

## The Mexican *corrido* in the age of YouTube: collective memory, cultural agency and hybridisation in the Ayotzinapa case

*El corrido mexicano en tiempos de YouTube: memoria colectiva, agencia cultural e hibridación en el caso Ayotzinapa*

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This article studies the inclusion of Mexican *corridos* to the subversive repertoire of contemporary transnational mobilisations claiming for social justice. Considered a hybrid genre of subaltern popular culture for the construction of collective memory, and based on Paul Ricoeur's narrative theory, we explore digital *corridos* in YouTube produced apropos of the mass disappearance of the 43 students in Ayotzinapa. Accordingly, we analyse to what extent digital appropriations of *corridos* create forms of cultural agency, providing alternative memories to official discourses.

**KEYWORDS:** Corrido, memory, hybrid culture, Ayotzinapa, YouTube.

*Se estudia la manera en que el corrido mexicano que circula en YouTube, en tanto modalidad híbrida de cultura popular subalterna para la construcción de memoria colectiva, se incorpora al repertorio subversivo de movilizaciones transnacionales contemporáneas por la justicia social. A partir del caso de los 43 estudiantes de Ayotzinapa, y basados en la teoría narrativa de Paul Ricoeur, se exploran formas de agencia cultural surgidas de apropiaciones digitales del corrido que proveen de memorias alternativas al discurso oficial.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Corrido, memoria, hibridación cultural, Ayotzinapa, YouTube.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Mexican *corrido* is a popular music genre which has shown significant ability to adapt to social and cultural changes over time, becoming a flexible and hybrid construct which constantly oscillates between permanence and change. The stories of injustices, betrayals and rebellions related by the genre encapsulate a series of elements in popular culture which contrast with or challenge formal historical narratives, in which mythical social figures emanating from folklore recreate events engraved on the collective memory. This phenomenon is particularly important in the digital age, as the dialogic nature of cyberspace significantly transforms the spatial-temporal factors of the production, diffusion and consumption of a genre, which is now subject to various appropriations. This being the case, we consider that the genre retains the possibility of establishing itself as part of the repertoire of resistance which gives voice to disenfranchised subjects and which, according to Honnet (1997), can serve as a platform in the fight for social recognition of the victims. At the same time, the *corrido* also reconfigures, by way of its iteration, the symbolic sense of the past and memory (Salvi, 2015; Rua, 2010).

In this article we focus on identifying whether the resistance *corrido* can adapt and be incorporated into digital culture, thus expanding the repertoire of contemporary protest tactics and whether the genre can connect global dissidents by way of the networked society (Castells, 2010), impulsing demands for social justice with local origins but global implications (della Porta & Kriesi, 1999; Leetoy, 2011a; Aikin, 2011).

Historically the *corrido* has demonstrated a capacity to adapt to change due to its syncretic nature. From the beginning, it fluctuated between history and fiction, the Spanish and the indigenous, the playful and the political. It is a mixed product originating from the hybridisation of native oral traditions with Spanish romance (McDowell, 1972). In this way popular culture appropriates the narrative voice to relate, in its own way, a lived experience by way of a catchy song that circulates in the community plazas and which reproduces the memory of the people through the generations (Cuesta, 1995; Paredes, 1963; Simmons, 1963; Florescano 2012).

The *corrido* can widen the repertoire of transnational activism with the help of digital platforms, since technology autonomously facilitates the creation of content, and simultaneously promotes the conjunction of audiences that, despite having heterogeneous identities, are concerned about the common issues which they experience. In other words, it represents a form of personalisation of protest which is a significant of contemporary networked society (Castells, 1999; Bennett & Segerberg, 2013). In this regard, cultural products also give rise to slogans and claims which are disseminated through performance, forging common identities through corporality and artistic expression (Taylor, 2003; Sommer, 2014). These productions are prone to being *viralised* and shared in cyberspace, where they form common identification milestones despite the multitude of global identities which come together in social movements (Zuckerman, 2014).

The mass self-communication permits the construction of dialogical narratives which hybridise authors with collaborative productions. Accordingly, as Castells comments (2009), it is no longer one individual transmitting to many, but rather many individuals transmitting to many others in a constant exchange of messages which always allows for the possibility of the reappropriation of media production.

This context of digitalisation is what leads us to the central questions of this investigation: 1) in what way are the functions and traditional characteristics of *corrido* modified as a counterdiscursive strategy? 2) Is the identity of the narrator of the *corrido* modified as a regional agent who prescribes and constructs memory? If this is the case, it is necessary to identify the agents of permanency and change in both the location of speech and the functions of a reflexive narrative. Carrying out this research is relevant because the *corrido* is a genre that can be lent to contemporary global social movements as an alternative route for the construction of stories. The genre also questions the hegemony of institutional version of events and considers community testimonies to be of great historical and journalistic value in the subaltern exploration of events (Westgate, 2013).

Based on the above, this article studies *corridos* published in YouTube relating to the disappearance of the 43 students of the

Ayotzinapa Rural Teachers' College, which took place in Mexico in September 2014. The corpus of research comprises 48 corridos that were obtained throughout the 15 months following the disappearance of the students. A discursive emplacement analysis was included, and this comprised identification of the producers, where they spoke from, and the type of production they chose to address the topic. In like manner, the audiovisual narratives and the descriptions that users made about their narratives were reviewed. From this starting point, we employed the Actantial Model of Algirdas Greimas (1976) and the reflexivity elements of Paul Ricoeur to review the structure of the story.

The complexity of the phenomenon invites analysis from an interdisciplinary point of view, in particular, that of cultural studies and literary theory, in order to understand the reflexivity processes associated with corrido narration and the hybridisation provoked by the convergence of diverse communication media. We also reflect on the work of Nestor García Canclini and Jesús Martín Barbero, who address the discussion of the hybridisation and enculturation of the popular.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, after a brief historical review of the corrido through the lens of hybridisation and the popular, we continue with the theoretical approach, in which the category of reflexivity posited by Ricoeur (1999) can be found. We subsequently focused on analysing the location and the narrative of the 48 corridos included in the study. Finally, we confirm that the digital modality does not affect the corrido regarding its structure and emblematic functions of counterpower and resistance, although the traditional ways of production and distribution are modified, becoming a cultural phenomenon that creates a unique type of memory reproduced not only orally but through technical repetition and narrative intertextuality.

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<sup>3</sup> Jesús Martín Barbero was a Paul Ricoeur's student. For more information, see: Moura, M. (2009, September 1). Jesús Martín-Barbero: Las formas mestizas de los medios. *Pesquisas*, 163. Retrieved from: <http://revistapesquisa.fapesp.br/es/2009/09/01/las-formas-mestizas-de-los-medios/>

## THE DISAPPEARANCE OF 43 STUDENT TEACHERS AND TRANSNATIONAL DIGITAL PROTEST

During the night of the 26<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> September 2014 in the municipality of Iguala, in the southern Mexican state of Guerrero, six people were killed, and 43 student teachers from the Raúl Isidro Burgos Rural Teachers' College were disappeared. The events took place in the context of a violent and confusing episode in which municipal police appeared to have colluded with elements of organised crime. The event was characterised by obfuscation, which caused difficulty in relating the event with historical accuracy. Hence, its narrative continues to be disputed. On the one hand, the federal government put forward a supposedly “historical truth”, which described how the young people had been killed and their remains incinerated in the municipal rubbish dump at Cocula at the hands of organised crime. On the other hand, the families and members of civil society organisations both national and international highlighted inconsistencies in the official version.<sup>4</sup> In this context, the digital *corrido* acquires particular relevance due to its ability to keep memories alive through a type of narration which gives voice to alternative communitarian versions of the story, which can be widely disseminated and give rise to demands for justice internationally.

To have a complete reading of the case and understand the relevance of the *corrido* in the mobilisation for Ayotzinapa, the socio-cultural context surrounding the disappearance of the student teachers should be considered. This incident is just the tip of an iceberg that reveals the existence of a historical problem of repression, authoritarianism, corruption, organised crime and extreme poverty in the region (Montemayor, 2006). Forced disappearances are part of the collective memory of the people of Guerrero, who felt particularly keenly the effects of the dirty war carried on by the Mexican state against social movements in the second half of the 20th century (Scherer, 2000; Mendoza, 2016). In this panorama of both direct and structural violence

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<sup>4</sup> Further information can be found in the report below of the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts (GIEI, by its initials in Spanish): <https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/actividades/giei/giei-informeayotzinapa2.pdf>

the Ayotzinapa Rural Teachers' College, in common with other rural colleges in Mexico, has historically functioned as a bastion of popular education and training in social justice and of resistance to an economic and political model which promotes exclusion (Padilla, 2009).

The context provided by social networks have permitted alternative representations of and meanings about the students and their families. The different digital platforms have been shaped as discursive opportunities which have been not only essential for the formation of transnational public opinion (Atton, 2003; della Porta, 2011; Clever, 1998) but have also helped to overcome uncertainty and to fix shared senses that transcend the prevailing misinformation.

The digitalisation of the protest has come to reconfigure the logic and repertoire of contemporary social movements and to resignify the processes of memory construction. Technological infrastructure has permitted what Bennett and Segerberg (2013) refer to as connective action, which, in a direct allusion to the collective action of Habermas, analyses how individuals put aside their own interests to unite in political action networks which connect them with different problems, expanding advocacy possibilities through digitally-mediated political involvement both on a personal and large-scale level. It encourages the participation of myriads of citizens who do not belong to traditional citizen-activist groups and who join the protest without leaving their private sphere (Conover et al., 2013).

Analysing the Ayotzinapa case on YouTube, it is possible to identify both activist groups and a plethora of private citizens from many diverse parts of the world acting on their account. This transnationalisation of dissidence does not depend exclusively on geographical proximity, structural similarities or historical interactions between nations (Olesen, 2010), but also encompasses diasporas that are motivated politically to promote social changes in their countries of origin by appealing to memory (Pratt, 2005). These initiatives generally begin locally, but their field of action, supported by ICT's, constantly transcends national and transnational areas and allows them to connect with hubs which could either be social movements or other collective actors (Olesen, 2004; McChesney, 2007; Leetoy, 2011b; Dahlberg, 2011).

In the case of Ayotzinapa, government silence was replaced by the *viral* spread of a unified message of global indignation that sided with the parents and blamed the state (Meneses y Castillo, 2016). The technology-mediated demands crossed different platforms, giving rise to a transmedia narrative (Meneses y Castillo, 2018). The result was simultaneous protest storms on Twitter, debates on Facebook pages and citizen awareness on YouTube, in addition to analogous platforms in the press, community radio and rallies.

On YouTube particularly the participation of multiple actors flooded the network with a wealth of varied cultural productions: public demonstrations, personal opinions, documentaries, and musical productions to name but a few. Among this wealth of material, those involving music stood out due to their high level of diffusion. It served to confirm the ability of music groups to identify commonalities with and link up to different social groups and to construct shared memories and identities (Chamberlain, 2003; Mendoza, 2010). Although any musical genre can function as a point of support, we consider that the *corrido* manifests as a very powerful cultural phenomenon in terms of constructing memory and identity, as we will subsequently demonstrate.

#### THE CORRIDO AS TRANSFORMATIVE POPULAR RESISTANCE

The *corrido* is a musical genre principally associated with popular resistance practices, and it combines both real and fictional events as well as adding complementary and alternative information to the story (Villalobos & Ramírez, 2004). For this study, we are not interested in those contemporary derivatives of the genre such as the ‘narcocorrido’, based on the hyperindividualistic and consumerist logic of illegality, but rather the appropriation of the traditional revolutionary *corrido* which stands as a counterdiscourse. From this basis, we explore the use of the *corrido* as a hidden transcript, as understood by James Scott (1990), who maintained that it gives voice to alternative narratives and forms of infrapolitics that question hegemonic discourses of ‘historical truths’. By the same token, the antecedents of the *corrido* can be examined and its role as a counterpower understood using the theories put forward by Jesús Martín Barbero (2003), who established

the existence of two principal historical processes which played a key role in the enculturation and marginalisation of the popular in the West: the religious and the enlightened.

At the beginning of the 19th century, religious indoctrination excluded and annihilated ‘pagan’ cultures in the drive towards cultural homogeneity. In this way, the Catholic Church censured the ‘Jarabe’ (an older form of the corrido), considering it an excessive and lustful practice used as a unifying element by rebel troops during the movement for independence from Spain (Mendoza, 1997). One hundred years later, the corrido as a genre was at the forefront of another social movement: the Mexican Revolution, and this is when enlightened secular enculturation became opposed to the genre. The movement to modernise Mexico regarded high European culture as the ideal and viewed popular culture and its origins as belonging to the realm of the vulgar and illiterate. For this reason, corridos were performed in ‘kiosks’ (small structures which were the focal point of the town square), and which were public spaces linked to popular entertainment (McDowell, 1972).

The advent of mass media and industrial culture gave rise to hybridisation that enmeshed the corridos with other types of commercial expression. However, the genre did not lose its transgressive character. Community radio stations served as spaces for the free diffusion of corridos challenging established power structures along with other commercial expressions, which came to represent the popular sentiment. The incorporation of the Internet in social life has resulted in the digitalisation of unedited forms of information and cultural expression. In the midst of this scenario, the corrido has once more adapted to the historical context, incorporating new socio-technical elements while simultaneously maintaining its attendant characteristics. In this respect, given that the phenomenon of an interconnected society implies the breaking and relocation of communicative borders, the digital corrido can be considered part of the repertoire of music that has migrated by way of the Internet and which foments the cohesive identity of diasporas (Muñoz, 2007; Olmos, 2012; Olvera *et al.*, 2015).

From this horizon, it is necessary to incorporate new categories which arise from other epistemologies and that contribute to the analysis of the complexity presented by the object of this study. Cultural



hybridisation, according to Néstor García Canclini (2013), is a Latin American proposal useful for continuing research into this area. The author considers that in the contemporary environment it is necessary to address social phenomena from the widest possible viewpoint. It is necessary to review one-dimensional ways of fixing identities, as many phenomena incorporate very fertile elements that cannot be explained by fixed categories but are the product of intertwined power relations arising from heterogeneous discourses. For this reason, this concept of hybridization requires nomadic social sciences which can migrate between disciplinary interstices, and which combine knowledge from the fields of history, anthropology, politics, sociology, philosophy, and economics and the humanities.

The phenomenon of hybridisation is evident in the corridos found on the Internet about the events at Ayotzinapa. The songwriters use this ancestral practice as a revolving door between the past and the present, the local and the global, as well as between the popular and the appropriation of the technology of mass self-communication.

#### NARRATIVE REFLEXIVITY: AGENCY, PRESCRIPTION AND MEMORY

We agree with Garza de Koniecki (1989), who states that the *corrido* is a musical-poetry narrative, and for this reason, we decided to analyse the research corpus using the category of reflexivity, which according to Ricoeur (1999) deepens the elements of social agency, prescription and memory by way of temporality. The theoretical proposal of Ricoeur harmonises and complements the category of hybridisation previously explained, as it accepts the existence of flexible identities which simultaneously fix limits in order to establish what elements within change can be viewed as permanent, thus giving rise to prescriptive elements which allow for memory to be constructed and abuse to be denounced.

The reflexivity to which Ricoeur alludes is coloured by pragmatism<sup>5</sup> and related to theories of action, of speech acts, and moral imputation,

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<sup>5</sup> Ricoeur (2000) considers his philosophy as a pragmatic one, founded intentionally on the will of the capable human being (p. 82).

which become more complex with the narrative temporality which functions as a mediator between an identity which simultaneously changes and remains the same. In this way, it is possible to appeal as much to the responsibility for acts committed in the past (moral imputation) as to imagine and narrate a new future. This capacity of the story to understand life as a whole and relate it within a linguistic community, makes it possible to delve into the reflexive project, for the actor clarifies the temporal dimension and evaluates it in accordance with the idea of “a good life in fair institutions” (Ricoeur, 1996, p.176). In his book, *La Memoria, la Historia y el Olvido*, Ricoeur (2000) adds one more dimension to this reflexivity: the construction of memory. Pragmatic change is acknowledged in each of the sections of the work – one can talk, act, be significant and impute one’s actions oneself. Now one say one can remember (p. 82). This sequence devolves the power of story-telling as an element of resistance in authoritarian societies which try to dictate what should be said, recorded or forgotten. Hence, Ricoeur affirms that memory, in this sense, is the guardian of history. This belief is also held by Todorov (2000), for whom historical memory can be “exemplary” and convert into an ethical-political project allowing us to act in the present to construct the future.

According to the statement mentioned above, 48 narratives of the Ayotzinapa corridos are analysed in order to identify elements related to agency and the prescription and construction of memory, with the intention of verifying how the material in the digital corrido has or has not kept its original narrative functions.

## METHODOLOGY

To ensure a high degree of objectivity in the selection of the research corpus to be analysed, we used software for digital enquiry in YouTube devised by the Cátedra Datos of the Faculty of Social Sciences in the University of Buenos Aires.<sup>6</sup> This tool makes it possible to obtain

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<sup>6</sup> This software was designed by @palamago, @ginocingolani, @ailensalamone and @martinked. The creators explicitly required to the authors to be identified by their Twitter accounts. See: <http://palamago.github.io/youtube-to-csv/>

random data downloaded in cvs format that includes public statistics, which, upon consumption, are generated by the digital platform. A search was carried out using the key phrase “corridos for Ayotzinapa” which obtained a primary sample of 152 music videos. The enquiry was carried out 15 months after the disappearance of the student teachers, with the intention of recovering the cultural material produced in the first year of the citizen protest movement. Taking into account the daily modifications to which digital ecosystems are subject, experts recommend compiling data on the development of the mobilisations on an ongoing basis (Rogers, 2013).

We then proceeded to filtrate our initial research corpus, reviewing the total productions and discarding three types: those which did not belong to the Ayotzinapa case (4), those which had already been deleted (8), and those which clearly belonged to other musical genres (92) such as ballads, rock and rap. Thus, we identified the 48 videos which made up our sample and which are a representation of the cultural output “Corrido for Ayotzinapa” produced and disseminated between October 2014 and December 2015 on YouTube. The selection featured two fundamental characteristics: the productions were explicitly labelled as corridos in the description, and they addressed the Ayotzinapa case as story-telling. With these two characteristics, we delineated the sample and simultaneously allowed for the inclusion of possible hybrids of the resistance genre within the digital appropriation.

As previously stated, the research has been divided into two sections: an initial discursive analysis followed by a story-telling analysis. In the first phase, the types of producers and the locations where the videos are made are identified, on the basis that the stories are discourses that are embedded in the struggle for social recognition. This task implies reviewing the generic information from the different YouTube channels, as well as reviewing the accumulated content of the cultural productions. In the second phase, elements related to our analytical category are identified: narrative reflexivity as agency, prescription and memory. Researching was carried out into both the motivations of the producers and the audiovisual narrative of the corridos.

The personal motivations behind the videos were obtained from the textual descriptions that the producers added in the social network,

with the producers themselves identifying their works as corridos. The next aspect to be reviewed was the audiovisual narrative of the 48 productions. In order to analyse the narrative structure, we used the Greimas' Actantial Model (1976), which considers subject-object, sender-receiver, and helpers and opponents. In order to identify the different actors within the story-telling, we considered, in addition to the text, the historical and sociopolitical context of Mexico. The use of the Actantial Model permits the reflexive elements to be located more easily, as well as easier identification of the story structure of the corrido.

## RESULTS

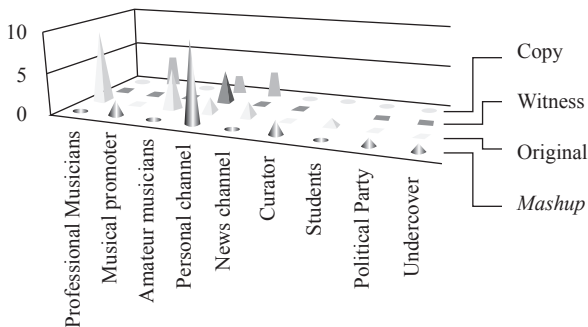
A review of the channels related to the above mentioned 48 videos allowed for the identification of nine main producers of YouTube videos about Ayotzinapa: we categorised them as professional and amateur musicians, promoters of regional music, curators of Mexican corridos, news channels, students from other educational institutions, political parties, and undercover and personal-use channels.

Professional musicians are distinguished from amateur musicians as they form part of the cultural industry and generate professional productions, while the latter are independent creators who own YouTube channels for the dissemination of their work in a simple format. Music promoters are distinguished from curators as they are traditional businesses that use the platform for diffusion, while curators use the YouTube model to commercialise their work by re-editing pre-existing videos and promoting subscriptions. Personal channels are differentiated from the rest because their production focuses on themes of private life such as family and work affairs and occasionally public-interest themes presented from a personal viewpoint. Undercover channels can be identified because they are built on anonymity, although their cultural product has the function of political activism. Finally, students from other educational institutions share spontaneous interpretations from diverse learning centres, and political parties use the corrido as a propaganda strategy.

Concerning form, the videos can be divided into four types of productions: original videos where the entire production is previously unpublished; straightforward copies from one channel to another; *remix* and *mash-up* style videos, and witness-videos: those made from one take in which the *corrido* is sung in a public space.

By cross-referencing the information, it was possible to identify that different actors were involved in different types of production. Professional and amateur musicians created original videos; music promoters and news channels made straightforward copies; curators, political parties and hidden channels relied on *remix* and *mash-up*, and students were involved in original and witness-style videos. Finally, personal-use channels were involved in all four different types of production, with the most popular being the *remix y mash-up* model, with the second most popular being the video-witness model (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1  
TYPES OF PRODUCTIONS AND PRODUCERS



Source: authors' own.

Regarding the geographical origin of the videos, 53% of them were made in Mexico, with 29% originating from outside the country, and 19% of the productions being made in unknown locations. It was ascertained that the most common points of origin for *corridos* outside Mexico were California (42.8%) and Illinois (21.4%) in the U.S.,

with both states having traditionally high levels of Mexican diaspora populations. In Mexico, Guerrero state (25%) and Mexico City (24%) were most significant, followed by the states of Oaxaca and Sinaloa, both with 8.3%.

When analysing how users described their YouTube productions, we found their motivations to be rooted in the construction of memory and the search for justice. We verified it by running the texts through the qualitative research software *Nvivo*, from which we generated semantic trees highlighting the most emblematic words. It revealed that the word *desaparecidos* ('disappeared') was preceded by phrases linked to homage and memory while being followed by prescriptive ideas indicating who was responsible and shaping future demands for justice. For example: "*Vivos se los llevaron y vivos los queremos*" ('They were taken alive, and we want them back alive'). We kept the original concepts in Spanish as displayed in the software (Figure 2).

We then proceeded to analyse the audiovisual narrative by using the reflexivity categories of Ricoeur (1999) –agency, prescription and memory– using the facets of the Actantial Model developed by Greimas. When conducting the investigation, the most notable of the patterns we identified were the following: the constant construction of the corridos in two-time frames (the present and the past), and the protagonism of one of the musical stories that was featured in 20% of the sample. It is due to one particular corrido being appropriated by other producers for visual reprocessing and straightforward copying. The title of the original corrido is "*Ahora soy 43*" ("Now I am 43") by a songwriter called Miguel Angel Carrillo Figueroa who originates from the city of San Luis Acatlan in Guerrero state.

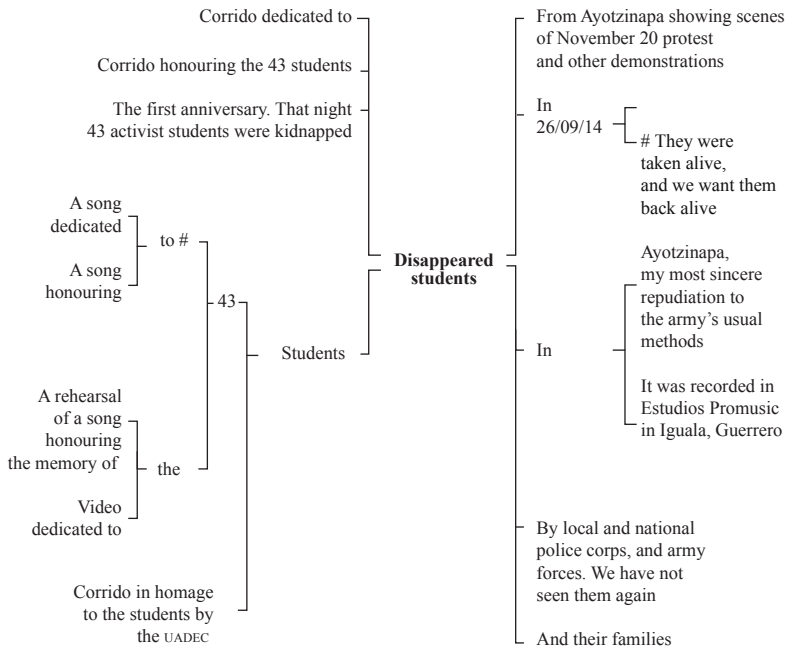
It is important to note that the digital corridos on YouTube, as audiovisual constructions, use a double dimension to narrate the event in two time-frames. Visuality is often used to accentuate the present tense, while the sung narrative recounts the past event.

In general, in the past tense, corridos relate the story of the 43 students,<sup>7</sup> determined to excel despite their poverty and become rural

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<sup>7</sup> According to Greimas (1976), the sender asks to the subject (hero) a determined action which can or cannot be accepted (for duty or desire). Thus, the subject is related to the capacity of action. Poor people are senders demanding help for the

FIGURE 2  
SEMANTIC MAP: THE DISAPPEARED



Source: authors' own.

teachers. The intended audience is the humble people of Mexico, with the Ayotzinapa Rural Teachers' College being a protagonist siding with the students. The narco-state forms the opposition, and this

Ayotzinapa students (p. 273). Greimas attests that humans create meaning based on binary oppositions. In other words, we perceive each entity according to its opposite and negation. This structure shapes our social experience and forms of articulation. It takes the form of narratives, including conflict and resolution, struggle and reconciliation, separation or union. Actants undertake the narratives, i.e. the functions of the characters of the story (a sole character, for example, can have the role of two or more actants) that Greimas integrates into three opposed pairs: Object-subject, sender-receiver, helper-opponent.

comprises the local authorities, the police and the army who are acting in collusion with the drug cartels:

*Todo comienza en un sueño, por quererse superar / Madre ya me voy de casa, me voy para la ciudad. / Madre ya me voy de casa, mamá tengo ganas de estudiar. / Como no había pa'l (sic) viaje, me puse yo a trabajar; / hice mi examen de entrada con ansias contento de ir a estudiar a esa escuela rural. / El 26 de septiembre sucedió todo lo peor / fuimos todos agredidos con armas, por el gobierno opresor ... Ya no pudimos salvarnos, a golpes nos levantaron / nos desnudaron a puras mentadas, nada podíamos hacer:/ Bocabajo con la bota en la cara, nos querían desaparecer. / Después de un golpe en la nuca, todo se me oscureció / se me nublaron los sueños, hermano, de ser un buen profesor. / Se me borraron los sueños, hermano, pinche gobierno opresor (Rodríguez, 2015).*

It all began in a dream because you wanted to overcome / mother I'm leaving home, I'm going to the city. / Mother I'm leaving home, mother I want to study. / As there were no funds for the trip, I started to work / I did my entrance exam with a lot of determination to study at that rural school. / The worst happened on the 26<sup>th</sup> of September / all of us were attacked with weapons by the oppressive government ... We could not save ourselves, they took us with violence / they stripped us naked, we couldn't do anything./ Face down with a boot in the face; they wanted us to make us disappear. / After a blow to the nape of the neck everything went dark / my dreams of being a good teacher clouded brother. / My dreams were destroyed brother by an oppressive scumbag government (Rodríguez, 2015).

The young people were represented as oppressed, and in some versions, as presumed dead. The prescriptive component is accentuated, the actor responsible for the proceedings highlighted, and the cruelty of the act and the impotence of the people described thus:

*... la policía los detuvo cuando venían del boteo / en Iguala se dio todo para darle miedo al pueblo / se planeó en dos ataques uno por la policía y otro por enmascarados pa' que no haya teorías ... no cabe duda que éstos son actos de terrorismo del crimen organizado en un estado fallido / mien-*



*tras José Luis Abarca dice que estaba bailando yo creo que se está bañando con el dinero del diablo* (Vocesdelpueblo2014, 2014).

... the police detained them after their call for funding rally/ in Iguala everything was done to frighten the people / two attacks were planned, one by the police and the other by masked assailants to create confusion about who was responsible ... there was no doubt that this was an act of terrorism on the part of organised crime in a failed state / and although José Luis Abarca said he was dancing, I believe he was bathing in the devil's money (Vocesdelpueblo2014, 2014).

In the present, oppressed people consider the *corrido* singers as agents summoning to take action and the singers, for their part, raise their voices to demand justice as an object of value. Mexicans are urged to seek solutions, generally of a revolutionary nature (agency). Heroes of the Mexican history are portrayed as iconic fighters for social justice, with some of the characters commonly featured in the traditional *corrido* being as follows: Emiliano Zapata, Pancho Villa, Genaro Vázquez, and Lucio Cabañas and Carmelo Cortés (memory). It is the time-frame in which the young people of Ayotzinapa are presented as disappeared, and who must not be forgotten (memory). The opponent is the impunity and corruption of the federal government, principally represented by the figure of president Enrique Peña Nieto (prescription).

In the part of the story set in the present, agency is articulated through prescription and memory, and in this way, the narrator takes on the role of the one responsible for recovering memory to demand truth and justice:

*Los pobres no tienen voz / los pobres son invisibles / los pobres pagan las cuentas del político inservible/ y también sus votos cuentan para un gobierno insensible / hoy quiero decir ya basta ...* (Atayde, 2015).

The poor have no voice / the poor are invisible / the poor pay the price of useless politics/ and their votes help support a callous government / today I want to say enough is enough ... (Atayde, 2015).

In the same vein, and maintaining the narrative cohesion of the 'corrido' and interwoven with the previous example, the tragedy of

the past strengthens the reflexivity of the present, the abuse perpetrated obliges the memory to be kept alive in the fight for justice, as historical fighters for social justice have done:

*La guerra sucia no ha parado en este estado costero / desde los años 70, no encuentran los guerrilleros / 1200 camaradas del estado de Guerrero / La normal de Ayotzinapa tiene principios muy finos / Lucio y Genaro salieron a defender campesinos / Genaro Vázquez, Carmelo te vigilan el camino / 43 estudiantes son hijos del mundo entero / con un diluvio de amor te esperamos con anhelo / con cantos de libertad del de tu pueblo sincero /... Si vivos se los llevaron, vivos deben regresar.*

The dirty war in this coastal state never stopped / they've not been able to find the guerrillas since the 70's / 1200 comrades from Guerrero state / Ayotzinapa Rural Teachers' College has admirable goals / Lucio and Genaro went out to defend the peasants / Genaro Vazquez, Carmelo guards your way / 43 students are children of the entire world / your return is longed for with an outpouring of love / with songs of freedom from your sincere people / ... If they were taken alive, they must be returned alive.

Visuality illustrates both stories, that of the past with images of a poor and rural Mexico emphasised by characterisations of school: children with notebooks and backpacks, young people teaching in rural schools, cold-blooded police repression, graves, deaths and crying mothers (Figure 3).

FIGURE 3  
STORY-TELLING IMAGES IN PRESENT TENSE



Source: Cirilo Mendoza (2015) and Kanna8Takahashi (2014).

The story based in the present essentially illustrates the part of the spectator, with images of a songwriter in simple locations revisiting the pain of the parents, remembering the faces and names of the 43 and highlighting revolutionary figures. It is told sometimes as a persuasive argument in the fight for memory and justice, and on other occasions, the titles and storylines are articulated in the present time with an implicit narrator who is never revealed (Figure 4).



Source: diananmarlove (2015) and Siervo Olmedo de Jesús (2014).

### DIGITAL CORRIDO MIXTURES ON *YOUTUBE*

In accordance with the research questions asked and the findings presented, it can be noted that the *corrido* is a hybrid cultural artefact, which transforms and adapts to different historical moments. It emerges where popular culture is required to come out into the light and narrate events on its own terms, constructing a subaltern collective memory in the search for truth and justice. According to the findings outlined in this paper, in the era of globalisation and the information society there are mixtures that modify some emblematic characteristics of the genre, but without altering the functions associated with reflexivity. In other words, we can see that more pragmatic elements remain than procedural ones. The identity of the untold *storyteller*, therefore, remains unaltered and is revealed to be that of an agent prescribing and constructing memory. Likewise, the functions of resistance and challenge to

authority embedded to the musical genre also remain unchanged. We note instead that there are other modifications associated with the forms of operation –enunciation and circulation–, which transform other elements of narrative identity which lend credibility to the corrido as a hybrid artefact, exactly as seen in this investigation. Accordingly, we identify six main mixtures in this case:

1. *Hybridisation epoch*: it can be seen that on YouTube the corrido is a frontier phenomenon between epochs. It cannot be catalogued as a traditional cultural construction, but nor is it uniquely modern. It is part of Latin American hybrid modernity which shows that the prevailing discourse of domination is also a discourse of subversion. In this instance, for example, we emphasise the temporal transcendence of a genre that continues to be relevant in the face of circumstances of domination which stretch all the way from the Mexican Revolution to Ayotzinapa.
2. *Media hybridisation*: the arrival of mass media has displaced the public plaza as the defined geographical area in which the corrido circulates. Hence, the collective construction of digital memory is a mixture of local, global, individual and collective character associated with technoculture and the cyberparticipation of diaspora populations that, as can be seen, tends to personalise protest.
3. *Technical hybridisation*: the spread of digital and technological literacy to underprivileged groups situates the corrido on the border between culture and the popular; it transcends historical forces which exclude either one or the other. The producer of a digital corrido is forged as an alternative voice to the so-called ‘historical truth’ put forward by the Mexican government in respect of the events of the Night of Ayotzinapa and recounted here. Thus, we observe how these individuals use digital technical literacy which permits them to connect with *glocal* audiences that transcend the literate city (*ciudad letrada*).
4. *Resistance hybridisation*: the power struggle mixture is situated on the border between resistance and the market, with the rebelliousness

of *corrido* using the hegemony of Google and YouTube to spread. The producers now no longer seek an audience in the town square but have their own YouTube channel where they disseminate their work by using virtual spaces. The *corrido* remains a contrary-to-power narrative, and it is still intended to oppose the pacts of silence, the oblivion imposed and the memory manipulated by the apparatus of the state. The *corrido* creates forms of cultural agency which uses music as an antidote to historical oblivion.

5. *Hibridisation of identity*: diaspora populations affect the subaltern music genre, and this is the sense in which we see the mixture of the identity of the cultural producers of YouTube *corridos*. The hermeneutic of the reading of the events is associated with the condition of the subject in areas both inside and outside the geographical limits of Guerrero and is also perceptible in how cultural ties to the region are maintained. It can also be noted that the regions with the greatest amount of YouTube channels reproducing the discourse are to be found in Guerrero, Mexico City, Illinois, California, Oaxaca and Sinaloa. In the case of Illinois and California, these are traditional U.S. destination states for migrants from Guerrero and Oaxaca. In the case of Mexico City, there are student-assistance groups allied to the cause. For its part, the state of Oaxaca borders that of Guerrero and has shared social circumstances. Finally, Sinaloa is a principal receptor-state for internal migrants from Guerrero, particularly for day-labourers (Leco and Fierro, 2007; Montalvo, 2015).
6. *Story hybridisation*: the *YouTube* *corrido* occupies a specific position between oral and written history. The oral element conserves characteristics associated with subjectivity because the author does not completely separate themselves from their work despite the negotiated identities built on the Internet: the evidence of multiple localised appropriations is an example of this phenomenon. The written text keeps the possibility of being constructed and fixed but in two dimensions: visual and auditory, and of being made visible through technical repetition despite losing the originality of the singular recitation associated with orality. This

repetition reduces the pressure for memorisation, and the stories have continuity in the same way in which micro-histories uploaded to digital platforms keep events alive which the dominant power would prefer to be forgotten.

## CONCLUSION

According to the analysis undertaken and the results obtained, it could be suggested that the corrido is a flexible artefact that forms part of the repertoire of counter-discursive stories. In the context of the information society, a new corrido modality is emerging in the form of different types of mixture that modify emblematic characteristics of the musical genre. Hybridisations of time, resistance, techniques, media relating to the subject and the story are just some of these. In the digital corrido the narrative structure and reflexive function do not change, although the production has become global.

This capacity for adaptation is part of the phenomenon of cultural agency and popular resistance which will continue to search for openings and opportunities to give voice to the subaltern in a way which recounts events in their terms. The digital corrido as a hybrid artefact forms part of the repertoire of protests for global justice, by offering counter-narratives of what is not visible, citizen agency, and the construction of alternative memories as a platform which makes possible a future project recognising the victims, the search for justice and redress.

It would be useful to discuss in future works how the digital corrido offers mechanisms for the construction of a heterodox narrative that can be revisited by way of technical repetition. This characteristic suggests the need to study in greater depth those stories which occupy the space between the oral and the written, while still observing the complexity added by the Internet to the endless supply of narratives and the millions of pieces of data added daily to digital ecosystems such as YouTube. While together these comprise a seemingly infinite digital memory, care must be taken that they are not consigned to obscurity.

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