On October 17, 1947, Thelonious Monk began his career as a jazz bandleader by sitting down at his piano, glancing at Art Blakey on drums, Gene Ramey on bass, Idrees Sulieman on trumpet, and Billy Smith on tenor sax, and kicking off “Humph,” a blazing bebop number. During this initial session for Blue Note records, Monk and his bandmates unleashed a wave of pent up fury; the group’s solos, weaving and bobbing through rapid chord changes, were at once a gaze backward and a surge forward: backward to jazz’s beginnings, forwards toward some rapidly approaching future. Together, the members of Monk’s group blared in defiance of an ailing America; they soared across extant borders and barlines; and they all but obliterated the lagging vinyl. To think the echoes of such vivacious solos—and the energies of jazz music in general—would someday grace the pages of storied Chican@ writers like Américo Paredes and underground heavyweights like Raúl R. Salinas may seem daft, a leap even. Though as Monk’s work often demonstrates, such bounds are not only possible, but revelatory.

It is no secret Américo Paredes, a canonical figure in the study and production of Chican@ literature, held vested interests in music, literature, and culture. Where his poetry featured his deft skill and subtle poetics, his fiction displayed his wry wit and masterful storytelling; where his scholarship captured his narrative sense and critical dexterity, his songs showcased his romantic vision and artistic care. It is less known, however, that before he penned and published his lauded study of border corridos, With His Pistol In His Hand—a study that would eventually help launch his oeuvre into the heavens of Chican@ literary and cultural history—he served as a journalist in the U.S. Army stationed in Japan from 1945-1950: a
postwar context when jazz music became tenuously linked to a United States exporting idyllic notions of democracy and capitalism. And despite the numerous scholarly texts championing Paredes’s contributions to literature, ethnomusicology, folklore, and Chican@ and Latin@ intellectual history, very few have attended to Paredes’s journalistic writings from this tumultuous period, and even fewer have tuned in to the jazz in those writings.¹

And whereas Paredes traveled abroad and reported on, among many things, jazz and Japanese popular culture, Salinas penned his jazz thoughts differently.² From 1957-1972, Salinas served time in Soledad State Prison, Huntsville State Prison, Leavenworth Federal Penitentiary, and Marion Federal Penitentiary on charges of drug possession; during his ever-extended sentences, he wrote poetry, fiction, essays, and jazz criticism of such caliber that professors and writers from across the United States penned impassioned letters to the State of Texas on his behalf. From within the walls of these four notorious prisons, Salinas participated not only in a Chican@ literary renaissance, but also in the discourses of the Civil Rights Movement, articulating in art and criticism new modes of connecting people across categorical boundaries. An ardent jazz lover, his poetics directly engage the improvisatory, his criticism the rhythms of jazz history.³

¹ Since the mid-20th century, scholars have written a number of texts lauding Paredes’s invaluable contributions to the study of literature, music, and culture across numerous fields. Until recently, however, the scholarly chorus remained relatively silent about his time in Japan; Ramón Saldívar’s The Borderlands of Culture: Américo Paredes and the Transnational Imaginary (Durham, NC: Duke University Press 2006) remedies this silence. Combining intellectual biography, literary analysis, and cultural criticism, Saldívar’s important work on Paredes’s time overseas catalyzed my scholarly interest in the music he heard and processed through writing. This essay simply would not have been possible without Saldívar, who not only inspired this work with his own, but also afforded sterling conversation about Paredes’s intellectual history and invaluable access to Paredes’s postwar-era journalism.


³ Concerning Salinas’s lesser-known work, I extend my warmest thanks to ethnomusicologist Catherine Ragland of the University of North Texas, who introduced me to Salinas’s writing years ago; Javier Rodriguez, Walton Muyumba, and Masood Raja for encouraging my early interest in his writings; José David Saldívar, Josh Kun, and Charles Kronengold for their brilliant observations about Salinas’s poetry; as well as Tim Noakes and
As some scholars have stated, Salinas was undoubtedly a gifted poet and activist; as others have pointed out, he was also an organic intellectual in the Gramscian sense; and as a few have mentioned in passing, Salinas had a penchant for bebop. What no scholar has undertaken is a serious engagement with his jazz life, particularly as it relates to Chican@ literary and cultural history. By queuing up his unsung writings, fraught with literal and figurative jazz rhythms and references, I aim to synthesize Chican@ literary and musical archives into a new critical narrative of Chican@ aesthetic and intellectual practice.

While Paredes and Salinas’s well-known works highlight, as Alexander Weheliye might put it, musics, literatures, and oralities distinctly interconnected in Chican@ intellectual history, it is in their unsung works that we find notable intersections of Chican@ and African American intellectual practice via the spirit of jazz. These writings, most of which have remained peripheral to discourses about Chican@ literature, offer new information about these figures on topics recurrent yet overlooked in Chican@ literary and cultural study: the relationship between writing, sounding, and social categories (race, ethnicity, nationality) via jazz music, Chican@ letters, and the historical conjunctures of the 1940s-1970s. For while numerous analyses of Chican@ and Latin@ cultures and literatures draw on music to unpack narrative strategies and aesthetic practices—especially the corridos Paredes rightly amplified—some too quickly drape

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4 Because of everything Salinas did to voice Chican@ and Native American concerns—to become a voice of the Chicano movement—it makes sense that his love of jazz music has taken a back seat in terms of the majority of scholarly analysis on him. In terms of positioning Salinas within literary and ethnic histories, amplifying his aural imagination in relation to his importance to Chican@ letters complicates his contributions, linking them to complex networks of cultural production that are interethnic, heterogeneous, and more difficult to manage in first-wave mappings of Chican@ narrative.

this music across all of Chican@ cultural and literary discourse. By focusing on influential figures like Paredes and Salinas, I aim to create a new dialogue between writings and musics to advance a novel history of Chican@ and Latin@ cultural production, culling from circumstances and cultural productions that define and disrupt the borders of nation, race, and ethnicity.

I offer a modest foray into a large conceptual terrain: by focusing on ad hoc intersections of musics, literatures, and historical currents in Paredes and Salinas’s unsung writings, I argue jazz has been an audible presence in Chican@ letters since at least the 1940s—that Chican@ literature has had a soundtrack including not only the Mexican folk musics that have so informed academic studies of Chican@ literature, or even the hip-hop that informs contemporary studies of Chican@, Latin@, and African American cultural imbrications, but also swing, bebop, and hard bop: virtuosic sounds for extraordinary writers. When we listen for the enunciations elided in the production of histories—like jazz in Chican@ literary history or Chican@ writers in jazz history—we amplify muted notes, reworking prevalent narratives with thought in a different mode, re-reading, in this instance, brown in the key of blue.

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6 That said, even in 1990, Ramón Saldívar rejected any claim (corridos included) to an authoritative, linear, reductive genealogy of Chicano narrative and aesthetic practice, more broadly:

. . . I do not attempt to establish a single, originary source for all Chicano narrative. Against such an essentialist and ahistorical view, I show how the corrido has served as much to incite narratives differing from its ideological base as it has informed narratives conforming to its world view (47-48).

This anti-essentialism aligns with the theoretical engine Saldívar constructs in the introduction to his salient text. After all, how could one propose a dialectics of difference while simultaneously practicing and promoting essentialist thinking? For more, see Ramón Saldívar, Chicoano Narrative: The Dialectics of Difference (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press 1990) and José David Saldivar, Border Matters: Remapping American Cultural Studies (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press 1997).

7 These ad hoc intersections include performed and recorded jazz poetry, re-mediated music in prose, music as a motif in literature, specific musical traditions referenced in literature, specific locales shared by the literary and the musical. While an in-depth analysis of all of this material in Paredes and Salinas’s oeuvres is beyond the purview of a single essay, all of the material has informed my approach to the writings on which I focus here.

8 In future projects constituting a more realized cultural-critical history, I aim to extend this work to include not only bebop and hard bop jazz, but also Chicano rock and psychedelia, corridos and the blues, conjunto fusions and Latin@ hip-hop, culling from a diverse archive (i.e. literature, journalism, recorded music, interviews, and other corresponding texts) in the process.
I. Over the Barline is In: Jazz, Postwar Japan, and the Journalism of Américo Paredes

A. Soundcheck

In 1946, Paredes, writing from Japan, reported the following of a local hit song: "One of these days, someone is going to swing it. Then they'll really have something." Working for Pacific Stars and Stripes, he was referring to "The Apple Song," a tune all the rage in Postwar Japan; over fifty years later, Paredes’s words resonate anew, inviting a swung approach to the thinker’s time in postwar Japan. For the Japan that Paredes encountered was, as he reports for English and Spanish newspapers, one coming to grips with a changed center of gravity, a new cultural physics. The presence of the U.S. Army in Japan included not only throngs of soldiers—many of whom, like Paredes himself, who were suddenly united by a standard-issue uniform despite hailing from different social, racial, and ethnic backgrounds in the United States—but also entertainment to quell restlessness, homesickness, and tension. Jazz musicians from the United States traveled to Japan to play at bases and in nightclubs; jazz musicians from Japan and other neighboring countries emerged and participated in the country’s bubbling jazzscape. From this swirl of heterogeneous American soldiers, Japanese citizens, and touring artists emerged lush scenes marked by swung solos and local melodies, booming theater productions and thriving businesses boosted by the occupation. Paredes, suddenly embodying a mainstream American identity that before he had stood outside of as a Mexican American from South Texas—suddenly encountering the newness of a distant land, formulating expanded notions of transnationalism, and measuring the sounds and stanzas of Postwar Japan against his experiences as a musician and writer in South Texas—offers through his journalism an unparalleled entry into jazz, América, and unsung Chican@ writings.

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9 Pacific Stars and Stripes, Saturday, March 30, 1946.
As music scholars E. Taylor Atkins and Jennifer Milioto Matsue have noted, Japanese jazz has histories at once imbricated with and distinct from American jazz.\textsuperscript{10} Before WWII, swing took root in Japan; during WWII, jazz was suppressed, marked as the sonic signature of an enemy force; and immediately after WWII, while Paredes found himself responding to perceptible shifts in Japanese cultures, it surged into something new: at once distinctly Japanese and entangled with the United States. For U.S. jazz in the 1940s was a fast-moving current that contained a wealth of possibilities and contradictions: while Paredes was stationed in Japan, bebop was thriving in the United States, erupting into displays of virtuosity, into celebrations of the limits of technical and improvisatory possibility.\textsuperscript{11} As American jazzers, including Charlie Parker and Charles Mingus, were sketching this newer, more ferocious jazz in the United States, across the Pacific, Japanese jazz too began to blossom into something new, informed by its own local stars and inflected by the musicians who would visit its shores to perform.\textsuperscript{12} When American jazz music was flown across the ocean for the entertainment of U.S. soldiers, it was simultaneously placed in conflict with existing Japanese jazz, juxtaposed against the variegated musical tastes of a heterogeneous occupying force, and, as Ronald Radano has explained in a related context, “removed from its African American cultural referent and defined in deracinated terms as a respectable expression of American democracy.”\textsuperscript{13} As E. Taylor Atkins explains:


\textsuperscript{12} One of these musicians, Lt. Jimmy Araki, is largely credited by Japanese jazz historians as having introduced bebop to the Japanese national context, performing as a multi-instrumentalist while simultaneously working as a translator in the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal. In a forthcoming project, I aim to place Araki’s contributions in conversation with Paredes’s journalism.

What was known as “jazz” in the late 1940s was virtually unrecognizable to most Japanese. Jazz was essentially reintroduced to Japan in bebop, cool, and progressive guises, collectively known as “modern jazz.”

The jazzscape Paredes experienced while stationed in Japan was one as in flux as the rest of the country’s cultural dimensions; the “modern jazz” of the 1940s United States converged with the Japanese jazz that had been driven underground by the war. The contrast between the two created a situation in which jazz music could no longer be said to be a distinctly American cultural product, but a group of localized musics bearing similar though distinct characteristics and social functions. Thus, when Paredes plays with the idea of swinging “The Apple Song,” he does so in the context of an environment in which swing can be something at once American and Japanese (though both linked to a modernity exported from American shores). As Paredes typed his articles for *Pacific Stars and Stripes* and *El Universal*—as he wrote in his journal and experienced a new world—the surge of jazz music in Japan was at once a process of Americanization and an exploration of a new mode of Japanese improvisatory practice: a marker of unequal, contemporaneous developments, a sign of a world globalized anew.

Despite the links between jazz and Japanese artistic expression, however, many Japanese citizens still heard the music as connected to an imposing force. This rift in how Japanese people interacted with the music’s many stylistic shades draws additional attention to Paredes’s in-print remarks about Japanese nightlife (particularly along the Ginza). As Atkins puts it:

> In the context of national reconstruction and expanding entertainment and leisure pursuits, jazz appealed to a generation whose inherited value system had been pummeled, yet the reputed ‘art of freedom’ remained manacled to American-defined standards of artistic originality and authenticity. And for many Japanese, jazz music remained

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15 To hear popular or jazz music as possessing positive potential is to already occupy a certain position in social space. To hear it as imposing is to live in a different position. It is important that jazz music not be a completely benevolent sonic presence in Japan, nor it be only a soundtrack to occupation and imperialism: jazz is iridescent in Occupation-era Japan, which is what makes Paredes’s observations so intriguing.
irrevocably the song of the conqueror, inextricably linked to everyday displays of American night.\textsuperscript{16}

The constellation of music, authenticity, and belonging are familiar territory for jazz artists and scholars alike; for Paredes, these forces broach both the Mexican folk musics he grew up playing, composing, and consuming as well as the jazz musics that were blooming in cities like Austin, TX while he was enlisted and abroad\textsuperscript{17}. That Japanese citizens would be wrestling with jazz music as part of an encounter with democracy—and that Paredes would be sensitive to these complexities as he acquainted himself with Japan by writing about its art scenes—is notable, knotty, and enlightening, for as José David Saldívar and Ramón Saldívar have suggested, these experiences prime Paredes’s his later ethnomusicological, folklorical, and literary endeavors.\textsuperscript{18}

Just as Paredes described an art exhibit at Ueno Park as “remarkable for its occupational overtones,”\textsuperscript{19} so too are the echoes of jazz music in postwar Japan and the intimations of it in Paredes’s contemporaneous writings notable for theirs.

While Paredes broaches jazz music in writing, he was by no means a jazz critic in a formal sense; his relation to the music is both inflected by his upbringing in the Rio Grande Valley, at the border of Texas and Mexico, and shaped by his true musical passion: the Mexican folk musics about which he would devote many pages. For at the same time jazz criticism was blooming as such (1920s), Paredes was coming of age at the Texas-Mexico border; for the most part, jazz remained somewhat peripheral to border life, coming to people’s ears primarily through the border blaster radios about which Ramón Saldívar has written. To suddenly find

\textsuperscript{16} Atkins, Blue Nippon, 167.

\textsuperscript{17} For more on this, see Ramón Saldívar’s analysis of Paredes’s “comedy of errors” at a Japanese restaurant in The Borderlands of Culture, 362.


\textsuperscript{19} Pacific Stars and Stripes, March 24, 1946. See also Ramón Saldívar, The Borderlands of Culture, 362.
himself in Japan, a world unknown beyond the myths and purported facts circulating in the United States, and to be surrounded by the sounds of jazz music, sonorous street vendors, and the occasional Mexican-Japanese folk tune created a sound world truly reflective of the country’s eddying social currents.

At the same time, the American jazz musicians lending their talents to the entertainment of U.S. soldiers abroad were dealing with the budding association of jazz with an audible African American political presence. As Eric Porter states:

. . . bebop emerged during a period when other musicians and observers increasingly saw jazz as a vehicle for African American political activism. The federal government’s enlistment of black musicians to perform at USO shows, make V-disc recordings for troops, and appears in jazz-themed films with patriotic messages afforded these musicians and their supporters the opportunity to engage in Double-V activism, in which they linked support for the war with a demand for African American rights within and outside the music industry.20

Too, during WWII, the U.S. proliferation of “racist propaganda directed toward Japan and the internment of Japanese Americans” engendered, as Porter summarizes, “domestic interethnic affiliations among people of color.”21 Combined, these situations paved the way for transnational solidarities to be realized. And when we consider these dynamics together, what becomes evident is that depending on who was listening, the blazing solos of bebop—or “modern jazz”—were in the 1940s at once a symbol of African American intellectual practice, a mark of U.S. occupying forces, a synecdoche for American popular culture, and an invitation to local Japanese jazzmen and women.22 In truth, the vibrant jazz music Paredes heard in Japan was iridescent, possessing, as Toni Morrison describes of the jazz she knew, an “intellect, sensuality, [and]
“anarchy” and a “history,” “range,” and “modernity”\textsuperscript{23} imbricated as much with Japan’s Postwar Period as the United States’s Pre-Civil Rights Period—and as much with white Americans as with black musicians, Japanese citizens, and Mexican American soldiers.

When we consider that WWII prompted an unprecedented integration of ethno-racial groups in the U.S. Army—something virtually unthinkable since WWI\textsuperscript{24}—we come to understand more fully what Paredes means when he captures in writing situations in which he was positioned to bear the weight of an American culture he had before been excluded from because he was a Mexican American from South Texas. In truth, his writings reveal an internal conflict somewhat paralleling that of jazz in Japan: Paredes is forced to deal with the American identity he assumes when drafted into the U.S. Army, though at the same time must understand points of convergence and divergence with the Japanese people among whom he lives. And out of Paredes’s personal counterpoint of identities emerges a notion of transnationalism he would later refine, challenge, and revise in creative and academic work. While Paredes himself did not turn to jazz music as his “vehicle for identity formation and self-actualization” the way that other “members of disparate cultural communities”\textsuperscript{25} did and would do after him, he underwent personal transformations on a ground zero for jazz’s westward blooming. His writings are an entry point into these eddies that touch, these hurricanes of history that lock arms if only for a brief while.

**B. Paredes’s Postwar Riffs**

In his landmark study of Paredes’s occupation-era journalism, Ramón Saldívar poses a


\textsuperscript{24}For more, see José de la Luz Sáenz, *The World War I Diary of José de la Luz Sáenz*. Edited and translated by Emilio Zamora and Ben Maya. (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press 2014. Also, see *Borders of Time-Space: The Global Imaginary in South Texas Literature—A Study of Mexican-American Writing in the Early Twentieth Century* (forthcoming).

\textsuperscript{25}Eric Porter, *What Is This Thing Called Jazz?*, xvii.
provocative question: “How did [Paredes’s] experiences as an American soldier, journalist, and humanitarian aid worker affect his understanding of the United States-Mexico borderlands?”

And as Saldívar rightly points out, there is no answering this question without the Ginza, a space known in the mid to late 1940s as a tempest of entertainment and cultural mixing. As “an urban mixing ground,” this space not only challenges Paredes’s repository of experiences linguistically, culturally, geographically, and musically, but also highlights the fast-moving currents of culture in postwar Japan. As Saldívar eloquently puts it:

... the Ginza has become an urban mixing ground, a site of ‘con-fusing’ where quite literally East and West met, touched, and erotically swayed to the rhythms of American swing and jazz, transcending their differences with body language, even if only for the moment of the taxi dance.

Through art and entertainment, the Ginza effectively writ large what was occurring on many levels of social life in postwar Japan: processes of “con-fusion.” In an article for *El Universal*, Paredes records his encounters with these “con-fusing” mixtures by zooming in on the proliferation of cabarets and the presence of Mexican-American soldiers in local nightlife:

“Los cabarets se prohibieron durante el régimen militarista; pero tan pronto como se rindió el Japón renacieron los centros de baile como el “Oasis de la Ginza”, “Edén”, “Manhattan”, “Marigold” y otros bien conocidos de los soldados de ocupación, entre los cuales se encuentran muchos mexicanos. El mexicano en el Japón ha creado gran fama como experto en el baile.

The cabarets were banned during the militaristic regime; but as soon as Japan surrendered, the dance clubs were reborn as “The Oasis of the Ginza,” “Eden,” “Manhattan,” “Marigold,” and others well known by the occupation soldiers, among whom are many Mexicans. The Mexican in Japan has created much fame as an expert in dance.

Paredes’s observations on Japanese nightlife and Mexican-American soldiers complicate a too-
simple Japanese/American binary, amplifying ethnic, racial, and cultural heterogeneity within the occupying forces (and by extension, the different peoples of Japan). This swirl of cultures—a blurring of the borders between East and West—is something like a shockwave rippling throughout the country, and at least one epicenter is the Ginza.\footnote{I lean on this East-West construction tentatively, keeping in mind Edward Said’s now storied critiques on the matter: “a very large mass of writers, among whom are poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, ‘mind,’ destiny, and so on. This Orientalism can accommodate Aeschylus, say, and Victor Hugo, Dante and Karl Marx” (2). For more, see Orientalism (New York: Vintage Books 1979).}

Just as he commented in numerous articles on the cabarets frequented by American soldiers and Japanese citizens alike, Paredes also attuned his ear to the lilts of local swing emanating from these nighttime hotspots. In a piece for \textit{El Universal}, he notes:

Los gustos musicales del japonés tienden más a la música dulce, al tango y al fox romantic que al “swing” norteamericano, y en esto encuentran afinidad en los de nuestra raza, aunque no dejan los nuestros de ser muy afectos al “jitterbug” también.\footnote{Ibid.}

The musical tastes of the Japanese tend more to sweet music, the tango and fox romantic, than the US ‘swing,’ and on this they have found affinity with those of our race, but they do not allow us to be very sympathetic to “jitterbug,” too.\footnote{Ibid, my translation.}

Commenting on what he perceives of Japanese musical tastes, Paredes triangulates three distinct cultural positions along a musical vector: the Japanese, the (mainstream) U.S., and arguably, Mexicans and Mexican Americans. That Paredes reports that the Japanese “tend more to sweet music, the tango and fox romantic,” aligns the Japanese more with Latin American cultural productions than with the “US ‘swing’” music that was certainly bustling in the area. This, in concert with a comedy of errors that ensues when Paredes argues with someone in a restaurant over the origins of a song he understands to be Mexican and others know to be Japanese, reveals an important Mexican, Mexican American, and Japanese dynamic fueled by the U.S. occupation.
But what it also does is highlight something important about the jazz music circulating in nightclubs, homes, and other establishments: that Japanese citizens on the whole had mixed relations with it despite its popularity. Indeed, during the “early postwar period” in which Paredes was writing,” jazz symbolized for many “the cultural power of the victor”; what was in one part of the world a celebration of African American intellectual practice and political visibility was in another part a sonic mark of Japan’s defeat in WWII. And the music sounded constantly. As E. Taylor Atkins writes:

Jazz blared from Occupation-controlled media and from the entertainment districts set up for the American troops. The Japanese government, on behalf of SCAP [General Douglas McArthur, Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers], hired hundreds of Japanese entertainers to perform for American troops and for ‘democratic propaganda’ on the airwaves’. Perhaps, as Isoi suggested, there was no escaping jazz. But the music proved seductive enough that millions of Japanese did not object. 

The ubiquity of jazz in Japan during the postwar period, coupled with the “con-fusion” of rapid cultural upheaval and the creation of solidarities between ethnic American troops and Japanese citizens, creates a complicated context for Paredes as he works his beat for Spanish and English publications—a context that continually reveals itself through the music Paredes captures in writing.

When Paredes writes in Pacific Stars and Stripes about “Ringo No Uta” (“The Apple Song”), he not only flexes his wry wit, but also reveals much about the sounds and sound horizons of postwar Japan by being sensitive to the country’s tumultuous cultural shifts. In his description of the song’s place in a theatrical production, Paredes relays details about his perception of the tune: “When it is evident that her happiness will be complete, the new singing star sings the “Apple Song,” a two-quarter time melody not quite Japanese.”

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34 Atkins, Blue Nippon, 171.
36 Pacific Stars and Stripes, March 24, 1946.
would be “not quite Japanese” is interesting in itself; when considered alongside Paredes’s remarks about “Japanese musical tastes” and the musical material itself, it becomes something more. For “Ringo No Uta,” now a Japanese pop cultural staple that survives in multiple covers across various genres, was first a polka with notable shifts between major and minor modes—a polka bearing rhythmic and tonal resemblances to Latin American musical works, including works like “Chão de Estrelas” by Brazilian composer Silvio Caldas (1937). If this tune is in line with the “sweet music” Paredes would reference only weeks later in an article for El Universal, it is notable that Paredes would cite swing as the next logical step for the song, even if half-jokingly. For just as jazz music catalyzed an explosion of Japanese musical exploration, it also embedded the United States into Japan’s musical horizons in a new way. As Atkins contends:

. . . for some two decades after the Occupation ‘liberated’ Japan, the jazz community remained shackled to a standard of authenticity that privileged the American exemplar. Rather than a ‘liberated’ artistic community committed to an exploration of the unknown and the unprecedented, we find a community in the teleological conundrum of having its artistic future mapped out by others: its aesthetic was referential; its art was quite deliberately derivative and its customs contrived; its faith in its own creative powers was too often obscured by its infatuation with American examples.38

The teleology Atkins describes—a forward march not just toward a “liberated,” modern Japan, but toward an American-defined modern Japan—could be said to inhere in Paredes’s memorable tagline: “One of these days someone is going to swing it. And then they’ll really have something.”39 However, to suggest as much without also noting Paredes’s wry rhetorical stance would be an injustice not only to his awareness of his cultural surroundings, but also of the creativity of Japanese improvisatory practice and the solidarities between Japanese, Mexican, and Mexican American people forged along the Ginza and beyond. Where jazz in Japan becomes

37 El Universal, “Desde Tokio,” Written July 25, 1946; Published August 11, 1946.
38 Atkins, Blue Nippon, 168.
39 Pacific Stars and Stripes, March 24, 1946.
truly iridescent is in its relation to democracy, for it at once possesses the potential to exemplify in its form and practice democratic principles of participation and group awareness (as Walton Muyumba has noted) as well as associative links to a country purportedly driven by its democratic idealism: the United States. Paredes’s writings on this constellation of issues sheds light on the sounds and sentiments of a country reeling from a horrific war and a new occupation.

At the same time Paredes was reporting for *Pacific Stars and Stripes* and *El Universal*, jazz flooded Japanese airwaves in ways unprecedented and provocative. As Atkins tells us, during the postwar period, radio shows like “*Gems of Jazz* and *Honshu Hayride* hit the airwaves along with shows starring Kid Ory, Harry James, and Frank Sinatra. Countless jazz aficionados began their personal narratives with the epiphany of hearing jazz for the first time on WVTR or NHK.”  

Moreover, in late 1945, disc jockeys and jazz musicians like Matsumoto Shin began using radio programs like *New Pacific Hour* to merge “music with American-style optimism and democratic ideals,” creating a “sonic backdrop for life in the ruins.” This active merging of the sounds of jazz music with figures and sentiments of American democracy created an environment in which consuming jazz also meant grappling with the United States as a presence in Japanese social life. That these radio programs provided a soundtrack for a democratic idealism exported from the United States contributed to the entanglement of jazz and nationalism (and even transnationalism).

For example, in an article for *El Universal*, Paredes comments on this forced introduction of an exalted American democracy in Japan by way of a brief story:

> En el otoño de 1945, pocas semanas después de que desembarcaron las tropas aliadas en el Japón, me toco visitar un villorrio en las sierras. Para llegar a el tuve que viajar horas por ferrocarril y otras tantas a pie. Mi misión era entrevistar a los campesinos acerca de su situación económica y de cerciorarme de la escasez de víveres en la región. Fui el

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40 Atkins, *Blue Nippon*, 172.
41 Ibid.
primer soldado aliado en visitar este lugar y encontré a los campesinos tan cooperativos como hospitalarios. Pocas semanas antes habían estado cortando cañas de bambú y afilando las puntas para defenderse hasta el último hombre en contra de la esperada invasión aliada, la cual se evitó con el rendimiento. Tuve dificultad en hacerles preguntas a estos campesinos, no por falta de cooperación de su parte, sino porque tenían ellos demasiadas preguntas que querían hacerme a mí. Casi todas eran variaciones del mismo tema. “¿Qué es la democracia? ¿Cómo funciona? ¿Exactamente qué es? Explíquenos por favor qué es la democracia.”

In the Fall of 1945, just weeks after Allied troops landed in Japan, I visited a village in the mountains. To get to there, I had to travel hours by rail and as many on foot. My mission was to interview peasants about their economic situation and investigate the food shortage in the region. I was the first Allied soldier to visit the place and found the peasants cooperative and hospitable. A few weeks earlier, they had been cutting bamboo shoots and sharpening the tips to defend to the last man against the expected Allied invasion, which was avoided. I had difficulty asking questions of these farmers, not for lack of cooperation on their part, but because they had too many questions to ask of me. Almost all were variations on the same theme. “What is democracy? How does it work? What exactly is it? Please explain what democracy is.”

Paredes traces this desire to understand democracy to the defeat of presumably undefeatable Japanese forces and modes of life:

El orgulloso pueblo japonés se encuentra derrotado, su suelo invadido y subyugado por la primera vez en su historia. Plantó todos sus sueños de conquista y de imperio sobre el “Bushido”, el modo de los dioses. El “Bushido” fracasó. La derrotó una democracia, un sistema del cual los líderes japoneses se mofaban y tildaban de débil e incompetente. Enteado de la situación, el pueblo japonés busca saber qué es esta cosa “la democracia”, y tartar de imitarla, de importarla al país para gozar de sus beneficios. Y ya convencido de la eficacia del sistema que resultó victorioso sobre el “Bushido”, el japonés, con su tenacidad de hormiga, pone todas sus energías en hacerse—cuanto antes y a toda costa—“democrático.”

The proud Japanese people have met defeat, their land invaded and subjugated for the first time in its history. The Japanese planted all of his dreams of conquest and empire in the “Bushido,” the way of the gods. The “Bushido” failed. It was defeated by a democracy, a system in which Japanese leaders scoffed and branded weak and incompetent. Aware of the situation, the Japanese people are looking to know this thing called “democracy” and to imitate it, importing it to the country to enjoy its benefits. And convinced of the effectiveness of the system that was victorious over the “Bushido,” the Japanese, with their antlike tenacity, put all of their energies into becoming—as soon as

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43 Ibid, my translation.
44 Ibid.
possible and at any cost—“democratic.”

As is made apparent by the musical landscapes of Japan during the postwar period, the energy put into understanding “democracy” occurred not only on the level of abstract political discourse, but also on the ground levels of art and entertainment. In 1945, just as some Japanese musicians preserved affinities with musical traditions distinct from American jazz styles, other Japanese jazzmen and women playing gigs for U.S. troops “performed stock arrangements imported from the United States, and when they took requests they were told to ‘play Bird.’”\(^\text{46}\) And, conversely, just as Japanese jazz musicians were catering to these particular American musical tastes, U.S. troops like Sgt. Isaac K. Joseph and Sgt. David Stacey were composing and performing their own numbers for Japanese audiences. As Paredes writes in *Pacific Stars and Stripes*:

> “Uta No Hanakago”—“Flower Basket of Songs”—Japan’s newest musical short which will be released shortly, will feature a song by Sgt. Isaac K. Joseph, GI staff songwriter at Tokyo’s Ernie Pyle Theater. . . . Sgt. Joseph’s song is a ballad named “I Know”, arranged by S/Sgt. David Stacey and translated into Japanese by Koh Fujura, Columbia Records lyric writer. It has been recorded by Columbia with Mariko Ike, who sings it in the movie short, doing the song for the recording, too.\(^\text{47}\)

That the exchanges between U.S. soldiers and Japanese citizens were a two-way street is certain; the specificities of such exchanges, however, reveal a top-down power dynamic even at the level of music, making Paredes’s observations about the harmonies between Japanese and Mexican/Mexican-American musical proclivities even more provocative. Positioned contra mainstream American culture, Mexican, Mexican American, and Japanese citizens could form solidarities and partnerships of many kinds; Paredes, positioned at a nexus of all of them—a Mexican American writer-musician enlisted in the U.S. Army and writing for English and Spanish periodicals while stationed in Japan in the moments after WWII—is best positioned to

\(^{45}\) Ibid, my translation.
\(^{46}\) Atkins, 168.
\(^{47}\) *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, Sunday, May 26, 1946.
grapple with vortices of knowledge and power uprooting older modes of Japanese social life. As a journalist with deadlines, he is forced to learn about Japan in public; in the process, he leaves trails to be followed, trails that, like Ellison in his 1982 introduction to *Invisible Man*, outline the convergence of “art and democracy” and beckon studies in “comparative humanity.”

Though Paredes’s writings for *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, *El Universal*, and his own journals only afford small, mediated windows into his experiences abroad—the sum of which is beyond the scope of this essay—they do grant us, as Ramón Saldívar has argued, an exciting look into a truly transformative time in Paredes’s life. As Paredes’s experiences make clear, the triangulation of the United States, Japan, and Mexico was occurring on many levels, including that of music—through transplanted *boleros* mingling with American swing styles among the infamous Ginza and beyond. And as if the élan of Paredes’s reportage is not enough, his proliferation is astounding: in 1946 alone, he penned some sixty pieces ranging from popular music to Kanji, Shakespeare to the Ginza, war trials to dinnertime banter, each demonstrating Paredes’s learning process: he taps into the pulse of a different world by latching onto how parts of his own experience (i.e. language, musics, social mores, even cultural authenticity) differ in this new space. These writings, inextricable from a complex historical moment, help map Paredes’s development and transformation into the man he would be when he returned to Austin, TX in the early 1950s: a man whose knowledge of alterity is textured by personal experiences with multiple nations and media.

**C. Coda**

The experience of radical alterity often casts the world we thought we knew—in Paredes’s case, life in the Rio Grande Valley, replete with *sones* and stanzas, new technologies

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and old guards—into stark relief, revealing how our assumptions have been working through us without our knowing their twists and turns. Paredes’s experiences in Japan are analogous to learning a new language: suddenly, when wrapping his mind around the logics and contours of another tongue, he becomes more aware of his own grammars.

Thus, it is no surprise that Paredes was able to pen the works he did once he returned to the United States. It is not that Paredes directly imported Japan into his seminal *With His Pistol in His Hand*, but rather that his new experiences in Japan unlocked his border life in an unforeseeable manner, enabling and arguably spurring him to pursue the innovative projects that mark the apogees of his output. Moreover, that Paredes *wrote* while in Occupation-Era Japan as a journalist on a deadline forced him to learn in public, to make visible his budding, blossoming thoughts on American and Japanese cultures. This written record and geographical distance highlight the processes of defamiliarization that unite Paredes with writers like Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, and countless other American writers of color who gained critical and creative insight about their homelands after leaving them for distant places—occasionally by volition, often under duress. And like Ellison, perhaps Paredes too held a belief, deep and nurtured by a foreign shore, that “war could, with art, be transformed into something deeper and more meaningful than its surface violence.”

Where Paredes’s postwar writings offer insight into the jazzed shores of Japan, traveling thousands of miles from Texas in late 1940s and encountering radical cultural difference and uncanny sonic familiarity, Salinas’s prison-era poetics illumine the relationship between jazz and Chicano poetics, exploring across genres and beyond the strictures of his confinement those sounds and styles that would help animate and poetize *El Movimiento*.

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49 Ibid, xvii.
II. Jazz, Race, and the Prison-Era Writings of Raúl Salinas

A. Soundcheck

Chican@ poet Raúl R. Salinas—also known as Roy Salinas, El Tapón, and raulrsalinas—also dealt with jazz in his writings, though did so in ways that underscored a deep admiration for the music’s intricacies and social possibilities. Born in Austin in 1934, Salinas’s youth was filled with the early sounds of bebop and hard bop, the music that would thrive in the United States while Paredes was stationed in Japan—the virtuosic bursts that would emerge out of after-hours jam sessions in New York and travel westward through circuits of performers and music distributors. This fast-paced music, engendered in part out of resistances to mainstream swing that had become commercialized and appropriated, is a constant force in Salinas’s poetry—from his early interest in the music and its live performance in East Austin jazz clubs to his signature jazz poetics and memorable performances with actual jazz bands.50

When Salinas was coming of age in Austin, he was privy to, as he explains in an unpublished document entitled “Biografía of Sorts,” the “[s]olos in the Black ghetto canton on Gregory St. (where one could see the stars at night through hole-y roof)”51; for him, such clubs were points at which people across racial and ethnic boundaries would meet to partake in nightly cutting sessions—for him, the jazz joint on Gregory St. was a sacred ground. As evinced by collections of poetry, unpublished writings, and recorded albums, this early exposure to jazz as a mode of intellectual practice shaped his trajectory as a writer until his death in 2008.

Despite the fact that jazz music is a bright thread woven throughout countless works of Salinas’s, literary scholars interested in his work have largely avoided entering jazz discourses

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51 Raúl R. Salinas Papers, Stanford Special Collections. M774 Box 1 Folder 1, “Biografía of Sorts.”
beyond the nods of parenthetical remarks.\textsuperscript{52} To wit, in a notable examination of Salinas’s oft-cited opus, “Un Trip Through the Mind Jail,” Michael Hames-García reads Salinas’s poetry and political consciousness through decolonial concepts Walter Mignolo presents in \textit{The Darker Side of Western Modernity:} double translation and diversality as a universal project.\textsuperscript{53} Specifically, Hames-García argues, “Like Mignolo’s double translation, raúlsalinas’s method breaks with the tradition of Eurocentrism while retaining a commitment to universal projects and communication across difference.”\textsuperscript{54} While Hames-García points to Salinas’s inclusion of particulars that have specific referents rather than archetypal functions—“Agnes Marie” versus “[Dante’s] Beatrice”\textsuperscript{55}—as well as Salinas’s “concern with the struggles of blacks, white radicals, Puerto Ricans, Marxists, and unionists”\textsuperscript{56} (though also Native American and queer communities), he only gestures to Salinas’s “deep interest in jazz”\textsuperscript{57} in the context of an aside. My position is that Salinas’s specific, studious interest in bebop and hard bop; his love for and invocations of Beat poets mixed with knowledge of a European literary canon, use of bilingual poetics, and appreciation of writings resisting coloniality; and his assumed identity as a prisoner, experiences in Texas, life in the Pacific Northwest, role as an educator, and function as a poet are all necessarily intertwined. None can be deemed spurious without jeopardizing the integrity of his thought as it develops throughout his life.

For as evinced by those close to Salinas, including artists and family members, there was no separating the man from the music he adored. Cherrie Moraga describes Salinas as “a ‘beat’

\textsuperscript{52} This is likely the case because musical, literary, and cultural historical knowledges are often segregated along disciplinary axes.
\textsuperscript{53} For more, see Walter Mignolo, \textit{The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options} (Durham, NC: Duke University Press 2011) and José David Saldívar, \textit{Trans-Americanity: Subaltern Modernities, Global Coloniality, and the Cultures of Greater Mexico} (Durham, NC: Duke University Press 2012).
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid, 199.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid, 201.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid, 204.
poet in the original sense of that word, drawing equal inspiration from a jazz sax and the ancient tambor.” Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano notes Salinas’s “poetic voice, blending Chicano politics and esthetics with the rhythmic legacies of jazz and the beat generation, cuts to the bone of the ailing social body.” Sandra Cisneros references Salinas’s “syncopated poetics heavily influenced by the Beat poets and jazz” as key to his “poetic master[y].” But despite his stylistic resemblances to figures like Ginsberg, Salinas’s jazz poetry is in a mode all its own, in a key contoured by East Austin, prison time, life as a Mexican American man, and importantly, an intimate relationship with jazz.

As evinced by the form and content of his writings, Salinas’s insider knowledge of jazz music finds a voice through literature, specifically poetry; as he notes while imprisoned in Texas, writing revealed to him his own multiplicities, his personal counterpoint:

“Poetry introduced me to my many selves . . . Writings express: (woman)loss . . . traditional exercises . . . awareness of, and attack on personal situation . . . unconventional forms . . . political awakening . . . confrontation with ME . . . la poesía proved essential para sobrevivir the madness of enforced captivity.”

Improvising beyond bars and across borders is Salinas’s modus operandi: throughout his work, he demonstrates improvisatory poetics, and the nuances of his writings, notes, and recordings at once quash primitivist notions of jazz expression, align him with other American writers fostering jazz proclivities, and distinguish him from Beat Generation writers exploring similar paths somewhat contemporaneously. Just as Charles Mingus actively pushed the boundary

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59 Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano in Raúl R. Salinas, “Commentarios on East of the Freeway.”


61 Raúl R. Salinas Papers, Stanford Special Collections. M774 Box 1 Folder 1, “Biografía of Sorts.”
between "improvisation" and "composition," so too did Salinas, composing moments on the page that swing, tapping not only into the literary traditions guiding his work—British, U.S., Latin American—but also the sonic world he inhabited—one of bebop and hard bop, corridos and rancheras, blues and early rock and roll.

Finally, Salinas’s political consciousness, ignited by the combination of his incarceration, his literary output, and his experiences in 1930s and 40s East Austin, differentiates him from Paredes, but more in terms of the particularity of historical and personal circumstances than the spirit of resisting the status quo.63

B. Salinas’s Jazz Writings

From 1957 until 1972, Salinas served time in four prisons on drug charges: Soledad, Huntsville, Leavenworth, and Mario. Incarcerated at the age of twenty-three, he would experience his intellectual coming of age from behind bars. He was a quick study as a practicing poet: if we are to take at face value a notation on a poem entitled “Para Un Discipulo Del Verso Moderno”—typed first in Spanish, then in English—Salinas wrote his first poem in 1958, the same year Paredes was publishing his landmark study, *With His Pistol In His Hand*.64 From 1958 to 1972, Salinas contributed from behind bars to social justice struggles by way of an attuned ear and a swift pen, noting in signature scrawl his poetized thoughts on solidarity, history, and jazz.

In the 1970s, Salinas compiled many—though not all—of his jazz snippets, stanzas, and sentences into two collections that have gone unpublished: “The Jazz Years” and *Music for the Masses.*65 “The Jazz Years” holds notable (though disorganized) pieces, including: micro

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62 Eric Porter, *What is This Thing Called Jazz?*, 124-129.
63 While it remains unclear whether Paredes ever wrote criticism of Salinas’s poetry, correspondence between the two thinkers indicates Paredes had both read and enjoyed “Un Trip Through the Mind Jail.”
64 Raúl R. Salinas Papers, Stanford University Special Collections. M774 Box 2 Folder 5.
65 Raúl R. Salinas Papers, Stanford University Special Collections. M774 Box 1 Folder 9 and M774 Box 1 Folder 11, respectively.
musings on music; details on jazz concerts and clubs that have since receded into memory; and handwritten lists of Salinas’s favorite artists, some nationally known while others of only local fame. *Music for the Masses* is unique in that it is the only collection of his literary and journalistic writings devoted exclusively to jazz, begging a provocative question: what would it have meant for an incarcerated Chican@ poet to release a book of jazz writings in the 1970s? Whatever the answer may be, in the unpublished collection—replete with poetry, letters, observations, pieces for a regular jazz column, and Salinas’s only surviving short story—the spirit of improvisation and the specificities of his insider jazz knowledge blare. And though we can trace a formidable musical prowess throughout Salinas’s oeuvre, these writings stand out as the closest thing to Salinas’s *own consolidation* of his Chican@ jazz writings.

Salinas’s “Music for the Masses” is a compact, half-realized collection spanning two decades—the earliest dated piece is from 1959, the latest 1978. He begins with a secondary title: “Jazz Jaunts.” On this secondary title page is an inscription of the contents: “/poems/prose/essays/letters/songs/bop prosody/& musical trips.” While not all of this material found its way into the manuscript Salinas stowed away, elements of each type of writing can be found in the collection’s pages. Ever devoted to jazz musicians, the Chican@ community, and African American revolutionaries, Salinas dedicates his collection as follows:

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66 Salinas’s explorations of jazz music across multiple genres of writing not only resonate with Paredes’s efforts, but also those of other writers, including Nathaniel Mackey. As Mackey and Art Lange write on the subject:

> Just as musical instruments differ in the tasks they can perform and the tonal and timbral contributions they can make, literary genres differ in the expressive possibilities they afford. To fully sample the range of what writers have done under jazz’s influence requires the inclusion of poems, stories, excerpts from novels and more—and by more we mean writings which blur the line between genres, bending genre in ways which are analogous to a musician bending notes. (n.p.)

For more, see Art Lange and Nathaniel Mackey, eds. *Moment’s Notice: Jazz in Poetry and Prose*. Editor’s note. (Minneapolis: CoffeeHouse Press, 1993), n.p.

67 Raúl R. Salinas Papers, Stanford University Special Collections. M774 Box 1 Folder 11, *Music for the Masses*. 

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To the Chicano jazz crowd of the 1950’s [sic] Austin Eastside/ Chuy z./ Chink Williams
(in whatever universe!)/ the many prison musicians/ cousins Juanillo & the other Tito/
and my companion: Georgia/Also to the memory of:

Lefty/ Lalo/ Tacho/
Bird/ Billie/ Bud/ & Pres/
   Clifford Brown/ Eric Dolphy/ Malcom
Coltrane/ Rashaan/ & comrades
   George & Jonathan Jackson

That Salinas would dedicate these writings to his heroes and compatriots speaks of both his
possession of insider jazz knowledge and devotion to a specific jazz tradition—one of boundary-
pushing boppers and experimentalists, of revolutionary figures on and off the bandstand.

The first full-length piece in Salinas’s *Music for the Masses* is a letter addressed to Ndada
Washira, an African American political activist involved in struggles for social justice beyond
the prison. In the letter, Salinas actively recreates (in a way distinguished from his typical
manner) a hip vernacular, aligning himself with a type of “Blkness” not only in content, but also
in form. What’s more, he demonstrates—as he often does—that while he knows canonical texts
of English literature, he finds more resonance with the writings of Langston Hughes:

B-ware/ do take care/ Longfellow?/ he jus’ ain’t mellow/ and Poe?/ he ain’t no mo’/
Don’t be so col’/ Dig Mr. Langston/ He gots whole latta’ SOUL/ Check out Miz’ Nikki/
for yo’ quickie/ lesson/ in down-home po-etix! 

These statements, in concert with related remarks in poems and correspondence, highlight
Salinas’s experimentation with an African American vernacular he honors, a rhetorical register
that equips him to say things with a different slant.

Even as early as January 1959—only weeks after writing his first poem—Salinas was
already experimenting with combinations of live jazz and poetry. The second piece in *Music for

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68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
*the Masses* is a short “experimentation in sound” entitled “Lamento.” 71 Finished on January 17, 1959, this would have been one of Salinas’s earliest poems, as he completed his first poem, “Para Un Discipulo del Verso Moderno,” on November 15, 1958.72 (He translated it into “To a Disciple of Modern Verse” on November 17, 1958.)73 Even in the earliest stages of Salinas’s poetry, jazz found its way onto the page—the written and aural traces of music notated on a piece of paper.

Dedicated to “the memory of Charles “BIRD” Parker,” a “musical genius & soother of early societal wounds,”74 “Lamento” combines the music and lyrics of Cole Porter’s “Night and Day” with original verse:

NIGHT AND DAY

“... you are the one,  
only you beneath the stars  
and under the sun . . .”

ON AN ENDLESS FLIGHT  
FROM A MUSICAL JOURNEY INTO PERFECTION  
A WEARY BIRD, TORMENTED  
FROM WITHIN  
SOUGHT REFUGE IN AN ALIEN WORLD.

No human ear was there to heed  
his sad/ plaintive/ WAIL . . .  

a  
Golden  
Voice  
was  
laid

71 Ibid.  
72 Raúl R. Salinas Papers, Stanford University Special Collections. M774 Box 2 Folder 5.  
73 Ibid.  
74 Raúl R. Salinas Papers, Stanford University Special Collections. M774 Box 1 Folder 11, *Music for the Masses.*
Salinas advises that the poem “be read contrapuntally with lyrics of Cole Porter’s ‘Night and Day’ interwoven,” effectively transforming Porter’s 1932 smash for *Gay Divorce* featuring Fred Astaire into an elegiac work celebrating the innovations of the great saxophonist Charlie Parker. That Salinas would do this in the years leading up to the Civil Rights Movement amplifies a commitment to solidarity born not only out of shared struggle, but a profound admiration for jazz music as intellectual practice.

In 1964, the same year jazz clarinetist Eric Dolphy unexpectedly left the land of the living, the same year the Civil Rights Act became law, Salinas tried his hand at fiction. In *Music for the Masses* rests what appears Salinas’s only surviving short story, typed though never released, entitled “Drum Trouble.” In it, a male protagonist and his wife attend a "jam-session at Powder Puff Lounge," soaking in the sounds of a jazz ensemble improvising into the evening. The protagonist grows irritated when his wife begins to fall for the drummer of the group—so much so that he lobbies to find another club. Once there, to the protagonist's horror, he realizes his wife once again possesses "goo-goo eyes" for the drummer, "Chuck Torres." Barely managing to control his frustration and nurse his ego, the protagonist takes solace in, at the end of the evening, finally heading home with his wife. After realizing his wife has gone into a bit of a trance while listening to a recording of "Chongo Mongo's drums" in the living room, the protagonist decides to attempt to solve his "marital ills" by purchasing a drum set—though whether he intends to learn to play is left up for speculation. As he leaves his home to travel to

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75 Ibid.
76 Ibid.
77 Ibid.
78 Ibid.
79 Ibid.
the music store, the narrator—presumably named “Fred”—whistles Lou Donaldson’s “The Masquerade is Over,” quelling his anxieties in his desperate attempt at, as he explains it, “satisfying mama’s weird obsession.” The piece ends with the strange promise of this new purchase; elongated ellipses dripping off the page underscore an uncertainty—whether or not the narrator intends to learn to play is a mystery.

A humorous piece, "Drum Trouble" has much to say about Salinas's approach to literary form, as well as his deep understanding of jazz music in American culture. The story, brief and brisk, places into conversation the often elided role of the jazz drummer, the guardedness of jazz knowledge, and threatened heteronormative masculinity, all of which combine into an ensemble of their own.

Though beyond the narrator, it is no secret the story’s most fascinating character is the narrator’s wife. While the narrator makes her seem as if she has no control over herself, it is actually the narrator who cannot determine why it is he feels so threatened. His threatened masculinity is further complicated by that while he is a musical person, he does not play music; his claim to musicality, just like his claim to masculinity, is thus threatened by his wife’s interest in jazz drummers.

The question that arises is: what has a short story about jazz, drums, and strained love have to do with Chican@ letters and activism? Aside from being penned by a canonical (though comparatively underground) figure in the prevailing narrative of Chican@ literature, "Drum Trouble" is a touchstone, a trace of Salinas’s aural imagination, evidence that in his creative acts—acts that augmented his critical thinking—he sought to come at his multitudes from different angles. The jazz engine of this short story imbues Salinas's understanding of literary possibility and Chican@ articulation with hipness.

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80 Ibid.
After Salinas’s quirky short story in *Music for the Masses* comes a section entitled “Blue Notes,” subtitled “(vignettes/biographical sketches/anecdotes/tragedies of people in the music world).” In it are only two pieces, “Elusive Drums” and “Kicking Cold Turkey,” each anchored by a specific jazz figure: Chink Williams and Mac, respectively. On the one hand, “Elusive Drums” reiterates that Salinas was working on this collection even after moving to Seattle, WA to work after completing his prison sentence:

I still think of Chink Williams on occasion. Especially on chilly, misty Northwest Sunday mornings on the Port Madison Reservation. Jazz comes through our patched-up, radioshack portable (veteran of the TRAIL in ’76) radio, out of Seattle, far from the warm songs of that southwest life still out there. Anyway, that’s when I think of Chink [sic].

We only met three times, but he made a lasting impression on me and my studies of jazz. The first time was at the old Doris Miller, an auditorium in the Black community, named after a local young man who died aboard a U.S. naval ship during the war. Chink was drumming with the Benny Green Orchestra and we rapped and we got high. I guess by then I was sort of a bag man for musicians passing through. The next meeting was at the same place some two or three years later when he was playing with the James Moody band. If memory serves me right, I think we last saw each other in San Jose, California, at the old Palomar Gardens. Was he playing with the Erroll G Garner Trio?

On the other hand, “Kicking Cold Turkey” returns Salinas to his memories of Texas as a jazzland:

Mac was a helluva’ bass player. He showed on our set sometime in the Fall of ’56. That’s the year we all started using SHIT in a serious, destructive way.

His last name escapes me now, but it seems almost unimportant at this point. But anyway, he came from Fort Worth, or “cowtown”, as most white folks call it. For us, “cowtown” was more than that, because of its rich and solid musical history. Yeah: Fo’t Worth, scene of some baaaaad encounters among territorial bands of the 1930’s [sic]. We knew it as the incubator of southwest “jump” styles and frenzied musicians. The home of Fathead, Six, Red Garland and Ornette rumblings, that’s where Mac was from.

The way he happened to be in Austin was that he and Green, who played trumpet, had met in an army band then attended the same all-Black college together, after discharge.

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81 Ibid.
Salinas’s anecdotes his and others’ experiences with jazz music that have otherwise gone unrecorded, especially in the context of Chican@ cultural histories. These passages indicate that he was a “Chicano man” committed to “writing about a purported Black music” while locked in “one of the country’s most vicious and inhumane prison systems.”82 They also indicate, as per Paredes’s postwar journalism and a note in Salinas’s Music for the Masses, that even “long before that time” when Salinas was penning his thoughts on jazz music and culture, “we already had Raza writing about jazz.”83

After “Blue Notes” sit journalistic writings by Salinas, writings crucial to Music for the Masses on the whole. For while incarcerated, Salinas funneled his critical energies into his prison-circulated jazz column, “Quartered Notes”—an effort entwined with his creative work. From January 1964 to May 1965, Salinas surveyed a multitude of styles and artists, though took special interest in Thelonious Monk—particularly in Monk’s role as jazz’s hapless painter. In the “Quartered Notes” column of April, 1964, Salinas reports:

> When Monk plays his music, he is like a painter who stands away from his easel and slings paints at his canvas. But you can’t object because of the beautiful colors he chooses.84

Here, Salinas writes of Monk’s sonic experimentation in a sideways manner, via a comparison to another artistic medium. The image of Monk standing away from the canvas and improvising art by “sling[ing]” paint echoes, in a way, Salinas’s experiments with new modes of expression via his appropriation of jazz as a mode of thought. The “colors” Salinas chooses for his experimentation are iridescent and steeped in many traditions—perhaps one being Indio, another Mexicano, and yet another African American. Though brief, for our purposes, Salinas’

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82 Ibid.
83 Ibid.
84 Ibid.
description of Thelonious Monk’s sound and process in this April column speaks volumes of his translation of jazz practices into Chicana/o enunciations. Therefore, the impact of jazz music on Salinas’s subjectivity is amplified by his jazz criticism.

Monk’s impact on one of Chicana/o literature’s most inventive poets embeds the pianist in the aesthetic code of Chicana/o literary and musical production. Of Monk, Salinas writes in the same April 1964 column of “Quartered Notes” that:

Thelonius Monk has always been considered somewhat of a weird and offbeat character, and his music has been described as the meanderings of a madman. Still, he remains an individualist, a prime requisite in the performing arts. Monk has yet to be swayed by the numerous schools and fads which have arisen since the advent of jazz. He lives in a wealthy land of dissonant chords, harmonic interplays, and rhythmic interpolations. From these he has never deviated.\textsuperscript{85}

That Salinas sees Monk as an “individualist” and a “prime requisite” for art, and thus, for culture, demonstrates Salinas’s respect for Monk’s sonic imaginings. Salinas’s apt description of Monk’s sound as laced with “dissonant chords, harmonic interplays, and rhythmic interpolations” also speaks of Salinas’s grasp on complex musical structures—though perhaps more importantly, of “traditional” jazz practices, and, in terms of Homi Bhabha’s work, what the sonic representation of newness in jazz might sound like.\textsuperscript{86} For Salinas, then, Monk is a great model. He exhibits all of the qualities someone theorizing a Chicana/o identity would want an artist to exhibit—individuality, a knowledge of the aesthetic tradition, though also departure from it. Thus, we can position Monk as the sonic representation of the inclusive consciousness Salinas fights to actualize through his art. Salinas’s attitude toward Monk aligns with a 1948 description in The New Yorker: “intensely interested in basic principles of life.”\textsuperscript{87} It is only fitting that among Salinas’s possessions, scrawled on a small scrap of notebook paper, tucked

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{86} Bhabha, Homi K. The Location of Culture. (London: Routledge 2010).
\textsuperscript{87} Richard O. Boyer, “Profiles (Bop),” The New Yorker, July 3, 1948, 30-31.
safely between the leaves of thick paper, rested a quote attributed to Monk, the hapless painter:

“Beyond justice, everything gets complicated.”

In another piece for “Quartered Notes,” Salinas argues good jazz is mimetic and “indigenous”; further, cultures mix in the musical and social structures of jazz music, and its sonic representations are, like in Chican@ cultural histories, native to the United States’ geographical space. In July of 1964, Salinas described jazz as a “product of our environment.”

He continues by stating that:

Predominant in this musical environment is the African culture blended with the European influences. There are also traces of the Latin culture inherent within its structures. But it is a native American product, nonetheless. One which we should not allow anyone to defile and desecrate…especially if we are to consider ourselves enthusiasts of modern jazz.

Salinas acknowledges “foreign” influences, but hails good jazz as native to the American experience. While under the moniker of “America,” this consciousness echoes the indigenous qualities of the Chican@ art-song and the identity encapsulated in Salinas’s work. This moment in Salinas’s jazz criticism places Chican@ identity formation in conversation with the greater African American tradition from which jazz descends. Salinas, rooted in sonic improvisation, positions himself as a counterpoint to artists like Ellison who, engaged in jazz improvisation as it relates to finding a new form of novelistic, jazz-influenced, improvisational prose, extend into the world a novel improvisation—newness in the novel via improvisation. To the extent that, as Walton Muyumba argues, “the improvised mark is a useful place to begin thinking about identity formation and the evasion of racial essentialism,” we can place Salinas alongside not just other influential Chican@ artists and critics like Paredes, Juan Felipe Herrera, and Cherríe Moraga, but

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88 Raúl R. Salinas Papers, Stanford University Special Collections. M774 Box 1 Folder 9.
89 Raúl R. Salinas Papers, Stanford University Special Collections. M774 Box 1 Folder 11, Music for the Masses.
90 Ibid.
also jazz musicians and African American literary and critical contemporaries to read their collective artistic production like a large ensemble improvising identities of the oppressed. Through the lens of jazz improvisational practices, we can better understand Salinas’s role as a Chican@ poet in a historical moment when American artists and activists amplified the coalescence of Chican@ and African American intellectual practices.

Beyond *Music for the Masses*, Salinas experiments with form in ways that reflect his deep appreciation for the jazz idiom. On the page and musical stage, Salinas presents a version of the Chicana/o experience that reflects his solidarity with African Americans and, by extension, highlights the role of urban soundscapes in the creation of ethno-racial literatures. Of the many poems in Salinas’s seminal *Un Trip Through the Mind Jail: y Otras Excursions* (1980)—published only two years after the compilation of *Music for the Masses*—four poems, “Jazz: A Nascence,” “Epiphany,” “No Tears for Pearl,” and “Song for Roland Kirk,” speak directly to Salinas’s interest in jazz improvisation as a literary, musical, and cultural modality out of which Chicana/os can improvise new identities.

From his Huntsville Prison cell, Salinas envisions a life beyond bars by building musical structures into his poetic forms, crossing ethno-racial borders in the process; “Jazz: A Nascence” illustrates this imagination. Salinas splits the poem into two sections of text, one of which imitates a melody, the other a solo. Based on the musical roadmap Salinas provides—“(Part 1),” “(Chorus I),” “(solo),” and “(out)”—this poem is at once a piece of writing and a jazz chart suited to the live performances Salinas later enjoyed. The beginning of the poem provides the context—the metaphorical key, chord changes, and melodic hook—out of which Salinas improvises a textual solo in the second half of the piece:

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Late night SHRIEKING Sounds!

commence
sweeping out the mental cobwebs
awakening brains from their torpor
tonal (poem) cascades
Gently
washaway
musty/ dust settled within
thin lines of genius/ madness.

O’ JazzBird fluttering in the darkened sky,
the willows have shed their tears too long
does no one hear their mournful cry?

La Tejana / Huntsville 1964

In his solo, Salinas bursts into a virtuosic display of technique, riffing on the power of sound as a tool for “sweeping out the mental cobwebs” and “awakening brains from their torpor”; in this poetic parallel to his writings in Aztlán, a prison-circulated newsletter started in the heat of El Movimiento, Salinas comments on a torpid, mainstream America in need of awakening. He then highlights his poetry’s hybridity by making the word “poem” parenthetical, allowing readers to interpret the line as a description of sound and the process by which hybrid poetry can cleanse the “musty/ dust” in the cognitive borders between ideologies—between the “genius” of a home ideology and the “madness” of the Other’s. Salinas ends his solo with an apostrophe to the “JazzBird,” tapping into the well of literary tradition to improvise in a social realm under a “darkened sky.” The “willows” weeping for change, stuck in a never-ending minor key, resonate with the marginalized people among whom Salinas counts himself. Their yet unheard “mournful cry” sets a precedent for a new kind of song: that of the jazzbird, the muse of innovation upon which artists at the edge must call.

Salinas extends this line of thought by championing jazz improvisation and African-American political activism in “Epiphany.” In this poem, he directly addresses the Black America he has only alluded to through his literary jazz by recounting a reading by UMKC poets in the late 1960s. Their calls for social justice and ethno-racial equity resonate with Salinas’s efforts to bring about positive change for the Chicana/o community:

i heard some black cats blow today
who spoke of pigs, of being free, of many things.
No Shakespeare/Keats/ or Shelley, they;
no bullshit sonnets of nobility & kings.

Oh, No!
Theirs was street poetry/turn on poesy
of the wake-up kind;
with snap-to-it rhythm
the type that blows your mind.

Eric Dolphy knew
& Malcom too

And so with clenched-fist i salute them:
Boss Bitchin’ Black Bards!
Spread out the deck and deal ‘em
it’s time to play some cards.

(afterthought)

the MAN’S stepped on our toes his final hour
from now on he should get
steady bombardment of our
People’s Power. 93

In the first stanza, Salinas recalls the sound of “black cats [blowing]” solos, momentarily leaving their mode of articulation—poetry, prose, jazz music—undefined. Salinas then states that the “bullshit sonnets of nobility & kings” were absent from the soloists’ enunciations; instead, the improvisers focused on, among “many things,” freedom. Additionally, Salinas again trumpets

93 Ibid, 45.
the value of solos that can wake people out of torpor and into action: “street poetry/turn on poesy / of the wake-up kind.” He plays with “snap-to-it [rhythms]” as catchy, toe-tapping sounds and tools that call listeners to attention. Calling upon his own knowledge of jazz and political activism, Salinas then celebrates “Eric Dolphy,” a multi-instrumentalist and pioneer of free jazz, and “Malcom [X],” an intrepid African-American intellectual. Salinas does so while articulating his solidarity with these “Boss Bitchin’ Black Bards” by saluting them with a “clenched-fist.” Finally, at the end of his “Epiphany,” Salinas argues that the subal terns of the United States have reached a critical mass, stating, “the MAN’s stepped on our toes his final hour / from now on he should get / steady bombardment of our / People’s Power.” Thus, Salinas unites himself with black communities by celebrating African-American aesthetic traditions and political activism, determining that cross-cultural demonstrations of “our / People’s Power” is a step toward social change.

Salinas again echoes jazz improvisation as a tool for social change in “No Tears for Pearl,” doing so as he commemorates Janis Joplin for her contributions to American culture. In verse, Salinas captures the spirit of la frontera and Homi Bhabha’s theories on the creation of newness: “From nether regions / —out of desperation— / comes an unrestricted / SOUND!”94 In these “nether regions,” the geo-political, artistic, and cognitive borderlands, innovation emerges “out of desperation.”95 In Salinas’s poem, Janis Joplin, a 1960s psychedelic rock singer, illustrates this necessary innovation as she emerges from a tumultuous nation-state bumping against its internal, ideological, and legislative borders. Her song “Turtle Blues,” celebrates her

94 Ibid, 73.
95 Ibid.
autonomy and stays with Salinas long after he hears it, “remain[ing] tattooed / forever on [his] eardrums.”

Salinas paints jazz improvisation as central to his vision in “Song for Roland Kirk,” championing the jazz multi-instrumentalist Rahsaan Roland Kirk as a guiding light for marginalized communities. At the outset of the poem, Salinas provides a parenthetical subtitle that also reads as a map for musicians with whom Salinas would later perform: “(in a minor blues mode).” In his first extended sentiment, Salinas praises Kirk for “dispelling fears / of / being / Sane” and concludes that Kirk, “in spirit tongues,” and “jokes / of / Hurt & Pain / Raining / Jazz / Tears,” was “close / to / Something.” Salinas later states that the sounds of “Struggling Saxophones” battling through improvisation were “SOUNDS / that somehow / made it / RIGHT / for / US”—for those “crowds of jazz” in “1950s Austin” to which Salinas and his barrio brethren belonged. Finally, Salinas links Kirk’s widespread appeal to his “talk[ing] to trees,” echoing Salinas’s attention to the “willows” in “Jazz: A Nascence.” Thus, through praise, Salinas involves Kirk in the construction of an inclusive, transcultural community—one free of the strictures of artificial boundaries.

In written poetry, Salinas captures the improvisatory spirit of jazz music through rhythm, invocation, and pagespace; his experimentation with form and focus on cross-cultural solidarity position his vision of community as inclusive and informed by his prison years and urban upbringing. But as indicated by even his earliest poetry, Salinas also felt committed to lending his voice to an actual jazz ensemble, to use his poems as solos. Before his death in 2008, Salinas

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96 Ibid, 74.
97 Ibid, 178.
98 Ibid.
99 Ibid, 179.
100 Ibid, 180.
101 Ibid, 43.
102 For more on Rahsaan Roland Kirk, see Josh Kun’s “Basquiat’s Ear, Rahsaan’s Eye” in Audiotopia: Music, Race, and America (Berkeley, CA: UC Press 2005), 113-142.
worked with Fred Ho and Tomás Ramirez, both acclaimed saxophonists, on jazz poetry records marked by exploratory improvisation and Salinas’s tenor voice. An in-depth, contextualized study of the text-music interactions on these records rests beyond the purview of this essay; what is apparent upon listening, however, is that there is an entire sonic history of African American and Chican@ intellectual practice to be excavated.103 And the need to do so is ever present. As Meta Jones writes:

> When the tools for composition are words, not notes, the shift from song to script enables certain features of signification while disabling others. Performance is central to jazz composition because improvisation produces innovation. Who would deny that by its very definition jazz poetry must contain improvisation in its performed context in order for it to be accurately defined? Thus, the demands for improvised jazz poetic forms might require that each performed iteration of the poem be recognizably different from the previous one. But what counts as difference? And on whose cognition of that improvisatory differential will we rely?  

What’s clear is that Salinas’s writings—from his prison days and beyond—challenge the studies of Chican@ literature to grapple with music in a different way, to tangle with jazz as a necessary addition to the *corridos* that so informed early studies of Chican@ narrative and the hip-hop energies driving contemporary work. For throughout his life, Salinas approached jazz music and musicians with a special reverence, an exaltation surpassing notions (held by some Beat poets) that skilled improvisers were “untutored, natural geniuses.”105 The sounds he heard—like those Paredes heard in Japan and many Americans heard in nightclubs and on radios—marked a flight

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103 Because Salinas’s work is steeped in hard bop jazz, Chicano activism, and cross-cultural inclusivity, it lends itself to the kinds of analyses Meta DuEwa Jones implements in *The Muse is Music: Jazz Poetry from the Harlem Renaissance to Spoken Word*. In the work, Jones argues the spatial features of jazz poems can be productively interpreted as notational practice; in the process, Jones compares multiple audio recordings of the same jazz poetry pieces to chart the relationship between live improvisation, written poetry, and artistic collaboration. Salinas himself cuts albums of jazz poetry in his later years; Jones’s approach may serve as a model for studying these artifacts.

104 Meta Jones, *The Muse is Music*, 212.

toward newness and a knowledge of tradition, a movement toward social change and an acknowledgement of past struggles.

**IV. An Unlikely Duet**

When Salinas was a boy grooving to the sounds emanating from East Austin jazz clubs—and, incidentally, just as Paredes was typing up articles for *Pacific Stars and Stripes* and *El Universal* an ocean away—jazz musicians were breaking down borders of their own, working to alter fundamentally any notion that improvisation was not an intellectual practice. And just as Salinas demonstrated his knowledge of the English canon while simultaneously distancing himself from it, so too did “radical young black American improvisers” with their respective sonic archives. As musicologist George Lewis notes:

> These improvisers, while cognizant of Western musical tradition, located and centered their modes of musical expression within a stream emanating largely from African and African-American cultural and social history. The international influence and dissemination of their music, dubbed ‘bebop,’ as well as the strong influences coming from later forms of ‘jazz,’ has resulted in the emergence of new sites for transnational, transcultural improvisative musical activity. \(^{106}\)

As demonstrated by Paredes and Salinas’s unsung writings, such “transnational, transcultural improvisative musical activity” manifests not only in New York, Austin, Huntsville, and Tokyo, but also across multiple media, from the musical performances along the Ginza to the literary explorations in Leavenworth Prison—as well as all of their conceivable permutations. Just as jazz musicians wished to subordinate and even shed the role of the entertainer, allowing them to break into the experimental in the ears of listeners and become recognized as aesthetically complex and valuable, so too did Paredes and Salinas, riffing across borders and barlines.

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And as it happened, the two thinkers did share some correspondence. In 1970, Salinas, along with others at Leavenworth Prison, created a publication called *Aztlán* dedicated to the concerns and currents of *el movimiento*. This was six years after Salinas penned his jazz columns, under the terrific name of *Quartered Notes*, as well as the bulk of the material for the *Music for the Masses* project that never made it past the drafting table. It was also just a few short years before Salinas’s release from prison and re-entry into the world beyond the prison walls (or at least the visible ones). Later that year, Américo Paredes received a copy of *Aztlán* while working at the University of Texas at Austin as a Professor of English and the Director of Mexican-American Studies. In a letter Paredes wrote to Salinas, Paredes inquired about a subscription to *Aztlán* for the students at the Center for Mexican American Studies. He also asked if the man to whom he was writing—Roy Salinas, one of Salinas’s early nicknames, a holdover from his childhood in an Austin largely hostile to people of color—was in fact “the Raúl R. Salinas who signs *A Trip through the Mind Jail*.”\(^\text{107}\) This question was perfectly reasonable, as Salinas’s best-known work appeared in the first issue of *Aztlán*.

Paredes and Salinas corresponded over the two years that followed, always maintaining a polite, professional decorum, never dipping into the realm of familiarity. But had they, perhaps they would have heard the music in each other’s writing. The closest indication of such an event is a piece of Salinas’s Paredes more than likely read, as it appeared in the *Aztlán* newsletter. This piece, entitled “Music for the Masses”—related to the unsung jazz manuscript only in name and spirit—effectively bridges the gap between Paredes and Salinas’s distinct yet complementary musical proclivities: for Paredes, Mexican popular music, border *corridos*, and other folk sounds; for Salinas, jazz ranging from bebop and hard bop to modal. In the piece, Salinas poses a provocative question: “What is Chicano music?” And to answer it, he turns to El Chicano, a

\(^{107}\) Raúl R. Salinas Papers, Stanford University Special Collections. M774 Box 5 Folder 23.
California band rooted in *El Movimiento*, jazz organ trios, and the birth of the “Brown Sound,” blending thoughts on Mexican folk musics, jazz, and rock in the process.\(^{108}\)

Paredes and Salinas’s relationships to disparate musics—swing, bebop, and hard bop; classical/orchestral; and corridos, boleros, and Afro-Cuban sones—as well as their implementations of wildly different poetic forms highlights the thinkers’ projects as entwined yet distinct, an aesthetic counterpoint sounding out a heteroglossic, multimedial, and above all inclusive portrait of Mexican American experiences in the 20th century. To wit, Paredes’s use of metrical poetic forms like the Petrarchan sonnet as a way of both anchoring his ideas in a literary form with musical roots—as well as hybridizing such forms through local color and his border consciousness—separates him from Salinas. While Salinas also roots himself in poetics with musical genealogies, he models his poetry after that of the Beats rather than the highly ordered, polished rhythms of British letters.

While Salinas’s works have remained marginal in studies of Chican@ writings, scholars from a number of fields have engaged the abundant dimensions of Paredes's thought. Ethnomusicologists and folklorists often turn to the latter half of Paredes's *With His Pistol in His Hand* while literary scholars tend to focus on the first half. José Limon, José David Saldívar, and Ramón Saldívar focus on the links between music and literature in Paredes's intellectual practice; music scholars like Catherine Ragland and Manuel Peña amplify the man's contributions, indirect or otherwise, to the blooming field of ethnomusicology by way of folklore. Two things emerge from this: effective cross-pollination or discursive border crossing is relatively rare despite the same figure's contributions to two fields of study (fields much more closely related

\(^{108}\) While working with the Raúl R. Salinas Papers, I came upon the track list for *El Tirado* (1970), El Chicano’s premier record, complete with Salinas’s own marginalia. Pairing this track list with the “Music for the Masses” article as well as the Paredes-Salinas correspondence gives us a sense of what was in the air at the time: the mixing of jazz concepts and Latin@ percussion with the early stirrings of rock and roll.
than, as in the case of Charles, atonal music and insurance)—Ramón Saldívar, José David Saldívar, and José Limón's works are notable exceptions; given the magnitude of Paredes's writings on corridos and other Mexican American folk musics, people have overlooked other musics with which Paredes engaged, jazz being one. Listening for the jazz in Paredes's thought enriches our understanding of the man's storied thoughts on music, writing, and culture while simultaneously uniting multiple nations of discourse, if you will, through an enigmatic figure.

Just as Toni Morrison wanted to engage the spirit of jazz music as much as its sounds, so too did Paredes and Salinas, in their own, distinctive ways. Through music, Paredes and Salinas, united in their efforts though distanced by time and lived experience, find a unique resonance, an overtone of the improvisatory ringing in their imaginations:

Another way of measuring the distance between Paredes and his Mexican American contemporaries in their divergent understandings of race, culture, and language and the construction of the modern New Mexican subject is to read his poetry with an ear to its distinctive intertextual affinities. Doing so allows us to see Paredes's accord with an amazing array of alternative modernities voices in African American, European, and American modernist poetry and an emerging new world empire of rhythm.

As Saldívar reminds us, through Paredes, we know that the traditions out of which Chican@ literature emerges include the musical and vernacular as well as the canonical; we know Paredes’s musical talent and literary skill converged into deft poetic, prosaic, and scholastic sentiments that have shaped the landscape of Chican@ literary and cultural studies. And through Salinas, we learn that jazz music and a thread of Chican@ letters from the 1960s on is entwined with jazz in direct ways—José Montoya, Sandra Cisneros, Alurista, Cherríe Moraga, Juan Felipe Herrera, Lorna Dee Cervantes, Trinidad Sanchez, Jr, and even Paredes himself. When we consider both Salinas and Paredes, distinct as they are in style and manner, as part of the same continuum of Chican@ letters, a subsonic truth becomes audible: Chican@ letters and their

\[109\] Morrison, Jazz, x.
\[110\] Ramón Saldívar, The Borderlands of Culture, 243.
storied writers, in the twentieth century and beyond, have not only intervened, but also improvised—not only subverted, but also swung.