

THE DRUG BALLAD, MUSIC FROM THE BORDER¹

Maria del Carmen de la Peza²

Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana- Xochimilco

INTRODUCTION

This article sets out to demonstrate that the drug ballad is a border song; and as such, it is a symbolic expression as much of the conflictive, uneven inter-cultural relationships arising at the border between Mexico and the United States. It is also an expression of the conflictive relationship within Mexican society itself that is developing between traditional peasant cultures and the capitalist culture.

To achieve this aim, let me begin by exploring on the main characteristics of a ballad, in order to compare a ballad with a drug ballad. The aspects I want to consider here are: 1) the specificity of the drug ballad as epic poetry and tropical group music; and 2) the relationships between Mexico and the United States, plus the hero figure.

The different studies of the drug ballad conducted to date, regard it as an expression of the social reality of drug-trafficking. However, these studies disregard the specificity of the drug ballad as an epic song, and the specific mechanisms this music uses to construct and re-create this reality in accordance with a very particular point of view. This is the viewpoint I am most interested to discuss in this article, the one that comprises the referential function of a drug ballad, not as a “true” story about actions that actually happened, but more as a symbolic construction.

¹ This Paper was written with the collaboration of Ignacio Meza. His careful bibliographic search, and search for CDs in the marketplace, generated an ample corpus (subsequently systematized) of 337 songs from the tropical group genre. Of this corpus, 145 songs take the form of a dialogue in the present, and we classified these as “dramatic”; 113 songs are formulated in the first person singular as expressions of the feelings of the “I”, and we classified these as “lyrical poetry”. In the main, the themes of these two types of song were love themes. The remaining 79 songs are narrations of events, and these we classified as “epic poetry”. Of this “epic poetry” group, 76 are drug ballads, 12 having love stories of drug-traffickers as their central theme, and 64 being tales referring to the activity of drug-trafficking and to the drug-trafficker as the hero and central personage. (The remaining 3 songs do not refer to drug-trafficking.)

² Translation into English: Jennifer Terrett

Indeed, even though these tales are not totally dependent of any historical ingredient, the drug ballad itself actually establishes a fiction. The historical reality of the events, data, dates and characters, is difficult to define. Actual history serves only as a narrative framework, manipulated in such a way that a circulation evolves between what really is history and what is myth. By its use of the different languages of music, gesture, words and images, the drug ballad effects a re-construction of reality from several specific ___ but contradictory ___ points of view. According to Aristotle, “it is not the poet’s duty to refer to what really happened, but to what could happen... According to probability or necessity... (The historian and the poet) differ in that one narrates what happened, the other what could happen...” (Aristotle 1994:11).

The Ballad as a Form of Epic Poetry

The ballad is a general denomination applied to the popular song that sinks its roots into the oral culture of the Mexican peasantry. Within this general denomination, it is possible to distinguish various types of ballad. There are, for example: narrative epic ballads “homolog able to sung eulogies and to Spanish romances, to Central European ballads and to French ‘complaints’” (Giménez 1990:35); lyrical ballads (on the theme of love); ballads that are tragic, humorous, or lessons in morality; ballads of protest and popular complaint. Most of all, however, ballads are popular narrative epic songs *par excellence* (Giménez 1990:36).

One important characteristic of the ballad is that it lives because of its formulary structure based on verse, which is fundamentally transmitted orally and stored in the mind of its users as collective memory. Even though the ballad in its most ancient manifestations was eminently oral, at the time of the Mexican Revolution, the ballad was also transmitted on flyers and pamphlets, thus benefiting from the added support of writing.

The traditional Mexican ballad as a revolutionary epic tends towards the heroic, towards exaltation of heroes: battles, sieges, assaults etc.. In the ballad the hero functions as a kind of super-ego for the community.

Valenzuela rightly describes the popular ballad “arising out of the population” (Valenzuela 2002:33), as a form of denunciation of the conditions of injustice and oppression suffered by the peasants. He distinguishes the popular ballad from the popularesque ballad “fabricated by the conjunction of the record and film industry” (Valenzuela 2002:33), the drug ballad being an expression of the latter, as we shall see below.

Specificity of the Drug Ballad as a Modern Epic Song

The drug ballad is a type of epic song that preserves some of the oral elements of the traditional ballad, in which emphasis is placed on the verse form of the message, with both rhyme and rhythm facilitating memorization. However, the drug ballad also incorporates the languages of writing and images, into the languages of lyrics, music and gesture. Thus, although the drug ballad is unquestionably a manifestation of oral poetry, it has also been transformed by the cultural industries. The following fragment illustrates how the drug ballad still preserves some vestiges of orality as we can see in the following verses:

“*Quiero mandar un saludo /
a toditos los presentes /
amigos que están conmigo /
y también a los ausentes /
brindemos por las mujeres /
las traigo siempre en mi mente*”³

“I want to send a greeting /
to all those present /
friends who are with me /
and those who are absent /
let’s drink to women /
I always have them on my mind”

Radio, television, cinema and the record industry, have incorporated group music into their repertoire, and exploited its enormous appeal among the popular sectors on both sides of the Rio Bravo. In the 1970s, *Los Tigres del Norte* were the first group to popularize the drug ballad among the population of Mexican origin in Los Angeles. This kind of songs then spread throughout the north of Mexico, also becoming popular with the general public in Mexico City and all across the country.

From that time on, the record industry and the cinema have produced a large number of films and songs, the central theme of which is a drug ballad. As Valenzuela points out, thanks to the cultural industries: “a drug-culture has taken shape in films and songs, such as: *Contrabando y Traición* (Contraband and Betrayal), *La banda del Carro Rojo* (The Band with the Red Car), *La muerte del soplón* (Death of a Snitch), *Los contrabandistas* (The Smugglers), *Las tres tumbas* (The Three Tombs), *El hijo de Camelia* (Camelia’s Son), *Ya encontraron a Camelia* (They’ve Found Camelia), *La fuga del rojo* (Red’s Escape), *Carrera contra la muerte* (Race against Death), *Margarita la de Tijuana* (Margarita from Tijuana), *Contrabando y robo* (Contraband and Robbery), etc” (Valenzuela 2002:34), within others.

Each time a drug ballad moves from one register to another ___ from a live show, to a record, to the radio, to the cinema or television ___ it undergoes a transformation. For example, thanks to the moving images of the cinema, the drug ballad has turned into a detective story; while television has transformed the drug ballad into a show deferred in space and time.

Specificity of the Drug Ballad as Tropical Group Music

The drug ballad falls into the category of today’s tropical group music and, as such, is the result of a fusion of different kind of music. Clearly identifiable among these are: northern Mexican music, North American country music, sinaloan band music, colombian cumbia, rock, rap, and others.

What characterizes the drug ballad as an expression of group music is its rhythm, which predominates above the melody as an invitation to dance, and to sensual movement of the body. The drug ballad has an agile, quick rhythm, that exaggerates certain elements reminiscent of the polka, the running steps of northern Mexican dance, and the unmistakable rhythm of the Colombian cumbia (Valenzuela 2002:72).

Bands or groups that play drug ballads, have adopted the accordion from groups playing northern Mexican music, and the saxophone, keyboard and electric guitar from rock groups.

The border character of group music ___ or as it is also known, Tex-Mex music ___ is expressed in the style of dress, the unmistakable style of the North American cowboy:

³ Clave privada, Tucanes de Tijuana

cowboy jeans, checked shirt, leather jerkin, Texan hat and boots, belt with enormous buckle, and a handkerchief tied around the neck.

The Conflictive Relationship between Mexico and the USA

The drug ballad as a border song, expresses a dimension (perhaps the most conflictive dimension) of the relationship between Mexico and the United States: drug-trafficking.

The drug ballad expresses an ambivalent image of the USA. On the one hand, the “American Union” represents economic success, technological development, as the song says: “I’m an agriculturalist / with everything modernized... I also irrigate with a sprinkler / like the American ones”⁴, together with the power derived from this economic success.

However, on occasion, drug ballads also manifest a mixture of respect, hate and resentment towards the US Government, the DEA and the immigration police (the border guards). On other occasions, drug ballads also manifest an attitude of bravado, revenge and disdain towards these authorities, and this attitude is then applied towards all Americans in general another song says: “the gringos don’t scare me / each time they come after me / when they see my pistol / I swear they even pee in their pants”⁵.

Outwitting the control systems, the deployment of power of the border guards and the DEA, is viewed by a song as a challenge: “There were fifteen men from the DEA / their mission was to get me / I’m craftier than a cat / I proved that to them... Don’t imagine this is the first time / that I’ve got away from under their noses”⁶.

The drug ballads express different points of view regarding the border between Mexico and the USA. In some it is seen as an opportunity for work or business: “I’m going to continue working / as long as I have buyers / in the United States / the best buyers are there / they buy a hundred kilos of powder / like buying a bunch of flowers”⁷. However, other drug ballads depict the border as a battlefield between the USA police and drug-traffickers. Sometimes the police have the upper hand in this struggle: “Blondies with blue eyes / I can’t shake hands with you / because I’m under sentence / from the USA Government”⁸. Yet most of the time, it is drug-trafficking that comes out on top because of the consumer market: “the gringos buy everything / because they’ve got cash to spare”⁹. Drug-trafficking also benefits from corruption and the economic interests involved as the song says: “The Mafia has always existed / and so has corruption / and don’t think they’re going to end / with certification / that’s just a political fairy-tale / to get everyone excited. / We know the drug empire / will never be overthrown / as long as the political big guys / don’t stop co-operating / if they’re all in the same boat / they will all row together”¹⁰.

⁴ El agricultor, Tucanes de Tijuana

⁵ El Chingón de Durango, Capos de México

⁶ El Gato de Chihuahua, Los Huracanes del Norte

⁷ Clave privada, Banda el Recodo

⁸ Contrabando de Juárez, Capos de México

⁹ Contrabando en el chile, Capos de México

¹⁰ La fiesta de los perrones, Exterminador

The Hero Figure

The drug ballad, as with other ballads, belongs to narrative. It is a tale of the exploits of the drug-trafficker, who becomes the hero and central character of the drug ballad. That said, the drug-trafficker is a different, more modern type of hero. He's an individualist, and readily adopts the values of capitalist rationality: money, consumption and power.

From Traditional Peasant to Modern Agriculturalist

Ballads are generally tales in the third person, with the hero responding fundamentally to the "myth" of the social *bandolero* (a type of Robin Hood) — the noble bandit who fights for justice, the beneficiary of his actions being the oppressed peasant community to which he belongs, and with whom he shares the same traditional system of values (Hobsbawm 2001:128-131). This can be observed in the following fragment:

*"Era Emiliano Zapata /
un campesino sencillo /
que vivía humildemente /
sin ostentación ni brillo"*¹¹

"Emiliano Zapata was /
a simple peasant /
who lived humbly /
without ostentation or distinction"

By contrast, however, the drug ballad is a cult to the individual personality of the drug-trafficker: an autobiographical narration that is profoundly narcissistic and selfish:

*"Soy el jefe de jefes señores /
y decirlo no es por presunción /
muchos grandes me piden favores /
porque saben que soy el mejor..."*¹²

"I'm the boss of bosses gentlemen /
and saying so isn't mere boasting /
many big guys ask me for favours /
because they know I'm the best..."

By enunciations in the first person, the drug-trafficker is actually narrating his own exploits. This arrogant attitude of the protagonist contrasts sharply with the simplicity attributed to Zapata in the fragment mentioned above.

Both the rural bandit of the traditional ballad, and the drug-trafficker, are of peasant origin. However, the former emerges from the peasant community, with the aim of returning to it as the song says:

*"En su caballito prieto /
con carabina y pistola, /
ha sido siempre el primero /
para meterse en la bola.*

"On his dark horse /
with carbine and pistol, /
he's always been the first /
to step forward and fight.

*Y cuando la paz se haga /
dice que va a descansar, /
cuidando de su familia /*

And when peace is made /
he says he's going to rest, /
looking after his family /

¹¹ Corrido Suriano, Antonio Vanegas Arroyo

¹² Jefe de Jefes, Tigres del Norte

*y cuidando de su hogar*¹³

and looking after his home”

The drug-trafficker on the other hand, even though also of peasant origin, actively distances himself from traditional values and from the community itself, but not without a certain degree of nostalgia:

*“El caballo que montaba /
se murió de la tristeza /
y el machete que portaba /
enmohecido se encuentra /
los cambié por mi Cheyene /
y por una metralleta”*¹⁴

“The horse I was riding /
died of sadness /
and the knife I was carrying /
is all rusty /
I exchanged them for my Cheyenne /
and for a machine-gun”

Drug-trafficking has now established itself as a factor of modernization in the Mexican countryside, a means of social mobility for the peasants. Thanks to drug cultivation, the drug-trafficker has gone from being a poor traditional peasant, to what the North American model of progress would describe as a “modern”, “rich” “agriculturalist”:

*“Yo soy un agricultor /
con todo modernizado /
hoy siembro con mi tractor /
ya no acostumbro el arado /
riego también con reloj /
tipo los americanos”*¹⁵

“I’m an agriculturalist /
with everything modernized /
today I sow with my tractor /
I’m no longer used to the plough /
I also irrigate with a sprinkler /
like the American ones”

The drug ballad adopts the idea of well-being pertaining to capitalist rationality, as defined in terms of the cost-benefit ratio (Castoriadis 2001: 65-92). Clandestine drug cultivation is spoken of as a business, in the following terms: “I have regained my worth / thanks to my investments / I sow corn and beans / but there I plant double...”¹⁶.

Progress is attained, apparently, thanks to the development of technology as the song says: “Agriculture has grown / today with technology...”, but it is clear that not only because of technology. In effect, according to the vision of the drug ballad, economic progress is beyond the reach of peasants who work the land simply to produce food. Economic success is only possible, beyond the bounds of the Law as the song says: “the working man / who is straight, dies of hunger...”¹⁷; and at the cost of the destruction of society itself: “you have to score a home goal / to get ahead”¹⁸. This combination of the

¹³ Corrido Suriano, Antonio Vanegas Arroyo

¹⁴ Las dos hectáreas, Banda el Recodo

¹⁵ El agricultor, Tucanes de Tijuana

¹⁶ El agricultor, Tucanes de Tijuana

¹⁷ El agricultor, Tucanes de Tijuana

¹⁸ El agricultor, Tucanes de Tijuana

values of economic progress plus the illegal production of drugs, produces a contradictory and profoundly ironic effect.

From Revolutionary to Criminal

Both the social bandit and the drug-trafficker are transgressors of established Law and Order:

*“Este Emiliano Zapata /
qué guerra dio a los gobiernos, /
que bien lo querían mandar /
a los profundos infiernos”*¹⁹

“This Emiliano Zapata /
what a war he gave the governments, /
who really wanted to send him /
to the hottest of hells”

*“Salí desde Monterrey /
con ciento veinte kilos de carga /
iba violando la ley....”*²⁰

“I left from Monterrey /
with a hundred and twenty kilos of cargo /
I was breaking the law....”

The social *bandolero*, on the one hand, seeks to transform society, to obtain conditions of equality and justice for all, as illustrated in the following verse from the ballad about Emiliano Zapata:

*“Él por los indios pelea /
pues los mira como hermanos, /
y quiere que sean iguales /
toditos los mexicanos.”*²¹

“He fought for the Indians /
because he saw them as brothers, /
and he wanted them all to be equal /
all the Mexicans.”

The drug-trafficker on the other hand, cynically mocks the Law, transgressing social Order for the mere pleasure of doing so, simply as a show of strength and personal power, and always to his own benefit:

*“Me gusta violar la ley /
soy gente muy especial /
me gusta que me respeten /
aunque les parezca mal”*²²

“I like breaking the law /
I’m a special kind of guy /
I like people to respect me /
even if they don’t like it”

Drug-traffickers live on the edges of society, constructing their own world set apart from “decent people”, and speaking their own language. As if in a show of strength, the drug-trafficker threatens whoever tries to interfere with his “businesses”: “Pure horns and

¹⁹ Corrido Suriano, Antonio Vanegas Arroyo

²⁰ El último viaje, Exterminador

²¹ Corrido Suriano, Antonio Vanegas Arroyo

²² El balido de mi ganado, Tucanes de Tijuana

R15 / that's what my whole herd is / the bellowing is dangerous / so you'd best watch out"²³. In the environment of drug-trafficking, all weapons are classified under the metaphoric denomination of "*ganado*" (herd) ___ for example, "*cuerno de chivo*" (goat's horn), the army slang for a very high-powered weapon ___ and the sound these weapons produce on being fired is referred to as "*balido*" (bellowing).

Similarly, in drug-trafficking language, cocaine goes by many different names: "crystal", "powder", "parrot" etc., and marijuana too: "the good stuff", "grass", "international joint", etc.. This way of speaking is defined as a sociolect, in other words a social language distinguished from the general language mass. According to Barthes, a sociolect "traces the social divisions of class" (Barthes 1987:127). A sociolect is a private code which confers membership of a group on the speaker, and also functions as a secret code understood only by members of that group.

From Collective Solidarity to Individual Competition

Unlike the sense of solidarity and co-operation manifest in the traditional ballad the individualistic hero of the drug ballad does not seek any change in the prevailing unjust social structures as a collective solution. He only seeks an individual solution to the economic injustices of which he finds himself the object:

*"Pa' llegar a ser chingón /
te la tienes que jugar /
y a todo el que se atraviere /
te lo tienes que chingar...."*²⁴

"To get to be the fuker /
you have to join in the game /
and whatever gets in your way /
you have to do the fuking ..."

Individualism, competition and rivalry are some of the characteristics of the capitalist culture revealed in the drug ballad:

*"...aquí no hay ningún parentesco /
no se permite ningún error /
siempre te andas rifando el pellejo /
con las leyes o con el patrón"*²⁵

"...here there are no blood links /
no error is tolerated /
you're always risking your hide /
with the law or with the boss"

*"Este trono es pa' los grandes /
no llega cualquier cabrón"*²⁶

"This throne is for the big guys /
not just any old mother fuker makes it"

²³ El agricultor, Tucanes de Tijuana

²⁴ El mero chingón, Capos de México

²⁵ El centenario, Tucanes de Tijuana

²⁶ El mero chingón, Capos de México

The Personality of the Hero and Consumption

The drug-trafficker adopts the values proposed by the consumer society, in which objects are “personalized”. Things cease to be a solution to a practical problem, only to become the “solution to a social or psychological conflict”:

*“Yo mucho tiempo fui pobre /
mucha gente me humillaba /
empecé a ganar dinero /
las cosas están cambiadas /
ahora me llaman patrón /
tengo mi clave privada”*²⁷

“I was poor for a long time /
many people humiliated me /
I began to make money /
things have changed /
now they call me “*Patrón*” (Boss) /
I have my private hotline”

Objects become symbol-objects, mere mediators of the real relationship. Objects acquire their coherence, and thus their meaning, “in an abstract, systematic relationship with all other symbol-objects” (Boudrillard 1985:224):

*“Todos le dicen el centenario /
por la joya que brilla en su pecho /
ahora todos lo ven diferente /
se acabaron todos sus desprecios /
nomás porque trae carro del año /
ya lo ven con el signo de pesos.”*²⁸

“Everyone calls him “The *Centenario*”
(a coin) /
because of the jewel that shines on his
chest /
everyone looks at him differently now /
all the disdain is gone /
just because he has the latest car /
they see him now as a wealthy man.”

The car is only another item in that series of jewels, cell-phones and women, that simply indicate wealth, success and power. All of these are fundamental values in the capitalist culture, and are expressed in the drug ballads as desirable values.

Machismo

The drug ballad, in common with the traditional ballad, speaks of the courage and audacity of the hero. Like the ranch-style song and the traditional ballad, the drug ballad eulogizes the valour of a hero who does not fear death, who is a womanizer, who cheats the government, and does not capitulate to anyone. However, in the drug ballad, the characteristics typical of the hero in the traditional ballad, are taken to the extremes of “cynicism”.

Manhood and virility as “signs” of the hero’s “personality”, are expressed in vulgar, obscene language, the use of which deliberately seeks to transgress socially accepted rules of expression, whether in form or in content. The drug-trafficker is supremely arrogant. He fears nothing, not even death. He gets involved in anything, even drugs. The referential

²⁷ Clave privada, Banda el Recodo

²⁸ El centenario, Tucanes de Tijuana

ambits expressing the hero's courage are different from those found in the traditional ballad. The drug ballad transgresses the limits of what can be said in public, by explicitly making a show of drug consumption:

*“Me gusta ponerle al polvo /
al cristal y marihuana /
que importa que muera /
inflado como una rana...”*²⁹

“I like to get stoned with powder /
crystal and marijuana /
I don't care if I die /
bloating like a frog ...”

The drug ballad is characterized by the use of puns and plays on words, alluding implicitly or indirectly to sexuality. The virility of men is affirmed in their genitals, implicitly referred to in the expression “we've got them” (genitals)... hung like bells”³⁰.

The macho is so macho that he conquers both men and women sexually ___ but of course, no-one conquers him. Anal intercourse is what is being referred to when the hero enunciates in the first person: “I don't go around selling my buttocks”. The macho is the one who “chinga” (penetrates) everyone ___ both men and women ___ without allowing anyone to “chingar” (penetrate) him. In the expression: “los gringos me la han peinado / cada vez que me torea”³¹ (the gringos don't scare me / each time they come after me), the formula “me la” alludes implicitly to the penis. The formula is taken from the expression “me la pela”, which alludes to felatio, meaning in this case that it is the “gringos” who kneel before him.

This reference to the sexual act as a resource of the macho, who plays the active role, violating the integrity of anyone he considers cowardly or weak or who submits to the passive role, then becomes a symbol of his “virile” personality. By contrast, anyone afraid of an armed drug-trafficker, is not considered much of a man, as evidenced in the expression: “when they see my pistol / I swear they even pee in their pants”³².

Women form part of this system of “symbol-objects” that expresses the virile “nature” of the drug-trafficker. The drug ballad hero boasts of his sexual prowess, utilizing the “old mouse”³³ as a metaphor for the male sexual organ. “The holes in the cheese”³⁴ then become the metaphor for the multiple female sexual organs which the subject of the enunciation ___ the macho ___ enjoys. This can be observed in the enunciation: “I like wandering / from hole to hole”³⁵, and the number to which the macho has had access can be understood from the fragment: “It seems I even live / in the house of a cheese-maker”³⁶. Similarly, to demonstrate his manhood, the macho boasts continuously of his success with

²⁹ El chingón de Durango, Capos de México

³⁰ El chingón de Durango, Capos de México

³¹ El chingón de Durango, Capos de México

³² El chingón de Durango, Capos de México

³³ El chingón de Durango, Capos de México

³⁴ El chingón de Durango, Capos de México

³⁵ El chingón de Durango, Capos de México

³⁶ El chingón de Durango, Capos de México

women: “babes / love it when I lie them down on my mattress / they end up more than satisfied / they know I’m the best”³⁷.

CONCLUSION

As we have observed throughout this analysis, the drug ballad is a style of music from the border in two senses of the word. One “border” described in the drug ballad, is the ambivalent and conflictive relationships between Mexico and the United States. Even though, musically, the drug ballad has absorbed various elements from North American country music, the drug ballad expresses contradictory feelings of hate, disdain and admiration for the United States, materialized in objects and concrete characters such as the border police, drug buyers, cities, cars, technological development, etc..

The narrative enunciation comprising the drug ballad both enunciates an action and produces that action at one and the same time. In this sense, the drug ballad does not create drug-trafficking, but by narrating it the drug ballad gives a particular form to drug-trafficking, in other words it re-creates drug-trafficking. Bruner describes it as: “The tales define the range of orthodox characters, the environments in which they act, and the actions which are permissible and comprehensible. Thus they provide, let’s say, a map of the possible roles and worlds within which the action, thought and definition of the self are permissible or desirable.” (Bruner 1994:76)

The other “border” the drug ballad speaks of, is a paradoxical expression of the capitalist society’s values which are typical of the market economy model. Thus the drug ballad is both a manifestation of the conditions of injustice and oppression suffered by the peasants, who find themselves unemployed and excluded from this imposed development model, as well as being an apology for crime. Nevertheless, it remains clear that mere transgression of the Law does not subvert it; on the contrary it even re-affirms the Law.

An analysis of the symbolic construction made by drug ballads, reveals that the drug-trafficker hero ___ unlike the revolutionary hero ___ does not seek any transformation of the situation of injustice which oppresses him, nor does he seek a more just Order for his fellows. On the contrary, by resorting to violence, corruption, bribing the police, transgression of the Law, and the traffic of drugs, the drug-trafficker is actively pursuing the very same values promoted by the capitalist system: money, power and consumption.

Drug-trafficking is an expression of the growing state of decomposition the capitalist system currently finds itself in. The drug ballad does not express any desire to change this oppressive social system. In fact, by means of the symbolic construction of the world, social conflict as such is simply annulled, being transformed into a personal problem, which then has to be faced by the individual him or herself. Therefore these individuals have to look for personal strategies ___ such as becoming involved in the “business” of drug trafficking ___ to address both their financial problems and their problems of “prestige”.

The process of decomposition of the capitalist system is manifest in the values it promotes: money, economic benefit and enrichment. When eventually economic benefit becomes an end in itself, corruption ceases to be peripheral or anecdotal, but generalizes to become a structural, systemic feature of the society as a whole (Castoriadis 1998:92).

³⁷ El chingón de Durango, Capos de México

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aristotle, *Poética* (The Art of Poetry). Monte Ávila Editores. Venezuela, 1994

Barthes, Roland, *El susurro del Lenguaje. Más allá de la palabra y la escritura* (The Murmur of Language. Beyond Words and Writing). Editorial Paidós. Barcelona, 1987

Baudrillard, Jean, *El sistema de los objetos* (The System of Objects). Siglo XXI Editores. Mexico, 1985

Bruner, Jerome, *Realidad mental y mundos posibles. Los actos de la imaginación que dan sentido a la experiencia* (Possible Worlds and Mental Reality. Acts of the Imagination that Give Meaning to Experience). Gedisa Editores. Barcelona, 1994

Castoriadis, Cornelius, *El ascenso de la insignificancia* (The Ascent of Insignificance). Ediciones Cátedra. Madrid, 1998

Castoriadis, Cornelius, *Figuras de lo pensable* (Figures of the Thinkable). Fondo de Cultura Económica. Buenos Aires, 2001

Giménez, Catalina H., *Así cantaba la revolución* (They sang the Revolution like this). CONACULTA/Grijalbo. Mexico, 1990

Hobsbawm, Eric, *Bandidos* (Bandits). Ed. Crítica. Barcelona, 2001

Valenzuela, José Manuel, *Jefe de Jefes. Corridos y Narcocultura en México* (Boss of Bosses. Ballads and Drug Culture in Mexico). Plaza y Janés. Mexico, 2002