who signed the manifesto at that time, Víctor Heredia, Marian Farías Gómez, Ramón Ayala, Los Trovadores, the Cuarteto Zupay, the Dúo Salteño, Horacio Guarany, and Hamlet Lima Quintana, among others, joined the Movement later on.

¹⁴ Williams, Marxism and Literature.

¹⁵ “Manifiesto 1963,” <http://www.mercedessosa.com.ar>.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ This refers to the commodification/commercialization of tango.

¹⁸ “Manifiesto 1963.”

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Armado Tejada Gómez, album text, Mercedes Sosa. Canciones con fundamento (Buenos Aires: Producciones Matus, 1965), italics mine.

²² In the jungle of the Province of Misiones, a cachapecero is a person who drives a cachapé, a cart pulled by oxen and used to drag trunks from sawmills/timberyards to the riverbank, where they are sent downstream on a raft--a practice still very common in the 1960s.

²³ Miguel Smirnoff, album text, Cuarteto Zupay. Folklore sin mirar atrás, vol. 2 (Buenos Aires: Trova, 1968), italics mine.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ “Manifiesto 1963.”

²⁶ It is interesting to see that “Plegaria a un labrador” by Víctor Jara, was part of the Nuevo Cancionero repertory. This particular song was an anthem of the Chilean New Song Movement, called Nueva Canción Chilena. Jara, a leader and singer of this movement, was assassinated right after the Chilean military coup in 1973.

²⁷ “Manifiesto 1963.”

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Quoted in Rodolfo Braceli, Mercedes Sosa: La Negra (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2003), 96.

³⁰ “Manifiesto 1963.”

³¹ For a more detailed analysis of the concept of “place,” see the works of Ricardo Corta and Danuta Teresa Mozejko, “Producción discursiva: diversidad de sujetos,” in Lugares del decir: competencia social y estrategias discursivas, ed. Danuta Teresa Mozejo and Ricardo Lionel (Rosario: Homo Sapiens, 2002), 9-42.

³² Alicia Poderti, La narrativa del noroeste argentino (Salta: Editorial Milor, 2000).

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Quoted in Braceli, Mercedes Sosa, 93.

³⁵ Ricardo Kaliman, “El ‘provinciano cantor’: definiciones del pueblo en las letras del folklore argentino moderno,” Sociocriticism 42, no. 1-2 (2002), 169-77; Carlos Vega, La ciencia del folklore (Buenos Aires: Editorial Nova, 1960).

³⁶ Richard M. Dorson, “Teorías folklóricas actuales,” in Introducción al folklore, ed. Robert Redfield, Guillermo E. Magrassi, Manuel M. Rocca (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1991), 91-139.

³⁷ Matilde Ollier, El fenómeno insurreccional y la cultura política (1969–1973) (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1986).