The Aural Border

Josh D. Kun

Three years ago, I was standing on the beach in Tijuana in front of the rusting border wall that runs across the sand into the sea. The wall was made from corrugated metal recycled from a Persian Gulf landing strip, and through the gaps in its beams I could see an Immigration Naturalization Service truck parked and ready-to-chase in the shadow of a brush-covered hill. By my side was Alex Zuñiga, the drummer for Tijuana NO, a local tijuanero punk band who have been screaming at la migra, Pete Wilson, and other honorary members of those they have been calling the "gringo Klu Klux Klanes" since 1992.

Alex told me that this was the very place, this very intersection of land, water, and national policing, that inspired the band to write 1994's "La Esquina del Mundo" ("The Corner of the World"), with Fermin Muguruza, the leader of Negu Gorriak, a Basque separatist punk band. The song is laden with anti-imperialist noise, a blazing Spanish-language punk shout that describes the border as "the last street of Latin America / the line that marks us from outside / the limit between stone and village." Inspired by Eduardo Galeano's political history, *Open Veins of Latin America*, Tijuana NO call for open borders in the face of militarized and legislated closure ("open doors / that's the only way"), casting the border as a war zone and calling for armed struggle: ".38 special / well-aimed bullet / bars and stars are at war."[1]

The band's call could not have been made at a more politically charged moment. 1994 was the same year that United States politicians like Pete Wilson and vigilante groups like Light Up the Border were attempting to close the border through

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[1] Tijuana NO, "La Esquina del Mundo," *Transgresores de La Ley* (BMG, 1994).

organized and well-funded campaigns of force and terror: Wilson through Proposition 187, which cut off all health and educational benefits to undocumented Mexican immigrants, and the "community" watchdog group Light Up the Border through the nighttime deployment of headlight-blaring cars and trucks to the border fence in a reactionary effort to assist the border patrol in spotting and catching "illegals."[2]

In the song's video, shot in 1994 by Mexico City video directors Ricardo Calderón and Arturo Pérez Rios, Tijuana NO actually perform live directly in front of the border wall, itself a section of the 2,000-mile-long US-Mexico borderline estimated to be crossed 40 million times each year. They turn this site of conquest and imperialism saturated with the historical residue of both the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and the Persian Gulf War into a site of insurgent performance, a televised performance of anti-authoritarian and anti-national rage that takes place within yards of roaming border patrol trucks. Instead of lip-synching to the recorded song, we see the band performing it live to an audience with the wall as its backdrop and the hot sand as its stage. Camera shots peer through the wall's openings, and tracking shots let us clearly see the band performing on the Mexico side of the line.

"La Esquina del Mundo" both lyrically theorizes the political and artistic realities contained within the site-specificity of the US-Mexico border and musically performs these realities by colliding punk, rock, and ska styles birthed and reformatted across the Americas. This is not simply a song that just happened to be recorded *at* or *near* the border, not simply a song by a band that just happened to be *from* the border, not simply a song that may pretend to be *about* the border. This is a song—a collection of words and chords and beats and guitar crunches and bass wallops and vocal howls—that *is* the border, that renders the border in sound, that makes the border and all of its experiences and histories and political narratives, audible.

Hearing the Fence, Sounding the River

I single out this musical event not to stress its novelty, but to point to an entire field of knowledge it stands in for and brings out of silence, what I am calling "the aural border." In this essay, I want to pose a few starting points for understanding what it might mean to consider the US-Mexico border as a field of sound, a terrain of musicality and music-making, of static and noise, of melodic convergence and dissonant clashing. And by this I don't necessarily mean assembling a laundry list of every song ever written about the border or of every band or musician ever from the border (though this project has its own merits). I mean opening the doors to a new archive of historicity and analysis, a new methodology of understanding the audio-formation of national and social identities within specific, delineated geopolitical territories.

In the essay's second half, I treat the aural border within the confines of a particular case study: the use of sound and music in the border and post-border performances of Guillermo Gómez-Peña and the Pocha Nostra. I highlight the work of Gómez-Peña

[2] On Proposition 187, see George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit From Identity Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998); and for an examination of Light Up the Border, see Jesse Lerner and Scott Sterling's documentary *Natives*: *Immigrant Bashing on the Border* (1991, available through Filmmakers Library Distribution).

Figure 1. Making border noise: Tijuana punk band Tijuana NO. Photo courtesy of BMG U.S. Latin.

both because of the centrality of music to his performance aesthetic and because of the way in which he has become virtually synonymous with mainstream debates and discussions around US-Mexico border performance art and cultural criticism. As José David Saldívar has argued, Gómez-Peña—with his 1991 MacArthur Fellowship and his frequent radio commentaries on National Public Radio and *Latino U.S.A.* —"has brought the term border art . . . into the mainstream, national discourse in the US."[3] By

[3] José David Saldívar, *Border Matters: Remapping American Cultural Studies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 152.

listening to Gómez-Peña's performances through the critical ear of the aural border, my aim then is not to exclude the consideration of a multiplicity of other border artists and writers whose work makes musical interventions and is therefore crucial to my larger project of assembling the aural border's archive.[4] Indeed, my point is to emphasize and take seriously the important role of sonic composition and performative musical praxis to the work of one of the border's most critiqued and studied figures.

I am understanding the aural border as both an archaeology and a genealogy of "subjugated knowledges" or "disqualified knowledges" that unveils the many multivalent ways the very idea of the border gets constructed and disseminated through sound and music. This entails both the "release" and "emancipation" of hidden and repressed "local discursivities" (its archaeological function) and the praxis or "tactics" required to bring them into play in service of "opposition and of struggle against the coercion of a theoretical, unitary, formal, and scientific discourse" (its genealogical function).[5]

In his critical response to the rise of border theory as a field rooted in but now often independent from US-Mexico border studies, Tijuana-San Diego visual artist David Avalos has argued that the border of US official culture has no narrative. As a fiction of national control and hegemonic sustenance, the US-Mexico border is necessarily gutted of its narrativity and formed as the collective state fantasy of surveillance policies, xenophobic legislation, media stagecraft, and accumulative capital. "There is no space for storytelling or personal experience," Avalos writes, "And time for nothing except accreditation and interrogation."[6] What the state's official border (of which Avalos admits there might be more than one) does produce, however, is the unofficial border, the border of narrativity, experience, and storytelling, the border articulated through the daily performances, rituals, and acts of the people who live within its physical and psychic bounds. Outside the grasp of the official border(s) yet informed by them, there arises a multiplicity of unofficial borders where borderness is voiced and rescued from the willful aphasia of official culture. Surely the aural border—the border that is narrated through sound, music, and noise—is one worth taking seriously as debates around the past and future of border theory and border discourse receive a proliferating amount of attention from scholars and activists of disparate national, cultural, and disciplinary backgrounds.[7]

[4] The larger trajectory of my work-in-progress on the aural border also includes the recordings and autobiographical writings of Lydia Mendoza, the auto-exotica of composer Juan García Esquivel, the Monterrey hip-hop video work of Control Machete, the Tijuana-influenced jazz compositions of Charles Mingus (specifically his 1962 *Tijuana Moods* recording), and the Los Angeles via Tijuana and Mexico City telenovela punk theatre of Los Super Elegantes.

[5] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 85.

[6] David Avalos (with John C. Welchman), "Response to the Philosophical Brothel," *Re-Thinking Borders*, ed. John C. Welchman (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 189.

[7] For a survey of some of these debates, see Welchman, *Re-Thinking Borders*; Claire F. Fox, *The Fence and the River: Culture and Politics at the US-Mexico Border* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); Scott Michaelson and David E. Johnson, ed., *Border Theory: The Limits of Cultural Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997); and José David Saldívar, *Border Matters: Remapping American Cultural Studies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

Yet even among the many narratives of unofficial border knowledges, the specular narratives of the visual border have dominated scholarship in the humanities, a fact which I believe makes the naming and development of the aural border all the more urgent and difficult. There is little critical language readily available to theorize the relationship between the US-Mexico border and the sounds it makes. The vast majority of writing about border representations and border performance has occurred through the lens of visual culture. In both the public and scholarly imagination, the US-Mexico border is mostly synonymous with visual icons and objects central to a battlefield of images: fences, rivers, walls, checkpoints, the tall and threatening border patrol agent, the crouching *indocumentados* hiding behind a bush, the Taco Bell chihuahua, the dusty, erotic cantina.

In a sense, the direction of discourse about the border has historically been based on who controls how it is seen and envisioned, a point made abundantly clear by Claire Fox in *The Fence and the River*, which surveys over a century's worth of visualizing border experience, from photography and cinema to postcards, visual art, and billboards. Inspired by a single border shot from the 1989 film *The Old Gringo* ("an aerial view of a horse-drawn cart crossing an antique bridge that spans a verdant river valley"), Fox's study centers on what she positions as the two focal icons of border knowledge, the fence and the river, and explores the formation of border discourse through what she calls "establishing shots . . . typically a two to three second take of a building exterior or landscape that is inserted at the beginning of a scene . . . meant to be unobtrusive keys that help the viewer to locate action within a larger space."[8]

Attention to the ways in which visual imagery "establishes" perceptions of border space and foundations of border knowledge is, of course, crucial to further understandings of border culture and its multiple histories. But what I am interested in developing here is not a further catalog of "establishing shots," but something more akin to an exploration of "establishing sounds" that build the critical ground necessary for understanding what songs like "La Esquina del Mundo" perform both at the moment of their performance and at the moments of their consumption by listeners. How do sounds "establish" for the listener what the border is, how it gets crossed, how it gets desired, how it gets feared, and ultimately, how as a place and a state of being it produces its own subjectivities? How do "establishing sounds" locate the listener within the border's larger geopolitical space?

I believe developing this genealogy of the aural border is important because of its potential to highlight the undertheorized relations between popular music, place/space, and the performance of expressive cultures. Popular music in the borderlands—whether conjunto, corridos, banda, tejano, techno, nor-tec, or hip-hop—has always been a prime register of border culture-clashing, a prime documentary mode of border history, and a prime stage for witnessing the performance of interstitial hybridities and identities-in-flux that have been generated along the border since it was arbitrarily drawn in 1848.[9]

[8] Fox, *The Fence*, 46.

[9] See for example the following landmark studies: Américo Paredes, *With His Pistol in His Hand: A Border Ballad and Its Hero* (Austin: University of Texas, 1958); José Limón, *Mexican Ballads, Chicano Poems: History and Influence in Mexican American Social Poetry* (Berkeley: University of California Press,

Focusing our critical listening on the aural border also holds the potential for opening up new ways of understanding the border as an audio-spatial territory of performance. In the space of songs themselves and in the exchange between producers and listeners, music enables, constructs, and imagines the mapping of new places and cartographies of possibility; it draws maps that otherwise might not be possible in the real time of political realities. In this sense, then, I see the aural border functioning within the discursive register of what I have elsewhere developed as the audiotopia—a working term for the heterotopic possibilities of musical production and reception.[10] Building onto Foucault's notion of the "heterotopia,"[11] I hear audiotopias as sonic spaces of effective utopian longings where several sites normally deemed incompatible are brought together not only in the space of a particular piece of music itself, but in the production of social space and mapping of geographical space that music makes possible as well.

Thus, reading and listening for audiotopias (through an analysis of both lyrics *and* music) have a dual function: to focus on the space of music itself and the different spaces and identities it juxtaposes within itself, and to focus on the social spaces, geographies, and identities that music can enable, reflect, and prophesy. In both cases, the audiotopia is a musical space of difference, where contradictions and conflicts do not cancel each other out but coexist and live through each other. Thus, in a sense, audiotopias can also be understood (and this is particularly fitting in the case of the aural border) as identificatory "contact zones." They are both sonic and social spaces where disparate identity-formations, cultures, *and* geographies historically charted separately, are allowed to interact with each other as well as enter into relationships whose consequences for cultural identification are never predetermined.[12]

Listening to the audiotopia of the aural border is also one way of situating its cultural forms within what cultural theorist Jody Berland calls "capitalist spatiality." Berland has convincingly argued for a reconception of music from a spatial perspective. She focuses her attention on the spatial positionality of listening, on the spaces produced for and occupied by listeners. "Much of the time we are not simply listeners

1992); Maria Herrera-Sobek, *The Mexican Corrido: A Feminist Analysis* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1990); Manuel Peña, *The Texas-Mexican Conjunto: History of a Working-Class Music* (Austin: University of Texas, 1985); Manuel Peña, *Musica Tejana: The Cultural Economy of Artistic Transformation* (Houston: Texas A&M, 1999); Teresa McKenna, *Migrant Song: Politics and Process in Contemporary Chicano Literature* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997); and Steven Loza, *Barrio Rhythm: Mexican American Music in Los Angeles* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993).

[10] Josh Kun, "Against Easy Listening: Transnational Soundings and Audiotopic Listenings," *Everynight Life: Culture and Dance in Latin/o America,* ed. José Esteban Muñoz and Celeste Fraser Delgado (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).

[11] For more on the audiotopia's roots in the heterotopia, see Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage, 1970), xvii–xviii, and "Of Other Spaces," *diacritics* (Spring 1986). For more on the border as heterotopia, see Alejandro Morales, "Dynamic Identities in Heterotopia," *Alejandro Morales: Fiction Past, Present, Future Perfect*, ed. Jose Antonio Gurpegui (Tempe: Bilingual Review, 1996); and ADOBE LA, "Heteropolis," *Ciudad Hibrida/Hybrid City: The Production of Art in 'Alien Territory,'* ed. Gustavo Leclerc and Ulises Diaz (Los Angeles: SCI-Arc Public Access Press, 1999).

[12] Mary Louise Pratt has described "the contact zone" in the context of colonial encounters as a social and geopolitical space "where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other." See Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 4, 6.

to sound," she writes, "but occupants of spaces for listening who, by being there, help produce definite meaning and effects."[13] Yet, while Berland is correct to stress the contingency of textual production on spatial production, I am equally interested in the inverse of her own declaration: that the production of space is likewise contingent upon the production of cultural texts. By listening for the border's audiotopias, we are able to hear these spaces that the music itself makes possible, the spaces that music maps, evokes, and imagines.

Border(audio)scape: Guillermo Gómez-Peña and the Performance of Sound

On a darkened stage, a blindfolded Roberto Sifuentes is in character as the Cyber-Vato, his long black hair pulled back into a tightly wound braid that drapes down the back of his white undershirt, and he's taking desperate, lunging swings at the flaccid carcass of a chicken hanging from an invisible string. With each swing of his police billy club, the chicken is jolted up or to the side, always just inches from violent contact. Soon enough, the chicken drops and Sifuentes proceeds to ritualistically, feverishly, and meticulously beat the carcass to a fine, minced pulp, mashing every fiber of skin, flesh, and bone into a meaty, moist dust on the floor of the black stage—the muscles of his body convulsing and straining as each blow becomes more focused, more targeted, more precise, more important, more saturated with blind rage.

While the beating takes place, Guillermo Gómez-Peña, who is standing further backstage and only slightly illuminated by a filtered spotlight, is singing The Eagles' "Hotel California" as a demonic mariachi, his deep, raspy voice fed through a sound board processor that tweaks and mutates its pitch into a horrific, taunting howl. "Welcome to the Hotel California," he sings as the police billy club pounds the floor with each blow, "such a lovely place, such a lonely place."

Sifuentes is both the cholo who gets beaten by the LAPD—the victimized, criminalized, and hunted brown body—and the boy in blue delivering the blows. The chicken becomes every minoritized body ever bludgeoned by police brutality, every undocumented body made unfit to live and learn by Propositions 187 and 209 and 227, every body caught and chased in the gaze of high-tech spy cams by the border patrol. Together they are the bloodied lie of the California dream, the noirish underbelly, to borrow Mike Davis's famous paradigm, of the great western Edenic myth of Southern California sunshine and oranges.[14] The "peaceful, easy feeling" of The Eagles' California—one made equally famous by their adult contemporary radio frontier ballad, "Desperado"—is flipped into what it really is: a terrorspace of oppression and violence, a surveillance police state of environmental collapse, public space erasure, right wing legislation, and white racial panic.

The scene is from *Borderscape 2000*, the most recent collaboration between Gómez-Peña, Sifuentes, and the rest of the Pocha Nostra crew, and it would not work without the song. In fact, none of *Borderscape 2000*—which is set in the year 2000, after the second US-Mexico War, after the Treaty of Guadalupe-Marcos has been signed, after

[13] Jody Berland, "Angels Dancing: Cultural Technologies and the Production of Space," *Cultural Studies*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula Treichler (New York: Routledge, 1992), 39.
[14] Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (London: Verso, 1990).

Figure 2. Welcome to the Hotel California: Roberto Sifuentes in *Borderscape 2000*. Photo by Eugenio Castro.

the power structures have been reversed and a utopia of inversion has been implemented with Spanglish as the dominant language, the White House as the Brown House, and hybridity as the dominant culture—would make sense as a performance piece without the sounds the Pocha Nostra employ.

In order to begin to open up the idea of the border as an audio territory, I want to turn to this particularly rich and fascinating intersection of sound and performance: the use of music and sound collage in the performance pieces and essays of US-Mexico, "chica-lango" artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña and his collaborators in the Pocha Nostra, specifically their use of the transfrontera flow of Mexicano/a and Chicano/a rock music. Gómez-Peña's performance pieces, which during the past decade and a half have dealt with the flow of identity, culture, and desire across and within the North-meets-South spaces of the US-Mexico borderlands, consistently return to the importance of music—traditional, folkloric, classical, popular, and otherwise—in the performance of border cultures and identities.[15]

And yet, his employment of live and pre-recorded sounds and songs remains the most undertheorized aspect of his work, with most critical accounts focusing on its visual, theatrical, textual, and ideological components as they relate to his playful, dramatic experiments with transborder issues of postnationalism, colonialism, globalization, and interracial desire.[16] Along with his own catalog of characters and personae—El Gran Vato, El Mexterminator, the Border Brujo, among others—Gómez-Peña has repeatedly demonstrated an understanding of music's role as a key character in the drama of contemporary global culture generally and, more specifically, its profound importance to the reimagining and remapping of inter-American cartographies and citizenships. He so frequently employs "soundbeds" and soundtracks featuring bands and musicians from across the Americas precisely because music so readily connects different cultural, social, and national geographies, as well as the communities that inhabit these different locations. Music opens up new lines of political and aesthetic communication between Chicanos/as and Mexicanos/as across the spaces of the borderlands.

By inhabiting this one borderland's intersection of performance art and popular music and asking what it can teach us, I hope to trouble the line between performance and sound, to ask what role recorded sound plays in the dramatic and theatrical performance of place. What are the limits and possibilities of popular music as performance? How does music, sound, and/or noise inform and shape the way performance pieces structure their meanings about territories of spatiality? In order to better pose and answer these questions in the context of Gómez-Peña's work, I have chosen to hear the aural border working as both a "music-culture" and a formation of

[15] For a more general discussion of Gómez-Peña's work in the context of global popular culture and multiculturalism, see Josh Kun, "Multiculturalism Without People of Color: An Interview With Guillermo Gómez-Peña," *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 24:1 (Spring 1999).

[16] For example, Jill S. Kuhnheim has recently argued for a text-based analysis of Gómez-Peña's performances. She asks, "How does it function as literature, an aesthetic experience defined by reading words and images on the page?" See Kuhnheim, "The Economy of Performance: Gómez-Peña's New World Border," *Modern Fiction Studies* 44:1 (Spring 1998). On the "place" of the border in Gómez-Peña's work, see Claire Fox's invaluable critique, "The Portable Border: Site-Specificity, Art, and the US-Mexico Border," *Social Text* 41 (Winter 1994): 61–82. On Gómez-Peña's video performance of Tijuana read in the larger context of a reconfigured inter-American cultural studies project, see José David Saldívar, *Border Matters,* 151–58. And while Lisa Wolford's recent detailed essay on the Pocha Nostra's rave-inspired *Mexterminator Project* focuses on diorama identity performances, she also goes out of her way to point out the "driving soundtrack that mixes southwestern music and exoticizing pop tunes with spoken text and Mexican rock." See Wolford, "The Politics of Identity in the United States of Aztlán: Pocha Nostra's *Mexterminator Project*," *Theatre Forum* 15 (Summer/Fall 1999): 60.

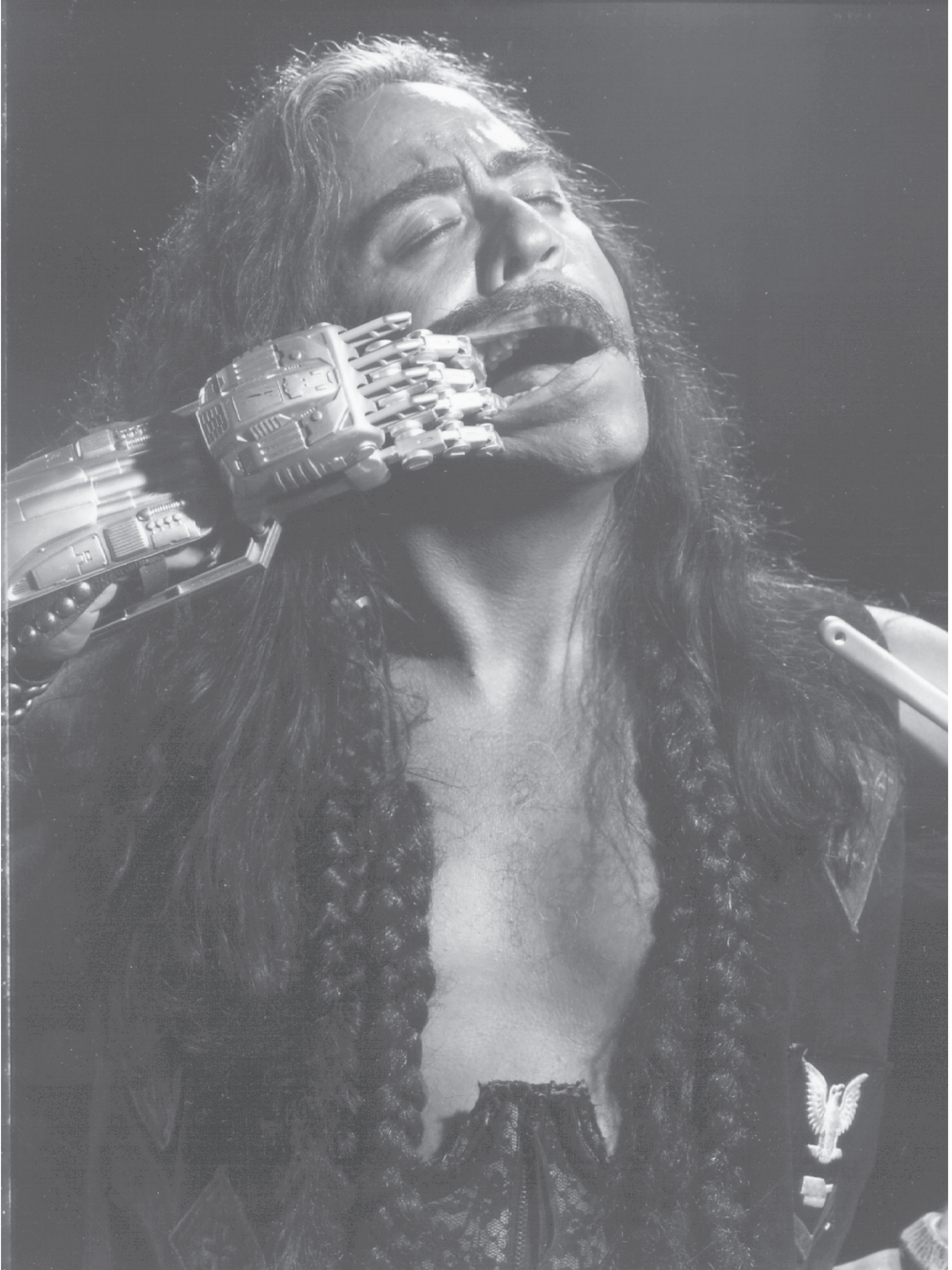

Figure 3. The silence that snaps: Guillermo Gómez-Peña in *Borderscape 2000*.
Photo by Eugenio Castro.

"musicking," two different models of musical analysis that both emphasize the extra-musical—the extent to which music is never just music, to which it absorbs, influences, and is informed by other forces of creative production and identity-making.

By claiming that as a performance artist and essayist Gómez-Peña is contributing to the border's "music-culture," I am borrowing from Mark Slobin and Jeff Todd Titon's very helpful paradigm in which they divide music's cultural influence into four principal areas: affect, performance, community, and memory/history. When he uses music in his pieces, Gómez-Peña is not simply using it on the aesthetic merits of its sound alone. As I will demonstrate, he deploys music for the histories it embodies, the memories it encodes and displays, the emotions and attachments it reflects, and the cultural meanings and relationships it performs to the ear of the listener.[17]

Slobin and Titon's music-culture approach has much in common with what Christopher Small has called "musicking": his attempt to expand the very notion of a musical performance itself to include a variety of different cultural activities. For Small, the meaning of music lies not simply in musical works as such but in "the totality of a musical performance between the people who are taking part in whatever capacity in the performance," whether it be through performing, listening, rehearsing, recording, or dancing. "Musicking" is not so much about music as sound, but music as social relationship. Gómez-Peña takes part in the musical performances of the border (specifically, as I will show in the essay's final section, those of rock en español) first by listening and then by mirroring the meanings and ideas of the music in his own work.[18]

Though he returns to rock most frequently, Gómez-Peña's musical palette is a broad one. In his landmark 1988 solo performance originally staged at the Tijuana-San Diego border, *Border Brujo*—in which he embodies a shape-shifting, language-twisting border changeling who shuttles between fifteen different personae—among the many props adorning his altar table is a battered tape recorder. It becomes as important to the brujo's performativity as his more famous megaphone (which he uses to transform himself into authority figures) and his bottle of Clairol Herbal Essence shampoo (which he gleefully chugs). Throughout the performance, Gómez-Peña ritualistically inserts and removes different cassettes, hits play, and releases various soundbeds to accompany different shifts in his character. When the piece begins, the recorder is playing "a collection of Tambora, German punk, bilingual songs from Los Tigres del Norte, and rap opera." This cacophonous, nearly dissonant polycultural and multinational collage of sounds plays as Gómez-Peña speaks first in a fictitious Indian dialect and then in English: "Dear audience / feel at home / this continent is your home . . . allow me the privilege / of reorganizing your thoughts."[19]

The musical, stylistic, and national blend of the soundbed and its willfully brazen disregard for genre categories is also the soundtrack to the announcement of *Border Brujo*'s initial chronological setting—"January 1st, 1847 / & the US hasn't invaded

[17] Jeff Todd Titon and Mark Slobin, "Music-Cultures," *Worlds of Music: An Introduction to the Music of the World's Peoples*, ed. Titon, Linda Fujie, and David Locke (New York: Macmillan, 1996).

[18] Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1998), 13.

[19] Guillermo Gómez-Peña, "Border Brujo," *Warrior for Gringostroika* (St. Paul: Graywolf, 1993), 76.

Mexico yet"—and its opening salvo: "there is no border / we are merely divided / by the imprecision of your memory." Throughout the piece, this sense of borderlessness at the border, of spatial and national disorientation unfolding at the very site of mapped policing and legislative fantasy that is the Tijuana-San Diego checkpoint, is further explored by the music the brujo chooses to drop into his tape deck—a wildly eclectic roster of artists and styles that blurs distinctions between high and low and plays with questions of authenticity and the commodification of identity. Gómez-Peña effectively evokes the cultural blur, technological scramble, and hierarchical inversions of the Tijuana–San Diego border by acting out different characters (INS agents, Tijuana barkers, Anglo tourists) in different languages (Spanish, English, Spanglish, gringoñol, faux-Nahuatl) over everything from Tambora sinaloense, cumbia, bullfight music, and blues to New Age, Rossini, Gregorian chants, and Ry Cooder's "Cancion Mixteca"—a song the Euro-American guitarist recorded with actor Harry Dean Stanton as part of the dusty, barren Tex-Mex soundscape for Wim Wenders' 1989 film *Paris, Texas*.[20]

A year after retiring the Border Brujo as a performance character in 1990 and leaving the Tijuana-San Diego border for New York City, Gómez-Peña penned "From Art-Mageddon to Gringostroika: A Manifesto Against Censorship." Though the site-specificity of his arguments had begun to change,[21] Gómez-Peña's push for a proactive, critical multiculturalism and his theorization of First World–Third World implosions where the North is in the South and the South is in the North were still accompanied by individual soundbeds selected to accompany each segment of the manifesto. Each musical setting operates as a secondary commentary on the text, a second voice that adds nuance to the meanings and arguments being made on the scripted page.

He pairs commentary on Eastern European political restructuring and the collapse of sustainable ideology during "this fin-de-siècle earthquake" with Gregorian chants. He offers critiques of eighties multiculturalism that failed to "readjust our anachronistic national institutions and policies to the new social, cultural, linguistic, and demographic realities of this country" as flamenco fusionists the Gypsy Kings and Franco-Spanish-Latin American politicos Mano Negra are played "at the wrong speed." He attacks New World discovery narratives and Columbus celebrations as "melancholic Tarahumara violins," reminding the listening audience of the indigenous genocide those narratives and celebrations so violently mask.[22]

Music is also important to mid-nineties pieces like "The New World Border" and "The Last Migration: A Spanglish Opera" which engage the border as a shifting, unmoored, global condition affecting all regions that have witnessed the effects of migrations, displacements, and cultural collisions—all sites and spaces that have become "borderized." "The Last Migration," for example, employs opera, classical music, Australian pop, norteño music, and rock, as well as a "live end of the century orchestra [which] includes two opera singers, a rapper, a Tex-Mex accordion player, a rock guitarist, a cellist, and five ghetto blasters."[23]

[20] Ibid., 76–95.
[21] See Fox, "The Portable Border," for a tracking of this change.
[22] Gómez-Peña, "From Art-Mageddon to Gringostroika," *Warrior for Gringostroika*, 55–63.
[23] Gómez-Peña, "The Last Migration: A Spanglish Opera (In Progress)," *The New World Border* (San Francisco: City Lights, 1996), 193.

One of its more effective musical interventions is its use of banda music—the brassy horn-based norteño oompah music originally from Northern Mexico but popularized in US cities like Los Angeles and San Jose—"mixed with helicopters" as the soundtrack to the Aztec mummy's march across the Americas. "Mosquito migra choppers circle her head," Gómez-Peña writes, "techno-banda music erupts like magma." As a musical form with roots in both Mexico and the United States, techno-banda (and its accompanying dance, quebradita) contains the border in its very composition. As George Lipsitz has so effectively argued, banda and quebradita create new social maps and modes of being for displaced Mexican immigrants in the United States whose migrations are tied to the ebbs and flows of the low-wage employment sector. With their accompanying citywide LA nightclub culture of dance competitions between flag-waving migrants representing different Mexican states, banda and quebradita reflect and comment not on life in Mexico but on life as a Mexican in the United States, what Lipsitz calls "a recombinant Mexican identity inside the US."[24]

Perhaps most relevant to my discussion here is the nature of the quebradita dance itself—a dance born in the United States and built around the "little break" of the dancer's body in rhythm with the music. Of course, this danced break also comes to symbolize the alleged national and cultural break between Mexico and the United States, the bodily rupture that both joins the two countries and breaks them apart. For migrants who want neither to return to Mexico nor assimilate fully into the United States, the "break" of the quebradita is perfectly fitting; it is the break that appears to split Mexico and the United States in two and yet in the end still contains them both in a fluid dance of performed interstitiality.[25]

I want now to return in more detail to Gómez-Peña and Sifuentes' *Borderscape 2000*, what I believe to be the most sonically realized Pocha Nostra production to date. Playing throughout it is a dizzying sound collage by San Francisco sound designer and Pocha Nostra member Rona Michele, whose cut-and-paste sonic compositions and patchwork musical assemblages not only supplement and augment the action onstage but by the performance's end, become their own self-referential audio performance. They offer their own aural rendering of a futuristic US-Mexico borderscape.[26]

By casting the border as a "-scape," Gómez-Peña and Sifuentes are wittingly entering the border into the critical discourse of global capitalism, specifically anthropologist Arjun Appadurai's oft-cited model of disjuncture and difference. Briefly, Appadurai argues that the global cultural economy no longer rests on older center-periphery models of fixed nationalism, and is now more disorganized and characterized by a series of disjunctures and flows. With this "nationalist genie" increasingly being released from its territorial bottle, Appadurai proposes instead that we reconfigure our view of contemporary global culture according to a system of interlocking "-scapes" that track the move from geographically bounded nation-states

[24] George Lipsitz, "Home Is Where the Hatred Is: Work, Music, and the Transnational Economy," *Home, Exile, Homeland: Film, Media, and the Politics of Place*, ed. Hamid Naficy (New York: Routledge, 1999), 210.

[25] Ibid., 201.

[26] Michele also created the soundbeds and soundtracks for the *Mexterminator Project*. In her essay on the performance, Lisa Wolford rightfully describes Michele's work as "a vital component of the diorama performance" (Wolford 60).

Figure 4. Performing the audioscape: Roberto Sifuentes, Guillermo Gómez-Peña, and Sara Shelton-Mann in *Borderscape 2000*. Photo by Eugenio Castro.

to denationalized circuits or landscapes of cultural production and consumption: financescapes, mediascapes, ethnoscapes, technoscapes, and ideoscapes.[27]

But because so much of *Borderscape 2000* depends upon its sound collage, because so much of it is about the interaction of live performing bodies in a virtual borderspace saturated with the crossing of sounds, what I am asking here is that we also seriously consider the role of audioscapes—musically determined and financially enabled landscapes populated by indeterminate cultural forms, mobile communities, and shifting identities. Audioscapes direct our ears to the migratory flow of sound and sound-objects (records, CDs, mix tapes, DATs, bootlegs) across disparate geopolitical and pop cultural spaces, the extent to which music and sound can serve as vectors of connection and affiliation between distanced and displaced communities.

In *Borderscape 2000*, Michele creates a collage that perfectly performs a very particular inter-American audioscape, one that plays out a musical version of Gómez-Peña's continental border zone while making audible two of *Borderscape 2000*'s central

[27] Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," *The Phantom Public Sphere*, ed. Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993). For different uses of Appadurai's model in terms of popular music, see Tim Taylor, *Global Pop: World Music, World Markets* (New York: Routledge, 1997); and Mark Slobin, *Subcultural Sounds: Micromusics of the West* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1993).

points: first, the extent to which Latino/a identities have historically been commercialized and repackaged on both sides of the border as fetishes of touristic desire (something that in light of the recent Ricky Martin craze we ought to know has never gone away). And second, the border is mobile and fluctuating, no longer bound to one specific geographic configuration; it belongs to a continental map of communities in motion and cultures in contact. As such, over the course of the performance, the sound collage covers "Japanese tea house lounge," techno, Ray Charles singing "America the Beautiful," Native American powwow music, The Champs twanging and shouting "Tequila," Chilean rock band Los Electrodomesticos, seventies "Jungle Fever" funksters Chakachas (a "Latin disco" band from French Guyana but based in Belgium), and repeat performances from Ry Cooder.[28]

Michele's digital tape collages figure centrally in one of *Borderscape 2000*'s principal sketches, "A Lecture on Reverse Anthropology: The Past," which features Sifuentes in a lab coat, wielding a bull whip as a "French intellectual" lecturing on his recent field study in Cancun. When he introduces the "in situ tribal recordings" he recorded while in Mexico, instead of hearing folkloric music coded with indigenous authenticity, the music Michele has him play is from Yma Sumac, "the legendary sun virgin" of Peru, who came to prominence in the fifties as the multi-octave queen of easy listening exotica and who is now being revived by a new generation of corporate hipsters.

The music the mock anthropologist wants is representative indigenous music from Mexico; what he gets is the spectacular, otherworldly voice of a woman who claimed to be an Incan goddess descended from Atahualpa, who was once actually believed to be Amy Camus from Brooklyn, and who was nonetheless fetishized for her marketed authenticity within a culture of postwar ethno-fantasy by both Hollywood and the recording industry. Equally destabilizing is that the songs of Sumac, so celebrated for their representative Latin Americanness, were mostly sonic constructions of enticing Latin make-believe engineered by tiki-torch composers like Les Baxter. "Nothing musical can be traced to South America," British music critic David Toop has written of Sumac, "despite the vivid sleeve-note descriptions of Incan hymns, Andean mountain grandeur, Peruvian monkey calls, and Aztec princes."[29]

Borderscape 2000's erotic and often violent orgy of crossed cultural meanings and migratory identities that encompasses Mexicanos/as, Chicanos/as, and African Americans[30] is further echoed when Michele unleashes La Lupita, a Mexico City rock band, refrying "Camelia La Tejana," a song originally recorded as a border corrido ("Camelia La Texana"), then popularized by Los Tigres del Norte in the seventies and turned into a feature film, *Contrabando y Traición*. It's a sediment-rich cover version that gives us an experimental urban Mexican band using the imported Northern rock idiom to pay

[28] All citations from *Borderscape 2000* are taken from the unpublished text script *Borderscape 2000 (Kitsch, Unnecessary Violence, Cyborgs, & Shamanism at the End of the Century): A New Aztec High-Tech Spanglish Lounge Operetta*. Manuscript in possession of the author, courtesy of Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Roberto Sifuentes.

[29] David Toop, *Exotica: Fabricated Soundscapes in a Real World* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1999), 72.

[30] *Borderscape 2000*'s inclusion of black-white racial economies in its portrayal of US-Mexico border futurism is best exemplified by the "Tea Ceremony" sketch which features Pocha Nostra member Sara Shelton-Mann as a racist white Southern woman grappling with her desire for racialized brown and black otherness.

tribute to a norteño supergroup that immigrated from Sinaloa to San Jose and that was the first undocumented band to win a Grammy.[31]

Two sketches later, Sifuentes is in character as Cyber Vato, and while a video of Chicano civil rights activists screens overhead, he delivers a sermon on the future fate of Chicano Nirvana—a fantasyspace of political freedom produced by the end of the "Second US-Mexico War" which has rendered "the ex-US of A" as a "metaficción nostalgica" splintered into various "micro-republics" of dissent. The soundtrack to Cyber Vato's report is the Chicano hip-hop group Delinquent Habits performing "Tres Delinquentes,"[32] which Gómez-Peña describes in the text's notes as "mariachi rap." But, in fact, the "mariachi" in question is not mariachi at all. The horns and guitars that begin over the song's breakbeats belong not to a mariachi ensemble from Veracruz, but to notorious border kitschmeisters Herb Alpert and The Tijuana Brass and their song "The Lonely Bull." The song was the title track to Alpert and the Tijuana Brass' debut recording which, according to the album's liner notes, was meant to capture the sound of a mythologized Tijuana, "the noisy Mexican-American voices in the narrow streets, the confusion of color and motion."[33]

The notes confuse Tijuana—"a spectacle, a garish border town"—as a site of Mexican-Americanness (perhaps a valid point in another context, but surely not one that Alpert and company had planned on making) and then reveal that the inspiration for the Tijuana Brass' formation was a Tijuana bullring, which leaves us with a theme song for Chicano Nirvana performed by a Chicano hip-hop group performing in African American styles. But instead of sampling funk and rhythm and blues, and instead of sampling norteño and ranchera, they sample and thereby invert the meanings of a post-Latin craze "south-of-the-border" ode to a tourist wonderland of fetishized, romantic escape and excess. In the end, *Borderscape 2000*'s music makes the project's central points with more clarity and resolve than the spoken and visual texts themselves. Contrary to the script's stage notes, the sound of the performance is not merely functioning as an accompanying "track" or "bed." It functions as its own performance, its own commentary on the contradictions, clashes, and circuits of exchange that characterize the aural life of the US-Mexico border.

"Un Canto Fronterizo": Rock en Español as Transborder Performance

By far the most frequent manifestation of the aural border that recurs in Gómez-Peña's work is that of Mexican rock en español, or rock in Spanish—an expansive and vaguely delineated rock movement that's been thriving in Mexico and other Latin American countries since the late fifties.[34] The hybridized and recycled result of local

[31] For more on the song's trajectory, see Maria Herrera-Sobek, "The Corrido as Hypertext: Undocumented Mexican Immigrant Films and the Mexican/Chicano Ballad," *Culture Across Borders: Mexican Immigration and Popular Culture*, ed. David R. Maciel and Herrera-Sobek (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1998).

[32] Delinquent Habits, "Tres Delinquentes," *Delinquent Habits* (BMG, 1996).

[33] Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass, *The Lonely Bull* (A&M 101S, 1962). On the album's cover, Alpert sits in a rocking chair, shot glass in hand, with his trumpet, a bottle of tequila, a wine flask, salt, lime, and a pairing knife at his loafer-clad feet.

[34] For an informed and detailed history of Mexican rock's formative years, see Eric Zolov, *Re-Fried Elvis: The Rise of the Mexican Counterculture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

Mexican music and vernacular culture transforming US and UK rock grammars, rock en español has become a key way for Gómez-Peña to theorize and understand the shifting geographies of the borderlands. Indeed, the music of rock en español provides the soundtrack to many of Gómez-Peña's "prophecies, poemas, & loqueras" for the end of the century and is frequently the sonorous landscape that territorializes the drifting, utopian "Fourth World" cartographies of his post-Colombian "performance continent." Part of a generation of Mexican artists who grew up listening to both cumbias and the Moody Blues, Gómez-Peña has even described his work as exploring "the silence that snaps in between corrido and punk."[35]

Most date the watershed period for the Mexican rock-performance art relationship to the 1985 Mexico City earthquake, when the shaking of the city birthed a new generation of chroniclers, or *cronistas*, desperate for new ways of documenting the world of rubble and devastation surrounding them.[36] Post-quake, art had to grapple with social reality, and rockers and performance artists were just some of the torchbearers—along with cartoonists and other engaged cultural workers—who were committed to bringing the voices of Mexico's urban margins into the country's unsettled public sphere. Since then, the elaborate theatricality of bands like La Castañeda and Víctimas del Doctor Cerebro, "guacarock" pioneers Botellita de Jerez,[37] intellectually engaged fusionists Maldita Vecindad, and solo artists like Sergio Arau have brought performance art into the rock club with lucha libre masks, monster mashes, customized charro pants, and boot spurs grafted onto sneakers, making the line between the two genres more and more difficult to draw.

In Gómez-Peña's case, rock en español's cross-border cultural migrations and its position in a transnational NAFTA economy make it a perfect partner in artistic revolution. His "high-tech Aztec" fusions are indebted to the way rock bands take music from abroad and transform it with music from home via postmodern studio recording technologies: Cuca soaking a traditional acoustic Mexican *son* in a heavy metal guitar bath, Café Tacuba splicing digitally sampled indio chants with fake Morse code signals and mariachi guitars, Maldita Vecindad programming hip-hop breakbeats under a classic *son* juasteco, Nopalica crooning about a rancho that's both "electronico" and "cibernetico."

These types of musical and technological mergers were precisely what Gómez-Peña described in his 1989 micro-manifesto, "The Border Is . . . ," in which he refers to "hybrid art forms for new contents-in-gestation" such as "punkarachi," the meeting of punk and mariachi. But while he argues that border culture is home to the hybrid soundings of punkarachi, it is important to note that Gómez-Peña also sees such art forms as contributing to something else that the border means, "a new cartography; a

[35] Gómez-Peña, "The Free Trade Art Agreement/El Tratado de Libre Cultura," *The New World Border*, 6, and "Documented/Undocumented," *Warrior for Gringostroika*, 38.

[36] See, for example, Rubén Martínez, "Corazón del Rocanrol," *The Other Side: Fault Lines, Guerilla Saints and the True Heart of Rock n' Roll* (New York: Verso, 1992).

[37] "Guacarock" refers to the rock aesthetic created by Botellita de Jerez that was meant to signify the musical mixing of guacamole with rock and roll—a mixing between traditional and vernacular Mexican forms with imported US pop culture. For more on guacarock and the "Heavy-Mex" solo career of one of Botellita's original members, Sergio Arau, see Yareli Arizmendi, "Whatever Happened To The Sleepy Mexican?," *The Drama Review* 38:1 (Spring 1994).

brand new map to host the new project." Gómez-Peña makes a direct link between hybrid artistic production and the reconfiguration of conventional non-hemispheric mappings of America. The punkarachi sounds of rock en español are part of what "the border is . . ." precisely because they move within and without the border's spaces and because they prophecy what he calls "America post-Colombina, ArteAmerica sin fronteras."[38] Indeed, punkarachi returns as the soundbed for the second track of another Gómez-Peña manifesto, 1991's "From Art-Mageddon To Gringostroika." Here punkarachi becomes the soundtrack to an increasing traffic between North and South. It is the musical equivalent of what he describes as "a border dialectic of ongoing flux" that generates "a moving cartography with a floating culture and a fluctuating sense of self."[39]

In his poem "Freefalling Towards a Borderless Future," Gómez-Peña puts rock en español musicians and fans at the forefront of a new California geography of migration and passage, imagining "grunge rockeros on the edge of a cliff / all passing through Califas / enroute to other selves / & other geographies."[40] The performance piece "The New World Border" imagines a hit TV show called Pura Bi-Cultura which broadcasts across the borders of the Americas and features "fusion rock bands that used to be underground now play[ing] their punkarachi, discolmeca, and rap-guanco at NAFTA functions."[41] And the first scene of "The Last Migration: A Spanglish Opera (in progress)" finds Gómez-Peña "training to face the end of the century" by jumping rope on his Los Angeles balcony while listening to Mexican alterna-metaleros Cuca.[42] Gómez-Peña so frequently returns to the music of rock en español—whether as the soundtrack to a coming American apocalypse, a Free Trade cultural fusion, or a journey into a new migratory self—precisely because of the inter-American sonic mappings it offers, what he describes as its "brave acceptance of our transborderized and denationalized condition."[43]

Gómez-Peña's understanding of rock en español as a two-way transnational flow of popular sound makes perfect sense given Mexican rock's history as a genre of cultural connection between the United States and Mexico, both in terms of style and audience. Seventies rock icon Jaime Lopez has even claimed that rock en español is *un canto fronterizo* (a song of the borderlands). For Lopez, "more than talking about an urban song, *un canto urbano*, we should talk about a borderlands song, *un canto fronterizo*, because that's what our song is like, you do it Chiapas, Yucatan, Mexico City, Nogales, Matamoros, or Tijuana. . . . We're border people not urban people . . . we're between the cement and the plains, those are our contradictions."[44]

The idea that rock en español, because of its travels and migrations between the United States and Mexico, is a borderlands song of inter-American remapping is only

[38] Guillermo Gómez-Peña, "The Border Is . . . ," *Warrior for Gringostroika*, 43–44.

[39] Gómez-Peña, "From Art-Mageddon to Gringostroika," *Warrior for Gringostroika*, 56.

[40] Gómez-Peña, "Freefalling Toward A Borderless Future," *The New World Border*, 2.

[41] Gómez-Peña, "The New World Border," *The New World Border*, 37.

[42] Gómez-Peña, "The Last Migration," *The New World Border*, 194.

[43] Gómez-Peña, "Danger Zone: Cultural Relations Between Chicanos and Mexicans at the End of the Century," *The New World Border*, 171.

[44] Thelma Duran and Fernando Barrios, "La Larga y Triste Historia del Rock Mexicano: Un Ensayo Aproximativo," *El Grito del Rock Mexicano: Hablan Los Roqueros* (Mexico City: Ediciones del Milenio, 1995), 34.

intensified as the impact of rock en español on Latino/a audiences and performers in the United States continues to grow in cities like San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Chicago, cities that in Gómez-Peña's terms would be considered "independent micro-republics" of Latino community and belonging. The year 1999 even witnessed both the stateside launch of the Watcha Tour, a national multi-city rock en español tour featuring Chicano, Latino, Mexicano, Puerto Rican, and Argentinean bands, and the beginning stages of *En Ambos Lados de la Frontera/On Both Sides of the Border*, the first ever transfrontera pop music conference, concert, and museum exhibition held in Mexico City, which will join Mexican bands such as Maldita Vecindad to Chicano musicians like Los Illegals with scholars and historians from the United States and Mexico.

In this way, rock en español has been one of the many "mysterious underground railroads" that Gómez-Peña hears connecting the transnational performance coordinates of the "new world border"—an audio circuit of exchange and communication between dispersed listeners and the shifting national geographies they inhabit. As a result, a Mexico City band like Molotov can perform Spanglish-flipping heavy metal rap fusions that draw both from Chicano hip-hop crews and the Chicano-identified LA band Rage Against the Machine (lead singer Zack de la Rocha's father was a member of the trailblazing Los Four art group); Monterrey's Control Machete can hook up with Chicano-Cubano hip-hoppers Cypress Hill and perform in pressed khakis as neo-vatos locos; and Tijuana NO can duet with LA Chicano rapper Frost on "Stolen at Gunpoint," an urgent demand for the mexicano reconquest of what became the US southwest after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

All of which is a long way from Octavio Paz's famous diatribe against East Los Angeles pachucismo and subsequent decades of mexicano disdain for perceived Chicano culturelessness.[45] The reverse is also true of course: Chicano bands like Yeska taking a "Greyhound to Chiapas" and California ex-punk icon Robert Lopez becoming El Vez the Mexican Elvis, leading walking tours of the Mayan ruins at Tulum, and performing with mariachi ensembles in the heart of downtown Los Angeles. These are just some examples of what Gómez-Peña and critics like Rubén Martínez have been tracking as a double-flow of exchange and influence: the Chicanization of Mexico and the Mexicanization of Chicano America.[46] As Gómez-Peña describes it,

> Mexican identity (or better said, the many Mexican identities) can no longer be explained without the experience of 'the other side' and vice-versa. As a socio-cultural phenomenon, Los Angeles simply cannot be understood without taking Mexico City . . . into account. Between both cities runs the greatest migratory axis on the planet, and the conceptual freeway with the greatest number of accidents.[47]

The transnational connections and musical bridges that make rock en español so attractive to Gómez-Peña are readily apparent in two songs by Mexico City rock band Maldita Vecindad y Los Hijos del Quinto Patio. "Mojado," a song from their 1989 self-

[45] Octavio Paz, "The Pachuco and Other Extremes," *The Labyrinth of Solitude and Other Writings* (New York: Grove Press, 1985).

[46] Rubén Martínez, "Beyond Borders: Culture, Movement and Bedlam on Both Sides of the Rio Grande," *NACLA Report On the Americas* XXX:4 (January/February 1997).

[47] Gómez-Peña, "Danger Zone: Cultural Relations Between Chicanos and Mexicans at the End of the Century," *The New World Border*, 178.

titled debut, tells the story of a Mexican national who leaves home to cross the border as an undocumented *mojado* to secure work in the United States. He leaves Mexico believing "el otro lado is the solution" and ends up suffocating to death in a truck along the border. The song is dedicated to "the Mexican workers that illegally cross the border into the United States who they call mojados . . . [and] to all those who have been forced to separate themselves from their customs, loved ones, roots, and everyday realities."[48] The fatal border crossing that "Mojado" documents gives literal voice to one of the thousands of so-called "silent deaths" that have occurred in the process of crossing the US-Mexico border at designated border checkpoints. Between 1994 and 1997—the very period that saw the rise of such close-the-border campaigns as Operation Hold the Line in Texas and Operation Gatekeeper and Light Up the Border in California—more than 1,100 people have died from automobile accidents, drowning, exhaustion, and dehydration, trying to find a way into the United States to locate work and reunite with family members.[49]

On the band's 1993 concert tour (which stretched throughout Mexico, the United States, and Europe), Maldita went so far as to dedicate the song to "all those *hermanos* dispersed all over the world and especially for the Chicanos," using the experience of crossing the border as a means of building musical connections between *Mexicanos* and Chicanos.[50] Similarly, when Mexican rock veterans El Tri played a sold-out show at Los Angeles' Hollywood Palladium in 1991, they insisted that even "more than a rock concert," the show was "a testimony to our people, to our fans, to our brothers" living in what they jokingly called "the sister republic of hamburgers, hot dogs, and hot cakes." In the liner notes to the recording of the concert, *En Vivo!!! Y A Todo Calor En El Hollywood Palladium*, the band's lead singer and songwriter Alex Lora writes that he hopes the concert let the audience forget their frustrations "and above all, that we make you feel at home, that you are in Mexico, and that proudly, we can say that we are brothers and that we are Mexicans."[51]

Part of what I am arguing, then, is that in terms of musical geography and sonic migration, the "borderless future" that Gómez-Peña performs and theorizes has already been realized by the music of rock en español itself, which has been a key point of cultural contact—a sort of musical hyperspace—between Latino/a communities on both sides of the border. Indeed, as a final example, two recent independent Chicano films, Miguel Arteta's *Star Maps* and Jim Mendiola's *Pretty Vacant*, both employ rock en español as a music of connection between the United States and Mexico. For Arteta's debut film about a dysfunctional first-generation Chicano family living in contemporary Los Angeles, *Star Maps* (which begins with the main character returning to Los Angeles on a bus from Mexico where he had been living with his grandmother), he used a soundtrack compiled by East Los Angeles Chicana folk-punk stalwart Lysa Flores that linked rock en español bands from the United States and

[48] Maldita Vecindad y Los Hijos del Quinto Patio, *Maldita Vecindad y Los Hijos del Quinto Patio* (BMG Ariola, 1989). For the live version, see *Gira Pata Del Perro* (BMG Ariola, 1993).

[49] Sam Howe Verhover, "Silent Deaths Climbing Steadily As Migrants Cross Mexico Border," *The New York Times*, Sunday, 24 August 1997.

[50] Maldita Vecindad y Los Hijos del Quinto Patio, *Gira Pata Del Perro*.

[51] El Tri, *En Vivo!!! Y A Todo Calor En El Hollywood Palladium* (WEA Latina, 1991).

Latin America. What the soundtrack to *Star Maps* ultimately suggests is that the music of contemporary Chicano/a identity is an increasingly transnational, cross-border formation.

Rock en español also makes an appearance at the end of Jim Mendiola's 1996 short film, *Pretty Vacant*, which chronicles a week in the life of Molly Vasquez, a second-generation Chicana filmmaker, zine publisher, and drummer for the all-girl punk band Aztlán-a-Go-Go. Throughout most of the film, the soundtrack Mendiola strategically employs is a smart mix of US and UK punk with Tex-Mex *conjunto*, but when Molly returns from a family trip to Mexico we hear instead "El Aparato," a song by Mexico City's Cafe Tacuba. The film's frame of reference suddenly shifts from San Antonio to Mexico City and Molly tells how she "hooked up with some rockeros at El Chopo" and "turned them on to the new L7 and they gave me some tapes by Cafe Tacuba and Santa Sabina."[52]

It is precisely these kinds of musical hook-ups, these kinds of networks and circuits of exchange and communication that rock en español makes possible, that are reflected, performed, and elaborated on in the work of Gómez-Peña. Together they represent the convergence of performance and popular music that is central to what I have been thinking about as the aural border ever since the moment which began this inquiry, hearing Tijuana NO perform "La Esquina del Mundo." On that day in Tijuana, standing at the border wall, at "the last street of Latin America" with Alex, I could not get over the way the wall extended out into the water past the breaking line of the waves and then just ended. Two thousand miles of demarcated national boundary line simply stopped, and right where Tijuana NO once had set up their amps, right where they had been singing about .38 specials and wearing Zapatista masks, the illusory expansiveness of the sea began. And for an instant, the only sound the border made was the sound of its own vanishing. "One day," Alex turned to me and said, "the water will wash it all away."

[52] *Pretty Vacant* (Jim Mendiola, director), 1996.