



SOUNDING THE MEXICAN NATION: INTELLECTUALS, RADIO BROADCASTING, AND THE REVOLUTIONARY STATE IN THE 1920s

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Abstract

This essay examines early radio broadcasting in 1920s Mexico. I particularly focus on the competing intellectuals involved in shaping Mexico City broadcasting, and how the incorporation of these varying artists, writers, and technicians shaped business practices, the Mexican state, and nationalism in the revolutionary era. It appeared to some intellectuals that radio would bring about a more open, democratic society that embraced an exciting, globally-connected future. To others, radio represented a static-filled future of cheapened culture and imitation that would remain a knock-off, but perhaps that could assist in the “civilization” of Mexico. Foreshadowing Mexico’s increasingly multicultural future, early radio broadcasters managed to settle on nothing and accommodate all. Likewise, instead of enforcing their own vision for broadcasting, officials of the new revolutionary government embraced the contending perspectives. They pursued this path because of their own inability to enforce their will and, subsequently, as an attempt to incorporate outside forces shaping broadcasting into the state apparatus. Despite the sometimes contradictory projections that resulted, the inclusion of diverse but popular intellectuals ensured that the growth of Mexican broadcasting mirrored and reinforced the new political-economic order.

Radio is the dream come true of psychics and dreamers, of all those who lost hope of speaking with the distant.

—Salvador Novo, 1924

In the August 1924 edition of the magazine *Antena*, the young and upcoming writer Salvador Novo lavished praise on the creativity that radio broadcasting had unleashed. In his brief essay—the verbatim script of a talk he gave over Mexico City commercial station CYX—he wrote “You just heard the sextet All Nuts Jazz Band and now you hear my words; in ten minutes ‘Il Bacio’ by Arditi . . . or ‘Manon’ by Massenet, and you can be as you like, in your pajamas, with slippers, doing what usually cannot be done at the opera, smoking your second pipe or dozing.”¹ Radio amazed the twenty-year-old Novo. He saw the technology as an almost magical force that would unite not only Mexico, but the entire world, all while transmitting a diverse assortment of news, literature, classical



compositions, and popular music. Immediately following his article, the renowned Mexican pianist and composer Manuel Barajas lambasted programming on Mexico's newly-created broadcasting stations. He decried the lack of genuine art—with a capital “A.” Lamenting the potpourri approach of station managers, he exclaimed “How can it [broadcasting] be artistic, or even more, cultural . . . when after a Beethoven sonata for piano we hear a marimba from Cine Z playing Yes, We Have No Bananas? . . .”² Arguments about the content of radio were not limited to the pages of *Antena*; in other journals, newspapers, and public forums competing literary groups, musicians, engineers, government educators, and business leaders all debated the merits and content of early broadcasting.

Mexico in the 1920s is an especially salient time and place to study the role of intellectuals and radio in economics and state formation. Like broadcasting itself, the Mexican revolutionary state was new and divisive in 1924. The victors of the Mexican Revolution searched desperately for ways to unify the fractured country and build popular bases of support.³ War had ravaged much of the country and the government's position was fragile. Military specialists and engineers recognized the crucial role that radio played in war, but also its untapped potential for promoting peace and building social cohesion.⁴ A number of prominent business leaders who survived the revolution also recognized the potential of broadcasting, paying particular attention to radio's commercial development in the neighboring United States. Although these businesses and government representatives were not always on the best of terms, members of each side understood the value of working together to better secure their mutual futures, create a working political order, and stabilize the economy. Necessary to their success was the inclusion of artists, writers, and musicians, people that could provide content and create a national culture that embraced the newly-formed state, the rising broadcast stations, and the marketing of foreign and domestic goods.

This essay explores three issues: how intellectuals reacted to and influenced radio during its formative years; how intellectuals influenced the policies of businesses and the revolutionary state; and how the outcomes of these contentions shaped Mexican nationalism. This study is not exhaustive, nor am I contending that the incorporation of these groups was absolutely complete, or that the so-called “Sonoran Group” and nascent single-party state obtained an immediate or powerful hegemony over the whole of Mexico.⁵ This article is predominantly limited to developments in Mexico City. I do, however, argue that politicians, business leaders, engineers, and artists in the capital brought about what political theorist Antonio Gramsci called the necessary “relations of force” to create a workable consensus that shaped the most influential broadcasting outlets, creating a powerful collaboration between mass-media managers, artists, and political leaders that became crucial to the ascendance of the single-party state and the shape of nationalism in Mexico.⁶ Broadcasting became essential to the formation of modern Mexican politics and business and, in

turn, became a symbolic, ethereal space that mirrored the very processes of nation and state building in revolutionary Mexico.

My work is not the first to examine the role of mass-media and nation-building, or even radio culture in 1920s Mexico. Benedict Anderson, in his influential book *Imagined Communities* (1984), demonstrated that print media was crucial to shaping the “imagined community” necessary for a functioning nation in many parts of the world.⁷ A half century before Anderson, Gramsci had made similar observations. But despite writing insightful theoretical essays on the importance of literature and the press in building a “national-popular” culture, neither discussed radio in any great detail, a strange lacuna considering the growing importance of radio in nation formation in the 1920s and 1930s.⁸ Yet, despite being in its infancy, broadcasting showed real benefits and possessed great potential for political leaders who aspired to build a more coherent nation. Authors who have written about radio and culture in 1920s Mexico have focused predominantly on the influence of avant-garde artists.⁹ Scholars more focused on Mexican politics and nationalism have examined the role of broadcasting in 1930s and 1940s, but provide only scant attention to the crucial formative years of the 1920s.¹⁰ Other authors still have explored the cultural tensions and interplay between attempts to build a unified nation and a more global approach to modernity, a point on which I wish to elaborate.¹¹ I build on these studies, recognizing the importance of avant-garde writers and artists, while examining a wider array of intellectuals, especially writers, composers, engineers, radio aficionados, and business leaders.

In Mexico, like other highly illiterate countries in the 1920s (only twenty-five percent of the country could so much as read a signpost), it was not literary works and newspaper articles that brought about real mass participation in the nation. More important were visual arts—advertisements, cartoons, murals, symbols, cinema—and audio technologies: phonographs and, most pertinent to this essay, radio broadcasting.¹² Radio transmitters were especially important because they could send specific and controlled messaging throughout and beyond the nation almost instantaneously. And state officials and affiliated associations made a direct attempt to get receivers into the hands of middle-class consumers, unions, agrarian groups, and schools as a means to construct a loyal, populist coalition, something they did with mixed results initially, but which ultimately proved of lasting consequence for Mexican culture and politics.¹³ Those who could easily afford the devices needed no prodding from the government, quickly obtaining radios imported from the United States. According to an “exclusive dispatch” for the *Los Angeles Times*, “An excursion about the principal street of Mexico City and other large towns in the republic is all that is needed to convince even the most skeptical that radio, with all the word implies, has come to Mexico.”¹⁴ Mexico had been “bitten by the radio bug,” and the new technology became a powerful medium for spreading the national aspirations of intellectuals in Mexico City.¹⁵

Mexican nationalism, as portrayed on-the-air in the early 1920s, was vibrant and contested. The future was exciting, but uncertain. Radio programming mirrored this reality. It appeared to some intellectuals that radio would bring about a more open, democratic society that embraced an exciting, globally-connected future. To others, radio represented a static-filled future of cheapened culture and imitation that would remain a knock-off, but perhaps that could assist in the “civilization” of Mexico. To some extent, both were right. Foreshadowing Mexico’s increasingly multicultural future, early radio broadcasters managed to settle on nothing and accommodate all. Likewise, instead of enforcing their own vision for broadcasting, officials of the new revolutionary government embraced the contending perspectives. They pursued this path because of their own inability to enforce their will and, subsequently, as an attempt to incorporate outside forces shaping broadcasting into the state apparatus. Despite the sometimes contradictory projections that resulted, the inclusion of diverse but popular intellectuals ensured that the growth of Mexican broadcasting mirrored and reinforced the new political-economic order.

Estridentistas and Contemporáneos

Artists and writers from the competing Estridentistas and Contemporáneos circles were some of the most significant early influences on commercial and government radio programming, both directly and via printed criticism. The two groups had a number of differences, but they also shared commonalities. More culturally conservative, except in matters of sexuality (Novo, at least, was relatively open about his homosexuality), and elitist in their sentiments, the Contemporáneos often praised the high arts, and were generally less experimental than the Estridentistas. The Estridentistas were, as their name suggests, more strident. They were avant-garde, loud, often iconoclastic, and playful. They embraced popular culture, especially what was new. Both groups, however, reacted against the extreme elitism of the preceding Modernist movement and promoted cosmopolitan worldviews that embraced modern technologies and globalization. Together, they complicated folkloric, indigenous, and *mestizo* notions of the Mexican nation espoused by anthropologists such as the influential scholar Manuel Gamio.¹⁶ And members of each circle eventually became participants in the revolutionary state, especially in matters of propaganda, education, and diplomacy. Both groups discussed radio broadcasting in detail, ultimately agreeing on the importance of radio for education, but disagreeing on programming.¹⁷

One of the most prominent debates about broadcasting, as exemplified by Barajas and Novo, was over whether stations should transmit popular or high art. This, in turn, fueled deliberations on whether broadcasting should be more for education or entertainment, both powerful but different forms of building national and state allegiance. Other disputes arose over the abundance of foreign music and the inclusion of folk songs. All of these

contentions involved the image and sound of the Mexican revolutionary nation. These polemics were on clear display in two short-lived magazines published by the Contemporáneos and the Estridentistas.¹⁸ The first of these popular journals was *Irradiador*, published by the latter group in 1923. The Contemporáneos published *Antena* in 1924. As suggested by the titles, both discussed radio in detail.¹⁹

Published by Estridentista founding poet Manuel Maples Arce and artist Fermín Revueltas, *Irradiador* styled itself as the journal of the vanguard, an “international projector” of Mexico’s “new aesthetic.”²⁰ In their “inaugural irradiación,” or radiation, they described their work as an “expositional synthesis of expression, emotiveness, and outpouring . . . nunism, synchronism . . . Jazz Band, petroleum, New York. The entire city sparking on the radio antennas of an improbable station.”²¹ Radio was not only a topic for Estridentistas; it was a symbol of their identity. It was also a symbol for the Mexican nation they wanted to create: cosmopolitan, industrial, modern, interacting with the world, living in the now—stridentopolis.

The word “radio” not only appeared frequently in *Irradiador*, it also influenced the shape of the poetry that Maples Arce and Revueltas published. Maples Arce, for example, wrote about radio. In fact, he launched the first-ever commercial broadcasting station, CYL, with his poem “T.S.H. (el poema de la radiofonía).” The poem was also published in *El Universal-Ilustrado*, a partner in the CYL endeavor, which printed pieces from the Estridentistas. Similar to Novo and *Irradiador*’s inaugural address, Maples Arce painted radio as almost magical, a medium connecting Mexico with New York, distant cries of distress, and the “perfection” of time.²² But as in the case of other Estridentista works, the formatting of his poem was not as radical as earlier poems published by some of his European influences—F.T. Marinetti and Guillaume Apollinaire. These European poets published provocative calligrams, including one by Apollinaire that addresses Mexico, in the shapes of radio towers and waves, creating circles and multidirectional sentences.²³ But *Irradiador* did publish a couple of pieces in line with Marinetti and Apollinaire’s style. Most similar was a radio-centric calligram written by the famed artist and Estridentista sympathizer Diego Rivera. In his piece, supposedly first drawn on a banquet menu, Rivera pleads the Estridentista cause, telling readers to listen to Maples Arce and to “use it, use it, sirs, it is necessary against the national mummy-ass-ocracy (*momiasnocracia*)” represented by the official culture of the state, the Secretariat of Public Education, and the connected Contemporáneos.²⁴ Most Estridentista poems, including Rivera’s calligram, show an enthusiasm for popular art, a disdain for elitist persuasions and a world embraced by electricity and mass communications.

The Estridentista perspective on radio as portrayed in *Irradiador*’s poetic art fit well within the movement’s manifestos, which attacked folkloric notions of the nation and embraced globalization. In the movement’s



Diego Rivera, *Irradiador* calligram, *Irradiador* no. 1, 1 (Sept. 1923): 3-4. Courtesy of the University of Hawaii.

founding document, *Actual* no. 1 (1921), Maples Arce argued that with the rise of modern technologies—the first public display of broadcasting in Mexico had occurred in Mexico City that year—it was “no longer possible to stick with the conventional chapters of national art . . . The only possible borders are the impassible ones of our marginalist emotion.”²⁵ At first glance, this may appear to be a starkly anti-nationalist statement. But Maples Arce was greatly influenced by the Mexican Revolution and promoted Mexico as a nation. In the early 1920s, Maples Arce attacked nationalist imagery only in that it connected Mexico solely to its past and folklore, and not to a broader nationalism. In the words of communications scholar Elissa Rashkin, his work called for “the increasing globalization of culture in contrast to a facile nationalism that searches in vain for cultural purity and authenticity that, if ever existed, are no longer possible”

in a world connected by movies, airplanes, and radio.²⁶ He also believed that art had to become a popular force capable of radiating throughout the populace. He disdained the elitism of many Mexico City artists who carried on elite literary traditions. He wanted a Mexico that engaged the modern world. To him, the singularity of the nation's artists would not be hampered by globalization; rather, interconnectedness would spread Mexican ideas just as the nation received them, and Mexico's writers, musicians, and artists would shine uniquely on their own. Mexicans had to become a nation of modernity, of the global now. His views became less combative, however, as he attempted to gain political influence, first as the Secretary of State for the state of Veracruz in 1926, and later as a national congressman and cultural crusader in the 1930s.²⁷

The Contemporáneos *Antena* was more in line with traditional journals of the time, despite its radiophonic name. Edited by Francisco Monterde García Icazbalceta, the magazine focused heavily on literary criticism, criticism more generally, theater, poems from more established poets, and brief journalistic pieces. Radio, however, was a main theme, even more so than in *Irradioador*, where radio was more symbolic of the Estridentista movement than the topic of conversation. As the editor stated in the inaugural issue, "A journal called *Antena* . . . should necessarily have a section addressing radio."²⁸ Unlike the radio sections in the Sunday issues of prominent newspapers, which had become common place by mid 1924, *Antena's* commentary was more a debate about the merits and content of radio than the technical aspects that interested electrical engineers and devout radio aficionados. Still, they found ample room to complain about static and other technical issues they found displeasing. In a cynical piece typical of *Antena*, one author quipped: "What is this band or orchestra that makes noise instead of playing music? Static!"²⁹ Radio was often portrayed as difficult, even rude, lacking the quality and "courtesy" of live philharmonic orchestras.³⁰ Of course, the fact that some of these contributors were members of philharmonic societies, which felt threatened by radio and were demanding royalties for the transmission of their works, lent an obvious bias to their critiques. But static and incoherence were annoyances that others outside of their specific circle shared as well.

Criticism about content was often sharp. Articles by composer Manuel Barajas and Fernando Sayago, director of Mexico City's Commercial Museum, slammed the premiere commercial stations for their lack of quality programming. Sayago went as far as to call for a national "cultural crusade" to bring better intellectuals and artists to the radio as a means on enlightening the masses of Mexico. He praised attempts of the nation's foremost radio-lobby (which possessed a "cultural" station of its own), the Liga Central Mexicana de Radio (LCMR), for its attempts to make broadcasting an educational medium. Sayago urgently pleaded for the government's Secretariat of Public Education (SEP) to "urgently build a high-power broadcasting station," something it was already in the process of doing in collaboration with a number of the young and upcoming

Contemporáneos.³¹ In contrast to popular programming, the SEP station, Sayago assumed, would be a civilizing machine, airing only the best classical compositions, poetry, and instructional information provided by pre-eminent scholars.

Barajas and Sayago were not the only ones who shared the Contemporáneos' disdain for popular music. Manuel M. Ponce, Mexico's most renowned composer of the era, and the most played and covered on the radio, detested certain U.S. influences. In the Contemporáneos first journal *México Moderno*, Ponce lambasted Mexicans for taking up the fox-trot. He called the music and associated dance the U.S. "musical conquest" of Mexico and the "dictator of all parties." He bemoaned its popularity across class lines and its vulgarity. Too him, "*foxtrotismo*" was the "destructor of all emotiveness and artistic innovation," a crude phenomena that "only excites the desire of physical movement . . . characteristic of inferior music." He went as far as to call its enthusiasts "animals."³² Yet he had no qualms with philharmonic players covering Beethoven or Debussy, something he deemed for the national good. To Ponce, national music was not necessarily about composing domestic pieces, though he himself did so with great success, but more about the quality of music that Mexicans performed and listened to. This stance challenged early broadcasting stations. After all, Ponce was a well-respected celebrity in Mexico and abroad. Before phonographs and broadcasting, composers held considerable power over the shape of Mexico City's musical content, at least within upper and middle class circles. The National Philharmonic Union also remained an influential force in the fledgling revolutionary state.

But the fact remained that American fox-trots, Broadway numbers, and jazz were all in demand in urban centers, in no small part due to the invasion of U.S. radio programming (radio waves paid no heed to political boundaries). And, as the Estridentistas demonstrate, not all intellectuals saw foreign music as inherently anti-national or vulgar. In addition to these contending cultural forces, *corridos* and other popular Mexican songs had become more sought after. After all, they were sung by thousands of Mexicans turned soldiers during the revolution. Government leaders saw these farmers, laborers, and housewives as important pillars of the new state and national economy. Even if many of these officials had no intention of addressing radical popular demands, they did have to recognize, and at times cater to, the power of the masses that they had unleashed and hoped to influence.

Interestingly, Maples Arce, Barajas, and Ponce were all a part of commercial station CYL's inaugural radiocast. Radio made for strange bed-fellows. CYL's first program also included Spanish classical guitarist and monarchist Andrés Segovia. Actress Celia Montalván and vocalist Julia Wilson de Chaves sang various popular songs. The show ended with an airing of the national anthem.³³ Representatives of the CYL ownership, businessmen Raúl and Luis Azcárraga and *El Universal* manager and government insider Felix F. Palavicini participated alongside the Secretary of

Communications and Public Works and former commander of military telegraphers, General Amado Aguirre. *El Universal Ilustrado* editor and writer Carlos Noriega Hope, a fan of Estridentismo, had organized much of the event, calling Estridentismo an “*hermano de leche*” or blood brother of radio broadcasting.³⁴ These motley combinations of artists, businessmen, and government officials continued throughout the 1920s, exhibiting the difficulty station managers faced in selecting programming. They had to decide on what they thought radio listeners—at this time mostly the upper and middle classes, but they hoped to expand their audience—would want to hear, their own individual tastes, how to incorporate their friends and business interests, while also catering to the demands of government officials and Mexico City’s classical performers.

Despite contributing to commercial stations, it was no accident that contributors to *Antena* promoted government radio endeavors. After all, the *Contemporáneos* made up a significant part of the newly created SEP. President Alvaro Obregón had charged the rector of the National University José Vasconcelos to head the ministry with the assistance of Dr. Bernardo G. Gastélum. Vasconcelos had become one of the *Contemporáneos* (mostly educated at the National University) first patrons, taking the younger writers under his guidance and hire. Gastélum became an active member of the *Contemporáneos* himself and was one of the founding members of their namesake journal in 1928. Vasconcelos quickly turned to the *Contemporáneos* to fill important SEP positions. Nineteen-year-old *Contemporáneo* writer Jaime Torres Bodet (later to become SEP minister himself) became the Director of Libraries and Vasconcelos’s personal secretary. Novo and poet Xavier Villaurrutia obtained jobs with the SEP as well.³⁵ The *Contemporáneos* solidified their place as an important literary force, and in the process, became instruments of the state, a fact that never sat well with Novo.

At the same time that *Contemporáneos* were filling the ranks of the SEP, the ministry was building the government’s first educational radio station, CZE (XFX after 1928), guaranteeing that the programming would recognize global trends and modernization, but with an emphasis on elitist notions of music, art, and literature. Obregón, a fan of radio himself, promoted the station as a crucial educational tool, arguing that alongside a campaign to provide radios to federal schools, the SEP station would incorporate Mexicans into national life: “teachers will meet somewhere near the ranches and neighborhoods of their students to transmit, on a predetermined day and time, a lesson about a useful theme, music, and news to arouse their interest so they can participate in the life of our country.”³⁶ Gastélum speaking at the inauguration of the station—Vasconcelos had resigned over a number of disputes with Obregón—provided a glimpse of what the *Contemporáneos*-inspired SEP planned to disseminate:

Teachers, workers and students: The Secretariat of Public Education will end its labor during the presidential period of Gen. Don Alvaro

Obregón inaugurating this new fountain for the dissemination of thought, which will light all corners of the country with the voice of the teacher, the eloquent words of our most distinguished intellectuals, and harmonies that will surprise those in the classroom, in the office or in the workshop, evoking in the spirit the memory of ancient and romantic visions, the most noble emotions, to inculcate the beauty in the soul and charity in the mind.³⁷

In true romantic flair, Gastélum articulated a vision of what Sayago had cried for, a cultural crusade to provide the voices of Mexico's greatest intellectuals and classical music performers. Soon, the SEP unrealistically planned, children in the rural countryside would become enthusiasts of Homer, while the arrangements of Massenet, Brahms, Barajas, and Ponce would turn those same children into cultured Mexican citizens, all via radio.

At least initially, the Contemporáneos vision had become dominate in high government circles and the SEP's broadcasting station, despite the growing preference of radio listeners for fox-trots, jazz, and Mexican popular performers and folk songs. But commercial stations continued with their potpourri approach, incorporating the very Mexican composer's that condemned their programming, while also including popular theater performers, local jazz bands, popular Mexican songs, fox-trots, "Hawaiian" music, tangos, and *corridos* or Mexican folk ballads.³⁸ Driven by profits, so often the motivator that requires quick results, they realized that the future lay in popular music, not in the symphonic productions. Within a year the SEP station recognized the success of their commercial counterparts; it began transmitting more popular musical programming as the 1920s progressed.

Conversely, state-driven priorities had an effect. While the Estridentistas remained somewhat influential, they individually branched in different directions. During the latter half of the 1920s most of them based their operations out of Xalapa, Veracruz, where Maples Arce became a high-ranking member of the Veracruz government. Over the next few years they, like their artistic competitors, they accepted jobs from the government, indeed, in the exact same departments that Contemporáneos worked in. Maples Arce became more embittered and by the end of the decade had lost much of his stridency. The man who in his youth had drunkenly told Mexico City cops to join him in rebellion had become a national congressman. He became enmeshed in revolutionary politics. Maples Arce joined fellow Estridentistas Fermín Revueltas and Arqueles Vela on the Committee of Revolutionary Orientation and Popularization, which used "the book, press, open forums, theater, cinema, and the radio" to strengthen loyalty to the Partido Nacional Revolucionario. Maples Arce served specifically on a public health committee that worked to increase "moral rigor."³⁹ His rebellion was over, but his imprint remained.

Despite the high level of conformity among some members, certain Estridentista writers kept truer to their artistic visions. Germán List Arzubide continued to write and increased his activism for laborers in the mid 1920s, but his refusal to join the Partido Nacional Revolucionario and his outspoken criticism soon landed him in political trouble. Government officials accused him of orchestrating a brief takeover of the popular commercial station XEW by a small group of communists in 1931, despite evidence that he was not there, briefly making him a political outcast. Even the Xalapa branch of the Communist Party kicked him out their organization, citing his “anarchist tendencies.”⁴⁰ Yet, only two years later his program “Troka the Powerful” was teaching children the benefits of modernization via a robot protagonist Sunday mornings on SEP station XFX. He went on to develop a large number of machine-themed plays and radio programs for the government. Still, he remained an ardent Estridentista until the end of his life at age 100 in 1998.⁴¹

For the most part, the administrations of the Sonoran Group and the National Partido Revolucionario obtained hegemony over most of the contending Mexico City intellectuals by including them, but as theorized by Gramsci, these intellectuals, in turn leaked some of their ideas into the system that ingested them, shifting the “superstructure.” They became important members of the state apparatus. Although the SEP and other government agencies were slow to incorporate the sometimes iconoclastic Estridentistas, the self-imposed conformity of many of their members provided them an entrance into government circles, especially those who held popular influence. At the same time, recognizing the inevitability of globalization and aspiring to promote modernization, the SEP became more open to Estridentista worldviews, including jazz performances and radio shows about robots praising machines. The SEP juxtaposed these shows with programs on Mozart, folklore, the Spanish language, the government’s history of the revolution, and hygiene in rural communities. The Contemporáneos had worked with the government since the reformation of the SEP in 1924, though some members, including Novo, would later become critical of the more leftist policies of President Lázaro Cárdenas.

Commercial Advertisements: El Buen Tono

While poets honed their phrases, other voices too contributed to the debate on radio as a cultural tool. Advertisements provide some of the more revealing works about capitalists’ perceptions of 1920s Mexican radio. Unlike views expressed by most of the Contemporáneos, ads from stations like El Buen Tono’s CYB were commercial in nature and sought out broader audiences by catering to popular demands. But the ads, along with the statements of commercial station managers, also articulated an attempt to keep on positive terms with the state, especially by promoting their operations as pro-Mexico. And as these commercial promoters understood, the Obregón and Calles administrations supported business endeavors as long as they did not threaten their political power. Surprisingly,

in comparison to the saturation of scholarship devoted to revolutionary art and even avant-garde poetry, academics have given less attention to these fantastic drawings and descriptions and what they say about early broadcasting in Mexico.

Not only did members of competing artistic and intellectual groups share space on radio stations, their publications also advertised the same companies, especially the cigarette company El Buen Tono, which operated the prominent station CYB as a means of promoting its products. Historian Julio Moreno argues that “advertising was not a high priority among Mexican businesses” in the 1920s and early 1930s, and other scholars agree with his conclusion, but El Buen Tono was far-and-away an important exception.⁴² It had been a mainstay in Mexican advertising since the Porfirio Díaz administration and remained predominant in Mexican advertising during the subsequent decades.⁴³ Astutely, El Buen Tono’s management catered to the competing Mexican nationalisms, the traditional and the avant-garde, like the government, incorporating them all.

Run by former senator José J. Reynoso, El Bueno Tono used its name to bridge the Porfirian and revolutionary eras. The name El Buen Tono roughly translates into English as “good taste,” but literally as “good tone.” Rubén Gallo suggests that the company’s management used the name, which originally referred to good manners or elite social etiquette—a very Porfirian image—to project a more modern image of El Buen Tono as a good musical sound, to be accentuated by radio technology and art, and by operating an entertainment-based broadcasting station.⁴⁴ As a part of this image change, El Buen Tono sold “Radio” cigarettes (a new El Buen Tono brand), radio equipment, and held raffles for receivers for people who sent in cut outs from empty cigarette cartons.

But El Buen Tono did not completely forsake its advertising to more traditional elements of elite culture; the company simply broadened its appeal to different sectors of society. After all, cigarettes were a relatively affordable product with a cross-class clientele. Two different approaches are apparent in the El Bueno Tono ads in *Irradioador* and *Antena*. In the former, Fermín Revueltas illustrated an avant-garde, Cubist advertisement for El Buen Tono’s Radio cigarettes that focused on a single, urban man in the night surrounded by street cars and telephone lines.⁴⁵ In contrast, an El Buen Tono ad in *Antena* shows an upper class mother and children sitting happily around large radios and their standing, smoking male patriarch. Another El Bueno Tono ad in *Antena* shows a *china poblana* dancing and singing to a speaker horn next to a massive juxtaposed image of their Numero 12 cigarettes. A small caption reads: “The entire American Continent listens to radio broadcasting station C.Y.B. of the grand Cigarette Factory.”⁴⁶ Like the Contemporáneos, El Buen Tono advertisements in their journals held closer to older, elite tastes and folkloric national symbols while also promoting a globalized Mexico.

El Buen Tono published well-illustrated advertisements in nearly every large Mexican newspaper, showing great nuance in navigating the coexisting versions of nationalism. Artist and poet Gómez Linares created many of the company's most impressive illustrations for CYB. On June 30, 1923, El Buen Tono bought a two-page spread in *El Demócrata* aimed at those "most ignorant and removed" from wireless communication. The huge image prominently displayed Paris with a pronounced Eiffel Tower and the El Buen Tono factory—radio towers included—in Mexico City. This illustration is framed by smaller circular portraits of people from around the world: a handsome Mexican *charro*, stereotypically dressed middle-easterners, a Chinese man with a high forehead and skinny Manchu pony tail, a North American Indian—full head bonnet of eagle feathers—and an urban American in fedora and jacket who looks like he came directly from the 1930s U.S. comic "Dick Tracy."⁴⁷ The ad plays on the growing use of the Mexican *charro* as a nationalist symbol (a symbol dating back at least back to the creation of the *rurales* in the 1860s), but also on stereotypical, mass-produced images that represent other nations. In an ironic twist, inward-folkloric notions of the nation were a global trend. They provided national logos and a means of generating national loyalty in a more rapidly interacting world. In addition to the *charro*, El Buen Tono portrays itself as a symbol of the Mexican nation, like the Eiffel Tower is for France. The company touted its importance as a disseminator of Mexican culture. El Buen Tono also hoped to gain the approval of the revolutionary state. The corporation's management tirelessly painted itself as pro-*patria* or fatherland. Their radio station, CYB, they contended, was not only a force to sell Mexican products, but also a way to "unite Mexican artists in an effective confraternity, together working for the prestige of the fatherland."⁴⁸ Reflecting statements made by other commercial radio owners, El Buen Tono was making the argument that the government could rely on private enterprise as promoters of nationalism and allegiance to the new Mexican state, while also building the economy.

The *charro* figured prominently in many El Buen Tono ads. In one, a *charro* sits, legs crossed, in a chair with a woman at his side. The woman is particularly interesting in that she is dressed as a *china poblana* but also wears a bobbed hair cut and heavy eye-shadow, the tell-tale sign of the "*chica moderna*" or modern woman. Both figures play with the unlit cigarettes in their mouths. Another *charro* stands behind the chair smoking. All are wearing headphones plugged into a large black radio resting on a dresser. Everyone is smiling. In fact, the *charro* in the back appears to be in a state of pure bliss. A caption underneath states: "The monotonous life of the hacienda is enlivened with a powerful radio receiver."⁴⁹ In another ad, four *charros* are in a cantina. Three stand at the bar. One sits at a table. On the table lay five packs of cigarettes and on the counter sits a large receiver with a blaring speaker horn. One of the men in the center, leaning near the radio, fondles a glass with one hand and rests his other arm on his friend.



El Buen Tono ad, *El Demócrata*, 26 Aug. 1923, 17. Courtesy of the Archivo General de la Nación de México.



El Buen Tono ad, *El Demócrata*, 7 Aug. 1923, 12. Courtesy of the Archivo General de la Nación de México.

Under the illustration is the El Buen Tono catch phrase: "The cantina of the remote town receives daily the sensational news of the entire world and listens to the concerts of the capital and the neighboring republics, thanks to a powerful radio apparatus."⁵⁰ El Buen Tono sounds its national and international reach in these advertisements, while also painting itself as representative of Mexico in its most modern and "traditional" elements. It shows the company as urban and rural. It was a clever campaign.

The advertisements also show the goals of El Buen Tono and the spread of radio use. Although most 1920s radio audiences resided in Mexico City or other urban centers such as Monterrey, Guadalajara, and Mérida, commercial and cultural stations had growing audiences in smaller communities, including among white-collar workers, agrarian groups, schools, mining operations, labor halls, and in large haciendas. Before the advent of broadcasting, wireless hobbyists lived in diverse places. Within the first year of radiocasting, it was fairly common to have a radio or two in a public place in many of Mexico's provincial seats. CYB and its mother company El Buen Tono wanted to reach these people—possible consumers. CYB dedicated programs to the aficionados of various communities.⁵¹ Along with every other station of significance, it published letters received from listeners from all over Mexico, including the states of Guerrero, Chiapas, and Yucatán.⁵² In Mexico City, radio stores and stations blasted music into the streets. La Casa del Radio openly displayed its products to the outside world from its store on Juarez Avenue. Radio station *El Mundo*, affiliated with the newspaper of the same name, blared its programs from its headquarters. A mob of people swarmed the thoroughfare to hear its initial radiocast.⁵³ Radio was growing, and oftentimes it was a social affair, something that state and business leaders knew all too well.

El Buen Tono and the emerging revolutionary state were, in many ways, similar in their approach to radio. Both built stations and acquired Mexico City's most prominent musicians and artists to promote their brand. Both pushed a dual campaign that built up folkloric notions of the nation—*charros*, *china poblanas*, Aztecs—and Mexico's global awareness and technical savvy. El Buen Tono shareholders were, of course, most concerned with profits, whereas political leaders were more interested in securing their place in power and governance. But the two goals were not contradictory. And as Senator Reynoso clearly demonstrates, the autonomy between these sectors was little to none. Oftentimes, business and political leaders were close allies, sometimes serving in both roles simultaneously. Adapting to the revolutionary era, El Buen Tono's management became enmeshed in the state apparatus and government executives turned to El Buen Tono for support among Mexico's small but powerful industrial sector. The people who constructed CYB's transmitters were the same army officers who built equipment and trained radio specialists at the military academy. Musicians aired on CYB also worked for the SEP. The artists that drew El Buen Tono's advertisements also found employment



“Simón Bobito,” *El Demócrata*, 22 Jun. 1924, 6. Courtesy of the Archivo General de la Nación de México.



“Pancholín y sus amigos,” *El Demócrata* 29 Jun. 1924, 10. Courtesy of the Archivo General de la Nación de México.

with the state. El Buen Tono provided receivers to municipal governments. In turn, the company provided space for government messages, promoted “Mexican” music, and refrained from political or religious programming.⁵⁴ Despite differences, there was room at the table of the “revolutionary family” for artists and businessmen alike.

Aficionados and Engineers: The Central Mexican Radio League

Poets, artists, and salesmen notwithstanding, no one promoted early radio as passionately as the medium’s aficionados. They composed radio sections for popular Mexico City newspapers such as *El Mundo*, *Excelsior*, and *El Universal*. They also provided articles and information for regional periodicals.⁵⁵ In addition to newspapers, aficionados wrote essays for scholarly journals. They penned technical pieces, published information on developments and regulations, and translated and published foreign—especially U.S.—essays on transmission and reception. The most important group of these enthusiasts, the Liga Central Mexicana de Radio or Central Mexican Radio League (LCMR) wrote most of the nation’s first broadcasting regulations, promoted radio in public events, owned its own station, and provided lectures and classes on radio construction and use. Its technical expertise quickly caught the eye of business and government leaders alike, and both groups regularly consulted them. Some of the most prominent radio specialists already had longstanding ties with political and military officers, who had used their services to establish radiotelegraphy networks during the revolution. The LCMR also occasionally clashed with

the Obregón administration, especially over the issue of taxing radio devices, which the LCMR opposed. These technicians became prominent in the construction of private and state stations, government regulations, and the popularization of radio among the general public.

LCMR members were all leading specialists in radio technology, but they came from different backgrounds. Modesto C. Rolland, the club's president, was well known in government and business circles. A young



Modesto C. Rolland and his children, 1925.

Courtesy of Jorge M. Rolland C.

engineering professor during the Porfiriato, he became a prominent advisor and propagandist for Venustiano Carranza's Constitutionalist forces during the revolution. Afterwards, he became a member of President Obregón's first National Agrarian Commission and had helped mastermind Mexico's experimental free ports system, building free-trade sites

at specific Mexican ports. Rolland was heading the latter project while leading the LCMR. Rolland was an ardent nationalist, who believed in a strong central government, American economist Henry George's single-tax scheme, and regulated capitalism. Well-connected in the private and state sectors, prominent leaders relied on him as a middle-man and someone who could get things done.⁵⁶ Other members were more especially interested in selling radio products. José M. Velasco owned a prominent radio store in Mexico City and operated some of the country's best receiving equipment, picking up stations as far away as Salt Lake City as early as 1922.⁵⁷ Other members, like Rolland, worked closely with government officials, despite ideological differences. For example, LCMR engineer Salvador F. Domenzáin installed radio equipment for Secretary of Foreign Relations Alberto J. Pani.⁵⁸

In line with its engineering leanings, the LCMR was most interested in advancing Mexico technologically and, for many members at least, in literally building the infrastructure of a Mexican nation. They saw radio as a means of connecting the frontiers of Mexico to Mexico City, of bringing education to campesinos in the rural mountains, deserts, and jungles, strengthening Mexico's economy and citizenry. Many of its members operated their own amateur stations, which in the first years of broadcasting competed well with commercial and state operations.⁵⁹ The Mexico City press, in which LCMR members often wrote the radio sections, kept tabs on their "titanic efforts" to popularize radio.⁶⁰ LCMR members did not see radio as a luxury; instead, they argued it was a "necessary thing in all homes, rich and poor."⁶¹

In addition to writing the weekly radio sections in the widely distributed *Excelsior* and *El Universal*, the LCMR commonly held public workshops, lectures, and exhibitions. In March 1923, alums and instructors from the School of Mechanical and Electric Engineering held a series of conferences on the technology to "illustrate the approach of the large number of aficionados that currently exist, principally to give clear ideas about the most important electrical phenomena in the field." In May of that same year, the LCMR held a gathering at the Center of Engineers, which they aired live. The transmission included the group's regular business and then a program that "simply" described how to transmit radio. Members also invited the public to visit their meeting place and equipment at the Garage Alameda in Mexico City, where they presented additional classes. On top of educating city residents, the group assisted with numerous amateur radio-construction competitions.⁶²

LCMR members were technicians, bureaucrats, and entrepreneurs largely indifferent to the extravagant fantasies of Maples Arce. Their statements on radio culture tended to favor the ideas of the Contemporáneos and the SEP. Modesto C. Rolland and Manuel M. Stampa, another important LCMR member and radio technician, declared that the league's purpose was to coordinate the propagation of radio, which "suddenly puts the men of remote villages in contact with the civilization of the most advanced

centers of culture."⁶³ When Rolland protested a tax that the Obregón administration placed on radio equipment, he stressed the detriment to education and human progress. Rolland argued that the fee impeded the spread of receivers, which college classrooms and households could use to tune into transmissions of educational conferences and lectures.⁶⁴

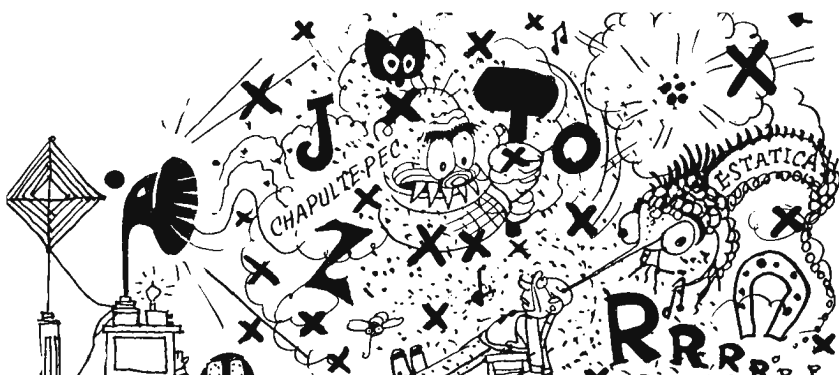
LCMR secretary F. C. Steffens was directly affiliated with the Contemporáneos. They heaped praise upon his cultured amateur station 1-J. Indeed, according to *Antena*, his station was popular among "aficionado clubs, artists, and writers" for its rejection of popular and commercial programming. Steffens received fan mail from all over the country, listing in an interview letters from twenty cities and states including Oaxaca, Jalisco, Tamaulipas, Guerrero, and México. Interestingly, Steffens was not Mexican, but rather an Argentine national educated at Oxford in England. A radio enthusiast since the early years of radiotelegraphy, he had lived in Mexico for a number of years and had taken up the cause of promoting "the best young Mexican poets" in addition to providing foreign works translated by screen writer and *Antena* contributor José Manuel Ramos. Steffens played only the "most select" music, chosen from the "best elements, without resorting to tired folksongs."⁶⁵ Most of Mexico's "best young poets," of course, happened to be Contemporáneos such as Xavier Villaurrutia.⁶⁶ Contrary to what other scholars have contended about the LCMR, its members were not solely advocates of the commercial sector.⁶⁷ Indeed, many of its members supported Contemporáneo tastes and the SEP, and disdained the popular music aired over commercial stations.

The LCMR's greatest achievement, however, was more inclusive and commercial, showing contending views among radio aficionados and exhibiting the collaboration of the various interest groups involved in radio. With strong support and participation from the Obregón administration and businesses (local and foreign), the LCMR put on the two-week-long Grand Radio Fair in Mexico City in June 1923. A huge success, multiple companies and experimenters set up exhibits. The fair "was crowded day and evening by both Mexicans and foreigners . . . people came from all over the republic. The railroads offered special rates to those in outlying districts who wished to attend."⁶⁸ President Obregón inaugurated the event alongside Rolland, praising the recent establishment of commercial broadcasting. He also posed for photographs at a number of booths with Rolland and representatives of local businesses. "Prominent men in Mexico's public life" held a series of "balls and entertainments."⁶⁹ Participants visited the stands and admired the goods, contests, and wacky costumes, including El Buen Tono's display where women gave away the company's "Radio" cigarettes while wearing antenna-shaped hats. CYL, *La Casa del Radio-El Universal Ilustrado*, handed out "Radio" sodas. In addition to blasting radio programs from Mexico, Cuba, and the United States, the LCMR held a contest for the best homemade radio device.⁷⁰ The military station JH broadcast alongside amateur experimenters, commercial operations, and foreign radio providers. Following the fair, radio dealers



reported “a tremendous increase in business” and a “growing enthusiasm” for receivers.⁷¹ It was not only the largest promotional exhibition of radio that had ever occurred in Mexico, it was a clear display of the collaboration between the government, engineers, businesses, and artists in the promotion of the technology.

Although commercial and state stations would dominate over aficionado operations in the subsequent years, LCMR members held considerable sway in 1923–24. They helped popularize radio, wrote regulations for the government, and produced their own broadcasting programs. Many of the original LCMR members continued to influence radio development in Mexico, though mostly as employees of corporations and/or the government. After moving on to pursue his work with the free ports system and a number of his own inventions, Rolland became the Undersecretary of Communications and Public Works during the Lázaro Cárdenas administration (1934–40). His engineering services and influence among top business and government leaders remained highly solicited until his retirement from public life in the early 1950s.



“La Radio Telefonía,” *El Universal Ilustrado*, 30 Aug. 1923, 17.

Courtesy of the Hemeroteca Nacional de México.

Chaos and Consolidation

Like an Estridentista poem, broadcasting was often chaotic in the 1920s. The medium was new and people held contending views about its use. Broadcasting came to Mexico at a hectic time, when a fragile government fought to retain control, rebellions remained commonplace, and people demanded a greater voice in public affairs. In many ways, early radio broadcasting mirrored this excitement and disorder. Government officials, strapped for money and in need of powerful allies, opened the field of radio, legalizing commercial and amateur operations, while constructing their own stations. Engineers and newly empowered aficionados promoted radio technology as a means to “civilize” Mexico, build the economy, and strengthen the now-supportive state. Estridentistas and

Contemporáneos fought over what represented good musical taste and the future of Mexican culture while commercial broadcasters experimented with programming. What was impressive about the early revolutionary state was not its ability to force its will upon intellectuals and artists, but its

LA ÚLTIMA PALABRA



—Conveniente, don Asunción, la última palabra en radio es el SUPER-DYNE.

—No, amigo, eso será en gringo porque aquí la última palabra es "Buenas Noches".

"La última palabra," *Excelsior*, 21 Dec. 1924, IV 10. Courtesy of the Archivo General de la Nación de México.

ability to incorporate them into the revolutionary family despite all differences. Indeed, one thing that is clear is that the most prominent members of the LCMR, Estridentistas, Contemporáneos, and commercial broadcasters became Partido Nacional Revolucionario cardholders or close affiliates. The Obregón administration ostracized those that did not comply, most notably, writer Martín Luis Guzmán, owner of station *El Mundo*, who supported the Adolfo de la Huerta Rebellion (1923–24) and avoided arrest by fleeing into exile.⁷² Those intellectuals and station owners that did comply

often disagreed with top political officials, but they ultimately reinforced the political system, providing equipment, programming, and airtime for government leaders who used radio to further build a popular base of support.

Another thing that stands out about the first years of broadcasting is that content was highly contested and the future shape of the medium was far from certain. Ultimately, many of the visions put forth by Mexico City intellectuals would lose out. Classical music remained common on Mexican airwaves throughout the 1920s, but popular music, foreign and domestic, gained ground, becoming dominant in the subsequent decades. Over-the-air poetry readings, common in the early and mid 1920s, became rare experiences in the 1930s and 1940s. State broadcasting, with its educational and political focus gained traction in the 1920s and 1930s as it better incorporated popular culture, but it ultimately declined in the face of commercial competition and agreements to let private broadcasters dominate the airwaves in exchange for free government airtime and political support. *Aficionado* stations continued (and indeed, continue to this day), but lost their influence in relation to commercial and state stations that could afford vastly more powerful transmitters, and which obtained the best frequencies through a number of domestic and international agreements. Engineers and aficionados who built and operated transmitters, and prominent musicians and writers, predominately aspired for a stronger, more modern Mexico, but they had differing opinions about what Mexico's identity should sound like. The lack of agreement made for a sometimes schizophrenic nationalism torn by dreams of the past and visions of modernity. But it was exactly the expansion of radio and the inclusion of varying intellectuals that allowed the revolutionary state to solidify its position—securing its survival, amplifying its power.

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Endnotes

¹ Salvador Novo, "Radio-conferencia sobre el radio," *Antena* vol. 1, no. 2 (Aug. 1924): 11.

² Manuel Barajas, "Los filarmónicos y el radio," *Antena* vol. 1, no. 2 (Aug. 1924): 12. "Yes! We Have No Bananas" is a song written by American and British-American songwriters Frank Silver and Irving Cohen for the Broadway revue *Make it Snappy* in 1922. The song became a huge hit in the United States, and abroad, in 1923.

³ Here, I am referring to the main period of violent conflict and civil wars that rocked Mexico from 1910–1920.

⁴ I discuss the role of radio technologies in military aspects of state building during the Mexican Revolution in my dissertation, J. Justin Castro, “Wireless: Radio, Revolution, and the Mexican State, 1897–1938,” Ph.D. Diss., University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma, 2013.

⁵ The Sonoran Group or Sonoran Dynasty refers to the revolution-era presidents that hailed from Sonora and ruled from 1920–1928 (or 1934 if one includes the Maximato, the six years where Plutarco Elías Calles wielded significant power outside of the presidency: (Adolfo de la Huerta, Alvaro Obregón, Calles).

⁶ For Gramsci’s discussion of relations of force and intellectuals, see Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers Co., 1971); Antonio Gramsci, *The Antonio Gramsci Reader*, ed. David Forgacos (New York: New York University Press, 2000). I am using “intellectuals” in a broad, Gramscian sense of the word. That is, that all social groups create a core of intellectuals—a group of people that provide organizational awareness and specialized leadership. By this definition, certain business leaders are intellectuals within their trades as much as professors are within academia.

⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, new edition (New York: Verso Press, 2006).

⁸ Gramsci and David Forgacos, *The Antonio Gramsci Reader*, 363–67.

⁹ Gallo, *Mexican Modernity*; Elissa J. Rashkin, *The Stridentist Movement in Mexico: The Avant-Garde and Cultural Change in the 1920s* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009); Ángel Miquel, *Disolvencias: Literatura, cine y radio en México (1900–1950)* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2005). Miquel also looks at the impact of radio on Mexican poetry more generally.

¹⁰ For example, Michael Nelson Miller, *Red, White, and Green: The Maturing of Mexicanidad, 1940–1946* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1999); Fernando Mejía Barquera, *La industria de la radio y televisión y la política del estado mexicano (1920–1960)* (Mexico City: Fundación Manuel Buendía, 1989); Hayes’s *Radio Nation*.

¹¹ Joanne Hershfield, *Imagining la Chica Moderna: Women, Nation, and Visual Culture in Mexico, 1917–1936* (Lanham: Duke University Press, 2008); Mary Kay Vaughn and Stephen E. Lewis, *The Eagle and the Virgin: Nation and Cultural Revolution in Mexico, 1920–1940* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

¹² See arguments made by Hershfield, *Imagining la Chica Moderna*; Rubén Gallo, *Mexican Modernity: The Avant-Garde and the Technological Revolution* (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 2005).

¹³ “Castro, Wireless,” PhD diss., University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK, May 2013; See also, Fernando Mejía Barquera, *La industria de la radio y televisión y la política del estado mexicano (1920–1960)* (Mexico City: Fundación

Manuel Buendía, 1989); Joy Elizabeth Hayes, *Radio Nation: Communication, Popular Culture, and Nationalism in Mexico, 1920–1950* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2000).

¹⁴ “Mexican Now Fond of Radio,” *Los Angeles Times*, 21 Aug. 1923, 4.

¹⁵ “Radio Exposition Given in Mexico,” *Los Angeles Times*, 16 Dec. 1923, II 15.

¹⁶ Manuel Gamio, *Forjando patria: Pro-nacionalismo* (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 2010).

¹⁷ For works on the Contemporáneos see, Merlin H. Foster, *Los contemporáneos, 1920–1932: Perfil de un experimento vanguardia mexicano* (Mexico City: Ediciones de Andrea, 1964); Salvador A. Oropesa, *The Contemporáneos Group: Rewriting Mexico in the Thirties and Forties* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003); Sheridan Guillermo, *Los Contemporáneos ayer* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2003).

¹⁸ Although much of the core of the Contemporáneos group was established by 1924, they did not pick up the name until 1928, when they published a journal by the same title. I am using the name retroactively for the sake of narrative.

¹⁹ *Irradiador* translates roughly into English as “something that radiates.”

²⁰ *Irradiador* vol. 1, no. 1 (Sept. 1923): cover page.

²¹ “Irradiación inaugural,” *Irradiador* vol. 1, no. 1, (Sept. 1923): 2.

²² T.S.H. was the Spanish acronym for both radiotelegraphy and early radio broadcasting (*telegrafía sin hilos* and *telefonía sin hilos*), which were often used interchangeably in the early 1920s. “T.S.H. (el poema de la radiofonía), *El Universal Ilustrado*, 5 Apr. 1923, 19.

²³ Gallo, *Mexican Modernity*, 133–140. Gallo provides a rich analysis of Estridentista poetry and its European Futurist influences. Gallo is correct to point out the impact of Apollinaire. His poem “Lettre-Océan” was the first to mention Mexico and radio in a poem together. However, Gallo’s analysis of this poem is incorrect. He claims that it was influenced from radio messages received in France from Mexico from Apollinaire’s brother, who was living in Mexico at the time the poem was written (1914). Apollinaire did have a brother living in Mexico, and his brother influenced the poem, but Apollinaire never received radio (radiotelegraphy) messages from Mexico. Mexico’s wireless stations could not transmit further than Florida at the time.

²⁴ Diego Rivera, untitled calligram, *Irradiador* vol. 1, no. 1 (Sept. 1923): 3–4; Manuel Maples Arce, *Sobrena juventud* (Madrid: Plenitude, 1967), 164.

²⁵ Manuel Maples Arce, quoted in Rashkin, *The Stridentists*, 28.

²⁶ Rashkin, *The Stridentists*, 28.

²⁷ Maples Arce lays out the basic contours of his professional life in his memoir, *Soberana juventud* (Madrid: Editorial Plentitud, 1967).

²⁸ “Radio,” *Antena 1*, no. 1 (Jul. 1924): 1.

²⁹ “¿Quien quiere un millon de pesos?” *Antena 1*, no. 1 (Jul. 1924): 17.

³⁰ "Cortesía Aérea," *Antena 1*, no. 1 (Jul. 1924): 17; "Lo que merece aplauso y lo que no lo merece en los conciertos de radio," *Antena 1*, no. 3 (Sept. 1924): 13.

³¹ Fernando Sayago, "Lo que falta en los conciertos de radio," *Antena 1*, no. 1 (Jul. 1924): 19.

³² Manuel M. Ponce, "S. M. el fox," *México Moderno* 1, no. 9 (May 1921): 180–81. Ponce was a regular contributor to *México Moderno*, writing the section "El arte música en el mundo."

³³ "Los artistas que tomaron parte en la inauguración, que anoche se efectuó, de la primera estación transmisora de radiotelefonía—'El Universal Ilustrado'—'La casa del radio,'" *El Universal* 9 May 1923, II 1.

³⁴ Carlos Noriega Hope, "La T. S. H.," *El Universal Ilustrado*, 8 Mar. 1923, 11. *Hermanos de leche* literally translates to "milk brothers" or "mothers of the same breast" implying born from the same mother.

³⁵ Foster, *Los contemporáneos*, 12–14.

³⁶ Alvaro Obregón, "El Gral. Alvaro Obregón, al abrir las sesiones ordinarias el Congreso el 1 septiembre de 1924," *Los presidentes de México ante la nación: Informes, manifestos y documentos de 1821 a 1966* (Mexico City: Cámara de Diputados, 1966), 638.

³⁷ Bernardo J. Gastélum, *Palabras del Dr. Bernardo J. Gastélum en la inauguración de la estación de radio de la Secretaría de Educación Pública C. Y. E., instalada en esa dependencia del ejecutivo por acuerdo del C. Secretario de Educación Dr. Bernardo J. Gastélum, siendo Presidente de la República el C. Gral. Alvaro Obregón México, 30 de noviembre de 1924* (Mexico City: Editorial "cultura," 1924), 3–10. The SEP station briefly went by the call letters CYE, but changed to CZE in a matter of months.

³⁸ "Hawaiian" music including ukuleles became popular in the United States in the early 1900s via the World's Fair. It became popular in Mexico, along with Broadway numbers, by the mid 1920s.

³⁹ "La policía invitada a la rebelión," *Excelsior*, 4 May 1920, 10; "Planes para difundir ideales revolucionarios," *Excelsior*, 1 Nov. 1934, 1,4.

⁴⁰ Rashkin, *The Stridentist Movement*, 225–26; Hayes, *Radio Nation*, 39.

⁴¹ Rashkin, *The Stridentist Movement*, 226; Elena Jackson Albarrán, *Seen and Heard in Mexico: Children and Revolutionary Cultural Nationalism*; (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, forthcoming); Castro, "Wireless," 267.

⁴² Julio Moreno, *Yankee Don't Go Home! Mexican Nationalism, American Business Culture, and the Shaping of Modern Mexico, 1920–1950* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 25; Hershfield, *Imagining la Chica Moderna*, 36.

⁴³ Díaz ruled as president 1876–80, 1884–1911.

⁴⁴ Gallo, *Mexican Modernity*, 143–44.

⁴⁵ El Buen Tono ad, *Irradiador* 1, no. 3 (Nov. 1923): back page.

⁴⁶ El Buen Tono ad, *Antena 1*, no. 2 (Aug. 1924): back page; El Buen Tono ad, *Antena 1*, no. s (Sept. 1924): back page.

⁴⁷ El Buen Tono ad, *El Demócrata*, 3 Jun. 1923, 12–13.

⁴⁸ José J. Reynoso, quoted in, "Al pie de la antena C.Y.B.," by José Manuel Ramos, *Antena* 1, no. 1, (Jul. 1924): 18–19.

⁴⁹ El Buen Tono ad, *El Demócrata*, 7 Aug. 1923, 12.

⁵⁰ El Buen Tono ad, *El Demócrata*, 26 Aug. 1923, 17.

⁵¹ "La estación radiotelefónica C.Y.B. de 'El Buen Tono,'" S.A. dedico su concierto de anoche a Cuernavaca," *El Demócrata*, 2 Jul. 1924, 8; "El concierto de anoche de 'El Buen Tono,'" fue dedicado a la caridad de Tacubaya," *El Demócrata*, 24 Aug. 1924, 8; "Un concierto de claridad en Piedras Negras transmitido por la estación C.Y.B. de 'El Buen Tono,' S.A.," *El Demócrata*, 1 Nov. 1924, 16.

⁵² "El enorme éxito de nuestra estación 'Excélsior-Parker'," *Excélsior*, 6 Apr. 1924, III 9; "Nuevos testimonios del éxito de nuestra estación transmisora 'Excélsior-Parker'," *Excélsior*, 13 Apr. 1924, III 9; "Mexico Radios Culture," *Los Angeles Times*, 7 Mar. 1926, F11; "La primera estación radiotelefónica en la Republica," *El Universal*, 8 May 1923, 1; "Mexico is Mart for its Output," *Los Angeles Times* 5 Jul. 1925, F4; "Mexico Showing New Interest in Radio Programs," *Los Angeles Times* 1 Sept. 1929, 25; "Como ayudar al desarrollo del Radio," *Excélsior*, 26 Aug. 1924, III 11.

⁵³ "Solamente fue inaugurada anoche la estación de El Mundo," *El Mundo*, 15 Aug. 1923, 1.

⁵⁴ "Una de las estaciones de radio en Mexico," *Excélsior*, March 9, 1924, III 7; Letter from the municipal president of San Ángel, DF, to the manager of El Buen Tono, 1924, caja 8, exp. 288, Fondo Ayuntamiento, Archivo Histórico del Distrito Federal, Mexico City.

⁵⁵ "Carnet social," *La Revista de Yucatán*, 8 Mar. 1923, 4.

⁵⁶ "Aviso del nombramiento de oficial mayor de la Sria. de Comunicaciones a Modesto C. Rolland," 7 Nov. 1914, Mexico City, caja 326, exp. 3, Fondo Instrucción Pública y Bellas Artes, Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City, hereafter cited as AGN; Modesto C. Rolland, *Lecciones sobre presas. Dadas en la clase de topografía, drenaje y riegos en la Escuela Nacional de Agricultura y Veterinaria* (Mexico City: Secretaría de Fomento, 1906); Michael M. Smith, "Carrancista Propaganda and the Print Media in the United States: An Overview of Institutions," *The Americas* 52, no. 2 (Oct. 1995): 159–60; Modesto C. Rolland, *Towards A Single Tax in Mexico* (New York: Latin-American News Association, 1917); "Reanudará sus trabajos la C. Agraria," *El Universal* 30 Mar. 1922, 10; Modesto C. Rolland, *Los Puertos Libres Mexicanos y la Zona Libre en la frontera norte de la Republica Mexicana* (Mexico City: Empresa Editorial de Ingeniería y Arquitectura, S.A., 1924).

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- ⁶⁰ "Dos conferencias," *El Universal Grafico*, 19 Sept. 1923, 1.
- ⁶¹ "La Liga Central . . . progresar la radio," *Excélsior*, 24 Feb. 1924, III 7.
- ⁶² "Se organiza una serie de conferencias sobre radio-telefonía," *El Universal*, 18 Mar. 1923, 6; "Conferencia sobre la radiotelefonía," *Excélsior*, 6 May 1923, III 11; "La Liga Central de Radio hace progresar la radiotelefonía," *Excélsior*, 24 Feb. 1924, III 7; "'Excélsior' convoca a un gran concurso," *Excélsior*, 21 Sept. 1924, III 2.
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- ⁶⁴ "Piden se anule el reglamento para el radio," *Excélsior*, 14 Jun. 1923, II 1.
- ⁶⁵ "Al pie de la antena: '1-J'," *Antena 1*, no. 3 (Sept. 1924): 14–15.
- ⁶⁶ "Radio concierto de la estacion 1-J para hoy," *El Demócrata*, 17 Aug. 1924, 12.
- ⁶⁷ Luis Antonio de Noriega and Frances Leach, *Broadcasting in Mexico* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), 15; Mejía Barquera, *La industria de la radio y televisión*, 36–37; Hayes, *Radio Nation*, 37.
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- ⁶⁹ "Radio Exposition Given in Mexico," *Los Angeles Times*, 16 Dec. 1923, II 15.
- ⁷⁰ "La feria del radio fue inaugurado por el presidente de la república ayer," *Excélsior*, 17 Jun. 1923, II 1; "La próxima feria de radio en la capital," *Excélsior*, 27 May 1923, III 9; "Al pie de la antena: '1-J'," *Antena 1*, no. 3 (Sept. 1923): 14–15.
- ⁷¹ "Mexican Now Fond of Radio," *Los Angeles Times*, 21 Aug. 1923, 4.
- ⁷² Ángel Miquel, *Disolvencias*, 166–70.

