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The Mexican Identity and Music: Audioscapes and The Transnational Death Metal Band Brujeria

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THE MEXICAN IDENTITY AND MUSIC:
AUDIOSCAPES AND THE
TRANSNATIONAL DEATH METAL BAND BRUJERIA

A Thesis

by

MICHAEL D. MENA

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University of Texas-Pan American
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AUDIOSCAPES AND THE
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December 2011

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ABSTRACT

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The California-based Mexican-American “activist” metal band Brujeria, uses a powerful, yet conflicting, blend of nihilism, anarchism, and racism with a dose of hyper-patriotism in its attempt to convey the voice of oppressed Mexicans on both sides of the border. While it is uncertain whether or not Brujeria is intentionally political, their live performances and song lyrics are highly critical of both the U.S. and Mexico regarding immigration policy, border-crossing, and other issues which have resonated among an international audience. In this paper I explore the conflicting notions of space, performativity, binationality and U.S. Mexico relations within the context of Brujeria messages. While using Brujeria as the focus of my work, I also explain what I call the notion of “Audioscapes.” In simple terms: it deals with the cognitive processes which create perceptions of music from mind to mind, state to state, and space to space.

DEDICATION

I would like to extend my gratitude towards all that helped me along my journey: my loving wife, my mother, my sister, my former students, Jaime Perez, and most of all Dr. Ragland. All others who helped keep my life sane during periods of insanity: including friends, family, and musical ensembles, especially Severance that I am honored to be a part of. Finally, eternal thanks to Brujeria for being an inspiration to the Mexican Community.

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Dr. Ragland: Thank you for being my true inspiration and revealing my scholarly ambition and abilities to myself. I assure you I would have never taken this turn in my academic scholarship if it was for you.

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Dr. Martinez: Your classical guitar training enabled my musical abilities two-fold. I will be forever grateful for those long tormenting hours of practice and performances. I became a stronger person after our time together.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
DEDICATION.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
LIST OF FIGURES.....	viii
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXTUALIZATION.....	1
Methodology, Theory, and Thesis Outline.....	5
Ch.II Lost in Translation, Found in Perceptive.....	10
Ch III. Symbolic Forms and Icons.....	12
Conclusions: Unmasking Brujeria.....	13
Fieldwork in our Borderlands.....	14
CHAPTER II. LOST IN TRANSLATION, FOUND IN PERSPECT.....	16
A Contemporary Corrido Spirit.....	31
A Contemporary Corrido Spirit (Part Two)	38
CHAPTER III. SYMBOLIC FORMS AND ICONS.....	40
The Spanish Language as Symbol.....	40
Skin Color as Symbol: Colorismo.....	42
The Mexican Revolution as Symbol.....	44
Translating Subtexts.....	49
A Contemporary Corrido Spirit: Part Three.....	51
CHAPTER IV: DIALOGUES WITH UNMASKED MEN.....	56
Final Thoughts.....	64

Audioscapes Align.....	66
REFERENCES.....	68
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.....	71

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Translation of “Pito Wilson” by: Brujeria.....	28
Figure 2: Translation of “La Migra” by Brujeria.....	34
Figure 3: Translation of “Revolution” by Brujeria.....	45

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXTUALIZATION

It's 10am on some random Saturday in early 2010. I am impatiently waiting for my band-mate Jaime's silver Toyota SUV to pull up in front of my house. We'll be crossing the Hidalgo-Reynosa South Texas border today. I feel nervous. Flashes from the Mexican news channels keep finding their way to the forefront of my imagination; in particular, the recovery of a rotted, bloated, severed arm pulled on to a Mexican police boat from the Rio Grande River. Such ravenous murders occur near us, but rarely cross the line, the state's line that is. Our imagined safety is highly compromised by local media reports daily on shoot-outs, police arrests, arrested police, and the recovery of grotesquely mutilated corpses. We'll be entering a border zone of borders, an area of conflict riddled with gang violence, border patrol vehicles, allegedly corrupt Mexican military personnel, and everyone caught in between, the citizens of a failed state, what appears to be a third world nation which is only minutes away from the neoliberal capitalist machine, the United States of America.

I quickly make a final check of all the necessities: driver's license, birth certificate, and oh yes, quarters for the various toll crossings back and forth over the US-Mexico border. The implementation of the passport laws was never quite clear to us; there was some doubt as to whether or not we even needed a passport yet. But ironically, we decide to risk it. Finally,

Jaime's vehicle pulls up. I open the passenger door to a fully cranked six-speaker stereo system blasting the tunes of New York's finest death metal band "Suffocation." We make a nervous eye contact, I crack a smile, start to climb in and yell, "I hope we don't fuckin' die today." We both cautiously laugh at the half-joking comment. Just a couple weeks prior to our trip the local and national media had reported a major shoot out between the Mexican street-gang, Los Zetas, and the Mexican military. Deaths were reported, but by this time the local rumors about a Mexican media cover-up had numbers topping twenty dead bystanders and even more gang and military casualties. The blur of fact and fiction, truth and folklore, was already taking hold of the incident. Images of the popular TV show "Border Wars" keep popping into my head, American snipers hiding in the brush by the river, murdering alleged cartel and gang members while still in the U.S. Why wouldn't they be in our area? After all this is a locale with lots of "movement" (be it drug or human trafficking).

Jaime decides it will be better to walk over, so I pull out a couple of dollars and pay a toll booth worker to use the parking lot next to the Rio Grande River, passing into the border zone, essentially crossing our first border. We walk quietly next to each other knowing exactly what we are looking for and knowing our business in Mexico will be done immediately. We strolled by a few heavily-armed border patrol agents standing in a circle, conversing and laughing. We pay a fifty-cent toll to walk over the bridge. Another border crossed. Upon reaching the middle of the bridge, I realize that children have fearlessly "Spider-manned" their way across the chain link fence on the bridge. Despite the 50-foot drop (not over water), they aggressively ask for dimes and quarters. I give a few loose dollar bills instead, thinking that I do not want to be caught at the toll booth back without my quarters. Realistically, I doubt we would stop to pay a

toll both worker during the panic of a shootout. We both understood that the need for a hasty exit back to America was real.

At that moment the smell hit me, the pungent mix of food, car exhaust, sewer, trash, body odor, the distinct concoction of poverty. Now we were in Mexico. This was it; this was the reality. I no longer felt a bit Mexican. Jaime and I no longer had a Mexican heritage or Hispanic identity; we were American tourists, mobility to our advantage with money to spend. We were free to exit this nightmarish reality at any time. We were the brown equivalent to the Anglo, or *gringo* drinking a Corona beer at one of the many street bars.

We begin our search constantly heckled by the conditions left by the failed Mexican economy and an ill-fought drug war. I look to my left, a full-size military tank, nonchalantly parked in the center of the street. Next to that, a Hummer-style vehicle with a soldier manning a fully automatic-machine gun, a weapon that could easily pulverize the entire street we were standing on. Jaime and I continue walking down the street both pretending *not* to see that we were passing the front of a four-foot tall, heavily-armed sandbag trench at the street corner. My stomach drops for the split second; my head was in sight of the machine gun set-up within the trench, to this day my closest encounter with death. Every soldier was heavily armed. The most disturbing aspect was their faces. They had none. They were completely faceless. Part of their military uniform was a full ski-mask and sunglasses. Suspicion paralyzed me for a moment. Who were they? Why are they here? Who was I *to them*? The unspoken dialogue of the face, particularly the eyes, reveal emotions, and messages. There was not even eye contact (that I knew of). Only the silhouette of a faceless body, appearing to have no thoughts, no emotions, perhaps not even human, just stillness, ready to kill, prepared to die.

“Dude, it’s right here! In here!” Jaime calls me into the shop we had been walking several blocks to get to, the “Metal Shirt Shop.” Of course that was not its actual name; in fact, if I remember correctly, it was connected to a sweet bread bakery. This place was special to us; it was a t-shirt gallery, the Mecca of all the underground death-metal bands in existence, and to top it off, all the shirts were between ten and fifteen dollars (half the price in America). Jaime and I begin sorting through unorganized piles of folded shirts. Despite being cheaper and essentially pirated versions of American shirts, the quality was amazing. The weight of the shirt was thicker than standard. The actual ink prints were high-end, and many came with embroidered band logos. Embroidery is something virtually non-existent in the lame U.S. mainstream stores like Hot Topic, a store that ironically profits off individuality by selling its “gothic/pseudo-punk style” *uniforms* in mass quantities to teenagers across the U.S.

Finally, I find the band I came for; Brujeria (witchcraft in Spanish), the transnational Spanish-speaking death metal band, the marginalized band within a marginalized genre of music. I had never found a Brujeria shirt at any of my U.S. metal shirt shop locations, so I knew the only way to get one was either at a concert or in Mexico. I suppose the internet was another option, but why wait six-weeks for it when I could just go “next door?” This was yet another irony, time outweighing safety.

I present the shirts to the cashier. He counts them then proceeds to neatly fold them back up. He stops when he reaches a particular shirt, smiles and asks, “¿Te gusta Brujeria?” I reply, “Si.” After hearing my ridiculously English accented “si,” he figured I could not speak Spanish, so he abandoned the conversation attempt. Brujeria uses the Spanish language to create an inclusive community of fans, but it also works as a tool of exclusion. I imagined that the cashier was upset that I was into a band that was “not mine to understand.” Perhaps it was all in my

head, but at that moment, I knew that I was not a Mexican to this man but a Mexican American, and an American first. Honestly, as soon as we were done in Mexico, I could not wait to go home, go home to United States of America. But I was shaken. My identity was questioned and I didn't like it. Was I not Mexican *enough* to like Brujeria?

The events of this trip across the U.S.-Mexico border are my primary inspiration into research on how music can help create, nurture and even segregate individual and group identities. In this paper, I suggest in the case of Brujeria, deeper issues related to ethnic background, nationalistic pride, and racism are themes that need exploration in order to reveal how individual perception, or as I call it, the audioscape can radically differ from person to person, group to group, and space to space. The audioscape will also reveal itself as a tool of ethnography when collective memory creates an imaginary "safe-zone" only completely understood by fans on both sides of the border. Through the music of Brujeria, I will attempt to contextualize how song travels, influenced by time and space, in turn creating multiple perspectives, interpretations on the fluid notion of Mexican identity.

Methodology Theory and Thesis Outline

My research will be influenced greatly by my experiences and insecurities about my own identity as a Mexican-American ethnomusicologist and death-metal performer. Within my work, I will provide commentary related to my own advantages *and* insecurities as an *American-Mexican* researcher in the 21st century. Following the theoretical "scapes" paradigm from Arjun Appadurai's study on globalization, I have decided to coin the term "audioscape" (which can easily be subsumed within his "mediascapes" even "technoscapes"). (34-36) While Appadurai

may feel perfectly comfortable including music in one of his other scapes, as an ethnomusicologist I found it unacceptable. Music is perhaps one of the only reliable constants of our modern times; it's heard every day somewhere, somehow. For the purpose of this paper, the concept of audioscape, as I envision it, can have several interrelated interpretations: 1) The physical audioscape is the actual sound itself (in this case the performance, the music, the song). 2) An audioscape is owned by the individual; her/his interpretation of the song whose perspective of the music will be influenced by the infinite angles of their own collective memory. Essentially, it is the totality of her/his being. For example, what I know are my scholarly weaknesses and strengths, my memory as a metal-head teenager, and hours of research will have direct influence on the production of my own imagined audioscape. 3) Another apparent phenomenon is when music creates multi-audioscapes that either collide or link up. Such was the story of me and Mexican t-shirt salesman, what a collision! This collision spawned a new consciousness within me; the audioscape concept was indeed abstract with no way to manage it, just to observe it while it reveals itself. 4) Finally, perhaps my favorite and most important aspect of my concept is that the audioscape allows us to *imagine* experience, *imagine* emotions, *imagine* oppression, an ethnographic method I depended on heavily while researching Brujeria. Here, notions of intuition, perspective, and even perception are agencies all formulating an individualized (or combined) discourse constructed from a large array of outer experiences that create our imagined lives. Let us review what a "scape" is according to Appadurai:

These terms with the common suffix – "scape" also indicate that these are not objectively given relations that look the same from every angle of vision but, rather, that they are deeply perspectival constructs, inflected by the historical, linguistic, and political situatedness of different sorts of actors: nation-states, multinationals, diasporic

communities as well as sub-national groupings and movements (whether religious, political, or economic) and even intimate face-to-face groups, such as villages, neighborhoods, and families. (35)

In other words, to use a grossly simplified metaphor, imagine the landscape of a mountain. We can easily figure that it looks different at any given angle 360 degrees around. Appadurai suggests considering every other variable including, weather conditions, time of day, proximity to the mountain, the elevation of view, and then continues with more abstract considerations such as the effects of time, items obstructing view, and even vision itself (often referred to as the “anthropological lens”). Any of these variables can have radical effects on the perception of the mountain, but the mountain is after all, still a mountain.

Still, Josh Kun, another notable scholar, should be mentioned in my research as I unknowingly put a word together that sounds remarkably similar to his: “audiotopia.” I must admit I referred more to Appadurai, but Kun did spark many creative ideas that originally lacked. His work is smooth, poetic, and solid. His use of the concept is different but never-the-less helps solidify my own intuition of what the audioscape is. He too realizes that music offers an intangible space; that “audiotopias” can function as utopic spaces for its listeners; a space to inhabit, to feel safe in. He says:

...audiotopias can also be understood as identificatory “contact zone” in that they are bit sonic and social spaces where disparate identity-formation, culture, and geographies historically kept and mapped separately are allowed to interact with each other as well as enter into relationships whose consequence for cultural identification are never predetermined. (23)

My idea of the “audioscape” is very similar, unfortunately Kun’s definition feels too positive, too happy. The utopia idea puts a subjective spin on the word. My “audioscape” realizes that music can take people to very dark spaces, dark times, dark memories fueled by aggression, violence, malice, and rebellion. It should be mentioned that Kun doesn’t exclude any of these possible spaces, but the word implies the utopia concept too strongly.

John Blacking writes, “Music is humanly organized sound.” (3) If some anthropologists view culture as being organic, mobile, and fluid, then it stands to reason that music, part of culture, is itself capable of being an organic object (in this case, Brujeria songs). Now if we replace our metaphor and apply it with a less tangible item, like a song, one can only begin to sense the infinite possibilities of perspective. The audioscape *as produced by music* is not just a physical object, but a liquid intuition, a sensation capable of mobility, adapting, molding, appropriating to the needs of any given discourse it inhabits. Unlike the basic “soundscape,” the audioscape can become an agreed upon meaning within a community, or even nation-state (such as a national anthem) and beyond but can also be as personal and arbitrary as an individual’s own ideas and perception of what a piece of music means. Through what has been called “active listening,” it is my belief that some people can tap into a deep sub-consciousness or intuition of what the artist may mean; this private sense of audioscape is capable of linking or latching to multiple audioscapes together and create a communal sense of oneness.

As performers, Brujeria is capable of transcending its own physical reality and creating an inclusive imagined community that is both serious and playful. According to scholar Benedict Anderson it is:

...imagined because the members of even the smallest [group or music scene] will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their commune...a complex 'crossing' of discrete historical forces" in need of various informant perspectives to only begin to grasp. (6)

This is where a portion of my term "audioscape" becomes realized. While every member sees the mountain and agrees it is mountain, they will perceive it radically differently. Even if community members are split half across the world, the genre of death metal will almost always be considered some form of resistance.

"I have therefore suggested that culture [music] is a pervasive dimension of human discourse that exploits difference to generate diverse conceptions of group identity." (Appadurai 13) Each group is capable of its own views, perceptions, and anthropological lens. The musical group Brujeria will be central to my analysis of how music can be easily interpreted in numerous ways in hopes to uncover its power in relation to various constructs of Mexican identities or "degrees of Mexican-ness." This phrase "Mexican-ness" requires some explanation as I use it often. The Mexican community members are always out to prove their loyalty as a "race": knowing better Spanish, knowing the sport of soccer, knowing people or having family in Mexico, a proven family lineage directly from Spain or the indigenous, are all ways to be "more Mexican" than others. This, I noticed at the "t-shirt shop" when the cashier gave me a face of absurdity as his eyes implied that Brujeria wasn't meant for me. This intuition or aspiration to feel more Mexican is brilliantly put into words by literary scholar Octavio Paz whose writing influenced my thoughts and techniques as a researcher. He would say, "We [Mexicans] admire fortitude in the face of adversity, more than the most brilliant triumph." (31) With his wisdom I took on the challenge of understanding what Mexican-ness is while replacing my insecurities

with the inspiration and fortitude that lacked in the beginning narrative of the research. In this case, imagining Brujeria as a gauge of Mexican loyalty cannot be underestimated. And when the community actually surfaces (at Brujeria performances), no one is shy to attend barefoot, use the Mexican banner as a shirt, or even cross illegally to watch to the show that is 15 minutes away. A Mexican space has been created.

Chapter II: Lost in Translation, Found in Perspective

Each chapter in this paper utilizes different angles and methodologies to understand the band Brujeria. To start, a simplified, less stereotypically “spectacular” view of death-metal culture is crucial. Then, I will analyze the aesthetics of the genre with special focus on the lyrics and timbre of the death metal vocal style, which is embedded with meaning, as “iconic speech: where the speech sounds themselves carry semantic meaning,” as Anthony Seeger discovered in his research on the Suyá of the Brazilian Amazon. (Seeger 31) Contextualization of the genre is necessary before beginning to unravel the cultural hodgepodge of symbolic agents working within Brujeria’s music. We will discover that death metal utilizes various filters that “weed out” certain listeners to aid the construction of a tight knit, inclusive community. After a somewhat brief introduction to death metal, we will start at the most obvious juncture of song and culture: the lyrics.

The biggest surprise in the ethnographic process was not how my informants interpreted the meaning of the lyrics, but how *they thought they should be translated for the purposes of this paper*. Every informant applied a radically different audioscape which in turn deepened my consciousness, further revealing a wider horizon to what I believed the audioscape concept was.

As a researcher, the discovery of perspective versus perception came into light. Knowing that these translations were to be used for study (my researcher perspective), all participants were extremely particular about what words should be used when, and even offered long detailed explanations on why (informant perception). Audioscapes were revealed at the most basic level -as interpretation- but the informants often forgot that the death metal context should influence their translation and that this was a mixture of my academic interpretations and their imagination. As an experiment, I would allow the informants to critique the translations of my other informants, and without fail all would say something condescending towards the others. Perhaps this was yet another show of Mexican-ness as competition. It should be noted that the translations of the lyrics are an amalgamation of all my informant's opinions with my expert knowledge finalizing the process. Each interpretation, while correct, differed on the grounds of how much the informant self-identified as Mexican as well as imagining Brujeria members as activists, simply performers, "really Mexican" or Mexican American (and obviously each person's collective memory and the totality of their experience will produce the construction of their personal audioscapes). Perhaps a genius intention of Brujeria is to never actually answer the questions surrounding their "authenticity" or identity, instead leaving listeners struggling to know them through a cloud of ambiguity. This was an unforeseeable yet welcomed challenge that provided a direct line into the personal audioscapes of my informants which were mixed with deeply conflicted opinions of Brujeria's message. The difficulty of translating and choosing the most appropriate diction for slang, racial slurs, and word play in a *death metal context*, along with several different audioscapes (informants) at work has proven to be a useful tool saturated with rich data into understanding the nature of lyrical interpretation.

In my research I will limit the study to one album, *Raza Odiada*, to explore how Brujeria uses their lyrical content to “latch” on to different cultural signifiers and even cultural stereotypes to construct a Mexican identity within their message. “The concept of ‘latching’ is a useful point of entry into understanding what moves music and aligns human beings with music [...] it marks palpable moments when human beings become entrained with music [lyrics].” (Dorsey 95-96) I will borrow this concept and apply it specifically to how Brujeria latches on to and brings forth what I observe as varying “degrees of Mexicaness” that invoke a sense of Mexican pride, amongst other emotions within my informants as well as the birthing of audioscapes. As one informant believes, his translation of lyrics will be the most accurate because he is “from Mexico.” But what if the lyrics were written in the United States, that concerned a problem related to Mexican-American audience?

Chapter III: Symbolic Forms and Icons

Brujeria uses a plethora of iconographic Mexican signifiers to invoke feelings of patriotism, nationalism, statelessness, homelessness, pride, anger, displacement, dissatisfaction with government, nostalgia, masculinity, and “*colorismo*” among other concepts. (Lugo 63-65) The chapter will take a semiotic approach to deciphering symbolic forms found in various Brujeria paraphernalia (be it artwork, lyrics, etc.). I will juxtapose their historical meanings with the personal meanings of my informants and myself to advance the concept of audioscapes. I have chosen two overlapping themes both meant to nurture some variation of the Mexican identity: 1) The concept of “colorismo” is a variation of racism and prejudice based on skin color (despite cultural heritage) but at the same time can be a source of pride. I have found that skin

color in many ways is used as means to create a caste system in Mexico; the darker a person is the lower their status and vice-versa. Brujeria uses a variety of racial slurs that relate deeply to the collective memory of each listener. Brujeria clearly indexes where the source of Mexican resentment originates and is directed toward light skinned people in power. We will discover that light skin *as a symbol* does not necessarily just mean Euro-Anglo, but is instead connected with a variety of larger meanings. 2) The second theme will focus on the use of Mexican historical icons, groups and events including Emiliano Zapata, Neo-Zapatismo, the ruling government party PRI (Partido Revolucionario Institucional), and the Mexican Revolutionary War of 1910. Brujeria constructs its own folkloric interpretations that again prove to have influenced the process of “latching on” and audioscapes of the listener. Narrowing myself to these two themes was a challenge considering that they seemed like vital points of entry to me as the researcher but were not necessarily as important to others, or more specifically, my informants.

Conclusions: Unmasking Brujeria

The final chapter of this paper will take a variety of approaches to the literal and metaphorical unmasking of Brujeria. The focus of chapters one and two are limited to the content of their album *Raza Odiada* only. Chapter three’s focus is on ethnographical research will take into consideration all things Brujeria, including my personal concert experiences, their on-stage tactics, album art works, their real identity, and even personal interviews with the band’s leaders including Juan “Brujo” and Pat “Phantasma. After spending a couple afternoons with them as a fan and researcher, I discovered a few things that almost made me turn my back on them as a loyal fan. I found that in the end, I had begun to think of Brujeria as an object of

study, a thing, and that my objectivity was not allowing me to enjoy the band anymore. Quickly I discovered this was a danger to my research, as my inspiration was slowly being replaced with objectivity. While objectivity is often the goal of anthropologists and ethnomusicologists, I discovered my own opinions were drowning in research, blurred by a seriousness that was not true to death-metal or the band. Representation of this band needed a special approach, one that I discovered as a youthful scholar, an objective-subjectivity if that at all makes sense. Perhaps likely to be voted the oxymoron of the year.

Fieldwork in our Borderlands

Ethnographic field work will be absolutely necessary in nearly every portion of this paper and will likely collect radically different micro-perspectives (audioscapes) of the band relative to our location: the South Texas Borderlands. My own death-metal project band was chosen to “open” for Brujeria three separate times, all minutes from the border: 3-11-2007/Brownsville TX, 7-12-2006/Brownsville TX, and 7-3-2005/McAllen TX. With each performance came a unique access to a performance never seen by the public, their “unmasked” sound check. This experience revealed to me that despite their gruesome and controversial image as a musical force, they are in fact human. They are people that have constructed a unique vehicle to traffic emotions, sentiments, and memory to a world-wide audience. This paper explores perspectives and perception within a tiny region of the United States that happens to border Mexico, but is 60 miles south of a major border patrol checkpoint *and* 200 miles south of the next major US metropolitan area; a locale both geographically and symbolically isolated. By the end of this

paper, the reader will attain a new, supplementary perspective on the power of music and the fluidity of Mexican identity in the region.

CHAPTER II

LOST IN TRANSLATION, FOUND IN PERSPECTIVE

It is a common approach to study music sub-cultures through its spectacular features (or as spectacle) whose preconceived notions are often stemmed from the mass media “reporters” concerned about today’s youth gone astray, corrupted by grotesquely sexualized rap videos, sociopathic video games, and other variations of tabooed cultural un-norms. Resistance to what renowned sociologist Zygmunt Bauman describes as “inborn savagery of the animal in man” is the way of progress, the *animal* being our lingering societal malfunction desperately denied of existence but ironically the only way of nature. (*Modernity* 5) Bauman reveals in his book *Modernity and the Holocaust* that perhaps the only thing more dangerous than rebellion and revolution is blind, mislead, and absolute hegemony. Where there is power, resistance will manifest itself in order to keep the hegemonic mechanisms in check, but as the modern states begin to globalize and the over-class elite (those only technically members of a state but have attained enough wealth to work outside its laws, nevertheless have tremendous influence in the global economy) is seen less and less, new forms of resistance must be created. This brings us to our pocket of resistance, or more specifically, the nationalistic/ethnic resistance found within the minds of death-metal fans and the music of Brujeria.

Brujeria is the blend of aurally displeasing sounds, the most horrendous inhuman vocal production coupled with radically taboo political lyrics. The spectacle of this unholy-trinity found (generally in death-metal as well) is meant to lure the listener or disgust them completely. Achieving both is an accomplishment any death metal band would brag about. It is an almost completely acquired aesthetic. If the potential fan's audioscape does not align with Brujeria, or the listener cannot handle the sensory assault, then according to death metal scene members, they are simply too "weak" to be part of the community. They will neither be fans of Brujeria or death-metal. The actual sound production works as only one of the first filters of the inclusive community.

Brujeria, formed in the late 1980s, continues to be considered one of the early "super-groups," that is, all members with the exception of the mastermind behind Brujeria: vocalist Juan "Brujo" and Pat "Phantasma", have become musicians for hire. The contemporary usage of the word "super-group" implies that most or all its members are from other more famous groups. Often musicians would call their second and third band "side-projects," which were to be done in spare time. Previously, the word was used to describe groups that had obtained an unprecedented amount of fame because of the notoriety associated with each member. There was recently a TV show called "Super-Group" that paired up some of the most famous 80's rock musicians in the U.S. for a special comeback tour with new original music. The results were a little above average. In death metal, the definition of "super-group" takes on yet another meaning from its popular usage. Since fame was not important to earlier death metal groups, and death-metal is in fact an underground subgenre, musical skill often takes precedence. This is not to say that Brujeria members had no fame, but their skill is what ultimately counted. The earliest form of Brujeria seems to be how most groups start, the inclusion of the immediate group of friends who

play instruments and just so happen to have been part of relatively known or credible bands. In a way, Brujeria was the side project that gained more long term momentum than the others. Most members were once part of their own “main” bands which are arguably much more famous. For example the guitarist, alias “Asesino,” (Murderer) can be seen performing with his hugely popular neo-metal band, “Fear Factory.” Their bassist, alias “Guero sin fe,” (Faithless Whitey) is a main affiliated with funk rock band “Faith No More,” and their bassist, known as “Hongo,” (Mushroom-Head) is a legendary musician who has performed with too many bands to mention, but most notable the legendary Napalm Death. Easily, the most provocative and ironic aspect of Brujeria is the fact that nearly half the members are not Mexican yet market themselves as such. Their American touring strategies are predictable, border cities or areas of extreme minority influence/population where the sense of diaspora would likely latch to music (i.e. sections of Chicago, Los Angeles and New York).

We must clear up one simple misconception about death metal and differences of punk and metal. The days of punk and other hardcore genres were often in bed with political movements, mainly anarchic ideology. Some notable bands were Black Flag, Minute Men, and the Sex Pistols. At every punk show I’ve attended (approx. 35-40), there has been at least one drunken “pseudo-Marx” fan, pulling random quotes from the *Manifesto* and getting people rallied to destroy a *small independent* business building. What a disgrace to Marx. Perhaps this is the reason why punk and metal never really joined forces; I have heard punk kids say “It’s about the message not the guitar solo.” While metal heads reply, “What’s your message?” Another common rebuttal is “Learn how to play guitar and then maybe we could take you seriously!” Death metal fans and groups are hesitant to wave a flag for anyone or any cause. There are a few scattered bands that actually imply an ideology, for instance, the death metal

band Deicide, who promotes the end of Christianity but does not necessarily promote atheism or agnosticism but instead decorates their album covers with ultra-Satanic signs and lyrics. But when Glenn Benton, front-man of Deicide, is asked about his Satanic beliefs, he usually replies with something like, “Every religion is fuckin’ stupid, including Satanism.”

Even the death metal band Impending Doom, a pro-Judeo-Christian band, would balk at attempting to evangelize a death metal audience. They literally stand for what death metal despises: order. In my view, “Christian Death Metal” is the latest taboo within the death metal genre! I also believe this is just be another healthy jump in the evolution of death metal. Ironically, Christians despise the music. Most Christians are likely to insist that Christian music must be lead by an upbeat acoustic guitar with a church choir accompaniment around a campfire avoiding how much death, violence, betrayal, murder, gang-rape, ethnic cleansing, incest, and sacrifice is written in the bible itself. My argument would be that these guys are great musicians, and I don’t understand the lyrics anyway, so who cares!?! It seems as though death metal kids are still more tolerant and “Christ-like” than Christians have ever been. They are more accepting of the gay/lesbian community, they offer to share equipment with others, they watch the other “competition” play and inspire each other, and simply, the death metal ideology revolves around cooperation and tolerance (for the most part). Still, death metal bands are simply resistant to any *obvious, single* unified cause.

While political motivations are not worn as badges of honor, like many highly structured subcultures, there is an implied message. In my view, death metal could easily be classified as the outright epitome of all dominant social order, “...[they] will not only be subordinate to this dominant order: they will enter into struggle with it, seek to modify it, negotiate, resist or even overthrow its reign-its hegemony.” (Hall and Jefferson 12) Death metal has long operated on the

margins of post-modern hegemony. This community knows it has no need for “neo-liberal or conservative” politics but are forced to operate within our political discourse that demonizes the black t-shirt, tattoos, and piercings.

Brujeria is a special case. Ideology: The recognition of the other Mexico, the oppressed Mexico, along with the diaspora spread through the U.S. It lionizes many elements of Mexican-ness be it: flags, language, *gritos* (a shout or yell typical of Mexican celebrations and in song), Mexican influenced album art, openly defying political parties in U.S. and Mexico, wearing stereotypically Mexican *somberos*, spouting anti-American racist blurbs, and even carrying Mexican indigenous weaponry on stage. A group of modern super heroes, loved much more by fans as super villains.

There are many examples of where this resentment and resistance can originate. Some could argue it began with delinquent youth rebels without a cause looking to make some noise that would annoy their parents. Older critics say it helps combat the banality of working life while others point to a discontentment with what music, particularly what popular music has become. In our musically minimalist era, the silence has been broken. People are listening and watching the blend of horror and humor found in death metal as it evolves throughout the years.

Brujeria fans and the death metal community is huge but thinly spread throughout the world, from the illegal underground shops in Cairo, Egypt, to computer downloading in Sao Paulo, Brazil, to the working class projects of Kiev, Ukraine. It may be more an imagined community than an actual community with meetings far and few between. “It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.” (Anderson 6) With the technological revolution, faces and actual communiqués now possible,

closing distances that stretches across continents to the size of a laptop PC. Still, often scene members meet each other once in person, never to see each other again, but the simple act of wearing an obscure metal band t-shirt makes them close friends, or “brothers” as we call it, at least for that one moment, for that one night. Human to human connection has yet to be forgotten in a world rushing through modernity. Posters are still made for shows, promoters are fans, fans are band members, and knowing each other’s name is still important.

The place of communion, or “the metal shows,” look like a stereotypical TV biker bar: long-haired males, black and leather clothing, the steady flow of alcohol, scandalously-clad women, and even actual motorcycles parked out front. Here in our borderlands, the venue is usually a biker bar, or any place with an owner open to extreme music. Unlike biker bars, the people in attendance aren’t divided into biker gangs, but friendly old cliques from secondary-school (10-15 years later), or youngsters still in secondary-school along with fellow musicians and band members. Interestingly, a generation gap is noticeable and in need of its own research. Very rarely is there any kind of malicious violence towards individuals or between groups, in fact, in the 200 plus shows I’ve been to, I can only recall one incidence involving too much alcohol and a couple of youngster alpha-male characters.

The main attraction is the music, often cranked so loudly it is impossible to carry on a conversation and your undivided attention is simply taken. While we have focused a bit on the visual spectacle, let’s not forget the aural spectacle. As I mentioned before, the genre is an acquired taste and let’s talk about why. To anyone unfamiliar with the music, it can most certainly sound like noise and in a sense; it is supposed to sound like noise, a highly organized complex layering of sounds that are far from the Western aesthetic. The fact is, with a little training and patience, anyone can understand death metal. It is the people that have the patience

and the desire to become familiar with the complexities of let's say, Bach who are the same *type* of person who would like death metal. I must emphasize that I am not suggesting the musicality of Brujeria equals that of Bach, only that the listener has to "want to like" the death metal aesthetic to be captivated. (Interestingly, I have coincidentally noticed a dense classical music fan base within the death metal subculture. Not enough research has been done on this peculiarity, so I will not analyze that in this paper.) Perhaps, an in-depth knowledge of song structure and familiarity with multilayered polyrhythm and counterpoint melodic patterns is key to enjoying Bach and even Brujeria for that matter.

Taboos and spectacle aside, the death-metal scene is just another fellowship of buddies, female and male, looking to listen to some loud music and see each other once every few months. It is hardly the evil, Satanic cult it is made out to be although scene members don't seem to mind this stereotype. It works as yet another filter to keep people who should not be there *out* of the inner-circle.

Describing the patterns of chaos created by death metal musicians is a job for the insider. I can speak as a death metal vocalist, guitarist, and bassist. I have been involved with musical groups looking to progress death metal by utilizing and exploiting only certain musical modes or scales while composing, and I have also been in groups where the members have no formal training on their instruments and no education in music theory. As a member of groups with no formal training, I found communication to be easier, quicker, and more efficient. Instead of trying to relay ideas in "fancy" musicological jargon, I found "just playing the guitar riff" for the other band members easiest. The band with more musical knowledge required reasons *why* I wrote the guitar riff a certain way. They were not so easily satisfied with phrases like "I just

think it sounds cool.” Both groups have been extraordinarily successful by death metal standards which is another topic on its own.

In order to understand the musical cognitive processes within the musician’s death-metal mind, we need to look at why they choose certain musical elements over others. Each instrument takes a certain element to a musical extreme; for example, death metal percussionists love speed and volume. For years they have been mastering the art of double-bass drum pedaling which for the musicologist would be described as constant 32nd beats at an allegro tempo. As death metal progressed, some drummers began opting for “drum triggers,” which is essentially an electronically recorded drum sample that is “triggered” with the lightest tap of the bass drum pedal. Now, drummers don’t need to produce power, only accurate speed (which is a feat in itself). Many drummers argue this was actually a regression in the realm of death metal drumming and the belief that neither speed nor power should be emphasized over the other. In any case, this was a way to “out-drum” anyone from any other genre. The “punks” couldn’t double bass, and the “jazzers” were dumbfounded by death metal’s speed.

The guitar and bass sections have also made extreme modifications to their craft. To begin with, there is a specialized distorted sound that most guitarists/bassists crave. These sound enthusiasts are known as “tone chasers.” I myself went through four different guitar amplifiers before finding my preferred timbre or my “tone.” Others will be even more detailed in their equipment choice opting for special “brand name” guitars, “brand name” guitar electronics, down to the exact gauges of string thickness; all to create the “tone.” This extreme pickiness is a far step for your typical jam bands that play on anything that has a volume knob. From a musicological standpoint, death metal guitarists have been quite innovative in the tuning of the instrument. Often they detune from $\frac{1}{2}$ a step to $4\frac{1}{2}$ steps below the “standard guitar tuning (the

E below the treble-clef staff). Brujeria tunes their lowest string to a “G,” a note that actually crosses over into the tonal range of the bass guitar. The bass guitar could easily “tune up” to match them, but this just would not be “extreme.” Instead, the bassist typically tunes just as low (2 octaves below the guitars). Throughout the years guitar manufactures have begun to design guitars with extra long necks to accommodate these tunings; some have even begun manufacturing 8-string electric guitars specifically for the death metal genre. The popularity of low tuning can be traced to nu-metal band Korn. They were one of the first to popularize the 7-string guitar which provided an extra string a 4th interval lower than the 6-string guitar. The 8th string is again a 4th lower than that. In my opinion the death metal genre has become less creative at writing music and has resorted to “guitar tricks” such as low tuning to get by reusing old riffs at a different tonal center. But of course, like the drums, speed and guitar virtuosity is a necessity.

Finally, we arrive at the instrument with the most symbolic relevance to this paper: the vocals. The origins of the screaming/yelling/grunting timbre are highly debatable. Some would say it originates from the first anti-singers such as Lemmy of Motorhead, or the raspy thrash tone of Tom Araya of Slayer who both tried little to establish a tonic or tonal center that was “in tune” with the guitar harmony. The first person I heard use the ultra-low, completely inaudible vocal style was Chris Barnes of Cannibal Corpse. In any case, the debate could take pages to explain with an inconclusive end. Perhaps the most accepted *need* for this wave of anti-singers was to lash out and counterstate the androgynous state of popular 80’s “hair metal” music, a genre obsessed with operatic vocals, love ballads, and borderline cross-dressing. Or as Robert Walsner explains in his book *Runnin with the Devil*:

Colorful make up; elaborate, ostentatious clothes; hair that is unhandily long and laboriously styled-these are the excessive signs of one gender's role as spectacle. But onstage in a metal show, these signs are invested with the power and glory normally reserved to patriarchy.

Let's reemphasize the importance of the timbre as a filter. It is wise to note that as soon as the voice begins the listener has entered a death metal space. For example, the newest metal band to hit the market is "Avenged Sevenfold." The first time I heard them on the radio I was positive they were the Swedish death metal group "Children of Bodom." When the singer entered, I realized this was not death metal but popular metal. Interesting how a clean timbre of the voice sudden gets radio play.

As I concluded, death metal is most likely a counterstatement to popular vocal styles designed to be commodified, pushed, sold, consumed, for the purposes of "rock star" fame. The older, first generations of death metal (which includes Brujeria) would have no aspirations of fame, fortune, and glory. The "sex, drugs, and rock n'roll" slogan was never quite applicable to death metal due to the lack of females in attendance ("the sex part"). Artists performed in their street clothes which carries with it a certain amount of pride taken by death metal artists who highlight the fact they wear the exact clothes on and off-stage (in a way, proving a sort of cultural authenticity similar to punk and garage groups). Vocalists (and in some cases, other band members) write lyrics of the most horrific nature including: postmortem rape, incest, occults, Satanism, and any other topic sure to turn away those unable to see the humor in taking on extremely taboo topics and highlighting them in publicized areas. Quite a twisted joke; and only those with only the most liberal sense of humor and ideals would dare to laugh. I must

admit, this necro-humor alone takes some years to acquire. Again, this is yet another filter into the circle, into the exclusive space, into the meshed audioscape created by the community.

But there is one final characteristic vital to this the paper in regards to timbre: inflection. Inflection is included within the laundry list of linguistic approaches to studying of speech, languages, and singing. For the purpose of this paper we will focus on a simplified definition for inflection: *words* that change meaning due to the modifications in the speaker's intonation, pitch, intensity, loudness, or grammatical mood. For Brujeria, the break down is quite simple. The vocalist is almost always yelling at her/his highest intensity and loudness, meaning that nearly every word is stressed to its deepest emotional intent. This technique is embedded deeply with meaning, the most translatable counterstatement meant to represent the discontentment with the banality of "mainstream" music, "mainstream" life, or the apparent natural order of things. After becoming quite familiar with the guttural vocal style, it slowly becomes audible, even understandable in some cases. This takes a certain amount of patience, and yet again acts as another filter into the death metal space. Often most are unforgiving and will immediately say, "What is he saying, you can't understand them, there are not any words are there?" I will often reply, "Yes there are lyrics, but there are some cases where lyrics are more relevant to some bands while others don't spend too much time on it. It is better that you think of them as an intense percussion instrument, like a loud cymbal crash, a groove producer rather than a melody producer." This is where the guitarists take over by producing the memorable, catchy melody lines. At this point the reader may ask whether or not these filters are essentially audioscapes. Yes, more often than not, filters put audioscapes on a collision course with no chance of aligning.

The last filter we will discuss is language choice. Brujeria is not the only band to sing in its supposed “native” language of Spanish, but I have observed a world-wide trend in death metal to sing in English. It could be argued that the roots of death metal are in the United States, but I was always perplexed at the fact that a huge percentage of today’s groups write English lyrics. Many bands around the world have little proficiency in the English language but attempt it anyway. I can only imagine that these groups feel that using English would make them more inclusive, perhaps adding an element of unification into the death metal “imaginary state” that spans the entire globe. Another possibility, to reference Anderson again, is that they imagine English as a “language of power.” (Anderson 45) Spanish will latch on to the Mexican listener more intensely since its meaning is only truly audible to its native speakers and readers and therefore can never have an absolutely accurate translation. Here, language expresses to raise nationalistic ideology, where one can interpret a communities’ audioscape from within. Again, this could be interpreted as a filter and even a resistance to the hegemonic English language.

The most difficult part of this paper was taking all these linguistic considerations and applying them to the complexities of translating Spanish-slang Brujeria into English. Death metal outsiders and insiders were needed to properly translate the Spanish language metaphors that undoubtedly shift in meaning from country to country, region to region, person to person, imagination to imagination, audioscape to audioscape while considerations of time and space must be accounted for. The pressure of learning/speaking English brings discomfort to most people who play or listen to metal in other countries. For example, I once had to communicate with a Spanish-speaker fan who spoke in a deep regional Mexican “upper-class” dialect of Spanish and knew little to no English. I could feel his discomfort stuttering along in English, so to ease the tension, I spoke in my own butchered and battered Spanish. Now both of us were at

the same level of comfort. With his strong reliance of Spanish, I can imagine how powerful Brujeria becomes in a fan's audioscapes. I will delve deeper into language in chapter three.

Our initial entry in the world of Brujeria will begin with an analysis from the album Brujeria: *Raza Odiada* (1994). The first track is an outright verbal attack on then Governor Pete Wilson's support for California's 1994 ballot initiative known as "Proposition 187," which denied basic healthcare, emergency health care, children's public education, amongst other controversial rulings to the undocumented. The bill was also known as the "Save our State" initiative. California's former Governor Pete Wilson was the most outspoken proponent of the bill which was easily interpreted by many Mexican Americans as a xenophobic attack on them as well as newer Mexican immigrants.

I'd like to return and reemphasize the process of "latching" as used in Margaret Dorsey's ethnographic study focusing on music and politics, *Pachangas*:

The concept of "latching" is a useful point of entry into understanding what moves music and aligns human beings with music. Latching refers to the moment when people come into configuration with music, it marks palpable moments when human beings became entrained with music. Latching provides a way to talk about the act of passing a threshold and becoming a "musically animated agent." (95-96)

In Brujeria, latching begins the moment a listener (in this case, more than likely a fan) aligns him/herself as an organic "agent" within the community described in the lyrics. The band has managed to find a space that fosters anger toward the political and/or sympathy for the Mexican American community. In my first analysis of the song "Raza Odiada (Pito Wilson)," I find that part of the Mexican identity, specifically the Mexican-American audioscape, will latch more deeply with the anti-American lyrical content than let us say, an indigenous Mexican living in

the southern Mexican state of Chiapas (this topic and community is saved for another song). I would argue that there is a distinctly American undertone to this piece. The translation is as follows:

Raza Odiada (Pito Wilson)

Hermanos mojados - de los Estados Unidos
El que te va chingar más - no es Satanás
Son la raza odiada en el mundo güero
Elegido por las manos gabachos
El Pito Wilson esta lleno de odio
Busca joder a nuestra raza

Pito Wilson - El rey de racistas
Pito Wilson - Sera presidente
Pito Wilson - Te quiere ver muerto
Pito Wilson - El cristo de odio

Hermanos mexicanos - no sean huevónes
Holocausto de la raza - Ya empezó
El Pito del norte - esta creciendo
Será presidente el cristo gabacho
Primero los mojados - despues los mayates
Puro güero o puro muerto

Pito Wilson - Odia la raza
Pito Wilson - Sera presidente
Pito Wilson - Te quiere ver muerto
Pito Wilson - El cristo de odio

The Hated Race (Dickhead Wilson)

Wetback brothers from the US
Who will fuck you over more? It's not Satan
We are the hated people in a white world
Chosen by those white fucks
Dickhead Wilson is full of hate
Looking to fuck over our people

Dickhead Wilson – the Racist King
Dickhead Wilson – Future President
Dickhead Wilson – Wants you dead
Dickhead Wilson – the lord of Hate

Mexican brothers – don't be lazy fucks
Holocaust of the people has begun
The Dick of the North is becoming powerful
The White lord will be president
The wetbacks first - then the niggers
All white or all dead

Dickhead Wilson – Hates the Mexicans
Dickhead Wilson – Is Going to be President
Dickhead Wilson – Wants you dead
Dickhead Wilson – the lord of Hate

**(Figure 1: “Pito Wilson” by Brujeria.
Final Translation by Michael Mena.)**

Immediately, the title references “la raza,” which is a word that contributes to the notion of ethnic unity within the Mexican culture, and it most definitely excludes the powers that be in Mexico and America. It is also emblematic of the struggle for equality and rights launched by Chicana@ism in the late 60’s-early 70’s. The phrase is loaded with history, political ideology and grassroots community struggles. Other phrases like “Viva la Raza!” exclude the ideology of the Mexican State unlike the phrase “God Bless America” which twines notions of democracy, justice, freedom of speech and the other patriotic concepts associated with America such as “Land of the Free, Home of the Brave.”

Raza on the other hand could be properly used as in its direct translation as race, but I find Brujeria uses this word in a slang context to include anyone of Mexican heritage (despite birth location, or county occupied). It must be noted that this word easily shifts meaning with the lightest change in tone, inflection, or timing from “people” to “race”. Brujeria calls to Mexican-Americans or Mexicans in America to unify against the white oppressive powers in California. So I chose the word “race” instead of “people” as the album title suggests it should be. Not to mention I feel the word “race” itself is an inferior word, a racist term itself that strips all identity down to skin color. How is this word still used in politics? Perhaps in biological literature it may be acceptable. The second half of the title references former Governor of California Pete Wilson while insultingly replacing his first name with Pito, roughly translates to any derogatory reference to the male genitalia but I chose “Dick-Head.”

The first line of the song reads, “Hermanos mojados - de los Estados Unidos” (translation: “wetback brothers from the U.S.”) clearly outlines the intended audience of this song: Mexican-Americans and Mexicans in America. Although the word “wetback” is a derogatory term for a person who crossed the border illegally, in the Spanish language

connotation, it may or may not apply to undocumented immigrants alone. Wetback in this connotation can also be interpreted as a counterstatement to the U.S. initiative to control immigration entitled “Operation Wetback.” As defined by Cathy Ragland, “...many Mexican immigrants use it liberally to denote an individual who has sacrificed much for a better life for him/herself and family” (209). Interestingly, the second verse replaces the words “hermanos mojudos” with “hermanos mexicanos.” Here there is a shift to a new audience on the other side of the border. The second full verse line says: “hermano mexicanos, no sean huevones.” This adds another dimension to the targeted audience in the sense that he differentiates hardworking mojudos from what I suspect he believes are *huevoes* or “lazy” Mexican-Americans that take their “easier” lives for granted already receiving the perks of U.S. citizenships and forgetting their brothers in third-world Mexico. Ironically, he plays into the “lazy Mexican” stereotype. In any case, two audioscapes are outlined in this song in hopes to align them.

A Contemporary Corrido Spirit

At this point I would like to turn our attention to the use of symbolic forms, and in particular, to the notion of invoking the abstract idea of a “contemporary corrido spirit,” as I have begun to call it. The traditional corrido is without doubt a symbolic form with a deep social significance to Mexican communities. And, it is difficult to compare Brujeria compositions to traditional corridos without mentioning the obvious fact that they sound nothing alike, but the topical ingredients are undeniably similar: oppression, revolution, bravery, death, injustice, and view points owned by the Mexican proletariat whose human capital is viewed by the dominant society as cheap, worthless, disposable labor. What I argue is that Brujeria is able to replicate

the spirit of corridos through their own extreme narratives; an updated, modern commentary of the oppressive social situations faced today by the Mexican diaspora on both sides of the border. They sing of a diaspora with no home, no state, a purgatory of statelessness, *beyond homeless*. Bauman suggests that these migratory groups are just one sinister side effect of globalization where people are “stripped of every single element of their identities except one: that of stateless, placeless, functionless refugees.” (*Wasted* 76)

Aside from their subject matter, perhaps the single characteristic that best resembles the corrido is the use of cultural protagonists versus cultural antagonists. Americo Paredes contends that there are essentially three distinct periods in the traditional corrido history:

a period of ascent from 1875 to 1910 (during which time the ballad heroes are Robin Hood-like outlaws in rebellion against Porfirio Diaz, [a dictator under the guise of democratic leadership]; a culminating period from 1910 to 1930 (the epic period of Revolution); and a period of decadence from 1930 to the present. (132)

While the primary subject matter is adapted every few decades, most corridos have some romantic notion of good versus evil implied somewhere in the storyline. In the case of the song “Raza Odiada (Pito Wilson),” if the Mexican community can somehow act together to defeat the hegemonic White power (the cultural antagonist), then perhaps the disposable Mexican (the cultural protagonist) will finally be appreciated. I would classify this under Paredes’ “decadent” corrido, where undertones of a new Mexican and U.S. revolution can be found. It would also be wise to observe that Brujeria often speaks directly to the audience, in this case to “rally the troops.” Ultimately, the final lines of the verse offer a gloomy prophecy: “The wet-backs first, then the niggers-All white or all dead.”

The next song I have chosen to analyze covers many corrido topics that I feel would align audioscapes more strongly to a group of Mexicans within the diaspora that have utilized mobility as their means of sustenance or survival. This can include people that migrate to work, to escape inhospitable economic conditions, or more recently, to escape violence and corruption (gang and government alike.) The act of “crossing the border” or “being illegal” is a hot topic in the American political arena today. Figuring out a humane way to deal with immigrants already here is another highly contested political issue. The lionization of border security officers (all varieties of them) and demonization of immigrants is a high priority strategy of the post 9/11 U.S. government. This coupled with a quickly modernizing global capitalism has left the Mexican state in the hands of an illegitimate neoliberal government and drug-lords. Economic migration is a trend not soon to end. The U.S. government and the “moral” majority of American voters do not understand that when the act of self preservation and survival are at stake, nothing can stop migrants from saving their own lives, even if that means treading dangerous geography, trusting human traffickers, and even losing family members in the cross over. Dying to live is the only option for some. Walls, fences, rivers, la migra, or waiting years for working visas/resident alien cards are simply not up for discussion when the act of *staying alive* is always threatened by a checkmate, always one move away.

The message of the song is highly conflicted. It begins with an imaginary conversation between front-man Juan Brujo and a *coyote*, slang for human smugglers/traffickers, who is offering to cross a family illegally for an unreasonable amount of money (approximately \$200 per person with no guarantee of success). The analogy to the coyote is quite interesting itself. The coyote, the animal, are often hunted by ranchers with varied success since they remain elusive, knowing the unknown terrain of the land better than the owner of the property. Coyotes

are etched into the minds of Mexicans as either “good” or “bad” or both. While they are providing a service to the helplessly hopeless, some have developed reputations of violence towards their clientele, including the rape and beating of men/women, deserting groups and families in the desert, “overcharging,” or even simply robbing the immigrants of every possession. Our analogy is quick to index the question of trusting a wild dog. While Juan Brujo initially criminalizes the *coyote*, throughout the song he casts himself as an heroic coyote willing to lead anyone “for free” to freedom, ironically, to the place he believes is also oppressive, the United States.

La Migra (Cruza La Frontera II)

Coyotes rateros, te chingan la feria
Siguen al brujo, te llevo por gratis
Trae tu abuela, tu tío, el lelo

Pinches polleros, viven pá feria
Te cobran tu sueldo y largan tu abuela
La pinche migra te está esperando
Te devuelven después de una paliza
La migra haya tu abuela en el desierto
La mandaron a Tijuana pegada con palos
El brujo tiene contrabando bien bueno
Números de seguro y cartas verdes

La migra la migra
Te pegan bien duro
La migra la migra
Te pica el culo

La misma migra te pasan por lana
Mordidas de feria te compra todo
Siguen al Brujo, te llevo al norte
Cuidad con ese alambre cortado
Hay carbón ay viene la troca
Pa tras pinches pollos ay viene la migra
Larga tu abuela, correle tia ya
Aplastaron el lelo

La migra la migra
Te pegan bien duro
La migra la migra
Te cojen el hoyo

(Figure 2 “La Migra” by: Brujeria
Final Translation by: Michael Mena)

La Migra (Cross the Border II)

Fucking smugglers will steal all your money
Follow “El Brujo,” I’ll cross you for free
Bring your granny, your uncle, the retard

Fucking smugglers live for money
They take you life-savings but abandon your
grandma
The fucking migra are waiting
They deport you after a beating
La migra found you grandma wondering in
the desert
They sent her to Tijuana bruised and broken
El Brujo has the contraband you need
Social Security numbers and green cards

La Migra! La Migra!
They beat you hard
La Migra! La Migra!
They fuck you up the ass (grito)

The same patrolman will cross you for
money
A payoff will get you whatever you need
Follow the “Brujo,” I’ll take you north
Beware of the barbwire
“Oh shit” here comes a truck!
Back everyone! Back fuckin’ smugglers
here comes the border patrol
Leave your grandma! Run aunt run!
They ran over the retard!

La Migra! La Migra!
They will beat you dura
La Migra! La Migra!
They’ll fuck your ass (grito)

(Note: *La Migra* is intentionally left
untranslated)

The first challenge of this translation was to find an English equivalent for the phrase “la migra.” It is essentially slang for Immigration and Naturalization Service or “border patrol agent(s)” (which is now under the political umbrella of Department for Homeland Security), but there are so many implied meanings that it was impossible to find an English equivalent without losing the sentiments and emotions involving this discourse.

In my own personal experience, I was taught to fear “la migra” as though it were an imaginary monster coming to “get” me or my family. Ironically, I am a natural born citizen of the United States with nothing to fear; still, I remember playing games as a child running from someone pretending to be “la migra.” The collective memory of each person will affect how people react to the concept of “border defender.” I can imagine that two generations before, “la migra” was an absolutely feared phrase. And we cannot forget that the INS essentially took over the job of the Texas Rangers in my locale, a state police branch with the reputation of beatings, rapes, robbery, and murder. While the modern rangers, or border patrol agents, have managed to redeem themselves a bit, cases of extortion, murder, bribery, and rape still occur all too often. In a paper written by Sylvanna M. Falcon entitled “Rape as a Weapon of War: Militarized Rape at the U.S.-Mexico Border,” she suggests:

The U.S.- Mexico border is a contentious region where militarization violently reinforces the territory of the United States. Daily, attacks against border crossers occur in the form of brutal beatings, assaults (including rape), and harassment by state and federal officials as well as by regional vigilantes. Like all militarized endeavors, the state is ultimately accountable for the violence. Rape as a tactic against women is considered a weapon of war by the international community because of its rampant use in every military conflict.

(203)

The primary downfall of militarizing any aspect of society is the silencing of morality and ethics, the deregulation and overlooking of basic human rights. To quote Bauman once again, “The irony of history would allow the anti-modernist phobias to be unloaded through channels and forms only modernity could develop.” (*Wasted* 46) The U.S. and Mexico are not necessarily at war, the phrase “War on Terror” quickly made famous at the “speed of media” by conservative propaganda and President Bush, has managed to sway the American imagination into believing war tactics are not just acceptable but necessary in a variety of post 9/11 situations (i.e. the torture of “terrorists” at Guantanamo Bay). Now, even honest hardworking immigrants are considered transnational threats to national security. In the end, I decided not to translate “la migra” but instead added an explanation mark to the chorus in the translation as a metaphoric substitute for the attached emotional subtext missing from English.

The song continues as an imaginary narrative detailing the experience of crossing the border. In the second verse, the group of immigrants panics at the sight of a possible border-patrol vehicle, forcing them to abandon their grandmother who is not fast enough and the “retard” who has been run over by the vehicle. While the death metal context is meant to be playful, considering he mentions “the retard,” “the dumb one,” or family “moron,” the actual decision to abandon family members, or suffering a casualty in the crossing is ultimately real. Split second decisions are made daily, families torn apart, the stateless refugees join a group mobile Mexicans, sentenced to the status of permanent temporariness.

My favorite part of this Brujeria song is the chanted chorus line: “La Migra! La Migra!” I find this to be an extremely important frequently used characteristic of Brujeria songs. On the recorded version of this song, the entire band can be heard shouting the chorus in unison. At

their live performances, the chant is often the responsibility of the audience in attendance which marks the moment of unison aligning audioscapes. Anderson explains this phenomenon best:

Take national anthems, for example, sung on national holidays. No matter how banal the words and mediocre the tunes, there is in this singing an experience of simultaneity. At precisely such moments, people wholly unknown to each other utter the same verses to the same melody. The image: unisonance...[the moments] provide occasions for unisonality, for the echoed physical realization of the imagined community...How selfless this unisonance feels! (145)

At these moments, the emotions are stirred, fear is imagined, discontentment is intensified, and latching completes itself. The collective memory, the communal audioscape reach a climactic moment. The hope for equality is mocked, pointing its sarcastic finger at the immediate threat to human dreams, the border patrol. Those who are seen as protectors of freedom are the military enemy to asylum seekers, refugees, and the suffering. While “chant writing” was extremely popular in punk music, rarely do metal-bands write for audience participation. As I mentioned before, the meaning of death metal vocals/lyrics should interpreted in its crudest, most graphic form, there is possibly only one way to intensify the lyrics from here: adding 1000 fans to sing along!

A Contemporary Corrido Spirit (Part Two)

Finally we return to my notion of a contemporary corrido spirit. As discussed, I draw my primary comparison in parallel with the topical ingredients that embrace both genres (which I believe my idea will come full circle in the following chapter). In this piece, corridos of Texas Rangers come to mind, about sacrificing one’s life to save another, about Pancho Villa’s

elusiveness in his use of terrain against the “protector”; however, primarily I would like to emphasize the “outlaw” spirit. Again the song is centered on a cultural antagonist and protagonist, perhaps the main ingredient in Parades’ revolutionary corrido and while hinting at his notion of decadent corridos. The next chapters will take a step back to analyze the concept of the album and associated art work along with the lyrics of one more song from the same album: *Brujeria- “Raza Odiada”*.

Still, another group must be hailed as the king of kings when it comes the newest former of “narco-corridos:” Los Tigres Del Norte. Los Tigres follow the topical formula for the most part: antagonist vs. protagonist, smuggling, border-crossing, and oppression. And most obviously, they sound much more corrido, characteristics like a “tonal” singer, an acoustic guitar-like instrument (bajo-sexto), and the I-IV-V chord progress. But their sound is modern as drums and electric bass are added. In my mind this group has already attained an immortal status and will live on far after their departure from music.

Some explanation is needed on how “narcocorridos” differ from original corridos. Narcocorridos while dealing with traditional topics also venture into life as a drug dealer, realistic violence, murder, and often takes an outlaw perspective. Dr. Cathy Ragland formulates a interesting thesis from her research to this: “It would seem that from an official standpoint, the narcocorrido as pulp is acceptable and celebrated, but as a contemporary manifestation of the proletariat corridor tradition, it is unworthy of serious scholarly study.” (14) This sounds similar to my own research! The corrido remains to be reborn again and again. Its connection to the Mexican popular imagination is simply still too deep to lose its greatness as it continues to retell stories of hope in an idol country.

CHAPTER III

SYMBOLIC FORMS AND ICONS

The Spanish Language as Symbol

Being at least conscience of the majority of symbolic forms used by Brujeria is already enough to get any researcher a running start at comprehending the band. The first and most obvious symbol of Mexican-ness is of course the Spanish language, which serves as a language more often metaphorical than referential. In our study, word play and slang have been the primary source of conflict. Mexican literary expert Octavio Paz illustrates the fluidity of the Spanish language when he focuses on the word *chingar* that is frequently used in nearly every Brujeria song.

In Mexico the word[s] has innumerable meanings. It is a magical word: a change of tone, a change of inflection, in enough to change its meaning. It has as many shadings as it has intonations, as many meanings as it has emotions. One may be a *chingon*, a *gran chingnon* (in business, in politics or crime, or with women), or a *chingaquito* (silent, deceptive, fashioning plots in the shadows, advancing cautiously and then striking with a club) or a *chingoncito*. But in this plurality of meanings the ultimate meaning always contains the idea of aggression...(76)

These “magical” words appear more often than not in Brujeria lyrics. Taking the “magic” out of them was extremely difficult. Luckily, an aggressive inflection is almost constant. Then the

only question was how aggressive should the translating be. I have said several times that everything should be translated to its extremist form but at certain moments Brujeria seems like he is joking with the fluidity of these “magical” words that have ten meanings or more. As Paz points out, the “magic” words can be nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, metaphorical verbs understood as nouns, etc. Deciding on final translations was a daunting task.

To Benedict Anderson the source of nationalism is language itself. A convincing thesis considering the fact entering a new country without language proficiency is often seen as unpatriotic, laziness, or ignorance. Remembering my visits to Mexico, the feelings of being absolutely unwelcomed have been engrained into my memory. The speed of my spoken Spanish is a clear indicator that I was an outsider, perhaps even a rich tourist. In regards to Brujeria, one of my informants thought some of the lyrics were “backwards” (literally in the wrong order) saying that “I can tell the vocalist was either *thinking* in English when he wrote this, or he was trying to make it sound *cool*,” he finishes in a sarcastic tone. Even within my informant, emotions surfaced about the idea that Juan Brujo was maybe not from Mexico, or that his first language was not Spanish. Somehow this possibility was imagined as unpatriotic in the audioscape of my informant. Anderson would remind us that there is no possibility of humankind’s general linguistic unification. Just within the Spanish language, dialects, accents, and speed differ from state to state, region to region, neighborhood to neighborhood, home to home. I absolutely agree with this statement, even though the speed of modernity and the alleged homogeneity of the contemporary globe would suggest otherwise, it seems incomprehensible to me.

Language is the ultimate symbol of nationalism. In my opinion language is more nationalist than a flag, a banner, a map of territories, a government, and even a national anthem.

I believe Anderson supports this theory well within his book “*Imagined Communities*,” a study every sociologist and anthropologist needs to be aware of. Brujeria uses language as its most powerful tool of nationalism, but which one? It usually isn’t America, and it definitely wouldn’t be the Mexican State. I would have to believe he is speaking of a Mexican other, with no flag, no state, only movement to new territories that don’t welcome them. Immigrants rejected by the Mexican bourgeois, and denied entrance by the U.S.

Skin Color as Symbol: *Colorismo*

Alejandro Lugo draws some disturbing parallels between power and physical skin pigmentation. Let us first examine the stereotypical U.S. notion of whiteness. The American imagination would quickly characterize whiteness as someone cosmopolitan, European, English speaking, rich, powerful, educated, and possibly involved in politics. But even in the U.S. there are lines drawn between upper class whites and lower class whites, more stereotypically known as white trash or someone that does not carry the demeanor a white person *should* (a racist notion in itself).

In Mexico, skin color as a symbol is an extremely powerful concept with hundreds of years of socio-historical construct just as solidified as the days of Hernán Cortés. Within the Mexican society, skin pigmentation comes in every variation, all spectrums and shades. Not necessarily side by side but they do occupy the same Mexican territory. Just as in most countries in the world, color hierarchies dominate several aspects of life in Mexico. America took hundreds of years to elect a black president and only sixty years ago was a violently segregated country. Mexico is far from such progressive steps, perhaps even a couple hundred years behind

the progress of America. Octavio Paz concludes there is “the other Mexico” within the state of Mexico, the lowest class, the self-preservationist class, the people who survive to live, and live only to eventually die, the forgotten indigenous population of rural. (215-235). The lower class worker’s and the indigenous population is virtually ignored, yet at the moment, they have made their presence known to the shock of the world, attacking with weapons of primordialism: machetes, rocks, and sticks; while spreading propaganda through the masterword of modernity: the internet.

Alejandro Lugo would consider this entire portion of my essay a regressive opinion on Mexican politics, but in this instance my subjective emotions overtake the need to be “politically correct.” Lugo explains:

It concerns researchers because color hierarchies will not be dismantled if we continue to privilege our own categories, such as “ethnicity” and “race,” and continue to use color distinction only as descriptions of individuals considered ethnic or racial. Instead, we must problematize the category of color itself in order to disentangle it from “colorismo,” that is, from the sociohistorical and political processes that create it. (61)

Brujeria attempts to dismantle the skin color ideology. Of course, in their own death metal fashion. But should we take this seriously? This is a question of legitimacy. One would probably not take a political comedian seriously even though he may be well versed in politics. Humor is simply not an avenue to study politics, but what many of these comedians are good at is pointing out absolute absurdities. People do not ignore this or have a memory “erase button.” Brujeria too is proficient at pointing out absurdities in how we live, in how others live. It may just be music, but Brujeria provides a commentary on skin color so extreme it’s difficult to

forget. Perhaps their most famous song is just of this subject titled: “Matando Güeros.” It literally translation is “Killing Whites” which made way for their entrance into the death metal “major league.” Reading these lyrics one can most certainly believe that the subject matter is as simple as the title suggests. Upon further examination, fans might realize Brujeria is indexing the light skinned hegemonic forces in U.S. and Mexico.

The Mexican Revolution as Symbol

The next symbol I will analyze will be the Mexican Revolution along with the Brujeria song appropriately titled “Revolución.” While we have been referring to all signifying-iconic material as symbols, the Mexican Revolution is a symbol of a different degree, representing a different kind of significance with meanings that reach much deeper into the human physique. “Iconic and indexical signs are signs of our perceptions, imagination, and experiences, where as symbols are more abstract signs *about* things as generalities” or in our case the reality of life in Mexico. (Turino 13)

Different realms of social life tend to utilize certain sign types more than others. In academic and scientific writing and teaching as well as mathematics, symbols are prominent; academic work exercises the symbolic analytical parts of the self. By contrast, the arts, even the linguistic arts, are distinguished by the preponderance of iconic and indexical signs with their propensity to fire the imagination and create sensory, emotional, and physical effects. (13)

As one begins to grasp the concept of symbol, combining the Revolution and song, two separate but complimenting entities, explosions and overloads of collective memory are inevitable (that

is, of course, you are the intended demographic of the art). What is unique about the *Revolution as Symbol* is that unlike the Spanish language or skin color, the Revolution was a moment in time, an era of Mexican history, not something experienced daily in the most basic terms. The Revolution is experienced by memory, folklore, death, oppression; a solution that solved nothing in the long run. The Revolution is a sentiment that is alive, living and breathing, surviving *and* a source of survival for certain diasporic communities.

The song “Revolución” indexes many aspects of Mexico, but it most directly points to a new revolution happening under the radar, away from the mainstream media, a new consciousness of the worker that the Mexican government is so desperately trying to neutralize, contain, wipeout. The day NAFTA (North-American Free Trade Agreement) was implemented, January 1st 1994, would also mark the day a group of Neo-Zapatista guerillas captured the capital and major cities in the state of Chiapas, Mexico. A group of poorly armed rebels managed to coordinate a movement that has since been an embarrassment to the Mexican government’s already questionable legitimacy. To this day, a “low intensity” fight (not a war according to media reports) is being fought, downplayed as a simple, surprise coupe. The definition of “low intensity war” is open to interpretation. In the case of Chiapas, constant military surveillance, the ominous threat of war, along with intimidation tactics are the Mexican’s government primary strategy. One must take into consideration there have been several “massacres” of people within Chiapas. Yet fifteen years later, the Zapatista movement still holds most of Chiapas, not characteristic of a coupe. The song translation is as follows:

“Revolución”

Oigan ó se chingan, no sean pendejos
Gobierno de Mexico ya vale madre
P.R.I. manda todo, son comunistas
Indios y pobres, no tienen chanzas

Donde estan todos los topos
En la selva ya estan
En la ciudad hay que comenzar
Hay que meterse en cada rincón

Cabrones del P.R.I. - comunismo
Despierten todos - revolución
Con machetes - armense
Ejércitos indios - zapatistas
Comandante Marcos - mandanos
Cubre tu cara - subteraneo
Son topos guerrilleros - revolución
Son topos locos!! – revolución

Viva Zapata, Viva Chiapas
Viva Mexico, Viva la revolución

No sean coyones - háganse hombres
Ya empezaron - hay que acabarlo
Quieren ser ratas o quieren ser hombres
Si no pa' ti - por tus hijos
Hay que meterse en cada rincón

Comunismo, satanismo, P.R.I.- es lo mismo
SATANISMO!

**(Figure 3: “Revolution” by: Brujeria
Final Translation: by Michael Mena)**

“Revolution”

Listen or you're fucked, don't be dumbass'
The Mexican government isn't worth shit
P.R.I. controls everything, they're
communists
Indigenous and poor, don't stand a chance

Where are all the moles (rebels)?
They are now in the jungle
It must begin with the cities
We must be everywhere

P.R.I. bastards - communists
Awaken people - revolution
With machetes - arm yourselves
Indigenous armies - Zapatistas
[Sub]Commander Marcos - leads us
Mask your face - underground
We are guerilla moles - revolution
We are crazy rebels!!! - revolution

Long live Zapata, Long live Chiapas
Long live Mexico, Long live the
Revolution!

Don't be cowards - be men
you started it - you finish it
Do you want to be rats or men?
If not for you - then for your children

Communism, Satanism, P.R.I.- all the same
SATANISM!

I find this song to be the most politically motivated piece written by Brujeria, whether intentional or not; they are unveiling the Zapatista movement to an entirely new group of people, metal fans. In the first few years the Zapatista movement managed to gain huge support from the media. Of course the media did its job: reported and left. Again, Chiapas is a state of turmoil, and we cannot forget the state of Oaxaca that is too leading its own revolution against Mexico. It does not surprise me that death-metal fans aren't usually aware of political wars, but Brujeria does bring a Neo-Zapatista movement to an entire new audience affecting the imagination of the listener.

Let's return to the concepts of audioscapes and latching to figure out who, or what Mexican group Juan Brujo is addressing the song to. After a general survey of about thirty different people (academics and friends) in the South Texas area, I discovered that in general people knew little to nothing about a the Zapatista movement, a new revolution, or even had heard of the state Chiapas, Mexico. This was quite disappointing to me, in some way proof that Mexican Americans could care less about their "blood," their *raza* in Mexico. In an ironic twist, fans wear t-shirts supporting the Zapatista movement, some even had red painted stars on their arms (which symbolizes a combination of democratic-egalitarian-socialism within the movement).

Part of my ethnographic strategy was to listen to the Brujeria songs with my informants and study their reaction, their visible/invisible emotional reactions (their latching), and ask for an interpretation of what they thought the song meant (explain their audioscape). I decided I needed a more specialized team with credentials or characteristics that I thought would be useful: M.K. Slayton (white but with an appreciation of Mexican culture, anthropology student who had never heard of Brujeria), J.D. de la Rosa (Mexican America, smart, witty, an expert fan on Brujeria),

Erasmus Espericueta (Mexican Native with a deep grasp of the Spanish language but *not* a fan of death-metal), Magdalena Espericueta-Mena (sister of Erasmo, fan of Brujeria with a deeper grasp of English than her brother), and myself, the collector and researcher. Every informant had much to offer from their own audioscapes. With time and traveling options limited I rely on my imagination, my audioscape, which concluded that the song was meant for Mexicans *in* Mexico, people familiar with agricultural sustenance, street begging, military presence on every street corner, the smell of death, sickness, plague, surviving to eventually die. To quote Paz, “If our deaths lack meaning, our lives also lacked it.”

The realization that my “raza” knew next to nothing about the suffering literally five minutes away was disheartening, further proof that Mexicans and degrees of Mexicanness differ drastically from region to region. At least all of my group of 30 informants had heard of the name Emiliano Zapata (rebel leader in southern Mexico) but most confused him with Pancho Villa (rebel leader of the north with a notoriously vicious reputation). Brujeria does well in separating the two leaders as well, saving Pancho Villa for the more playful, violent type of death metal song while seemingly reserving Emiliano Zapata for songs of a more serious nature, songs more politically intertwined. Both men deserve credit for leading the overthrow, the Porfirio Diaz dictatorship. Unfortunately, this was the easy part. Inner governmental turmoil, betrayal, Zapata’s assassination, and personal interest would rule Mexico to this day. Establishing a new working government would ultimately be a miserable failure, corrupt, self-serving, and a dictatorship disguised as a democratic party known as the PRI who has ruled unopposed for over 70 years (until recently that is). But like all revolutions the individual becomes self-conscious, hoping to live *life* becomes within grasp, ready to defend her/his rights as humans to the death.

Translating Subtexts

Let us take a moment to return to the translation of “Revolución” in order to grasp some of the subtexts and word play that would challenge even the most fluent Spanish speakers. I have found some rather elementary mistakes that prove Brujeria’s research in this song was minimal, or even completely skipped. Of course, it is hard to blame a band for not being politically accurate when they don’t claim to be political or activists in anyway, nor are they bound by any code to be politically accurate, so I have come to peace with what I think are two major mistakes that could possibly hurt the neo-Zapatista cause.

In the first verse, Juan Brujo refers to dominant political party in Mexico (P.R.I.) as a communist entity. They are far from the ideals of communism although I will say it is possible he may be referring to the dictator-like quality that seems to be synonymous with the government of Mexico (and the infamous cases of communism we know-Fidel Castro, Stalin, etc). In any case, I would consider the day NAFTA was implemented with its focus on international capital, and move away from the agricultural reform, would be the day Mexico joined the ranks of neoliberalism, a pawn in the globalizing American hegemonic discourse. Upon asking my informants what they thought Mexican government was based on, most said dictatorship and one said communist, none said democracy. I asked one informant why he believed they were communist, and replied that they “only care for the rich.” Of course, we all know how communism can go terribly wrong when in the wrong hands, but nevertheless, there are some egalitarian principles within communism that I don’t see the Mexican government even attempting to implement. Brujeria, having a world-wide platform to spread “dangerous ideas” to the Mexican population I believe they should try to be a little more accurate with their message: neoliberalism is their enemy. Ultimately, I don’t fault them since a word like communism that

has been redefined, relentlessly skewed through since its conception. It just would have been nice to witness metal-head becoming aware of this fairly recent policy.

Another damning mistake in this song is the reference to incorrectly ranked “Commandante Marcos.” “Marcos” is currently the political spokesman and military strategist for the E.Z.L.N.-Ejercito Zapatista Liberacion National (Zapatista National Liberation Army). He is rumored to be from the Mexican upper class, highly educated, philosopher and philanthropist. While researching the Zapatista movement I was required to watch hours of interviews of Marcos, and in my opinion he *is* highly educated, charismatic, and a poet of both the English and Spanish languages. There is no doubt to me that he is an avid reader and philosopher, but I hesitate to believe any kind of official report released by Mexico about his actual identity. Various reports about his university education and even his “real” name (interestingly not a single photo) are released, and it is unfortunate that I cannot trust official Mexican government documents as “reliable” information.

His quest is to liberate the forgotten indigenous population of Chiapas, a state rich with natural resources, but essentially a slum. No running water, no electricity, and all natural resources are being exported for profit in neoliberalist fashion, benefiting the powerful, the unseen global *overclass*. Humanity is nowhere in sight, death from curable disease plagues every village, people are forced to live in inhospitable jungle territories with little useable farmland. While Marcos is perhaps the leader of the movement, it is important *to him* that everyone knows the indigenous people themselves have power in their labor, in their art, in their contribution to society, and economically in their underground natural gas and oil deposits. For deeper insight into the history of the Zapatista movement and Marcos’ views, I highly suggest his book: *Our Word is Our Weapon*.

The phrase “Commandante Marcos” skews his carefully crafted image. While he is their military leader and official spokesman, his rank is “Sub-Commandante Marcos.” He does not make any ultimate decisions; that is left up to the indigenous high counsel, a group of indigenous leaders that look out for the survival of their communities who are aptly named the C.C.R.I.-C.G. (Clandestine Revolutionary Indigenous Committee-General Command) or as individuals: *los commandantes* (the commanders).

A Contemporary Corrido Spirit: Part Three

No other song seems to correlate, and parallel the corrido better than this song: “Revolucion.” The fantastical nature of a super-hero character, sporting modern weaponry (a large pistol) with bullet belts across the chest coupled with Paredes’ topical revolutionary theme seems barely able to contain the corrido spirit, the revolutionary will. We cannot oversee the list of injustices to the working poor throughout the song. But a true revolutionary corrido would not be complete without a martyr. In the last verse of this piece, Juan Brujo asks the people of Mexico to unite and stand against the government, without fear, ready to kill, ready to die, if not for them, for their children, for the future of Mexico. The song includes a rebel yell as the chorus: Viva Zapata! Viva Chiapas! Viva Mexico! Viva la Revolucion! Quite a powerful concept, but I would claim it is an exact throwback to the original revolutionary corridos that existed in the early 1900’s. One would be ignorant not to believe that there will be plenty of martyrs to come out of the neo-Zapatista Revolution.

The remaining analysis of this album will deal with the cover art and other symbols and messages seen (and not seen) on the CD packaging in general. Let us first consider the time and space associated with the album. It was released by the American record label giant, Roadrunner

Records in 1994. It is no coincidence the album's theme would center on the Zapatista movement that made itself known that January 1st, 1994. The title of the album also translates to "The Hated People." This translation would imply a sense of community while "The Hated Race" implies a cynical view held by many in the U.S. and Mexican governments. I would not overlook the timing of this release which vicariously exists within the shadow two other monumental moments in Mexican history. The title can mean something updated, like the consequences of recent 9/11 policies when foreigners of any kind are considered threats to the nation. I distinctly remember filling out the U.S. Census in 2010 and wondering if this was something U.S. politics would use to further induce fear into the undocumented public, and the popular imagination for that matter. I also distinctly remember news reports of locals not wanting to submit the *anonymous* census out of fear of the watchful eye of the government, a sort of statistical panopticon.

The cover of the Brujeria album is an heroic portrait of Sub-Commandante Marcos, his eyes focused on something distance, the future, armed with a huge pistol on his belt and shotgun shells across his waist. His signature tobacco pipe pokes out of identity covering black ski mask. Marcos markets his persona in very specific ways, always with machinegun, always riding a horse, always in the jungle, always smoking a pipe, always shaking hands or carrying a child. I believe he is consciously modernizing the romantic image of a rebel fighter to connect with the most Mexicans as possible. The internet has uncovered hundreds of pictures driving around on a motorcycle a la Che Guevarra, another revolutionary martyr recognized in Mexico, (although his work was primarily in Cuba, Africa, and Bolivia).

The masking of the face has deep symbolic significance to the Zapatistas which I will not get into here; but what is important to know is that it is most definitely a successful propaganda

scheme that has pushed the movement onto a world-wide platform. Older aged neo-Zapatistas wear simple bandanas for reasons as simple as it being too hot in the jungle for a ski mask!

Brujeria sports bandanas across their face as well, but they have been doing this since their early years in the late 80's. This was probably a sort of homage to the revolutionary outlaws like Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata. In the Brujeria fantasy world, all members are outlaws whose identity must be protected at all cost. Each member uses aliases, take pictures with fans covering their face, and even use pictures of random men holding weapons as their group shots. Most album covers use random Mexican mug shots with their identity "black barred" out. This could be their punkish influence peaking its way through but I would guess that it is most likely a branded Mexican humor (as seen on the album "Raza Odiada").

Although I would hesitate to read too deeply into this, after all we are dealing with a death metal band.

Within the CD booklet, images of Mexican and indigenous deities along with Emiliano Zapata cover every page of the booklet. It should be noted that unlike other albums, images of Pancho Villa seem to be purposely excluded from the material which hints at the semi-seriousness of the album theme, or at least as serious as a death metal band can be (or should be taken for that matter). The exclusion of Villa hints that perhaps Juan Brujo knows that Pancho Villa is arguably a less honorable revolutionary than Zapata. And the fact that Zapata was once again being resurrected at around this time. The last page of the booklet has an excerpt of an inspiring speech delivered by Subcomandante Marcos (3/24/94).

The inner black sleeve makes a comment about the identity of Mexicans saying we are "*Mexicanos! No somos Latinos. Latinos son la gente blanca de America Latina. No somos Hispanos: Hispanos son la gente de España, Europeos.*" Translation: [We are] Mexicans! Not

Latinos: Latinos are white people from Latin America. Not Hispanics: Hispanics are Europeans from Spain.” (It must be noted that Hispanos and its translation to the Hispanic have different connotations in English) I found that many of my “general informant survey of thirty people” did not use the word “Latino” or “Chicano” or “Tejano” or “Hispano” as an identifier. Most would answer “Mexican-American.” Most quickly note that, “Latinos are from South America.” I too find it insulting when the popular mainstream media attempts to lump everyone of “Mexican” descent into some form of the popular media “Latino” exotic. All this does is strip what little identity most Mexicans are trying so desperately to keep alive within the diaspora. They clearly identify with Mexico as their heritage and no other country.

The fluidity of identity reaches far deeper than the racist word: *race*. The idea that “racism does not exist anymore” is the newest form of racism. In time, I feel the next major evolution of language will remove the word race, to replace it with something more accurate like “cultural history” which embodies more than just skin color or geographic national origins. The U.S. Census is a perfect example of the complete inability of categorizing people by their ethnic background; it is an impossibility forced possible. I find theories of rootlessness that transcend the idea of race much more appealing than the superficial attempt at categorizing the animal, or bestial traits of the human anatomy. At times I wish the process of homogenization would speed up. Perhaps if we shared more there would be less to take from each other. This is only a random thought coming from your author, the “hopeful-misanthrope,” the “skeptical humanitarian.” And then the despicable word “race” would be no more. The authentic would be no more. The search would be over; the final species would be found and it would be human, all too human. The collective consciousness, individual collective memory, our humanity is what is important now, not our “race.” The limits of descriptive language are in the end insufficient.

Sometimes we need artists to “draw” it out in simple terms so that the ignorant majority can begin clueing in. Artists like Brujeria draw attention to the fact that racism is real, relevant, and chaotic. It exists in infinite forms. While it seems as though they enforce ideas of racism (to a younger audience this may be especially true), I believe their stories, lyrics, and commentary are the ways they “prove” the notion of race is alive and well

Here the use of symbols and icons reach most people in all 19 different spoken dialects in Mexico and hundreds of languages in Latin America and beyond. It is art such as this that remains underground and subterranean where revolutions begin. Art may not be fighting wars, but it can definitely inspire movements.

CHAPTER IV

DIALOGUES WITH UNMASKED MEN

I find the most peculiar aspect of Brujeria are the men behind the bandanas, beneath the marketed Mexican. While researching this paper I visited them on tour for two dates in San Antonio and Austin, Texas (April 4 & 5, 2010). Luckily, I knew a fellow metal-head by the name of Enrique, a huge fan of my death metal project “Severance.” It just so happens that he was extremely close to the band and even does guest appearances during their performances dressed as a Mexican *lucha libre* wrestler, alias: “Mil Mekos” (directly translated to “1000-Sperm”). I simply asked if I could tag along at one of the Texas shows, and he offered to get me on the bus to meet the guys. I remember pulling up behind the club, perpendicular to the back of the tour bus in San Antonio where a couple a fans were patiently waiting to get a glimpse of the band members. It was early in the afternoon, hours before the concert. I quickly dial my man inside Enrique, a few seconds later he appears. He tells me to follow him onto the bus. A sudden paranoia took hold, “How in the world would I conduct an interview or ask questions if they don’t know English? What if they don’t want to talk to me because I don’t speak fluent Spanish? What if this was a bad idea?” The face of the cashier in the Mexican shirt shop consumed my thoughts. His disappointment in the language barrier embarrasses me to this day. We open the bus door; I glance at jealous faces of the fans denied entry, if only I could have

enjoyed the moment. Enrique suggests I take a seat and mentions that “the Brujo is taking care of some business with the club.” I took a seat on the leather couch; I’m alone. I look around and I take in the moment. Nice bus, I thought. It had all leather interior, TVs, a kitchen area and huge lounge toward the back. But wait, did he just say refer to Juan as “the Brujo,” “the witch, the sorcerer?”

Intimidation begins to cloud the questions I had ready to ask...my memory was beginning to fail me! Why didn’t I write down these questions, in English and Spanish?! I realize I forgot my digital recorder in the car, a novice ethnomusicologist mistake. Regret to my very existence began to consume my soul, but then, someone walks out from the second half of the bus (the beds and lounge area). I was not immediately sure who this was. I had never seen his face before; I began to wonder if this was a band member. (The following conversation is paraphrased, but as accurate as my memory allows.)

I quickly smile and say, “Hey, what’s up man?”

The gentlemen in his 50’s replies, “How’s it going? [I’m] Pat.” in a deep raspy voice.

Reality sets in, this is Pat a.k.a “Phantasma,” second vocalist and Brujeria’s second in command. He sits feet away from me; wearing his signature plaid red button up.

“I’m Mike, I’m the dude writing a thesis on you guys.”

“Oh, yeah we heard about you; oh man I love this dude!” He quickly changes conversation to the TV screen showing a music video of James Brown.

I decide now is the time to develop a repertoire with this guy, just hang out as a fan, not a researcher. I began to wonder if James Brown was famous in Mexico. We exchange sporadic comments and inside jokes on the music videos, all of popular 60’s-70’s-80’s artists. Then another realization hit me, he spoke perfect English, (as if his first language) he knew all these

artists that my parents loved. “Was he even *from* Mexico?” I wondered. This was not a question that I was willing to risk asking now.

The bus door opens, the “Brujo” marches in, upset about something. He ignores my presence and complains to Pat about the pathetic guitar amplifiers, calling them toys.

Pat says, “ Hey man, this is that kid doing a report on us.”

Brujo turns to me and smiles, “Hey, what’s up dude?” His face seemed instantly jolly. The thick mustached, slightly overweight man hardly seemed like the performance demon I was accustomed to.

Another perfect English speaker, not only perfect English, but he had an almost stereotypical California surfer-type quality to his accent, especially when he said the word “dude.” They continue their conversation in English, hardly ever saying anything in Spanish, except for maybe a couple of profanities. My research has begun, no doubt about it.

Were these guys even Mexican or were they born Mexican-Americans? This fact alone would change the meaning of so much of their material; even releasing this fact to the public could have repercussions of its own. The fans, including myself, imagine them as singing from an insider, first person Mexican perspective. The audioscapes of their listeners could be drastically effected. Their lyrics would become less “authentic” if they were not actually from Mexico. Most fans know they reside in Los Angeles, California but assume their birth place is Mexico. I begin to wonder if it is even wise to ask the question and whether or not they would tell me the truth if they weren’t from Mexico. As a fan I want to imagine they were Mexicans from Mexico, as a researcher this fact was of dire importance. In the end I decide the question would be too obtrusive for a new person to ask another person only after a few hours of dialogue.

The mystery remains. My expertise would conclude they were either American-born or brought to America at a very young age.

My worries about the band's Mexican-ness began to subside as I met the other members. I saw the drummer of the band standing outside. I recognized him. He was a hired musician originally from the band "Cradle of Filth." He was skinny, European, white, with a thick European accent. The conversation attempt was a complete failure. He did not have control over the English language, so I could tell he was uncomfortable and preferred not to speak to me. I suppose the fact that he was a "temp" told me not to bother him too much, and I should focus on the others, the supposed Mexicans.

Later on that night I met guitarist Shane Embry a.k.a "Hongo" (directly translates to "mushroom"). This was obviously poking fun at his big curly, mushroom-top hairdo. He was another interesting character. He is the oldest and one of the founding members of the band but to my surprise spoke with a British accent and did not know any Spanish. My idea of who these men were was smashed asunder.

What was I to make of this? How did the members feel playing songs like "Matando Gueros" (Killing White People)? How did they feel performing in such a racially charged atmosphere? All these were questions I would have loved to inquire on but two days was not nearly enough time to get them to open up to me, a stranger, a reporter of sorts, a researcher, the enemy to their mystery. In the end I did not get all I had hoped for, but improvising and maneuvering through dozens of new anthropological situations was a priceless experience.

All was not lost though; I did get to have several short conversations with Juan "Brujo" and Pat "Phantasma", the lyrical masterminds behind Brujeria. Of course being inexperienced in ethnography, I made a couple huge mistakes; again, not having my digital recorder was the first.

So most conversations mentioned are paraphrased to the best of my memory, kept as short as possible with a conscious effort not to add anything extra as to refrain from accidentally exaggerating anything that was said.

At the time I was enthralled with politics so, my question revolved around political situations. One quote that I did get recorded was a question about whether the band was political or activist. Pat replied, “We are not active enough to be activists.” This was a powerful statement as he confirmed that the band wasn’t out to change the world we live; they were in fact just a death metal band. This is why I have forgiven the lyrical mistakes mentioned earlier; they are first and foremost musicians, taking their commentary seriously would be the same as taking a political comedian’s commentary seriously. They are not professional political analysts and should not be treated as such, but it is undeniable, like other forms of popular media, the imagination remembers and constructs opinion out of all things experienced.

There was another mentionable conversation that I had with Juan Brujo about the Zapatista movement. First off, I would like to describe Juan Brujo’s personality as somewhat less friendly, or at least less patient. I could not tell if he was performing his onstage identity for me, the researcher, or he was being genuine about the statements he made. At certain times, for instance, after having some beverages and possibly other drugs, he seemed much nicer and relaxed. I could take many pages describing the seemingly back and forth, multiple personality I dealt with.

In any case, one comment he made hurt me personally. In the process of researching this band, I had acquired an emotional, sympathizing attachment to the Neo-Zapatista movement. I asked Brujo what he thought about it, and he replied, and I quote, “I think it’s a little old,” and began to speak of other more current political causes. “Old?!” I thought. I did not have my

digital recorder with me but these words were painfully seared into my memory. Since when does people needlessly dying become “old” to other human beings? I was angered. I was disappointed. The person, the band that got me so interested in *Zapatismo* thinks it was “old.” In retrospect, I must take into consideration that maybe he was in a bad mood, or maybe had been asked about it too much, or again, just performing his ruthless “Brujo” persona. I can never be sure. But, again I reminded myself to stay objective and listen to his thoughts on other movements happening around the world.

Unfortunately, I never got to ask if any of them were actually from Mexico. That is a question that treads a line of appropriateness and I never had the courage to cross. I suppose what is important is they remain Mexican in the audioscapes of their listeners, “Brujeria-Land” as I call it sometimes. Their first hit record in 1993 was called “Matando Gueros” (“Killing White People”) which had a picture of a mangled decapitated head on the cover, reminiscent of gory Mexican tabloids. Inside, more photos of the defiled body, dirty, arm severed, naked. Any person will most likely believe this is a body of a dead white person as the album title suggests. Other somewhat questionable sources say it is a picture taken from a Mexican tabloid. A dead Mexican drug dealer which makes much more sense, but ultimately I was unable to confirm either theory. I would conclude that the message in this is “how they would kill white people” if the opportunity arose.

Later the title track from “Matando Gueros” was released again, rerecorded with updated lyrics. This E.P. was entitled “Marijuana.” The inner sleeve has a picture of Governor Pete Wilson with the headline “Matando Gueros ‘97” underneath. The song lyrics were revamped, dedicated to Pete Wilson and the lyrics suggest that Juan Brujo wanted to murder him “O.J. Simpson style.” A humorous death-threat that can be read deeply as the racial context

surrounding the murder was what made it so controversial. (A black man found “not guilty” in allegedly murdering a white person, a white woman.)

Another album entitled “Brujerizmo” plays on the superstitious stereotype that has seemed to follow Mexican women around for decades. Unfortunately, I can’t definitively say it is a stereotype since both my aunts, and both my grandmothers had Virgin de Guadalupe Shrines in their home. Of course, the shrine on the album is modified to look more related to witchcraft and sorcery as opposed to Catholicism. Again, I would ask, “who is this cover meant for?” It most definitely latched to my Catholic-Mexican memory or associations of my own families’ using religious iconic imagery. Perhaps this album has shifted its latching effect to Mexican metal fans.

The next couple albums were marketed quite differently. Instead of the “overtly Mexican” persona, the album titles suggest a transnational character by creating words that are mostly English with a Mexican wit, for example, “The Mexecutioner!-The Best of Brujeria” and “Mextremist! Greatest Hits-Brujeria.” Also interesting was the exclusion of the inverted exclamation mark that would have normally been included *before* exclamatory statements in Spanish. I can only assume this was a marketing attempt to latch on to English speaking, Mexican American death metal fans or younger Mexican fans that are more American-assimilated (like myself). If this was solely a marketing strategy, it worked on me.

As I mentioned earlier, I have attended many Brujeria shows, as a supporting act and as a researcher: five in total, twice in McAllen, once in Brownsville, once in San Antonio, and once in Austin. The first three I attended as a fan and as a supporting act with my death metal project Severance. Little did I know the gentleman who specifically asked for us was Enrique “Mil Mekos” of the Brujeria entourage. Years later he would be my way into the tour bus.

The first McAllen show (July 3rd 2005, McAllen) was a unique experience. As a youngster, I was eager to get a glimpse of the band, so I got to the venue hours early, and happened to walk in on their sound-check. Without thinking of their “hidden identity” policy, I pulled out my video camera and recorded the entire sound-check. This was a calm volume-check, no aliases or alter egos were performed, simply technical details were tended to. Again this day they had different members, original guitarist “Asesino” and who I believe was drummer “El Sadistico.” Also, band back-up vocalist and cheerleader “Pinche Peach” was in attendance. They finished their second song and quietly left the stage.

This night would easily become the most chaotic concert I had ever attended. People filed in with and without shirts, wrapped in Mexican flags. Of course there is no way to officially count, but there seemed to be a foreign crowd there, faces I had never seen before in my 100-plus metal shows; this was a crowd of Mexican nationals! Spanish became the language heard everywhere! People ordering beers, buying t-shirts, group conversations, everywhere. The space had transformed into an extension of Mexico, a space of Mexico in the U.S. After all, Mexico was only 5-7 minutes away from the building we were performing at. It was one of the most unique communal experiences of my life. I was astounded by the nationalistic pride present. Later in life, I realized that these flags did *not* represent the geographic territory of Mexico, *not* the ideology of the Mexican government; it represented *la raza*, the people, our people, my people.

Brujeria performed their usual crazy-masked show. Juan Brujo fashions a mask out of the Mexican flag, while most of the others stick to black or red bandanas (a socialist undertone perhaps). He also wears a leather vest, shirtless underneath, with a full size machete on his belt. I would consider his regalia to be the ultimate stereotypical superhero-supervillain Mexican

outlaw. The machete could be interpreted several ways, as an indigenous farm tool, a weapon of the Mexican revolution, or even a contemporary “drug-lord” murder tool (as popularized in the mainstream media). His vest reminds me of something my grandfather would wear, suited up with a nice cowboy hat. And oh yes, cowboy hats were everywhere, even on a couple Brujeria members.

Final Thoughts

As we can see, the term audioscape is an amalgamation of many different meanings, interpretations, translations, emotions and even modes of self consciousness that link to other people. It begins with physical writing abilities and audioscapes of the *composers*, next by the *record label's* choice of regional marketing distribution, modification done to art work etc, it is next interpreted by a *single person audience*. Next the possibilities are literally global. One must remember, especially in a tight knit community like a death metal scene, that a simple dialogue between two people will always spawn amounts of infinite audioscapes. The audioscape then continues on its own plane of existence, with the constant exchange of consciousness and interpretation, flowing both backward and forward, circular, all simultaneously.

The audioscape *as produced by music* is not just a physical object, but a liquid intuition, a sensation capable of mobility, adapting, molding, appropriating to the needs of any given discourse it inhabits. In the case of Brujeria, the band purposely harvests feelings of anger, pride, discontentment, nostalgia, etc. All intuitions are birthed from our stubbornly slow realization of class consciousness and the power relations hidden within. Using a line from Michel Foucault:

Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation of power. Should it be said that one is always “inside power” power, there is no absolute outside where it is concerned...(95)

In other words, Brujeria seems to understand the notions of “white power,” not in its most literal sense, but an intuition that lighter skinned humans still have managed to empower themselves as the ultimate decision makers. This is obviously arguable. But my perception of global power does seem to be a little whiter than I would like.

Power provides the need for resistance, revolution. Whether held at huge political functions or at the grassroots level. Movements against power are sometimes invisible, in Brujeria’s case, a teen listening to music in her car, a twenty year old attending a concert, the fear of white police officers attempting to control an enthusiastic mob of Mexicans youngsters, and so on. Grassroots movements have proven to be capable and dangerous. It would be foolish to think that Brujeria is powerless.

I would like to end on what I think the reader should take the most from this paper. What is the purpose of the audioscape? How do we benefit by the awareness of or audioscapes? The audioscape is not just a concept, but an ethnographic method for reaching a higher level of musical consciousness. I’d like to answer these questions and more by closing this paper as I opened it, with a personal narrative. An experience I will never forget that happened just days before the publication of this paper. This was the moment my year of research all fell in place. My audioscape was realized to a depth I never felt before. Here is my story.

Audioscapes Align

“Did you hear, Brujeria is coming on Friday!” my buddy reveals (November 12, 2011 at Smokin’ Aces in Mcallen,Tx). I panic at the \$25 dollar ticket fee. The short lived apprehension wanes as I soon realize that \$25 is a trivial amount to pay for what is likely to become one of those moments in life you never forget. “*I have to go,*” I thought. “Maybe ‘Mil Mekos’ can once again pull some strings and get me in for free for the fourth time.” I figured any research I did at this concert would be too late to get into my current writings, but here it is.

Although I ended up attending the event and having to painfully pay to be a part of the mayhem, my decision to do so was not unrewarded’ Mil Mekos provided with an exclusive “all access” wrist band. I was free to go in and out of the concert, backstage, and more importantly, “frontstage” (a place blocked from fans by guardrail and security guards). The concert eventually begins, after a much anticipated and excitement; the euphoric pandemonium commenced and nothing short of a cataclysmic event was going to stop it.

The front of the stage was occupied by the most attractive, female metal heads in the venue. A typical occurrence at rock shows; females allowed access more than males. Emotions were raging, a Mexican space created, a collaborative audioscape, pride magnified, frustration symbolized by the incessant mosh pits, etc. Then the unexpected happened.

I look to my left to see a young woman reciting every lyric verbatim, a true fan. But something was wrong, she had tears slowly streaming from her eyes. “What an odd scene,” I thought, “crying during an aggression-filled performance.” Was she angry? Was she feeling the music? Was she drunk? What was the purpose of this unexpected display of emotion at a metal show?

My humanitarian nature got the best of me. “Are you okay?” but no answer. I repeat, “Estas bien?” I asked her in Spanish after I realized that everyone could claim English as their first language. Just as she was able to respond, the next song blasts through the speakers and shatters all hopes of conversation broken. She smiles with tears in her eyes and looks back to the stage. I grab her hand and look into her eyes with a deeply concerned gesture; she suddenly explodes in tears and grabs on to me with an embrace so intense, so vulnerable that the room paused into a shrieking silence. I felt alone with her, we existed as one soul. I felt pain radiating from her body; I imagined a pain terribly lonely. We embraced for more than half the song. A new space was created for us, audioscapes aligned. I hold back my tears. She slowly releases her hold on me and looks into my eyes. I give a hesitant smile with a quick nod, a sort of “are you ok?” gesture. She quickly hugs me again, still holding my hand, as if to express that she needed me there with her, wanted me there with her. Soon, she lifts my hand high in the air, smiles through her tears then begins to move our hands in aggression and begins to head-bang; signaling me to join her. Forces united we pay tribute to the band as one. The song finishes, she gives me the gentle kiss and disappears into the masses of sweaty fans never to be seen again

It was quite an experience that saddened me as I wrote about it. But the audioscape was defined in nearly every way. The audioscape was produced and interpreted by musical performance. I imagined her pained state of mind (whether accurate or not), our audioscapes created an imaginary private space within a larger space as they aligned and combined. I found myself searching for her and later attempting to conceptualize the moment as an ethnographic experience. Again, I feel as though my research on the concept has only begun and I look forward to deepening my research.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Michael D. Mena has been student of music since birth, with a mother that was particular with what music was played him as an infant. In fact, his first attempt at guitar was around the age of twelve was when his mother taught him his first guitar piece: Led Zeppelin's "Stair Way to Heaven." His was mainly self-taught the majority of his life. He started playing the drum kit in high-school while simultaneously venturing into the genre of Mariachi music. He would begin his Bachelors in Music immediately out of secondary school. At the University of Texas-Pan American, he would continue his musical training under classical guitar mentor, Dr. Kurt Martinez. At the same time, Mena was involved in the UTPA Mariachi Aztlan as well as various professional groups. Mena also was heavily involved in performing and promoting local, national, and international death metal groups. His own death metal group, Severance, has taken on surreal trips and performances across the world.

Today, Mena continues his studies as an Ethnomusicologist at the University Texas-Pan American. He has spoken publicly many, many times at academic conferences and as guest lecturer. Mena is seeking acceptance as a PhD candidate in Business Marketing with emphasis on Music. His ambitious nature and experience will undoubtedly take him far in the world of academia and music.

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