

ARTS CORNER

In Praise of the Bolero

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As a friend of mine says, all of us have a dark side. I share his opinion. Probably mine is that I enjoy singing boleros.

I know this may seem a bit twee, but I really like to.

I don't believe the ideal woman is anything like the prototype that seems to inspire the lyrics of the bolero. You are either fragile, a second-choice, or if neither of those, a bit fickle in your relationships.

Nor am I convinced by the bolero male, who is almost always pleading or embittered.

That's why I believe what I said at the beginning, that all of us have a dark side, whose *raison d'être* even escapes ourselves.

I admit I enjoy the melodies, usually sad, and unsuitable for diabetics due to the sugary sweetness of the lyrics.

They've been my companions when traveling alone, and the soundtrack to my relationships during both tough times and happy ones.

Even my daughters, poor things, sing perfect boleros out of pure imitation.

In the repertoire of any bolero singer we find themes addressing each key moment in a romantic relationship.

To support this view, I offer a list of examples.

For those in love:

- a) the lucky ones: *La gloria eres tú* (You are my heaven);
- b) the unlucky ones: *Perfidia* (Treason).
2. For those who are going out: *Somos novios* (We're engaged).
3. For lovers: *El reloj* (The Clock).
4. For those who have been happily together for years, married or not: *Contigo aprendí* (I learned with you).
5. For widows and widowers: *Historia de un amor* (A love story).
6. For those starting to hesitate: *Esta tarde vi llover* (I watched the rain this evening).
7. For those who know for sure that things are going wrong: *Llévatela* (Take her with you).

8. For those brave enough to end a bad relationship: *La mentira* (The lie).
9. For those starting over: *No me platicues más* (Don't tell me any more).
10. For those who dared to love, even if it was only once. *Solamente una vez* (Just once).

Sometimes the lyrics contain one or two lines that describe feelings that are close to us because we may have experienced them (and on such occasions I believe that a few words are worth more than a picture), or in the worst case, will experience them at some time in our life. Let's illustrate this with four examples:

1. Nostalgia for the one who was so special (or at least it seemed that way): "You got me used to all those things and you taught me they were wonderful...why didn't you teach me...how to live without you"? *Tu me acostumbraste* (You accustomed me).
2. The proud words of the one left behind: "...I'm giving you back your promise that you'd adore me for ever. Don't even bother to feel sorry for leaving me, you didn't make a deal with God..." *La mentira* (The lie).
3. The sweet revenge, barely restrained, when talking to our ex's new partner: "...Oh! I forgot to tell you, if she means to say your name, but instead says another man's, that's what happened to me with yours, so, come on, my friend, take her with you, for the sake of all three of us." *Llévatela* (Take her with you).
4. The loss of dignity in a broken relationship with no possibility of saving it: "...I still have a thousand nights to give you. I'll give you my life if you stay, (...) I'd still adore you even if you didn't love me..." *Espera* (Wait).

There are some very happy boleros among my favorites, such as *Piel canela* (Cinnamon skin), other moody ones such as *Contigo en la distancia* (I'm with you, though you're far away) and others such as *Sabor a mí* (A taste of me) that, although I find hard to classify, always evoke in me the times to come when all that will be left, with a little luck, are memories.

But if I had to choose one right now, I would say: "...but



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if you ask me to come to you, I'll drop everything..." *Si tú me dices ven* (If you ask me to come to you).

Well, almost everything (let's not overdo it!).

The Illuminated Shadow

This dark thing that I recognize as mine

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Indeed, as our dermatologist, Rosa Díaz says, all of us have a dark side. But this dark side is not actually bad. According to John A. Sanford "the shadow (our dark side) is that which laughs and is amused. People who lack a sense of humor have a very repressed shadow." Thus, enjoying our darkness looks like a perfect defense mechanism to gain emotional balance.

Singing boleros might be a transcendent psychological experience. As our author says, there are boleros for everything: for being in love, for falling out of love, for

sadness, for joy, for when the magic begins, for when it disappears... An array of possibilities that covers every situation in life.

The lyrics, the verses made into melodies that eagerly greet the cascade of the song. The song brings together startling connections, profound voyages of dazzling joy. And then, the singer, Rosa Díaz in this case, officiates at the ceremony of reliving the song with the passion of a magician casting to the four winds her message of delight, her being in all its fullness, her many-layered meanings. She sings in winter as she gazes through the frosted windowpanes, she sings in summer under the sunlight while holding a cool glass of wine and soda. She sings to appease anger, she sings in the face of the unforeseen, in good times, when turning the pages of a novel, when sorting through the bottom drawer.

Rosa has a dark side, a magnificently luminous shadow. Congratulations! We could take it on too. A choir of dermatologists singing boleros in unison... Amazing! Don't you think so?